

HIRING MANAGER'S GUIDE TO THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

It is recommended that the hiring manager uses a structured interview process. What is a Structured Interview? Structured interviews are interviews that use multiple mechanisms (or elements) to help make the interview job-related and systematic. Research shows that structured interviews are twice as effective as unstructured interviews in predicting job performance. Unstructured interviews, where interviewers rely on unaided judgment, are subject to bias and may expose you to future complaints or challenges. The elements of a structured interview include:

1. Base questions on job analysis. (Ensures fairness and impartiality)
2. Ask effective questions. (Evokes responses that help you make the decision)
3. Ask each candidate the same questions. (Ensures fairness and impartiality)
4. Use detailed rating scales. (Helps quantify subjective data)
5. Train interviewers. (Ensures professionalism)
6. Use interview panels so that more than one person conducts the interview. (Provides checks and balances to ensure fairness and impartiality)
7. Take notes. (Memory can be short and provides paper trail for defending selection if needed)
8. Assess candidate responses objectively by using the rating scales to score candidates. (Promotes objectivity and complies with Merit System Principles)

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Conduct a Job Analysis.

Spend quality time reviewing the job description and selecting the critical knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's) of the position. After you review the major duties, KSA's identify the key competencies needed to be successful in this position. Examples of key competencies include: Technical Skills, Interpersonal Effectiveness, Problem-Solving, Flexibility, Teamwork, Self-Management and Communication Skills.

Develop questions in advance.

Studies indicate that past performance is one of the best predictors of future performance. Therefore, the most effective questions you can ask a candidate are behavioral-based questions. Behavioral-based questions require the candidate to describe specific situations, actions and outcomes from their past experience. An example of a behavioral-based question for a customer service competency might be: Tell me about a specific time when you had to deal with a difficult customer complaint. Describe your actions. What was the outcome? Prepare a list of questions that relate to the knowledge, skills and abilities for the position. Prioritize the list of the most important job qualities that are critical to the position, along with any other questions that will help you assess fit for the position. A good question is job-related, focused on past behavior and open-ended.

Train interviewers.

It is important that whomever you decide to include in the interviewing process be knowledgeable of the job requirements and trained in establishing rapport with candidates, effective questioning, documentation, evaluating answers, and applying the rating scales. After deciding the appropriate interviewing panel, the "lead interviewer" (typically the immediate manager) must provide all interviewers with the necessary materials (i.e., resume, interview questions, and rating scales) well ahead of time. If you are conducting panel interviews as a team, you may want to decide uniform

questions, which will be asked to each candidate and any candidate-specific questions. Before calling candidates, set an interview schedule with the interviewers. Most interviews last 45-50 minutes. Allow 10 minutes for each behavioral-based question you choose and 15 minutes at the end of each interview for scoring responses. Reserve times/dates ahead of time with panel members' schedules.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Take notes.

Notes help you capture the content of the interview vs. relying on memory.

Closing the interview.

Give the candidate 15 minutes at the end of the interview to ask you and/or the panel questions. Let the candidate know what the next steps in the process will be and your expected timeframe. You also want to thank the candidate for coming and if time permits, provide a quick tour of the office.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Score responses.

Do immediately after each interview when the information is fresh in your mind. Build in 15 minutes at the end of each interview for this.

Review reference checks.

Use the reports Human Resources provides you in your decision making process. These reports provide more candid feedback – even on “areas of improvement,” which helps identify quality candidates.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS DO'S & DON'T'S

Questions that ask a candidate to reveal information about his or her national origin, citizenship, age, marital status, disabilities, or other personal information is a violation of the [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) and can be discriminatory. Below is a list of examples of questions that are appropriate or inappropriate to ask during the interview process. When in doubt, keep questions work-related. Protect yourself by phrasing questions so that they directly relate to specific occupational qualifications.

Name

Appropriate: "Is there any other name used for work or school that we should know in order to check on your work and education record? If yes, please provide a list." This is best asked at point of serious consideration.

Inappropriate: Inquiries about the name that would indicate applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin or descent. Inquiries into previous name of applicant where it has been changed by court order, marriage, or otherwise.

Marital and Family Status

Appropriate: Whether applicant can meet specified work schedules is the only acceptable inquiry.

Inappropriate: Any inquiries indicating whether an applicant is married, single, divorced, engaged, dating, etc.

Age

Appropriate: Only applies in relation to hiring a minor.

You can ask:

- When the applicant graduated from high school.
- For dates of employment in each job held.
- Young people for proof that they are over the minimum age required for working papers.
- Applicant if they are under 18.

Inappropriate: Requirement that applicant produce proof of age in the form of birth certificate or baptismal record.

You cannot ask:

- For date of birth.
- Applicant their age.
- Use terms such as boy, girl, young or designate a preference for a specific age group (if it excludes persons over 40 years of age) when advertising job opportunities.

Citizenship

Appropriate: Statement that if hired, applicant may be required to submit proof of citizenship is acceptable, only if previously required in the position description and if approved through Human Resources or EO/AA office. Upon hire, all students, staff and faculty will be required to provide proof of eligibility to work in U.S., as required by the INS.

Inappropriate: "Of what country are you a citizen?" Whether applicant or his/her parents or spouse are naturalized or native born U.S. citizens. Date when applicant or parents or spouse acquired U.S. citizenship. Requirement that applicant produce his naturalization papers. Naturalization plans.

Disabilities

Appropriate: If applicant indicates that he/she is reasonably able to perform the essential functions of the job and is qualified, there should be no inquiry regarding disabilities.

Inappropriate: General inquiries (i.e., "Do you have any disabilities?"), which would tend to divulge disabilities or health conditions.

If applicant indicates he/she requires an accommodation to perform job duties and may be otherwise qualified, ask what accommodation is necessary and inform him/her that the request will be taken into consideration. Immediately after the interview, notify the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity.

Ancestry or National Origin

Appropriate: Languages applicant reads, speaks or writes fluently, if job related only. Must be included in position description if required.

You can ask:

- What languages do you speak fluently?
- Do you have the legal right to work in the United States and for what period of time? (You may ask for proof of this).
- Name and address of the person to be notified in case of emergency (You may ask after job offer).

Inappropriate: Inquiries into Applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, birthplace. National origin of applicant's parents or spouse.

You cannot ask:

- What country are you a citizen of?
- Are you a naturalized or a native born citizen?
- The applicant to produce their naturalization papers.
- About the applicant's lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent parentage or nationality.
- What language the applicant commonly uses.
- The name of any relative, such as parents, spouse, or minor children.

Education

Appropriate: Applicant's academic credentials, vocational, or professional education. School attended. Inquiry into language skills such as reading, speaking, and writing foreign Languages, if job related only.

Inappropriate: Inquiry concerning racial or religious affiliation of a school. How foreign language ability was acquired is not permissible.

Experience

Appropriate: Applicant's work experience.

Conviction, Arrest and Court Record

Appropriate: Inquiry into actual convictions. Note: If conviction record is declared, this is not automatically a reason for rejecting the applicant. This should be discussed with the EO/AA Officer.

Inappropriate: Any inquiry relating to arrests. Ask or check into a person's arrest, court, or conviction record if not a bona fide qualification.

Relatives

Appropriate: Where required by Regents Rules, names of applicant's relatives already employed by ULM

Inappropriate: Name or address of any relative of adult applicant.

Sex

Appropriate: No inquiry is acceptable.

You cannot ask:

- Do you have children? If so, how old are they?
- Are you married, single, widowed, divorced?
- What does your spouse do for a living?
- Who lives in your household?

Inappropriate Sex of the applicant. Any other inquiry that would indicate sex.

You cannot ask: *All Female applicants:*

- About their thoughts on career vs. marriage.
- About their husband's job or career plans.
- What was your maiden name?
- If they can type, unless typing is a requirement of the job.
- What kind of childcare arrangements do you have?
- Are you planning to have a family?
- What kind of birth control methods do you use?

Race or Color

Appropriate: No inquiry is acceptable

Inappropriate: Applicant's race, color of applicant's skin, eyes, hair, etc., or other questions directly or indirectly indicating race or color. Applicant's height or weight.

Address or Duration of Residence

Appropriate: Applicant's address, if required for clarification purposes.

Inappropriate: Specific inquiry into foreign addresses which would indicate national origin. Names or relationship of persons with whom applicant resides. Whether applicant owns or rents home.

Birthplace

Appropriate: Upon hire can you submit proof that you are legally eligible to work in U.S.?

Inappropriate: Birthplace of applicant. Birthplace of applicant's parents, spouse, or other relatives. Requirement that applicant submit a birth certification, naturalization or baptismal record before employment. Any other inquiry to indicate or identify nationality or customs.

Military

Appropriate: Type of education and experience in service as it relates to a particular job.

Inappropriate: Type of discharge. Any political discussion on military intervention.

Photograph

Appropriate: May only be required after hiring for identification purposes.

Inappropriate: Request photograph before hiring. Requirement that applicant affix a photograph to her/his application.

Notice in Case of Emergency

Appropriate: Names of persons to be notified in case of accident or emergency. May be asked only after hire.

Credit Rating

Appropriate: No questions are appropriate.

Inappropriate: Any questions concerning credit rating, charge accounts, etc.

References

Appropriate: “By whom were you referred for a position here?” Names of persons willing to provide professional and/or character references for applicant.

Inappropriate: Require the submission of a religious reference. Request reference from applicant’s pastor.

Organizations and Religion

Appropriate: Inquiry into professional, or job-related organizations of which an applicant is a member, providing the name or character of the organization does not reveal the race, religion, color, or ancestry of the membership. What offices are held, if any? Simultaneously mention that the applicant should not name any organizations that may disclose race, religion, national origin or disability if this question is asked.

You can ask:

- What days or hours would you be unable or unwilling to work?

Inappropriate: The names of organizations to which the applicant belongs, if such information would indicate through character or name, the race, religion, color, or ancestry of the membership should not be asked.

You cannot ask:

- What is your religion?
- Are you able to work on Saturdays and/or Sundays because employers are inquired to make “reasonable accommodation” for an employee’s religious observance or practice so long as it does not cause “undue hardship” on the conduct of the employer’s to make it almost impossible to claim.
- What church do you attend?
- Do you believe in prayer in school?

Miscellaneous

Appropriate: Notice to applicants that any misstatement or omissions of acts in the application may be cause for dismissal.

Appropriate: Are you available to work overtime on occasion?

Inappropriate: Do you have children? Or Can you get a babysitter on short notice for overtime or travel? You might be concerned that family obligations will get in the way of work, but you can’t ask or make assumptions about family situations. Cut to the chase by asking directly about the candidate’s availability.

Questions You May Ask:

Questions related to past jobs:

- What was your boss's title and what was your boss's function?
- Tell me about the people you hired in your last job. How long did they stay with you, and how did they work out?
- What is the most important accomplishment, achievement or innovation you brought to your present (past) job?
- Exactly what were you responsible for in your old job?
- Describe a typical day on the job?
- Did you ever initiate any changes in the way the work was performed?
- What kind of problems did you encounter on your job? How did you solve these problems?
- What did you like most about your job?
- What did you like least about your job?
- Was your work ever criticized? If so, in what way? Did you improve?
- What was your reason for leaving?
- What kind of a company was () to work for?
- If you could change anything you wanted to about that company, what would it be?
- Of all of your previous jobs, which one did you like the best? The least?

Questions related to motivation:

- Why did you select this type of work?
- What do you want to be doing three years from now?
- What do you want to be doing ten years from now?
- What do you want to be earning two years from now?
- What do you hope to gain from an organization like ours?

Questions related to stability:

- I notice that you are/were working for (). Why did you decide to work there?
- What was your original career objective?
- How have your original career plans changed over the years?

Questions related to resourcefulness:

- When you ran into a problem you couldn't solve, whom did you go to?
- How did you change the scope of your previous job?
- What was the most difficult work problem you have ever encountered and how did you solve it?

Ability to work under direction of others:

- How well do you think your supervisor does his/her job?
- What did your supervisor compliment you for? What did he/she criticize you for?
- How much of your work was done on your own? As a part of a team?
- Which aspect did you enjoy more and why?
- How would you supervise people if you were the supervisor?

Personal beliefs and self-evaluation:

- What do you feel are your outstanding qualities?
- What are your two weakest points as an employee?
- If you had a problem or a complaint on your previous job, how did you handle it?
- Do you think that by handling it in this way that it was successfully resolved?
- Why did you like or dislike this process?

Special questions:

- Did you get annual wage increases? How much? Did you know ahead of time how much they would be?
- What kind of job security did you have? Did people ever get unjustly fired? If so, what could they do about it?
- What method was used to determine the pay rate for a job?
- Were your benefits “spelled out” in writing? How?

Aptitude and Cognition:

- How did you go about making an important decision?
- What are some of the things your company might have done to be more successful?
- Why do you think we should hire you?
- Where do you think the power lies in your company?
- What characteristics might differentiate you from other candidates?

SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Skills and Abilities

1. What skills and abilities do you possess that will help make you successful in this position?
2. Describe the most difficult person you have ever dealt with, and how did you respond?
3. How do you organize your time?
4. What are your major strengths and weaknesses?
5. How do you handle it when your ideas are not implemented, especially when you know they would be worthwhile?
6. Give an example of how you carefully consider your audience prior to communicating with them. What factors influence your communication?
7. Tell me about a time when effective listening skills helped you in a problematic situation.
8. Have you ever given a presentation to a group? How did you prepare for it? What would you do differently?
9. Describe a time when you were able to overcome a communication barrier(s).
10. Tell me about a creative solution you developed for a challenging situation or problem.
11. Do you consider yourself to be a proactive person? Give me an example of a time when you were proactive in solving a small problem before it turned into a major problem
12. What methods do you use to keep track of your activities and results?
13. How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time?
14. Give me an example of a time when you took ownership of a situation.
 - What was the result of you stepping up to the challenge?
 - What could have happened if you did not take ownership?
15. Think about a time when you found it necessary to verbally communicate critical information to an employee or employees. What was the issue? How did you determine the success of that communication?
16. Describe one of the most difficult problems you faced on the job. What made the problem difficult to resolve? How did you solve it?
17. Give an example of the time when you had to learn some new software. How did you become proficient in its use?

Teamwork and Interpersonal Skills

1. How do you approach a team project or committee assignment?
2. How do you maintain a good working relationship with co-workers, colleagues or supervisors?
3. If I asked several of your co-workers about your greatest strength as a team member, what would they tell me?
4. Describe a situation working in a group or team where there was interpersonal conflict. Describe how you approached the conflict. What worked and what didn't? How did you manage the outcome?
5. What is essential for a team to be successful?
6. Describe a situation where you worked effectively as part of a team to accomplish a goal on time and within budget. What was your role? What did you learn?
7. We all have different ways of doing our work. We also have different communication styles, cultural backgrounds and work experiences. Tell me about a time when you had a disagreement with a coworker or your supervisor and how you handled the situation.

8. What is your customer service philosophy?
9. Describe a time when you looked for ways to provide better service for your customers.
10. Please tell me about a situation that required you to work closely with someone with whom you disagreed or had a personality conflict. How did you deal with the issue?
11. What types of efforts are you making to serve your customers and to exceed customer expectations?

Career Goals and Objectives

1. What are your short-range and long-range goals and objectives? How are you preparing to achieve them?
2. What are your goals and aspirations for the next three years? Five years?
3. Where are you headed in the future with your career?
4. What are your personal objectives for this year? What have you done to make sure that you attain them?
5. Describe a situation in which you aspired to reach a goal. What obstacles did you confront along the way? What did you do to overcome them?

Work Experiences

1. What current/prior work experiences have you had that prepare you for this position?
2. What do you consider your most significant accomplishment? In your current position? In your career?
3. What would your last two employers say about you as an employee, either good or bad?
4. What major projects were accomplished during your time on the job, and how?
5. What experiences did you have when meeting deadlines?
6. Can you tell me about one of your toughest job assignments?
7. Please tell me about a conflict situation and how you resolved it.
8. Tell me about some changes at your current/prior position and how you responded to them.
9. Give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond your duties and responsibilities to ensure that the task was completed in a timely manner.
10. Describe a time you recommended a change to procedure. What were the cost and/or productivity savings?
11. What do you do on an ongoing basis to keep your professional skills up to date?
12. Describe your experience working with computers; include any software packages that you are familiar with.

Probing Interview Questions

Often, we want or need more information than we get when we ask a question during an interview. *Probing* is asking follow-up questions when we do not fully understand a response, when answers are vague or ambiguous or when we want to obtain more specific or in-depth information. For example: "What did you like best about the program?"

1. Could you please tell me more about...
2. I'm not quite sure I understood ...Could you tell me more?
3. I'm not certain what you mean by... Could you give me some examples?
4. Could you tell me more about your thinking on that?
5. You mentioned....Could you tell me more about that? What stands out in your mind about that?
6. This is what I thought I heard...Did I understand you correctly?
7. So what I hear you saying is..."
8. Can you give me an example of...
9. What makes you feel that way?
10. What are some of your reasons for liking it?
11. You just told me about.... I'd also like to know about....

Probing questions often begin with "what" or "how" because they invite more detail. Questions that begin with "Do you..." or "Are you..." invite personal reflection. "Why" questions can be problematic. They may put the respondent on the defensive or result in little useful information and require additional probing. Example: "Why did you do that?" "...because I wanted to". If possible, try to replace "why" with "what". With any question, watch for leading questions or bias in your probes.