



Good Luck Finding Qualified Job Candidates

Finding a top-notch household manager who is capable and willing to handle a wide array of duties can be a challenge.

By Beth DeCarbo

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“You might have someone who can whip up lunch or run in the house and press a shirt, but they don’t have Excel skills,” says **Teresa Leigh**, owner of advisory firm **Teresa Leigh Household Risk Management**. “Or you may have someone who could get trees removed or oversee building something, but you can’t ask him or her to run to the airport and pick up your best friend.”

Her firm’s latest project involved hiring a household personal assistant for a New York-based entrepreneur with homes all over the U.S. A marketing push for the position drew 1,940 resumes, she says. Of those, 500 were interviewed

over the phone. From that pool, 21 people made the cut for in-person interviews, which was narrowed down to 10 for real-life testing. “We love to test because it will call out people who are not equipped to do the job,” Ms. Leigh says.

Here are some examples of what candidates asked to do:

Test 1

It’s your first day on the job, and the housekeeper hasn’t arrived yet. So the homeowner asks you to do the laundry. Here is 50 pounds of laundry. Sort it into loads based on the fabric, color and other care instructions.

Test 2

The homeowner is going on a trip and needs her favorite brand of toothpaste. Go and find it. “You’d be surprised how some people can’t problem solve. Or they’ll spend four hours at the drug store,” she says.

Test 3

The homeowner and her best girlfriend want to go on a trip to Paris, to Athens and then to Sicily. What questions are you going to ask her before you plan that trip? A red flag is when the candidate says, “I can go ahead and book it—I don’t need to ask the homeowner.”

Ms. Leigh filled the position, but it wasn’t easy. “We could only find two who were a match to the homeowner’s needs. That’s not really good statistics for a homeowner when they’re looking to hire themselves,” Ms. Leigh says.