

How to Be a Much Better Interviewer

APPLICATION

Specific Situations. This applies to selection interviews when you are the hiring manager.

INTRODUCTION

These are critical practices that will improve your ability to identify the best candidates and also detect the unqualified potential “**Mishires.**” This can improve your effectiveness to make good decisions by 100%!

IMPORTANT TIPS

- A. *Remember, clear and detailed examples of past behavior are the best predictor of future behavior. Ask “how have you handled . . .”*
- B. *Stop asking hypothetical questions. Responses to “How would you handle this problem” cannot be validated. They provide empty data. Change the verb to past tense.*
- C. *Gain a balanced perspective by probing three competency sets: technical, performance, and fit.*

KEY POINTS

1. **Create a Job Analysis** List all of your required attributes (called competencies) for this position well in advance of the interview. Divide these into three groupings – Technical, Personal Performance, and Cultural Fit competencies. Share this with all members of your interviewing team. For professional positions you should have approximately 25 to 40 of these competencies. (see Performance Competencies checklist on this site)
2. **Ask Behavioral Questions** Ask how people did things in the past. These are your best questions. You want to probe work history of the candidate and essentially ask “Describe how you handled difficult customers at ABC company.” Note in most cases these questions are actually statements. Drill down two more levels of detail by asking follow up questions. (see #3)
3. **Drill Down Two levels by asking follow up Behavioral Questions** After you ask your first question and hear the response, probe for details by asking questions such as

“What was the situation?”, “Why was the customer upset?”, “What did you say?”, “How did you handle the problem?” and “What was the outcome?”

4. **Always First Conduct a Telephone Interview** Don't bring in unqualified candidates. Always pre-interview every person, by phone and/or in person, for at least 15 minutes before scheduling them in to interview. Gain a clear understanding of historical work patterns before the interview. Ask about their work history.
5. **Take Notes During the Interview** Notes will help you remember what the candidate said and did, and also show you are thorough. Use the T-diagram technique where in the left column you record a summary of what they said, and in the right column you note your reactions both favorable, unfavorable, or weak evidence.
6. **Specialize** It is impossible to thoroughly probe work experience in an hour. Specialists do a much better job collecting in depth information. Reduce redundancy and improve data collection by assigning 5 to 10 different competencies to each member of your team.
7. **Ask for References in the Middle of the Interview** Not at the end of the interview. The best time to ask for these is when you are asking questions and listening to claims of success - this will help prevent expansive claims. Then check them yourself. Get names of former supervisors, co-workers and customers.
8. **Add 15 More Minutes than You Think You Need** to your interviews to allow you to get more in-depth. More time means more detail. Structure and plan your interview to allow enough time for in-depth questioning. Place a clock behind the interviewee on a table so you can discreetly track your time.
9. **You Ask Your Questions First** Keep control of your interview by having the candidate ask their detailed questions after you have asked yours. This prevents the possibility of contaminated data and answers “spun” to fit what they learned about your requirements from your questions.
10. **Hold your Interviewing Team Members Accountable** for asking good questions; and collecting good data by requiring detailed written feedback from them. Emphasize that the traditional vague “thumbs up or down” feedback is no longer acceptable. Hold a post Debrief Meeting and ask them to support their conclusions by facts.

Remember that the competency is the central unit of the interview. Organize all your activities around these.