

**Section 4.5**  
**Hiring a CAO**

Introduction ..... 3

The role of CAO ..... 4

Relationship between Council and CAO ..... 6

Legislative framework ..... 7

Job analysis ..... 7

Developing a job description ..... 8

Recruiting ..... 12

Advertising ..... 12

Screening Candidates ..... 13

Interviews ..... 14

Assessment ..... 15

Selection ..... 16

Checking references and background checks ..... 17

Conclusions ..... 19

How to get the truth out of references ..... 19

Dos and Don'ts ..... 21

Bibliography ..... 22

Appendix A: Sample Scoring Guide, Interview Appraisal Form ..... 23

Appendix B: Reference Check Form ..... 24



**INTRODUCTION**

The *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) provides for the appointment of a chief administrative officer (CAO) to lead the municipal administration. The appointment of a CAO is mandatory in regional municipalities in Nova Scotia, whereas other municipalities have the option to continue with Council as manager of the administration, or adopt the CAO system.

**The role of a CAO**

**Responsibilities of a CAO**

Where there is a chief administrative officer, that person is the head of administration for the municipality. The position of CAO is quite similar to that of a chief executive officer in a private sector corporation in that they are responsible for the overall performance of the organization. In their role as top administrator, the CAO is responsible for directing a team of department heads, supervisors, technicians and support staff in order to manage the affairs of the municipality and to deliver public services. However, the prime responsibility of a CAO is to implement the policies of the elected officials for whom they work.

In addition to their supervisory role, CAOs work together with elected officials and members of the community to define and implement the strategic plan or vision for the future of the community by establishing goals and outlining strategies for achieving those goals. In this aspect the CAO is the professional advisor to Council in the development of policy.

As senior municipal administrator, the CAO is required to work within the legislated mandate of the municipality and must be able to work professionally with federal and provincial government levels of government in addition to their municipal councillors.

**Legislative framework for CAO position**

The position of municipal CAO requires a high level of professional expertise, education, specific training and relevant work experience. The Nova Scotia *Municipal Government Act* s.31(1) is quite specific concerning the duties and responsibilities of the CAO position. Those responsibilities include preparing the annual budget, submitting it to Council for approval, and administering the budget after it is adopted. The CAO is also expected to have the skills necessary to prepare plans and programs for the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of municipal property or facilities, which must be submitted to Council

for approval. . The CAO is responsible for reviewing drafts of by-laws and policies brought for Council, and for making appropriate recommendations to Council regarding them. The National Advanced Certificate in Local Authority Administration course manual for Policy Planning and Program Evaluation describes the CAO role in the preparation of policy papers for Council as “identify and examine problems, evaluate policy options, and make recommendations regarding the possible courses of action”. The CAO may recommend one or more courses of action and Council makes its decision based in large part on the advice of the CAO. Once adopted by Council, the CAO is responsible for the implementation and enforcement of those by-laws and policies.

In order to facilitate the CAO’s role as professional advisor to Council, the *Municipal Government Act* s31(2) provides the authority for a CAO to be present for any meeting of the Council as well as any board, committee, commission or corporation of the municipality in order to make observations and suggestions on any subject under discussion.

In addition to the advisory function of the position, one of the primary responsibilities of the CAO is that of manager. The CAO has the ultimate authority over all staff employed by the municipality. As such, the CAO may appoint, suspend and remove any and all employees of the municipality. The CAO may choose to further delegate this authority to a department head or other agent such as a director of human resources. Note that subsection 30(4) of the *Municipal Government Act* provides that no Council member, committee or committee member shall instruct or give direction to an employee of a municipality - instructions should come from Council itself to the CAO if there is one. *For further information on the Municipal Government Act and the roles and responsibilities of the CAO see Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations’ website at: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/muns/legal/>*

Given the importance of the CAO position to the administration of a municipality, the process of selecting the proper candidate for the position of CAO is critical.

### **Separation of Policy-making and Administration Roles**

When a municipality chooses to adopt a CAO system, there is a definitive separation between the policy-making and administration



aspects of local government.

Council is the elected branch of municipal government, and its role is to represent the community at large and ensure that the wishes of the constituents are considered when developing a vision for the future direction of the community.

The administration implements the resolutions and policies approved by Council and carries out the day to day business of the municipality.

**Council  
and  
CAO  
roles**

This separation of policy-making and administration is based on the tenet that the main mandate of Council is setting policy direction for the community. In order that Councillors may effectively discharge their duties as policy-makers, it is necessary that a strong administrative leader is appointed to direct the day to day affairs of managing the administration and directing senior and junior staff in implementing the vision formulated by Council. This separation between the administrative and policy aspects of a municipal government ensures that any subsequent actions are in keeping with Council policies.

The CAO and his or her staff are responsible for ensuring that Council has the necessary information to make good decisions when debating policy. All information and direction from Council to staff must go through the CAO, likewise all information, reports and recommendations to Council must go through the CAO (with the exception of certain legal reports).

The CAO is responsible for all of municipal staff and is answerable to Council for the actions of municipal employees in the course of their employment. All aspects of managing staff are the responsibility of the CAO, from hiring to firing and everything in between. As noted by Jack Novak and Kell Antoft in *Grassroots Democracy: Local Government in the Maritimes*, of this separation between the policy and administration aspects of local government, means the only staff member directly accountable to Council is the CAO.



As administrator, the CAO coordinates the variety of skills and

**CAO is the principle professional advisor to council**

activities of the staff, and ensures that those skills and abilities are focused in the most effective and efficient way to accomplish what is required. The CAO is also responsible for discipline and conflict resolution in staff.

Municipal Councillors in Nova Scotia are not usually expected to work full time in their elected roles, and many municipal Councillors often have careers to attend to in addition to elected office.

The CAO system effectively frees Council from the day to day minute details of managing the administration of the municipality. This allows Council to concentrate on the bigger picture of developing a vision for the future of the community while dealing with emerging issues, debating and developing by-laws and policy, and of course setting the annual budget . In the development of policies aimed at achieving the vision defined by Council, the CAO serves as the principle professional advisor to Council.

**Relationship Between Council and CAO**

George Cuff in “Cuff’s Guide for Municipal Leaders: A survival Guide for elected officials” outlines 15 basic principles that elected officials should understand in order to be successful. Mr. Cuff states that

*“Council deals with the organization through one employee - the chief administrative officer (CAO). Any other course of action in attempting to guide the work of the administration should not be tolerated.”*

As the CAO is the only employee that deals with Council, it is essential that when Council is considering hiring a CAO that a comprehensive description of the requirements of the position be drafted as early as possible in the hiring process. Specifications of the CAO position are essential in order for Council to thoroughly assess potential candidates, and to ensure that the candidate fully understands what is expected of them.

**Information flows in both directions**

The very nature of the relationship between Council and the CAO may at times lead to conflict. It is therefore essential that Council and the CAO together take special care to nurture open communications on a regular and timely basis in order to develop a strong and healthy relationship which includes mechanisms for dealing with conflict. Such an open and healthy communication process begins with the hiring process.

As Jack Novak and Kell Antoft describe in *Grassroots Democracy: Local Government in the Maritimes*, there is an essential requirement that the administration as a whole must have an understanding of, and an appreciation for the political role of Council, and vice versa, the Council must understand and appreciate the role and value of the administration. In addition, both aspects of municipal government need to nurture and maintain both formal and informal channels of communication and respond to potential conflicts quickly in order to facilitate the smooth operation of the municipality.

***“The relationship between council and staff is an important element in the daily life of every municipal government. When the rapport between the two sides is based on mutual respect and a sense of shared purpose, the task of governing will be greatly furthered. Conversely, when elements of hostility, discontent, or suspicion creep into the relationship, the lines of communication will wither and the decision making process will grind to a halt.”***

Source: Grassroots Democracy: Local Government in the Maritimes. Jack Novack and Kell Antoft page 76

**The first step is developing a comprehensive job description**

**The Hiring Process**

The first step in hiring a CAO is to develop a clear and complete position description. It is Council’s job to establish the key areas of responsibility for the new CAO position. What might be required in one municipality may not always be applicable in another municipality. Because the relationship between the CAO and Council is so critical, Council must decide before beginning the selection process on the key elements of the position, and establish the level of authority that the CAO position will have within the parameters laid out in the *Municipal Government Act*.

**Job Analysis is an in depth study of a position in order to document the specifications and the skills required**

In the event that Council is replacing a former CAO, for example as a result of retirement, it is still important that the job description be reviewed to ensure it is still relevant and meets Council’s needs.

**Job Analysis**

Why do a job analysis? The information garnered from doing an in

depth analysis of a particular position can be invaluable in matching job applicants to the job requirements. The information aids in planning future human resource requirements and aids in establishing fair and equitable compensation levels. Without a detailed job analysis, the process of performance appraisal would be almost impossible after the position has been filled.

### **The Process of Job Analysis**

The process of doing a job analysis involves collecting relevant information about the position, and the various factors which can contribute to success. This may involve studying job descriptions for CAO's in other municipalities and adapting those descriptions to fit the needs of your municipality. However the most direct source of information on the job of a CAO is other CAO's. It would therefore be helpful to talk to a CAO from a neighbouring municipality especially if Council is hiring a CAO for the first time. Some additional information sources that might prove useful include professional organizations, and publications, list servers and internet research.

A job description such as the one that follows can be invaluable in developing an advertisement, a recruitment strategy, and especially for detailing the evaluation criteria for interviewing potential candidates for a CAO position. The sample job description that follows has been adapted from a number of sources including Chief Administrative Officer Policy, Nova Scotia Model Policy Manual for Municipalities Chapter 6: as well as a variety of job descriptions for CAO's and CEO's of private sector corporations,

### ***CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER Job Description***

#### ***Background:***

*The Chief Administrative Officer is the senior appointed official of the municipality providing organizational leadership to municipal staff.*

*This position is responsible to Council for administration and co-ordination of the delivery of services to the municipality's residents and businesses in a manner that will ensure the effective utilization of the human, financial and physical resources of the municipality.*

**Duties**

*The CAO will oversee the execution of programs and initiatives approved and established by Council policies and any relevant governing legislation.*

*The CAO is the principal advisor to Council in the development of public policy, and is responsible for ensuring that Council is provided with all relevant information necessary to make informed decisions.*

*Under the general direction of the Mayor (Warden) and subject to the policies established by resolution or by-law of Council, the Chief Administrative Officer is responsible for:*

*1. The effective utilization of the municipality's human, financial and physical resources including:*

**Effective handling of a municipality's resources**

- *Making or authorizing expenditures, and entering into contracts on behalf of the municipality.*
- *Co-ordination of the preparation of operating and capital budgets and business plans consistent with the directions provided by Council and requirements of the Province of Nova Scotia.*
- *Monitoring the delivery of municipal services through the various department heads to ensure that Council's budget (and business) plans are followed.*
- *Establishing departments of the municipal administration.*
- *Monitoring the administration of human resources to ensure that all departments conform to approved Council staffing levels, hiring practices, training and other policies.*
- *Directing or conducting collective bargaining with employee unions, and determining the salaries, wages and emoluments to be paid to municipal officers and employees, including payment pursuant to a classification system.*
- *Recommending to Council the appointment, suspension or dismissal of department heads, as well as providing assistance and direction to department heads in the hiring, suspension or dismissal of all other employees. In the case of unionized employees such action shall be in accordance with procedures laid down in the relevant collective bargaining agreements.*

**Implementing  
Council's  
initiatives**

- *Monitoring purchasing and tendering procedures to ensure that the policies of Council are followed.*
- *Providing recommendations for changes to the organizational structure that will improve efficiency and/or improve service delivery to the public for consideration by Council.*

2. *With regard to ensuring that Council's initiatives and policies are executed and implemented in a timely manner the CAO is responsible for:*

- *Meeting with department heads collectively on a regular basis to review the policy directions of Council and assigning responsibility for implementation and execution.*
- *Developing appropriate communications procedures to ensure that all members of staff are informed regarding the policies and directions of Council.*
- *Monitoring the implementation and execution of all Council policies by the responsible departments.*
- *Ensuring that all municipal by-laws are enforced.*
- *Providing periodic reports to Council on the status of programs, initiatives and the financial condition of the municipality.*

**Advisor to  
Council in  
development of  
policy**

3. *As an advisor to Council in the development of public policy the CAO will be responsible for:*

- *Providing direction in the preparation of agendas for Council and Committee meetings.*
- *Developing and maintaining liaison with officials, groups, agencies, and government departments as is necessary to secure information and advice that will assist Council and promote the interests of the municipality.*
- *Maintaining a thorough working knowledge of Provincial Legislation and Regulations that affect the policy decisions of Council.*

- *Ensuring that Council receives staff reports on agenda items that provide a background, technical analysis, alternatives and a recommendation sufficient for Council to make an informed decision.*
- *Providing advice to the Mayor and Council on agenda items during Council and Committee meetings.*
- *Ensuring that sound public relations are maintained by communicating information on the actions and decisions of Council to the general public through the media.*
- *Discharging such other duties as Council may assign from time to time by resolution.*

*The duties outlined above are representative of the position and are not all inclusive.*

**Education and Training**

In today’s world, a CAO may be expected to have attained a University Degree in a relevant discipline such as a Master’s Degree in Business Administration or Commerce, Master’s degree in Public Administration or a professional designation such as Professional Engineer, Certified General Account etc.

In addition the successful candidate may be expected to have taken a number of specialized training courses in municipal related topics such as those offered through the National Advanced Certificate in Local Authority Administration offered jointly through Dalhousie University and the University of Alberta.

**Experience**

A candidate for the position of CAO might be expected to have acquired about ten years of senior level experience, preferably in the management of municipal government administration or services.

**Knowledge**

A CAO candidate will be expected to have acquired a comprehensive knowledge of government affairs, governing legislation, and public responsibilities related to municipal government administration in Nova Scotia in addition to a sound knowledge of fundamental and advanced business management principles and best practices.

A thorough knowledge of the local community’s strengths, opportunities and challenges, and an in depth understanding of the culture of the area are additional assets that might also be required of a candidate for municipal CAO.

**Abilities**

Any CAO will be expected to have proven administrative and managerial abilities in directing and overseeing the activities of several departments with wide ranging and diverse public responsibilities. In addition, any candidate for the position of CAO will be expected to have demonstrated participatory management and leadership skills in a team oriented environment. Also, the successful candidate will demonstrate interpersonal and communications skills in dealing with Council, staff, the public and other government officials and agencies.

**Personal suitability**

Although more subjective in nature, the successful candidate should have the ability to adapt management style to the needs of Council and the management team. It should be a prerequisite that any candidate be able to demonstrate a history of good health, regular attendance and a commendable former employment history.

**Job Dimensions**

With a detailed job analysis as described above, it is then possible to develop an interview appraisal form which contains an assigned weight or score for each of the dimensions identified. Some of the dimensions that might be included in the interview appraisal form would be, type and or level of educational, number of years experience in a similar position, communication skills, interpersonal skills, personal suitability etc. *A sample appraisal form may be found in Appendix A.*

**RECRUITMENT**

With a comprehensive description of the requirements of the position, Council may advance to the next step in the process, advertising the position.

There are a myriad of possible sources for CAO candidates, however it is likely that potential candidates for the position of CAO will come mainly from:

- municipal staff of other municipalities,
- accounting and financial professionals from the private sector,
- recent graduates of public administration, business administration or other university programs, or
- directors of departments etc. within your own municipality.

**Advertising the job opportunity**

Advertising for candidates for CAO positions may be placed in newspapers that have provincial or even national distribution as well

as those central to the local area. In addition, notices might also be placed on the Association of Municipal Administrators List Server, and in newsletters of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities.

Whatever venues that might be selected for advertising the position, there will always be a word of mouth component to any publication of the opportunity.

Additional venues that may be considered include:

- Websites providing municipal government information
- Trade publications,
- Professional associations Recruitment companies, etc.

An advertisement for the position of CAO might look something like the following:

**The Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ Nova Scotia is inviting applications for the position of Chief Administrative Officer.**

***Any municipality* is a rural municipality of \_\_\_\_\_ residents and an operating budget of approximately \$\_\_\_\_\_. The community is located in the picturesque region of Nova Scotia.**

**The Chief Administrative Officer, reporting directly to Municipal Council, will be responsible for managing the daily affairs of the Municipality within the policies adopted by Council.**

**The successful candidate will have extensive senior financial management experience, ideally in a municipal government setting, and possess excellent communication, organizational and inter-personal skills with the proven ability to manage in a team environment. Minimum qualifications include a Masters Degree in Public Administration, a Masters Degree in Business Administration, or other relevant university degree, or a combination of suitable education and experience. A National Advanced Certificate in Local Authority Administration would be an definite asset.**

**Salary will be commensurate with qualifications and experience. The Municipality of \_\_\_\_\_, Nova Scotia offers a complete pension and benefits package.**

**Applications, including a detailed resume with references, may be submitted in confidence to the address below, no later than \_\_\_\_\_month, \_\_\_\_\_day, \_\_\_\_\_year.**

**Probably the most important part of the interview process is to stick to the agreed upon rating system. In most cases it will get you to the correct candidate.**

## **Screening Candidates**

Once the advertisement has been placed and applications are received, a selection committee should be established. Such a selection committee may be comprised of the Mayor or Warden, a small number (2 or 3) municipal Councillors, the Municipal Auditor, the Human Resources Officer of the municipality, and perhaps the Municipal Advisor for the area.

All applications are then reviewed in order to determine the educational and professional qualifications of each candidate. Applicants are scored on the basis of their relevant education, municipal experience, management experience, match of skills to job description, and the quality of their resume. Based on the scoring, a short list of no more than five or six candidates may be advanced to the interview stage.

The selection committee then conducts interviews with the short listed candidates. Questions to be asked in the interview process are prepared in advance by the screening panel based upon the qualifications and demands of the job as outlined above and provided to the other members of the screening committee prior to the interview process.

## **The Interview**

There are a number of different types of interviews that can be conducted, however probably the most appropriate for this type of position is the behavioural descriptive interview as described in "*Human Resource Management: A Strategic Approach*" authored by Hermann Schwind, Hari Das and Terry Wagar of Saint Mary's University in Halifax.

Schwind, Das, and Wagar describe the behavioural descriptive interview as a technique of identifying important behavioural dimensions of a job and assessing the applicants against those dimensions. Behavioural descriptive interviews assess how an applicant responded to past situations. Situational descriptive interview questions pose a hypothetical situation and assess how an applicant might respond. Behavioural description interviews or situational interviews are based on the principle that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. Recent behaviour, and behaviours demonstrated over long periods of time are especially

indicative of future behaviours in circumstances of a similar nature. In other words, how a person has handled a specific type of situation in the past is a good indication of how they would handle it in the future. This type of interview is used to determine how an applicant will respond to a specific type of situation should it arise on the job.

In an interview of this sort, the applicant is given a theoretical situation and asked how they would handle this particular situation.

For example:

The municipality is asked to sign a complex legal agreement which would have them join a solid waste authority. The agreement has come to you; it has not yet gone to Council for their consideration. What steps would you take in getting the agreement ready for Council's consideration.

The suggested response to such a scenario might include the following points:

- Have the agreement reviewed by the municipal solicitor, and the Director of the Department of the municipality responsible for solid waste (if applicable). Get their comments in writing.
- Prepare a report for Council concerning the agreement that provides some of the background and pertinent details. If possible incorporate the solicitor's comments. Assess the various options available to Council, including the financial impacts. Provide a recommendation for Council noting the pros and cons of each option.
- Speak with the Mayor/Warden (or Clerk) to have the matter put on the Council's agenda.
- Circulate the report and agreement to Council in advance of the meeting.

A number of questions such as this that target specific desirable behavioural responses should be developed well in advance of the interview.

There are numerous publications available that provide in-depth instructions on how to develop interviews in order to make the best possible selection of candidates for the position. A number of these resources are listed in the bibliography on page 20. However this list is not exhaustive, merely representative of some of the information available.

## The Assessment Phase

Once the structured interview is over, it is time to review the data collected on each applicant. During the process of developing the questions to be asked each candidate during the interviews, each question is weighted or scored according to the importance of the criteria demonstrated by the response to the question. In the example listed above, the applicant's response indicates their familiarity with and understanding of the role of the CAO, and the process inherent in the municipality becoming involved in complex legal agreements. In this particular scenario, there are five distinct aspects to the desired response, each aspect could be a value of one point and the question would be weighted at a four.

The responses each applicant gave to the situational interview questions are compared to this pre-established scoring guide and an overall rating for each question is determined. In a similar manner, each of the job dimensions identified during the job analysis is scored according to pre-established scoring criteria based on the importance the interview panel places on each job dimension. For example, one municipality might place a high point value on a candidate having a Master's Degree in Public Administration, another municipality might feel that experience is more important. Establishing the value of each job dimension is dependant upon the circumstances and may or may not be the same from one municipal unit to another.

Scoring guides such as this make it possible for the interview panel to score each applicant based on their response to the questions, and enables comparisons between applicants. This is particularly helpful when a number of applicants are being interviewed. Because of the number of questions being asked each candidate, and the number of candidates being interviewed, combined with the time that elapses between the actual interview and the final selection process, assigning a specific value to each of the criteria allows the interview panel to assess each candidate on a level playing field based on the attributes the candidate brings to the table. As noted in *Skills for Managerial Success: Theory Experience and Practice* by Larid Mealiea and Gary Latham,

*“Research has demonstrated that note taking can enhance interviewer recall and accuracy. Therefore, to ensure accuracy of information, interviewers should take notes during the interview.”*

A sample scoring guide as described above is included as Appendix A.

*...organizations have a great interest in discovering the facts about job applicants and their work histories. Unfortunately, those facts are often misrepresented, and resume enhancements may not always be uncovered during an initial interview, or even during a series of interviews.*

Source: Joey George and Kent Marett, *The Truth About Lies*. Society for Human Resource Management Online <http://www.shrm.org/hrmagazine/articles/0504/0504george.asp> May 31, 2004.

### **Final Selection**

There is one very important criterion for the position of CAO that may not be demonstrated in the resume or in the responses to the interview questions but is of extreme importance in selecting the right candidate, and that is personality. In order for a successful relationship between the CAO, Council and staff, the new CAO must be able to “fit” with the culture. The new CAO’s style may be different than that of the outgoing CAO, however there has to be that intangible sense that they are part of the team from the beginning. This is one aspect of the selection process that is almost impossible to put a value on as it is inherently a subjective call. Therefore, in order for Council to be able to make the assessment that a particular applicant is right for the job, as a final check, the recommended candidate should meet with the full Council. This provides an opportunity for each Councillor to ask the candidate two or three questions in order to assess whether a good working relationship is possible with the candidate.

Questions Councillors intend to ask should be submitted to the chair of the selection committee for circulation to the rest of Council prior to meeting with the candidate in order to ensure that questions are fair and unbiased and meet with legal requirements.

After Council has met with the top scoring candidate, they are in a better position to make an informed decision based on the results of the formal interview, and their personal talk with the applicant, whether to support the candidate or not. If the selected candidate is supported, the search committee may then negotiate an employment contract for Council’s ratification. If there are doubts, Council may then wish to meet with the next highest ranking applicant.

### **Reference Checks**

Applicants who achieve the second interview stage, or final selection

## **Negotiating a contract**

phase of the hiring process would be expected to provide three different references:

- one from a former supervisor,
- one from a peer, and
- one from a subordinate.

These references are then asked a number of behavioural questions which will be scored on a pass/fail basis. Should the preferred applicant fail the reference checks at this point in the process, the search committee may then decide to conduct reference checks on the next leading candidate, or decide to examine other options.

A sample reference check form is attached in Appendix B.

At this point the hiring process has been completed and the final step is to offer the winning applicant a contract for employment. The employment contract may be negotiated with the chosen applicant or developed beforehand with the understanding that there will be some flexibility to negotiate certain aspects of the contract with the successful applicant.

## HOW TO GET THE TRUTH OUT OF REFERENCES

**Use the phone:** Most references are more likely to be honest over the phone or in person rather than in a formal letter.

**Seek information on job-related behaviour:** Ask for details on job behaviours, such as tardiness and absenteeism, rather than on personality traits, such as ambition and intelligence, which are hard to evaluate reliably.

**Ask direct questions:** Questions such as “Would you rehire this employee now?” or “How is this person’s behaviour in a group setting?” would result in more honest answers than when a person is asked to write a paragraph on the strengths and weaknesses of the employee.

**Combine references with other predictors:** Reference letters are no substitute for application blanks, tests, and interviews.

**Use credible sources only:** Former work supervisors are, typically, the most useful reference sources. Letters from acquaintances and friends are usually worthless for predicting future job success.

**Note frequency of job changes:** A person who has not stayed in any organization for more than a few months may be either an extremely successful employee or a problem employee. Persons who have been moving laterally across organizations without any apparent change in job challenge, rewards, or working conditions should be carefully watched.

**Watch out for phrases with hidden meanings:** Most references do not blatantly lie; they simply don’t tell the whole truth. A person who is described as “deeply committed to family and friends” may be someone who will not work beyond five o’clock; an “individualist” may be a person who cannot work with others.

Source: Canadian Human Resource Management: A Strategic Approach. (Adapted and summarized from Hari Das and Mallika Das “But He Had Excellent References: Refining the Reference Letter,” *The Human Resource*, June-July 1988, pp15-16.)

## Conclusions

Hiring a new CAO is probably one of the most critical decisions that a municipal Council may have to make. The time and energy devoted to developing a candidate profile complete with the characteristics and specific skills required for the position as a first step is probably the most important part of the hiring process. All other aspects of the process from the initial advertisement, to the final interview questionnaire are developed from this profile.

The optimum choice for new CAO will meet or exceed the skill and experience qualifications detailed in the position profile or job description, and will have personal and professional values and goals compatible with those of the community and Council.

## **Dos and Don'ts of Conducting Employment Interviews**

### **DO:**

1. **Collect only job-related information and not information on general personality traits.**
2. **Concentrate on securing information about the applicant's past job behaviour.**
3. **Use three or four interviewers (to interview each candidate) to increase the reliability of the interview process.**
4. **Treat all interviewees equally and impartially.**
5. **Have a checklist of questions to ask each applicant.**
6. **Provide job-related information to each candidate.**
7. **Attempt to create a relaxed setting by asking easy, nonthreatening questions first and showing support to the applicant.**
8. **Compare your evaluation of each candidate with other interviewers and find out why discrepancies exist.**

### **DO NOT:**

1. **Attempt to predict personality traits from a single interview.**
2. **Be guided by initial impressions (or nonverbal cues) and generalize them to all relevant work and nonwork behaviour of the applicant.**
3. **Allow your evaluation of the candidate's job performance to be influenced by a single characteristic (such as how well the applicant dresses).**
4. **Be tempted to make "snap" judgements of the candidate early in the interview, thus locking out further information.**
5. **Ask leading questions that communicate the correct or desired answer to the applicant (e.g., "Do you believe that women workers should be treated equally with males?").**
6. **Exhibit personal biases ("In my experience, good sales managers are all talkative").**
7. **Dominate the interview; rather, use the interview to collect relevant information about the candidate.**

Source: Canadian Human Resource Management: A strategic Approach (6<sup>th</sup> ed) Schwind, Das and Wagar, 2002. P263.

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Sample job description adapted from City of Timmins, Ontario  
<http://www.city.timmins.on.ca/Municipal/cao.htm#Location%20of%20Personnel%20Department>

### Appendix A: Sample Scoring Guide

Candidate	Current Position	Summary of Education	Summary of Experience	Score : A	Score: B	Score: C	Score: D	Total
John Doe	Mun Admin	NACLAA, CGA,	7 yrs Mun finance, 12 yrs CGA	4	4	4	4	16
Mary Brown	Consultant	MBA, various workshops	11yrs mun administrator, 4 years mun consultant	3.5	3.5	4	4	15
Bob Smith	Municipal Auditor	CGA, MPA	5 years manager	3	3.5	4	4	14.5

*Note: Score A - Municipal Education and Experience*  
*Score B - Management Education and Experience*  
*Score C - Resume*  
*Score D - Interview*

### Interview Appraisal Form

<b>Candidate:</b> <i>Mary Brown</i> <b>Date of Interview:</b> <i>May 24, 2003</i>					
#	value	Question	Suggested Response	Actual Response	Score (out of 10)
1	5.0%	Why are you suited for this position?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good knowledge of mun government</li> <li>- Management experience</li> <li>- Financial Experience</li> <li>- Experience in dealing with elected officials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 7 yrs in Mun gov.</li> <li>- mun planning background</li> <li>- education in financial mgmt</li> </ul>	5
2	5.0%	What do you see as the role of CAO?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Coordination of admin resources</li> <li>- Implementing Council direction</li> <li>- Advice to Council</li> <li>-Mgmt of staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-supervise admin staff</li> <li>- responsible for sound mgmt of resources</li> <li>-advise council</li> <li>- implement council decisions</li> </ul>	5
3	5.0%	What would you do if ....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	

**APPENDIX B:**  
**REFERENCE CHECK FORM**

**Candidate:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reference Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reference Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Ref. Phone No.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Check:** \_\_\_\_\_

#	Question	Response
A	What position did the candidate hold when you worked together? Can you describe the duties of that position?	
B	Did the candidate manage any staff in that position? How would you describe their management style? Can you describe an event that best illustrated that style?	
C	Did you enjoy working with the candidate? Why? Can you provide examples that illustrate those qualities?	
D	What are the candidate's strengths? Can you provide examples of times those strengths were exhibited?	
E	Could you describe for me a time the candidate took the initiative to deal with a problem in the organization? How did it work out?	
F	Are there any other comments you wish to make?	

**For the Interviewer:**

**General Impressions:**

<b>Pass:</b>	<b>Fail:</b>
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