How to conduct a structured interview?

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1   Hiring workflow

1. Job announcement
2. Applicant assessment
3. Applicant are placed in categories
4. Hiring manager selects applicants from the highest category
5. Hiring manager conducts hiring interview $<-$ YOU ARE HERE
6. Candidate is presented with an offer

2   Overview of structured interviews

A structured interview is an assessment method designed to measure job competencies by systematically inquiring about candidate's behavior: in past experiences or hypothetical situations.

- Uses a standardized questioning and scoring process
- Questions are developed based on required job competencies
- All candidates are asked the same predetermined questions in the same order
- Detailed notes are taken during the interview

3 Developing a structured interview

3.1 Job analysis

- Review job tasks and responsibilities
- Review the competencies necessary to perform the job
- Identify entry level competencies

3.2 Assessed competencies

Identify between 4-6 job competencies such as:

- Teamwork
- Oral communication
- Interpersonal skills
- Conflict management
- Influencing/Negotiating

3.3 Develop interview questions

Questions should:

- Reflect the required job competencies
- Be open ended
- Be clean and concise
- Be free of jargon
- Include a superlatives (most, least, last, best, ...)
- Provide context

Use the STAR model. STAR questions should elicit three pieces of information:

- S for Situation, T for Task - describe the context or background for the event
- A for Action - describe what was done
- R for Result - describe the consequences of the actions

There are two types of questions:

- Behavioral questions that draw from candidate's past experiences which demonstrate job competencies

- Situational questions that present realistic scenarios or dilemmas and ask how candidates would respond

Behavioral questions are created when an experience based scenarios are converted into questions.

An example of a behavioral questions that examines candidate's interpersonal skills:

- Describe a situation in which you dealt with individuals who were difficult, hostile, or distressed. Who was involved, what specific actions did you take, and what were the results?

Situational questions are created from real incidents and specify effective and ineffective behaviour.

An example of a situational questions that examines candidate's interpersonal skills:

- A very angry client walks up to your desk. She says she was told your office sent her an overdue check 5 days ago. She claims she has not received the check. She says she has bills to pay, and no one will help her. How would you handle this situation?

3.4 Develop probing questions

Most candidate will not immediately provide the required STAR information. You can ask them a few probing questions to elicit their response.

- Do not ask leading questions

- Do narrow down the question if they are vague: "we did..." or "sometimes..."

- Do not challenge the candidate's words

- Do ask more open ended questions

An example of a behavioral probing question:

- Situation/Task

- Who was involved?
- What factors led up to this situation?

- Action
  - How did you respond?
  - What was your role?

- Result
  - What was the outcome?
  - Is there anything you would have done differently?

An example of a situational probing question:

- Situation/Task
  - Why do you believe this situation occurred?
  - What do you consider to be the most critical issues in this situation?

- Action
  - What is the first thing you would say or do?
  - What factors would affect your course of action?

- Result
  - How do you think your action would be received?
  - What do you consider as benefits of your action?

3.5 Develop rating scales

Create between three and seven levels: unsatisfactory, satisfactory, superior, ...

For each question for each proficiency level determine that answer that the candidate should give.

3.6 Final steps

- Pilot test the process
- Develop an interviewers guide
- Document the process development process

4 Conducting a structured interview

Generally:

- Create a comfortable atmosphere
- Listen to what they are saying not what you want to ask
- Take comprehensive notes
- Treat all candidates the same way

Before the interview:

- Review all interview materials
- All candidates must be considered for the same amount of time
- Estimate the amount of time the interview will take

At the start of the interview:

- Explain the interview process
- Ask if they have any questions for you
- Begin the formal interview

You should avoid:

- Giving body queues: nodding, pencil tapping, eye wondering
- Evaluating body queues: fidgeting, shaky voice, tapping of feet

If necessary ask probing questions or politely interrupt if:

- Candidate is talking too much
- Candidate goes off topic
- Candidate has used up all their time

At the end:

- Thank the candidate
- Explain the next step in the hiring process

4.1 Taking notes

The notes must:

- Summarize the content and delivery
- Be of sufficient quality and quantity
- Not be evaluative statements

5 Evaluating a structured interview

Responses should be rated immediately after the interview ends.

Evaluate responses and avoid:

- Rating first impressions
- Rating how similar are the candidate the interviewer
- Rating how responses interact with each other
- Being strict or lenient irrespective of the response
- Giving middling grades