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THE SELECTION INTERVIEW: SOME REASONS FOR OPTIMISM

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Barbara Showers, Editor

Editor's Preface

The interview has always been among the most common methods of assessing prospective candidates for employment. In public organizations, particularly at the local level, the interview remains a frequent component of civil service examinations both for selection and for promotion. But this practice has been inconsistent with professional opinion, based on a long trail of evidence dating more than 70 years indicating relatively poor reliability and negligible validity. The conclusion has been that the selection interview, in general, should be avoided.

Silverman and Wexley, however, provide "reasons for optimism." Recent research provides strong evidence for reliability and validity of certain kinds of interviewing procedures. The bad news, however, is that sound interviews cannot be haphazardly put together and conducted; they must be carefully developed and carried out, in the same fashion as any other assessment procedure. The conclusion for practitioners is quite simple--an interview procedure can be developed which produces reliable and valid results, and the authors illustrate how this can be accomplished. Those who have avoided systematic use of interviews may want to reconsider.

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The Selection Interview: Some Reasons for Optimism

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Human resource and selection specialists who have looked for solid research that points to the effectiveness of the interview as a selection device over the years have been disappointed. Authors of journal articles and textbooks have spent much time describing the biases inherent in the interview that seem to lead to its poor reliability and limited validity as a selection device. Dunnette and Bass (1963) described the interview when used as a selection device to be a "costly, inefficient, and usually invalid procedure." They go on to state that the interview "should be retired from its role as an assessment tool." Tenopyr (1981) looked at the interview as being a poor alternative to testing. She saw the interview as a device that has not been consistently shown to improve selection and describes the history of the validity of the interview as "dismal." We hope to provide the reader with some of the more recent work that has been done in the selection interview and a reason to be more optimistic with regards to the interview.

The purpose of the present paper will be fourfold; first, to review some of the issues concerning interview validity, second, to discuss some of the errors that affect interviewer judgements; and third, to discuss the situational interview and the behavioral description interview as it relates to the interview content, and finally to describe an interviewer training workshop that makes use of many of the findings discussed throughout the paper. We hope the paper will provide practitioners of personnel selection/assessment with some ideas and suggestions for improving the interview.

Interview Validity

Schneider and Schmitt (1986) report that during the last 30 years there have been eight separate reviews of research on the interview published: Arvey and Campion, 1982; Hakel, 1982; Mayfield, 1964; Schmitt, 1976, Ulrich and Trumbo, 1965; Wagner, 1949; Webster, 1982; and Wright, 1969. Although some of the recent reviews share the disappointment of earlier reviews with regard to interview validity, there is reason for optimism.

Schmitt (1976) concluded that there was not much research in the half dozen years preceding his review to bolster the confidence of a personnel interviewer regarding the validity of his/her interview decisions. He goes on to say, however, that there is evidence that tells us what is wrong with interviewer decisions, but more needs to be done to ascertain if and why decisions are correct. Arvey and Campion (1982) report that recent research on the validity of the interview has been less pessimistic than in the past. They state that some reasonably promising results have been reported on the board or panel interview (Landy, 1976) and the "situational" interview (Latham, Saari, Purcell and Campion, 1986). Hakel (1982) reports past reviews have reported lower than desired validities and little had transpired up until the time of his review to change the overall picture. He believed, however, that most of the conclusions from the many reviews were based on studies conducted on employment interviews that were "poorly conceived, poorly conducted, and therefore generally inconclusive."

Glass (1976) notes that often various areas of the behavioral sciences have accumulated more information than researchers in the field are aware of because of the reliance on methods used in narrative literature reviews. Glass (1976) introduced the term "meta-analysis" which allows researchers to quantitatively accumulate results across studies and draw more accurate conclusions about, in this case, validity studies of the interview. Recently, two of the largest scale meta-analysis studies of the interview were conducted (McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, Hunter, Maurer and Russell, 1986; Weisner and Cronshaw, In press).

The McDaniel et. al. (1986) study categorized the interview with regard to its content (psychological vs. job-related) as well as the level of the standardization (structured vs. unstructured). They also categorized the interview validity studies by content of the criteria (job performance vs. training performance) and purpose of the criteria (administrative vs. research). The study started with a data-base which included 144 validity coefficients representing a total sample size of 28,909. They found that job-related interviews were better predictors than psychological interviews. The job-related interviews were designed to assess past experience and job-related information whereas the psychological interviews were typically subjective ratings of psychological or personal traits (e.g. dependability, intelligence). Structured interviews yielded higher validities than unstructured interviews. The structured interviews typically specified in advance the interview questions and acceptable responses (e.g. situational, oral board) whereas those classified as unstructured interviews were less systematic and all persons may or may not have been asked the same questions. Those interview validity studies using job performance criteria (typically supervisory ratings) generally yielded higher validities than those using

training performance criteria such as end of training grades. And finally, the McDaniel et. al. study found that those studies where criteria were collected for research purposes (specifically collected for the validation study) usually had higher validities than those studies employing administrative criteria such as routine performance appraisals. Their highest obtained validity coefficients were for the job-related structured interviews where job performance criteria were collected for research purposes. The mean uncorrected and corrected validity coefficients were .30 and .55 respectively.

Weisner and Cronshaw (In press) investigated the impact of interview format (individual vs. board interviews) and interview structure (unstructured vs. structured) on interview validities. They reviewed published as well as unpublished literature worldwide which yielded 148 validity coefficients representing a sample size of 51,418. The individual interviews were characterized by one interviewer who interviewed and rated a single applicant. The board interview had two or more interviewers who interviewed and rated each applicant. The mean uncorrected and corrected validity coefficients (.25 and .45) were identical with both the individual and the board interviews. Whereas no differences were found with regard to interview format, large differences were found with interview structure. The unstructured interviews were coded as such when there was a free interview format without predetermined questions and/or where no rating scales were used. Typically there was just one overall subjective rating made at the end of the interview. The structured interviews had a series of job related questions with answers that were developed beforehand. The same questions were asked of all individuals and rating scales were completed based on answers to each of the questions. The mean uncorrected and corrected validity coefficients for the structured interview (.34 and .62

respectively) were twice the size of those validity coefficients for the unstructured interview (.17 and .31). Although substantially smaller sample sizes were involved, additional analyses revealed:

1. higher validities when a formal job analysis was conducted
2. unstructured interviews yielded higher validities for the board interviews than for the individual interviews
3. board interviews yielded higher validities when ratings were reached through consensus rather than statistical combination of individual board members.

Contrary to the predominantly pessimistic view of previous researchers, Weisner and Cronshaw (In press) describe the interview to be a "generally good selection instrument."

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE INTERVIEW

When faced with literature reviews that are pessimistic regarding the interview's validity, researchers have looked to various sources of bias. The following factors have been identified as influencing the interview:

1. Halo - an interviewer's exaggeration of the homogeneity of an applicant's characteristics or traits. Often we simply perceive one very good or very bad characteristic and this affects our evaluation of other characteristics (Webster, 1982).
2. First-Impressions - interviewers tend to reach final decisions about the applicant quite early in the interview - typically within the first 4 minutes (Springbett, 1958).

3. Similar-to-me - a tendency on the part of the interviewer to rate more favorably those applicants perceived as being similar to self. This similarity could be in terms of attitudes, values or biographical information.
4. Contrast - a tendency to rate applicants in comparison to other applicants rather than against an established standard of excellence. Applicant ratings often are affected by the immediately preceding applicant (Wexley, Yukl, Kovacs and Sanders, 1972).
5. Stereotyping - judging an applicant on his or her group membership such as sex, race, age or handicap instead of job related qualifications (Arvey, 1979).
6. Trait Attributions - a tendency to make attributions about an individual's underlying personality traits based upon certain behaviors we have observed in the interview (Hakel, 1982).
7. Interviewer Experience - often it is assumed that the more experience an interviewer has the better his or her judgements. Apparently the experience of day-to-day interviewing does not necessarily enhance the quality of interviewer judgements (Cascio, 1982).
8. Unfavorable Information - interviewers weigh negative information more heavily than positive (Webster, 1982).
9. Interviewer Accountability - the more accountable an interviewer is for their mistakes, the more cautious he or she may be, thus perhaps lowering their rate of error (Webster, 1982).
10. Pressure to Hire - sometimes there is pressure to fill a vacancy quickly and interviewers may be too lenient, preferring to risk failure rather than not obtain an employee (Webster, 1982).
11. Last Impressions - a tendency to rate an applicant on the basis of

judgements made primarily on things that happened in the later part of the interview.

12. Non-verbal Behavior - interviewers attach great weight to non-verbal behavior in decision-making but it is typically a distractor that reduces the accuracy of the interview decision (Webster, 1982).

In order to reduce these sources of inaccuracy, careful consideration must be given to the content of the interview and the training of the interviewer. These are the two issues we will now address.

DEVELOPING THE INTERVIEW CONTENT

In this section, we will present two of the better methods of developing the content of an employment interview. The first approach, known as The Situational Interview, is based on the assumption that intentions are related to behavior (Latham, Saari, Pursell, and Campion, 1980). That is, it rests on the premise that what applicants say during an interview is predictive of how they will behave subsequently on their jobs. This approach to interview development starts with a type of job analysis known as the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954).

The critical incident technique is performed to identify unusually effective and unusually ineffective behaviors critical to performance on the job. An example of a critical incident is presented below:

-- Another manager in our division is always trying to make Bob "look bad" with our boss. He likes to point out, during our monthly meetings, any

mistakes he thinks Bob has made regarding scheduling, delegating, and setting priorities. Rather than trying to deal with the situation, Bob decided to just avoid the other manager as much as possible (Ineffective Critical Incident).

Critical incidents are then turned into interview questions by approximately 3-5 "job experts." Each question describes a hypothetical situation that the applicant is likely to encounter on the job. The job experts are typically supervisory people who have had training in developing situational interviews, and have also had first-hand experience both supervising and performing the target job.

Shown below is the critical incident rewritten by the experts in the form of situational interview question:

--You find it extremely difficult to work with one of your peers. The particular person is always trying to make you look bad and him/herself look good with your boss. How would you handle this situation?

Next, the job experts develop, as a group, sample answers to the interview questions for the purpose of evaluating interviewees' responses to each question. For each question, a 5-point answer rating scale is constructed with specific samples developed for a "good" answer (a "5" rating), a "minimally acceptable" answer (a "3" rating), and a poor answer (a "1" rating). Shown below are the 5, 3, and 1 answers for the above interview question:

5 - Record specific incidents. Meet with him/her and talk about the

incidents. Explain your viewpoint. Focus on making it a "win" situation for both of you. Come to some common agreement.

4 -

3 - Tell the person how you feel about it. Let your boss know.

2 -

1 - Avoid the person.

The rating scales are not shown to the interviewees. Instead, they serve as a scoring guide for the interviewers. If there is any difficulty in determining what any of the benchmarks should be for a particular interview question, then the questions need to be reviewed for possible rewording or elimination (Pursell, Campion, and Gaylord, 1980).

The interview questions and benchmark answers should be tried-out before actual use in hiring to ensure that there is variability in the responses given to each question and that there is interinterviewer agreement (i.e., interobserver reliability). If there is not enough variability, it is likely that the interview question is either too easy or difficult. If there is low interinterviewer agreement on the scoring of questions, it is probably because the behavioral anchors lack sufficient clarity (Latham and Saari, 1984). If this happens, the question and/or anchors need revision.

It has been shown (Latham et al., 1980; Latham and Saari, 1984) that the internal consistency (i.e., reliability) of the questions used in situational interviews varies from .67 (using foremen as interviewees) to .73 (using office clerical personnel). Further, the interobserver reliability among interviewers ranges from .76 (with unionized hourly workers as interviewees) to .87 (with

entry-level job applicants). The validity coefficients reported to date are as follows:

<u>Sample</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>Size</u>	<u>Source of Performance Measure</u>
Unionized Hourly Workers(49)	Concurrent	.46	Supervisors
Foremen/ Whites(62)	Concurrent	.41	Superintendents
Entry-level/ Blacks(56)	Predictive	.33	Supervisors
Entry-level/ Females(20)	Predictive	.39	Supervisors
Office Clerical/ Females(29)	Predictive	.39	Supervisors
Office Clerical/ Females(29)	Predictive	.42	Peers

Behavioral Description Interviewing (Janz, Hellervik, and Gilmore, 1986) also begins with the critical incident technique. As with situational interviews, job experts (i.e., incumbents, supervisors, executives, or customers) are asked to brainstorm specific situations that exemplify unusually effective and ineffective job performance. These incidents can be gathered via written forms, but face-to-face sessions are recommended for most circumstances by Janz et al. In either case, it's advisable to generate a minimum of 80 to 100 separate, nonredundant incidents. Once the incidents have been gathered, the next step is to form 5-10 performance dimensions by clustering effective and ineffective incidents that describe the same type of behavior. According to Janz et al., a performance dimension name should be a succinct summary of the critical incidents that make up the dimension. One-word dimension names, such as "Dependability" and "Self-Starter" should be avoided. Instead, the name must involve both the positive and negative sides of the behavioral content (e.g., Maintaining Clean Vs. Messy Work Areas; Working Steadily Vs. Wasting Time). The final step in the job analysis involved asking two or three supervisors and two or three incumbents to make sure that the incidents are clear and specific, that each belongs in the subgroup which was formed, and that no major performance topic was left out.

The next step involves writing questions for one performance dimension at a time based on the critical incidents. Each question contains a stem and several probes. The stems locate a specific time in the interviewee's past experience and focuses the applicant on that kind of event or circumstance. The probes seek out exactly how the person behaved in the past, as well as the consequences of that behavior.

Listed below are several stems and probes for the jobs of nurse and middle-level manager taken from Janz et al. (1986):

-- All jobs have some unpleasant tasks that are boring or physically uncomfortable. Can you recall the most unpleasant task you were asked to do at the hospital?

- What was the task?

- Who requested that you do the task?

- How often were you asked to do the task?

- What was your response to the request?

-- Meetings and presentations are an important part of a manager's job. Tell me about your most successful presentation to a management meeting.

- What was the topic of your presentation?

- What were your objectives for the meeting?

- What percentage of the time did your meetings go like this one?

Janz et al. recommend that the first question stems that should be written are those for applicants who have had direct job experience. For example, recently the authors' job analysis for a middle-level manager position revealed the performance dimension "Coping with Stress Vs. Becoming Overly Nervous and/or Ill". One incident from that dimension described a situation in which the manager experienced extreme stress coping with time demands and more tasks than can be handled. The manager handled the stress by prioritizing, delegating certain of the tasks to others, and playing tennis daily.

We turned that critical incident into a question by asking applicants: "Tell me about some of the things that you did to cope the last time your job became

extremely stressful?" The probes were:

- What obstacles did you face in coping with it that way?
- How effective was that in reducing your stress?
- Did it change your behavior in any way?

The next step is to develop questions for applicants who had minimal or no direct job experience. For example, if an applicant for a particular position had not had any work experience (i.e., recent college graduate), the question shown above would be inappropriate. Therefore, the interview question writer must ponder other types of situations that the interviewee is likely to have experience in the past to assess the same general theme. An alternative question and probes might be: "I would like for you to tell me of a time in your life that was extremely stressful for you." Then the probes could be:

- What made this situation trying?
- Did you do anything to reduce your stress?
- What, specifically, did you do?

It is recommended that the Behavior Description Interviewing questions focus always on instances of positive accomplishments (e.g., "Tell me about the most recent time you helped someone out without being asked") instead of continually probing failures and disappointments (e.g., "Tell me about the last time when your manager had to criticize the quality of your work"). It is further recommended that the order of the questions be grouped together based on major topics from an interviewee's likely experiences (e.g., recent direct work experiences; educational experiences; interpersonal experiences at work) rather than around the performance dimensions.

The final assessment procedure involves rating one performance dimension at a time on a 5-point scale. A "5 rating" means that an interviewee places at the top 20 percent of all applicants on a dimension. A "4 rating" places the interviewee in the 60-80 percent range. A "3 rating" puts the interviewee squarely in the average range. A "2" places the applicant below average, within the 20-40 percent range. A "1" places the person in the bottom 20 percent.

If more than one person interviews an applicant, they should first rate independently and then meet to reach consensus. If desired, the various performance dimensions can be weighted differentially by spreading 100 points across the dimensions so that the number of points assigned to a dimension indicates its relative importance. To find a total score, Janz et al. simply multiply an applicant's score on each of the dimensions by the number of points assigned to each dimension, and then sum the cross-products (i.e., score X weight).

The validity of Behavior Description (BD) Interviews have been examined to date on two occasions. Janz (1982) compared the validity of patterned behavior description interviews with traditional unstructured interviews, the latter being the most prevalent method of interviewing job applicants. Here, 15 teaching assistants (TA's) were each interviewed four times, twice by interviewers trained in conducting BD interviewing and twice by interviewers trained in standard techniques. The BD training focused on the skills of patterning (developing questions based on critical incidents), questioning (selecting appropriate questions from the pattern), recording (taking concise notes), and decision-making (using the 5-point rating scales described

earlier). The standard interview training involved establishing rapport (greeting the applicant, small talk, impact of nonverbal behaviors), interview probing and control (use of summary probes and calculated pauses), and completing the rating form (Fear, 1973). The interviewers used their interviews to predict the rating that the TA's would receive from students, while actual student ratings were collected after all the interviews were conducted.

It was found that the interinterviewer agreement (i.e., reliability) of the standard interviews was higher (.71 vs. .46), but that the validity of the BD interviews was .54 vs. .07 for the standard interviews, a difference that was both statistically and substantially different.

As an improvement on Janz' study, Orpen (1985) made certain to randomly assign interviewers to the two interview conditions and to provide both groups the same number of hours of training. In this field study, 19 applicants for life insurance sales positions were interviewed twice by eight interviewers trained in each method (i.e., BD and unstructured) of interviewing. In this study, the interviewers predicted the future performance of the applicants in terms of dollar value of sales as well as supervisors' ratings of overall effectiveness one year later. The validity of the BD interviews was significantly higher than that of the unstructured interviews with respect to dollar sales (i.e., .48 vs. .08) as well as superiors' ratings (.61 vs. .05). Interestingly, the test-retest reliability of the BD interviews (.72) did not differ significantly from the unstructured interviews (.68).

Taken together, the research conducted thus far suggests that both

Situational and Behavioral Description interviewing do have promise, and that additional research to test their reliability and validity in the public-sector will prove to be quite beneficial!

TRAINING TO IMPROVE INTERVIEWER RATINGS

For years, articles and books on the employment interview have stressed the importance of providing managers, supervisors, and personnel administrators with training to improve the validity of their ratings of job applicants. Nevertheless, only recently have training programs for improving the accuracy, by means of reducing rater errors, appeared.

In one of the first known attempts at improving the rater practices of interviewers (Wexley, Sanders, and Yukl, 1973), it was found that simply warning individuals to recognize and avoid making judgmental errors in their ratings of job applicants was not successful. Instead, only an intensive workshop resulted in a lasting behavioral change. The workshop was based on certain psychological principles of effective learning, namely, active participation, knowledge of results (i.e., feedback), and active trainee practice. Specifically, the workshop gave trainees an opportunity to practice observing and rating actual videotaped job applicants. Further, the trainees were given immediate feedback regarding the accuracy of their applicant ratings.

In a subsequent research project, two different approaches for helping interviewers minimize rating errors when rating job applicants were developed

by Latham, Wexley, and Pursell (1975). There was the workshop approach, similar to the one originally used by Wexley et al., and a group discussion method. The group discussion method was selected because it had previously been found to be effective in reducing leniency errors. In this comparative study, 60 individuals were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: A workshop, a group discussion, or a control group that did not receive training until it was certain that at least one of the two training methods could attain the objective, i.e., to reduce interviewers' rating errors. Each group consisted of a combination of personnel people and line managers.

The workshop consisted of videotapes of job applicants being evaluated by an employment interviewer. The trainees gave a rating on a 9-point scale as to how they thought the interviewer in the videotape rated the applicant, and how they themselves rated the applicant. Group discussions concerning the reasons for each trainee's rating of the job candidate followed. In this way, the trainees had an opportunity to observe other interviewers making errors, to actively participate in discovering the degree to which they were or were not prone to making the error, to receive knowledge of results regarding their own behavior, and to practice job-related tasks to reduce the errors they were making. The relationship between the training content and the actual job as interviewer was similar in principles, so as to facilitate transfer of learning back to the job.

The format for the group discussion method was as follows: each error was defined by the trainer and an example of each error, within the employment interview, was given. This was done to ensure that the trainees thoroughly understood the error. The trainees were then divided into groups to discuss

personal examples that they had experienced while interviewing others. The trainees then generated solutions to the problems. Lastly, the trainer provided the same suggestions that were given to the workshop participants.

The results of the two training programs were evaluated six months after training on the basis of two criteria, namely, reaction measures and actual behavioral samples. The reaction measures consisted of the trainees' opinion on a 9-point rating scale of the extent to which they believe that they benefited from the program after they returned to their jobs. The average ratings given to the workshop and the group discussion were 8.8 and 6.3, respectively.

The second group of measures for assessing the effectiveness of the two training programs were behavioral samples. The trainees were given a job description and the person-requirements (i.e., knowledges, skills, and abilities) for a specific job. They were then shown videotapes that none of them had previously seen of job applicants being interviewed. The results showed that the control group committed the following errors: similar-to-me (a tendency on the part of the interviewer to rate more favorably those applicants whom she/he sees as being similar to self), halo (an interviewer's exaggeration of the homogeneity of an applicant's characteristics or traits), and contrast effects (a tendency to rate applicants in comparison to other applicants rather than against an established standard of excellence). The group discussion trainees exhibited one error: last-impressions (a tendency to rate an applicant on the basis of judgments made primarily on things that happened in the later part of the interview). The trainees in the workshop condition did not commit any rating errors!

The workshop trainees reported that the highly structured format of their program made them feel that the time away from their jobs was being used wisely. This was not always the case with the trainees in the group discussion condition. The major disadvantage of the workshop approach is that it can be costly and time-consuming to develop all the videotapes. On the other hand, once the materials are available, the training of the trainers is relatively easy because a major part of the interviewer training program includes the use of the videotapes. Several firms make use of a video based workshop approach to dealing with rating errors (e.g., Human Resource Decisions (HRD) Inc., Akron, Ohio; Human Resource Systems, Inc., New Bern, North Carolina; Personnel Decisions Research Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota). Human Research Decisions, for example, conducts a one-day Interviewer Training Workshop (ITW) that consists of videotapes where trainees have an opportunity to rate applicants in several varied jobs, to learn for oneself the kinds of rating errors that one commits, and to learn the solutions for eliminating these errors. As part of their program, trainees are taught the various Equal Employment Opportunity guidelines and how they affect the employment interview. This involves a review of questions that one can and cannot ask legally during an interview, considering both state and federal regulations. They stress that it is mandatory to be cognizant of the guidelines within one's own state. ITW also teaches how to conduct a Critical Incident job analysis, and how to write Situational and BD interview questions. Below are a few pointers for conducting effective interviews (Wexley and Silverman, 1987; Hakel, 1982; Levine, 1975).

Arranging the Basic Setting

Privacy is a must. No interruptions should be permitted. Have available

for ready reference an organizational chart, a copy of the job description, and general information about the organization.

Building Rapport and Putting the Applicant at Ease

Give applicants a warm, friendly greeting. Introduce yourself and then ask the applicant for his/her preferred form of address. Offer coffee or tea at the start of the session to get things rolling and to calm down nervous applicants. Break the ice by discussing something that you believe will be of interest to the applicant while guarding against Similar-to-Me error. Talk briefly about your position in the organization, and the purpose of the interview.

Following the Interview Plan

An 8-phase plan is suggested that works quite well for most interviews:

- Phase I: Building rapport and putting the applicant at ease.
- Phase II: Determining whether the person meets certain mandatory requirements (e.g., willingness to travel; starting date).
- Phase III: Gathering unclear and incomplete information from the applicant's resume.
- Phase IV: Asking the situational and/or behavioral description questions.
- Phase V: Describing realistically the job and the organization.
- Phase VI: Informing the applicant when the decision will be made.
- Phase VII: Making concluding remarks.
- Phase VIII: Rating the applicant's job suitability.

Keeping Things Simple

Don't use company jargon or a lot of names of company personnel whom the

applicant does not know. Ask only one question at a time. Stay away from complex questions that consist of multiple parts.

Probing for Additional Information

Seek further information to possibly refute your first impression of applicants. Make certain all probes seek only job-related, valid information. Stay away from asking "leading questions" (i.e., questions having obvious answers) when probing.

Treating All Applicants Equally

By conducting a structured interview (pre-established questions and correct answers), all applicants will automatically be asked the same questions, and in the same prescribed order regardless of their sex, age, race, or ethnic group.

Creating a Realistic Picture of the Job and Organization

Give applicants job descriptions, company information, samples of work completed, plus anything else that will give them realistic expectations for making an informed choice about whether to accept or reject a job offer, if made. This information should include both positive as well as negative features.

Refraining From Dominating the Conversation

Often, the more interviewers talk during the interview, the more favorably they later rate job applicants. Therefore, the interviewer should be speaking mostly when asking the questions and when giving realistic expectations. Strive to get the applicants to speak at least 75 percent of the time.

Separate Information-Gathering From Evaluating

During the interview, collect information about applicants by means of copious note-taking. Try to refrain from making evaluative judgements about applicants' job suitability until after they leave the interview. Only after they leave should you begin to complete the rating forms.

Maintaining Adequate Records

Keep detailed records of all questions asked, applicants' answers to each question, ratings given, and justifications for them. Keep these individual records for one year. Keep summary records for 3 years.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe this paper has given the reader some reasons to be more optimistic regarding recent developments in the selection interview. Some characteristics that seem to lead to more effective interviews are as follows:

1. the interviews are structured and job-related.
2. they are based upon a formal job analysis.
3. behavioral description and situational interview questions are used.
4. raters are carefully trained to avoid errors and biases as well as techniques of effective interviewing.
5. when board interviews are used, ratings should be reached through consensus rather than averaging.

We also hope the paper has given practitioners of personnel selection/assessment some suggestions for improving the interview in their particular organization.

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