Behavioral Interviewing

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Participant Guide

Part One: Course Overview

Course Overview

Finding the right person for your organization can be tricky. We conduct interviews as a way of trying to determine if someone will be a good "fit", but asking the wrong types of questions can actually interfere with your ability to weed out the "bad" apples from those that will help your organization flourish. Regardless of the type of position that you are trying to fill, Behavioral interviewing is one tool that can be used to identify the best candidate for your culture.

Learning Objectives

- Compare and contrast various types of interview questions.
- Describe behavioral interviewing and your role in the process.
- Implement the STAR model for effective interviews.
- Develop legally defensible probing interview questions that will help identify the ideal candidate.
- Review the do's and don'ts of interviewing.

Personal Learning Objectives: _____

_____

_____

> "Hiring people is an art, not science, and resumes can't tell you whether someone will fit into a company's culture." ~Howard Schulz, CEO of Starbucks

Behavioral interviewing is a proven hiring technique that will allow you to hire individuals with the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities, etc. (KSAs), because it has a higher probability for predicting future job performance of candidates.

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Part Two: Types of Interview Questions

Hiring managers have spent many (wasted) hours asking the wrong interview questions that do not provide answers in determining if the candidate will be the right fit for their organization/culture.

The threat is asking the wrong questions that provide you with the wrong types of answers. Empty answers that don't provide you an insight into what you are hoping to learn through your interview. In the chart below, we will explore the various types of interview questions and determine if integrating any of these questions would be a good idea for your environment.

Type of Question	Sample Question	Use(s) for Question
Experience Verification question	• What did you learn in your last position?	Evaluate the candidate's experience subjectively.
Credential Verification question	• What was your GPA? • How long did you work in your previous position?	Verifies information that is on a Resume and can be confirmed through a reference or background check.
Opinion question	• What is your biggest weakness? • What would you consider to be your greatest strength?	What the candidate considers to be, in his/her opinion, a strength or a weakness.
Competency question	• Can you give me a specific example of your leadership skills? • Explain a way in which you recently solved a problem creatively.	Aligns past behaviors with specific competencies which are required for a position.
Behavioral question	• Can you give me an example of a time when you… • What were the steps that you took to get the specific results?	Objectively measure past behaviors as a potential predictor of future results.

Notes:

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Type of Question (cont)	• Sample Question	Use(s) for Question
Case/Situational question	• Given this specific scenario, how would you handle yourself in that instance? • It's 2pm and you have a 4pm deadline, but your boss calls you into an unexpected meeting…	Evaluate problem-solving abilities and how he/she would analyze & work through potential case situations
Brainteaser question	• What is 1000 divided by 73? • How many jelly beans are in a jar?	Evaluate mental math calculations skills & also the creative ability in formulating math for providing an answer (or an estimate).
Nonsense question	• What kind of animal would you like to be if any? • What color best describes you?	Get past the pre-programmed answers & see if the candidate is good with developing an original thought.

Part Three: What is Behavioral Interviewing?

Behavioral interviewing is a structured way of interviewing that focuses on experience, behavior, knowledge, skills and abilities that are related to a particular job. Both behavioral and competency questions are gaining greater acceptance because past performance is the most reliable indicator of future results, especially when it is tied to the specific competencies required for the position. These types of interviews allow you to ask questions that are not

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hypothetical in nature, instead allowing you to see how people *did* behave in a situation, vs. how they *would* behave.

In formal formats, behavioral interviews involve an extremely structured process in order to get a more accurate hiring outcome. The process can take a significant amount of planning and effort before the interview can take place. Most of this effort will come from the hiring manager, with assistance from your HR personnel.

The Process

1. Conduct a job analysis. This is the process of determining if the job descriptions are up to date and truly depict the desired & essential functions, knowledge, skills and abilities.

2. Develop the behavioral interview questions.

3. Create (utilize) a rating scale/guide for evaluating candidates' answers.

4. Train the interviewers.

5. Prepare for and conduct the interviews.

6. Review information collected. Then make a hiring decision.

Conducting a **job analysis** includes identifying the skills and/or competencies necessary for success in a position. These are then measured by asking weighted questions to determine if a potential candidate possesses exactly what you are looking for to fit in your organization. (i.e., Decision-making, persuasion, problem-solving ability, etc.).

Developing the interview questions is an important step in the pre-interview process. After having conducted the job analysis to determine the competencies that you want the person to possess, now it's time to develop the questions for how you will determine if the candidates have the competencies that you desire.

There are lead questions and probing questions that can be asked to provide insight into how a candidate has performed in the past. The questions should be clear and concise and should encourage candidates to openly share about their (past) behaviors that demonstrate a job-related competency.

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After you have determined which questions you will ask your candidates, a **rating scale needs to be selected**. A rating scale should be used to weigh the answers from each of the candidates. It is important that you decide to either use this rating scale all of the time, or none of the time. Inconsistencies in using the scale can lead to claims of discrimination or disparate treatment in the hiring process.

Conducting interviews is an art, but one that you can learn. Over time and with practice you can become very skilled in probing candidates to see how their past experience may benefit your organization in the future.

The questions that you ask the candidates should get them to reveal critical incidents in the candidate's past role(s). A critical incident is an activity/task that had special significance and made a difference in the success or failure in carrying out an important part of a job assigned. Critical incidents may include:

- What went well;
- What aspects were problematic or difficult;
- Incidents that involved conflict;

An example of a critical incident story:
Setting – A bank teller was processing a cash deposit for a customer. When settling her drawer for the day, she was $2k short. After investigating, it appears as if a customer wrote $4k on his deposit slip, but only $2k made it into the teller drawer.

Behavior – The teller said she did not notice that the amount on deposit slip was $2k more than what the member actually gave her. She posted the deposit for $2k too much and balanced short for the day. When questioned, the customer stated that what the teller posted is what he gave her.

Result – The teller lost her job due to the shortage. It was never determined if she took the money or made a math/reading error.

What job-related details would you gather from this story? _____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

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The STAR Model

When interviewing the candidates, you will want to listen to and identify the STAR in each of their answers. STAR stands for:

S_____

T_____

A_____

R_____

- What was the situation that the candidate was in?
- What task had to be completed?
- What actions did he/she take in completing the task?
- What was the result?

During the interview, you will need to look for stories that helped shape a person into who they are and allow it to give you insight on how they would react in similar situations that may arise in your organization. The stories should include the situation (setting), what happened (the behavior), and the result.

You may have to ask questions to help guide the candidate to give you the answer that you are seeking. However, you want to be careful that you're not guiding them… or essentially giving them the answer that you are looking for.

Some probing questions include:

- What happened?
- What lead up to the event?
- What did you do to influence the outcome?
- What did you learn from this experience/decision?
- What might you do differently in the future?

Lead Questions	**Probing Questions**
Open ended	Follow-up questions to be used when:
Use introductory statements like: • Tell me about a time when… • Provide a recent example of… • Walk me through…	• Initial answers are vague & do not fully address the lead question.

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	• The candidate's tone changes significantly (this may be a sign they are not being truthful). • There is difficulty in forming an answer.

The same group of lead questions should be asked in the same order to all candidates (for the same position) to ensure the process is fair and unbiased.

Probing questions are prompted by the candidate's responses and allows the interviewer to dig deeper based on non-verbal or verbal cues. Active listening is vitally important during any interview, but especially during a behavioral interview.

It is important to note that you should be careful to not ask the candidate questions using guiding language. This includes statements such as:

- Tell me about a time when you successfully performed…
- In this organization, we require _____ (behavior/action, etc.). How do you feel about this type of behavior?
- This type of activity or behavior doesn't bother you, does it?

Activity: Turn to the Activity sheet provided.

More on Questioning Candidates

For individual contributors (team members), focus questions on skills and how the candidate will perform in the context of the team.

- What in their past performance (behavior) gives indication that the candidate understands their role and that they have the desired knowledge, skills & abilities?
- Will the candidate be able to fit into the (established) or desired culture?

For supervisors, questions should focus on leadership potential and skills.

- What inspires his/her leadership?
- Does his/her leadership style match the culture?
- Does the candidate's behavior match the ethical expectations?

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It is vitally important that you do not ask questions about or discriminate against candidates based on:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Do not ask questions about a candidate's native language; though you can ask if they can speak any additional languages.

Additional Tips for Successful Interviewing

Watch the small talk that could lead to the candidate revealing protected information. For example, if a religious holiday just past or is coming up, don't ask the candidate what they are going to do for the holiday. Don't ask questions about their families, including spouses, kids and/or their health. Sometimes candidates reveal the information on their own, but do not seek it out. Asking questions about where they grew up, when they graduated from high school or if they have had any significant illnesses in the past should all be avoided.

Authenticity is a goal for both the interviewer and candidate. One way to seek out this authenticity is to ask a question that the candidate may not be prepared for. The most authentic answers come from the most unexpected questions. This may cause them to throw their pre-written and prepared answered out the window, and cause them to think on their feet. This will allow you to see how well they can think on their feet (or not) and their authentic self when doing so. (This will subsequently reveal either a strength or weakness without asking the actual question.)

Strong emotional intelligence helps with interviewing, but specifically behavioral interviewing. It allows you the interviewer to read into what people are saying, and not just listening to their answers on the surface. Interviewing is an artform, but luckily, one you can learn & develop.

Your main goal as an interviewer is the listen actively and push the story deeper, to get a greater understanding for the type of employee you would be hiring. You want someone who can fit into your culture, and asking why and how are good ways to help get to the bottom of the way people think.

Is there a right or wrong answer in a job interview? Not typically. Think of it like this, you are casting for a position and you know the traits you want the person to have, the characteristics, the personality, etc. You'll be able to find out if this person will be perfect for the role you're trying to fill by seeing if their answers match those that you desire.

The last step in the hiring process is to **review the responses** of all of your candidates **and decide** whose response for each question best represents the competencies that you desire in your next new hire. This process should not be rushed through, as hiring the wrong person is a costly mistake.

Standardize the process

Standardize the process as best as possible. Ask the same questions of each applicant interviewing for the same position, so you remove the implication of bias. For example, if you're looking to hire your next Program Manager, you must ask all of the candidates for that position the same set of questions.

Separate handouts were made available to help you develop your rating system and develop the questions you want to use for each interview. Remember to use the STAR model in developing the questions.

Part Five: Tying it All Together

There are several things to remember that you should and should not do during the interview:

DO	**DON'T**
Be authentic and encourage authenticity from the candidate. This should be a conversation and not feel like a stuffy interview.	Ask questions that could reveal information that could be discriminating.
Select questions for each position (not each candidate). Ask the same questions for each candidate. *You can ask questions specifically related to a candidate's resume, in an effort to probe deeper into a his/her history.*	Discriminate based on: • Race • Religion • Sex • National Origin • Creed • Color

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	• Disability • Veteran status • Citizenship • Age
Use a rating scale for all interviews. (Be consistent in the scale used for all candidates.)	Ask canned questions such as “Why you?”
Ask questions that include the STAR model and listen for the STAR in the answers.	Guide the candidate to a (desired) answer through your question(s).
Practice Active Listening	Ignore “Red flags” in the candidate’s stories.

Your role in the interview process is critical to finding the right candidate for your area/organization. You should work with your HR personnel to determine that the job descriptions are up-to-date, and truly depict the job description to include the knowledge, skills, abilities and others (KSAOs) that you desire. Once the job postings have closed and before you begin the interviews, you should determine the behavioral interview questions that you want to use. The questions should be consistent for all candidates interviewing for the same position. This is vital to mitigate any potential claims of discrimination or favoritism.

After you have interviewed all of the candidates, you should objectively review the answers from each of the prospects. Make the best decision based on all of the answers provided and how well you believe the candidate will fit in your culture/organization. There are things that can be taught to your employees, but hiring for the best “fit” is priceless.

Appendix

Sample rating scale:

Rating Value	Definition
Exceeds Requirements	Demonstrates competency accurately and consistently in most situations with minimal guidance. Many good examples.
Meets Requirements	Demonstrates competency and consistently on familiar procedures and needs supervisor's guidance for new skills. Some good examples.
Below Requirements	Demonstrates competency inconsistently, even with repeated guidance or instruction. Few good examples.

For each competency, you should have a predetermined outline of what an answer would consist of for each of your rating categories. (See sample rating guide.)

A list of 100 questions has also been made available to you. You may choose questions off of this handout, or develop your own. Just remember, you want to ask questions that include the STAR method – **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, and **R**esult. Listen for the candidate's answers to ensure they address each item. This may require you to ask probing questions, so it is good to have some probing questions prepared before you start the interview.

Additional Resources for Use

1. https://www.wichita.edu/services/humanresources/documents/338_Behavioral_Questions.pdf

2. https://admin.ks.gov/offices/personnel-services/recruitment/behavioral-interview-generator

3. https://www.inc.com/marcel-schwantes/20-interview-questions-that-will-tell-you-if-job-candidates-are-highly-motivated.html