

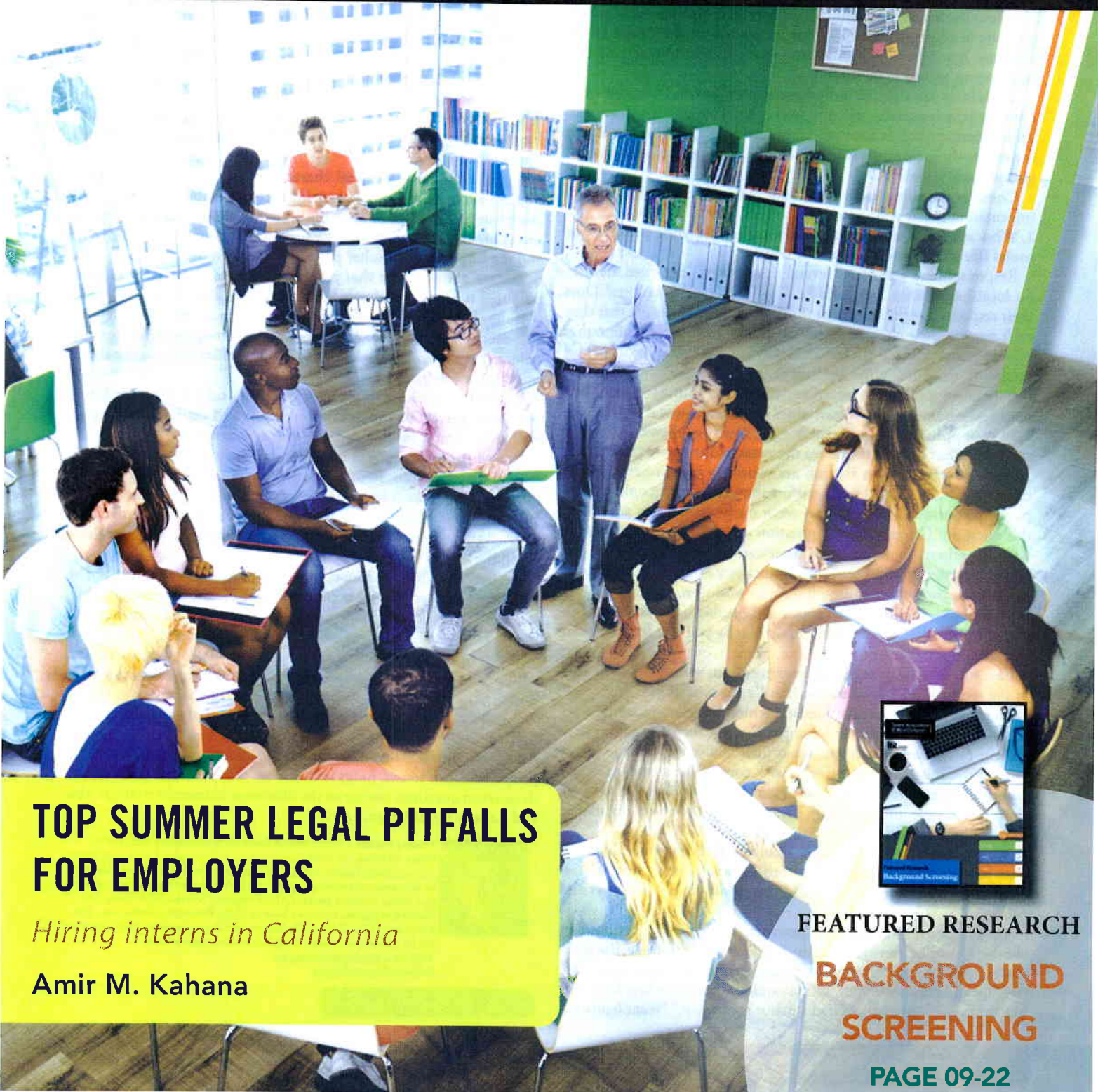
# Talent Acquisition Excellence

ESSENTIALS

» 07.2017  
Vol.5 Issue 07

PRESENTED BY

**HR.com**  
Making HR Professionals Smarter



## TOP SUMMER LEGAL PITFALLS FOR EMPLOYERS

*Hiring interns in California*

Amir M. Kahana



FEATURED RESEARCH

**BACKGROUND  
SCREENING**

PAGE 09-22

# 7 Interview Questions To Hire Top Talent

## Avoiding toxic employees

 By Dianna Booher

Your success often depends on the emotional intelligence of people you hire in strategic positions. That means you need to make hiring decisions based on solid information—not just gut instinct and first impressions gained in an interview.

Those interviews require well-planned questions that solicit genuine answers which surface real opinions, character traits, values, and skills. Most applicants have rehearsed for likely questions. So asking for two or three examples will get you past the practiced answers and give you real insights.

Consider the following interview questions to produce meaningful information about your potential job candidates:

### 1. Who are 3-5 people in the public arena or your personal or social life whom you admire and why?

Responses here will reveal several things: How informed are they on local happenings, current affairs, politics, or pop culture? Does their response suggest they can't think of anyone, or simply that they can't narrow their choices? Were all choices from public life rather than personal or social circles? That may suggest few mentors or role models in their life. Why? If all choices are personal acquaintances, that may suggest non-involvement in the community or activities outside the home. Why? At least, their answers will reveal their values.

### 2. In your opinion, what are the biggest ways people waste time on the job? What do you think are the reasons for this wasted time?

These timewasters on the job are routinely mentioned: visiting co-workers, taking long breaks, surfing the web, gaming, online shopping, and personal calls. Do they seem uncomfortable in answering this question? Or consider this question and their answer in another way altogether: Do they analyze "timewasters" and productivity at a higher level, seeing sources of the productivity problem? For example do they mention these causes: improper workflow, lack of training, indecisiveness, nonfunctional teams and conflict, insufficient equipment. Again, the level of their analysis tells you the level of their thinking in general.

### 3. Can you recall ever seeing or hearing about someone mistreated in the workplace? How did you handle the situation?

Their answers will reveal values and ethics. You're also judging their capacity to feel empathy and compassion. Further, the action they took in this situation tells you about their ability to persuade others to stop the mistreatment or otherwise correct the situation. Their response also tells you about their tolerance for risk (if they had to act alone to stop the mistreatment). Did they risk their own reputation or even their own job to do the right thing?

### 4. Would you tell me about a particularly bad day you've had this past year or two—a day when nothing was routine and almost everything went wrong? How did you deal with all the stress and calamity?

Their response gives you some perspective on what happenings they consider "routine" versus "calamity" and "particularly bad." But what you're really looking for is their coping mechanisms—both emotional stability and resourcefulness. Listen carefully to the retelling for words like "so upset," "so angry," "had a major meltdown," "went ballistic,"

"frantic," "just beside myself with worry." Did they personally solve the problems or did someone else have to take charge? How much and for how long did this problem or these problems affect their work and life? How does their idea of "serious" compare with yours? Does their reaction seem appropriate or extreme? How did their judgment and solution compare to how you would have handled the situation?

### 5. What have been your five biggest accomplishments to date? How would you rank order those? Why were each of these things important to you?

Again, their answers reveal character traits and values. Are they sharing all work-related accomplishments? Personal or family accomplishments? How do they rank the five things named? Reasons reveal much about their view of success, meaningful work, loyalty, and the importance of other people in their life.

### 6. Tell me about a time that you failed—either at work or in your personal life. What did you learn from that experience?

If they have never failed, either they are lying or they are extremely risk-averse. Do they blame others or accept responsibility for the failure? Do they seem teachable? What does their attitude say about humility or arrogance?

### 7. Explain a new idea to me. For example, take a complex term, product, service, or project in a past job and explain it to me so well that I could teach a session on it tomorrow.

I've yet to meet the job applicant who admits to having weak communication skills. In my three decades of reviewing résumés and hiring, job candidates routinely claim some version of "excellent oral and written communication skills." This question aims to test that boast. As the applicant explains the concept, interrupt with questions along the way to see how they react.

Do they overview the idea clearly—and then fill in the details? Do they organize their thoughts coherently and logically? Do they skip steps and definitions, making assumptions about what you "should" know? Does their body language suggest impatience? Do they "talk down" to you, demonstrating arrogance that will likely cause conflict with coworkers or customers on any future job? Is their language lazy, imprecise, and flippant, again representative of the language they'll use with customers as your representative in casual conversations?

Certainly, your interview questions have to meet the job criteria. And these questions assume the job candidate must interact with people and use sound judgment. Given that's a valid assumption, these seven questions can mean the difference between a strategic hire and a costly termination. **QOH**



Dianna Booher, CEO of Booher Research, is a bestselling author of 47 books, including her latest: *Communicate Like a Leader: Connecting Strategically to Coach, Inspire, and Get Things Done*. She works with organizations to help them communicate clearly and with leaders to expand their influence by a strong executive presence. Good Morning America, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, Investor's Business Daily, Bloomberg, Forbes.com, Fast Company, FOX, CNN, NPR, Success, and Entrepreneur routinely interview her for opinions on critical workplace communication issues. Visit [www.BooherResearch.com](http://www.BooherResearch.com) Follow @DiannaBooher

Would you like to comment?

