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Interviewing Candidates

Source: Reuters Pictures–Americas.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. List the main types of selection interviews.
2. List and explain the main errors that can undermine an interview's usefulness.
3. Define a structured situational interview.
4. Explain and illustrate each guideline for being a more effective interviewer.
5. Give several examples of situational questions, behavioral questions, and background questions that provide structure.

Can a company turn job candidates into customers? Whirlpool Corp. knows it can. Whirlpool makes and markets 17 major brands, including Whirlpool, KitchenAid, Maytag, Amana, and Jenn-Air.¹ With such a large product assortment and a global footprint, Whirlpool knows that every person it interviews for a job is either a current Whirlpool customer, or a potential one. That's why its strategy for building the Whirlpool brands' reputation and sales includes a special job applicant interviewing program. The program includes leaving all candidates—even those who don't get offers—with a positive impression of Whirlpool and its brands.

Access a host of interactive learning aids at www.mymanagementlab.com to help strengthen your understanding of the chapter concepts.



WHERE ARE WE NOW . . .

Chapter 6 focused on important tools managers use to select employees. Now we'll turn to one of these tools—interviewing candidates. The main topics we'll cover include types of interviews, things that undermine interviewing's usefulness, and designing and conducting effective selection interviews. In Chapter 8, we'll turn to training the new employee.

If the interview is just one of several selection tools, why devote a whole chapter to it? Because interviews are the most widely used selection procedure and most people aren't very good interviewers.²

- 1 List the main types of selection interviews.

BASIC TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

An interview is more than a discussion. An *interview* is a procedure designed to obtain information from a person through oral responses to oral inquiries. Employers use several interviews at work, such as performance appraisal interviews and exit interviews. A *selection interview* (the focus of this chapter) is a selection procedure designed to predict future job performance based on applicants' oral responses to oral inquiries.³ Many techniques in this chapter apply to appraisal and exit interviews. However, we'll postpone discussions of these two interviews until Chapters 9 and 10.

Interviewing should support the employer's strategic aims, as the accompanying Strategic Context feature illustrates.

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Whirlpool Corp.

With its 17-brand assortment and global footprint, Whirlpool knows that every person it interviews is a current Whirlpool customer, or a potential one. The question is, how can Whirlpool use its applicant interview practices to ensure that every interview helps to build the Whirlpool brands' reputation and sales?

Whirlpool calls its candidate selection process the Exceptional Candidate Experience (ECE). The ECE doesn't just aim to select the best candidates. It also aims to make every candidate a loyal customer. ECE contains three elements: "initial candidate touch points," "candidate engagement," and "candidate closings."⁴ *Initial candidate touch points* means that whether candidates first encounter Whirlpool via its careers Web site, at a job fair, or through some other means, Whirlpool carefully manages the process to make sure the candidate's impression of the company is consistent and positive.

Once a time is set for an interview, a Whirlpool guide contacts the candidate. His or her aim is to find out about the candidate's special situations. For example, does the candidate have special family responsibilities that the interviewing team should make scheduling adjustments for? Does he or she have special hobbies? The guide then helps to *engage* the candidate, for instance, by showing him or her how the geographic location in which he or she would be working can help support the candidate's preferences and needs, and by acting as a contact with the Whirlpool interviewing team. At the *candidate closings* the human resource team makes sure the candidate receives a thank-you note and a KitchenAid countertop appliance after the interviews.

Whirlpool believes that its interviewing and screening process directly supports the firm's strategy. In addition to ensuring that the firm's employees treat candidates with civility, the effect of the process is to leave the candidate with a positive impression of Whirlpool and its products and people.

We can classify selection interviews according to

1. How *structured* they are
2. Their "content"—the *types of questions* they contain
3. How the firm *administers* the interviews

Let's look at each.

Structured Versus Unstructured Interviews

First, most interviews vary in the degree to which the interviewer structures or standardizes the interview process.⁵ You've almost certainly seen that some interviews are more structured or methodical than others. In **unstructured (or nondirective) interviews**, the manager follows no set format. A few questions might be specified in advance, but they're usually not, and there is seldom a formal guide for scoring "right"

or “wrong” answers. This type of interview could even be described as little more than a general conversation.⁶ Most selection interviews probably fall in this category.

At the other extreme, in **structured (or directive) interviews**, the employer lists the questions ahead of time, and may even list and score possible answers for appropriateness.⁷ McMurray’s Patterned Interview was one early example. The interviewer followed a printed form to ask a series of questions, such as “How was the person’s present job obtained?” Comments printed beneath the questions (such as “Has he/she shown self-reliance in getting his/her jobs?”) then guide the interviewer in evaluating the answers. Some experts still restrict the term “structured interview” to interviews like these, which are based on carefully selected job-oriented questions with predetermined answers.

But in practice, interview structure is a matter of degree. Sometimes the manager may just want to ensure he or she has a standard set of questions to ask so as to avoid skipping any questions. Here, he or she might just choose questions from a list like that in Figure 7-3 (page 228). The structured applicant interview guide in Figure 7-A1 (page 236) illustrates a more structured approach. As a third example, the Department of Homeland Security uses the structured guide in Figure 7-1 to help screen Coast Guard officer candidates. It contains a formal candidate rating procedure; it also enables geographically disbursed interviewers to complete the form via the Web.⁸

WHICH TO USE? Structured interviews are generally superior. In structured interviews, all interviewers generally ask all applicants the same questions. Partly because of this, these interviews tend to be more reliable and valid. Structured interviews can also help less talented interviewers conduct better interviews. Standardizing the interview also increases consistency across candidates, enhances job relatedness, reduces overall subjectivity and thus the potential for bias, and may “enhance the ability to withstand legal challenge.”⁹

EEOC ASPECTS OF INTERVIEWS That last point is important. No one wants to have someone sue for discrimination, let alone lose the suit. A study of federal cases involving alleged employment interview discrimination is relevant. It’s clear the courts will look at whether the interview process is structured and consistently applied. For example, did you (1) have objective/job-related questions, (2) standardize interview administration, and (3) preferably use multiple interviewers?¹⁰

However, blindly following a structured format isn’t advisable either. Doing so may not provide enough opportunity to pursue points of interest as they develop. Therefore, the interviewer should always leave an opportunity to ask follow-up questions and pursue points of interest as they develop.

Interview Content (What Types of Questions to Ask)

We can also classify interviews based on the “content” or the types of questions you ask. Many (probably most) interviewers tend to ask relatively unfocused questions. These might include “What are your main strengths and weaknesses?” and “What do you want to be doing 5 years from now?” Generally, questions like these don’t provide much insight into how the person will do on the job. At work, *situational*, *behavioral*, and *job-related* questions are most important.

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS In a **situational interview**, you ask the candidate what his or her behavior *would be* in a given situation.¹¹ For example, you might ask a supervisory candidate how he or she would act in response to a subordinate coming to work late 3 days in a row.

unstructured (or nondirective) interview

An unstructured conversational-style interview in which the interviewer pursues points of interest as they come up in response to questions.

structured (or directive) interview

An interview following a set sequence of questions.

situational interview

A series of job-related questions that focus on how the candidate would behave in a given situation.

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS Whereas situational interviews ask applicants to describe how they would react to a hypothetical situation today or tomorrow, **behavioral interviews** ask applicants to describe *how they reacted* to actual situations in the past.¹² For example, when Citizen's Banking Corporation in Flint, Michigan, found that 31 of the 50 people in its call center quit in one year, Cynthia Wilson, the center's head, switched to behavioral interviews. Many of those who left did so because they didn't enjoy fielding questions from occasionally irate clients. So Wilson no longer tries to predict how candidates will act based on asking them if they want to work with angry clients. Instead, she asks behavioral questions like, "Tell me about a time you were speaking with an irate person, and how you turned the situation around." Wilson says this makes it much harder to fool the interviewer, and, indeed, only four people left her center in the following year.¹³ In summary, *situational* questions start with phrases such as, "Suppose you were faced with the following situation . . . What would you do?" *Behavioral* questions start with phrases like, "Can you think of a time when . . . What did you do?"¹⁴ More employers today are using (or planning to use) behavioral interviews.¹⁵

FIGURE 7-1 Officer Programs Applicant Interview Form
Source: www.uscg.mil/forms/cg/CG5527.pdf, accessed May 9, 2007.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security CG-5527 (08-04)		Officer Programs Applicant Interview Form		1. Date:	
2. Name of Applicant (Last, First, MI)					
3. Overall Impression: Compare this applicant to others you have interviewed or known. (Note: Scores of 4 through 7 constitute a recommendation for selection.)					
NOT RECOMMENDED			RECOMMENDED		
Unsatisfactory 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Limited Potential 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair Performer 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Good Performer 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent Performer 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	Exceptional Performer 6 <input type="checkbox"/>
Distinguished Performer 7 <input type="checkbox"/>					
Comments:					
4. Performance of Duties: Measures an applicant's ability to manage and to get things done.					
Unsatisfactory 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Limited Potential 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair Performer 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Good Performer 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent Performer 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	Exceptional Performer 6 <input type="checkbox"/>
Distinguished Performer 7 <input type="checkbox"/>					
Comments:					
5. Communication Skills: Measures an applicant's ability to communicate in a positive, clear, and convincing manner.					
Unsatisfactory 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Limited Potential 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair Performer 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Good Performer 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent Performer 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	Exceptional Performer 6 <input type="checkbox"/>
Distinguished Performer 7 <input type="checkbox"/>					
Comments:					
6. Names of Board Members	7. Rank	8. Command/Unit	9. Signature	10. Career Total of Interviews Conducted	

PREVIOUS EDITIONS ARE OBSOLETE

CONTINUED ON REVERSE

Reset

FIGURE 7-1 (Continued)

Page 2 - CG-5527 (06-04)

11. Leadership Skills: Measures an applicant's ability to support, develop, direct, and influence others in performing work.						
Unsatisfactory 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Limited Potential 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair Performer 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Good Performer 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent Performer 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	Exceptional Performer 6 <input type="checkbox"/>	Distinguished Performer 7 <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:						
12. Personal and Professional Qualities: Measures qualities which illustrate the applicant's character.						
Unsatisfactory 1 <input type="checkbox"/>	Limited Potential 2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair Performer 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Good Performer 4 <input type="checkbox"/>	Excellent Performer 5 <input type="checkbox"/>	Exceptional Performer 6 <input type="checkbox"/>	Distinguished Performer 7 <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:						

INSTRUCTIONS

The Officer Programs Applicant Interview Form is designed to help Officer Programs selection panels select applicants to be Coast Guard officers. The form is heavily based on the Officer Evaluation Report (OER) and the scale for each category is based on OER performance standards. While it should be remembered that applicants are not yet Coast Guard officers, they should have had opportunities to exhibit qualities that show they possess the character and potential necessary to be successful officers. Provide written comments in support of numeric markings for each category. Base these comments on what you observe during the interview or see in the supporting documentation in the applicant's package. Much like an OER, both the numerical evaluation and written comments are used by selection panels. Officer interview boards should review Article 4.B.2 of the Recruiting Manual, COMDTINST M1100.2 (series) and Articles 1.B.8 and 1.B.9 of the Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000.6 (series), which provide guidance on officer interviews.

1. Date of interview.
2. Self-explanatory.
3. Marks in the Overall Impression block should summarize the interview board's recommendation of the applicant's suitability for service as a Coast Guard Officer, and therefore should be completed last. Scores of 4 through 7 constitute a recommendation for selection.
- 4-5. Self-explanatory.
6. Last name, first name, and middle initial.
- 7-9. Self-explanatory.
10. Interviewer's career total of officer applicant interview boards.
- 11-12. Self-explanatory.

PREVIOUS EDITIONS ARE OBSOLETE

OTHER TYPES OF QUESTIONS In a **job-related interview**, the interviewer asks applicants questions about relevant past experiences. The questions here don't revolve around hypothetical or actual situations or scenarios. Instead, the interviewer asks job-related questions such as, "Which courses did you like best in business school?" The aim is to draw conclusions about, say, the candidate's ability to handle the financial aspects of the job the employer seeks to fill.

There are other, lesser-used types of questions. In a **stress interview**, the interviewer seeks to make the applicant uncomfortable with occasionally rude questions. The aim is supposedly to spot sensitive applicants and those with low (or high) stress tolerance. Thus, a candidate for a customer relations manager position

behavioral interview
A series of job-related questions that focus on how the candidate reacted to actual situations in the past.

job-related interview
A series of job-related questions that focus on relevant past job-related behaviors.

stress interview
An interview in which the applicant is made uncomfortable by a series of often rude questions. This technique helps identify hypersensitive applicants and those with low or high stress tolerance.

who obligingly mentions having had four jobs in the past 2 years might be told that frequent job changes reflect irresponsible and immature behavior. If the applicant then responds with a reasonable explanation of why the job changes were necessary, the interviewer might pursue another topic. On the other hand, if the formerly tranquil applicant reacts explosively with anger and disbelief, the interviewer might deduce that the person has a low tolerance for stress.

Stress interviews may help unearth hypersensitive applicants who might overreact to mild criticism with anger and abuse. However, the stress interview's invasive and ethically questionable nature demands that the interviewer be both skilled in its use and sure the job really calls for a thick skin and an ability to handle stress. This is definitely not an approach for amateur interrogators or for those without the skills to keep the interview under control.

Puzzle questions are popular. Recruiters like to use them to see how candidates think under pressure. For example, an interviewer at Microsoft asked a tech service applicant this: "Mike and Todd have \$21 between them. Mike has \$20 more than Todd does. How much money has Mike, and how much money has Todd?"¹⁶ (You'll find the answer two paragraphs below.)

How Should We Administer the Interview?

Employers also administer interviews in various ways: *one-on-one* or *by a panel of interviewers*, *sequentially* or *all at once*, and *computerized* or *personally*.

Most selection interviews are *one-on-one* and *sequential*. In a one-on-one interview, two people meet alone, and one interviews the other by seeking oral responses to oral inquiries. Employers tend to schedule these interviews *sequentially*. In a *sequential (or serial) interview*, several persons interview the applicant, in sequence, one-on-one, and then make their hiring decision. In an **unstructured sequential interview**, each interviewer generally just asks questions as they come to mind. In a **structured sequential interview**, each interviewer rates the candidates on a standard evaluation form, using standardized questions. The hiring manager then reviews and compares the evaluations before deciding whom to hire.¹⁷ (Answer: Mike had \$20.50, Todd \$.50.)

PANEL INTERVIEWS A **panel interview**, also known as a board interview, is an interview conducted by a team of interviewers (usually two to three), who together interview each candidate and then combine their ratings into a final panel score. This contrasts with the *one-on-one interview* (in which one interviewer meets one candidate) and a *serial interview* (where several interviewers assess a single candidate one-on-one, sequentially).¹⁸

The panel format enables interviewers to ask follow-up questions, much as reporters do in press conferences. This may elicit more meaningful responses than are normally produced by a series of one-on-one interviews. On the other hand, some candidates find panel interviews more stressful, so they may actually inhibit responses. (An even more stressful variant is the **mass interview**. Here a panel interviews several candidates simultaneously. The panel poses a problem, and then watches to see which candidate takes the lead in formulating an answer.)

It's not clear whether as a rule panel interviews are more or less reliable and valid than sequential interviews, because how the employer actually does the panel interview determines this. For example, *structured* panel interviews in which members use scoring sheets with descriptive scoring examples for sample answers are more reliable and valid than those that don't. And, training the panel interviewers may boost the interview's reliability.¹⁹

PHONE INTERVIEWS Employers do some interviews entirely by *telephone*. These can actually be more accurate than face-to-face interviews for judging an applicant's conscientiousness, intelligence, and interpersonal skills. Here, neither party need worry about things like appearance or handshakes, so each can focus on substantive answers. Or perhaps candidates—somewhat surprised by an unexpected call from the recruiter—just

give answers that are more spontaneous (although more confident interviewees do better, of course’).²⁰ In a typical study, interviewers tended to evaluate applicants more favorably in telephone versus face-to-face interviews, particularly where the interviewees were less physically attractive. However, the interviewers came to about the same conclusions regarding the interviewees whether the interview was face-to-face or by *videoconference*. The applicants themselves preferred the face-to-face interviews.²¹

VIDEO/WEB-ASSISTED INTERVIEWS Firms have long used the Web to do selection interviews (particularly the initial, prescreening interviews). With iPad-type video functionalities and the widespread use of Skype™, their use is growing. For instance, Cisco Systems, Inc., recruiters conduct preliminary interviews online. Applicants use their own camera-supported PC or iPads (or go to a local FedEx Office or similar business). Then, at the appointed time, they link to Cisco via Web video for the prescreening interview. Naturally, such video interviews reduce travel and recruiting expenses. Job interviewing apps are available through Apple’s App Store. One is from *Martin’s iPhone Apps*. For people seeking technical jobs, this app includes hundreds of potential interview questions, such as Brain Teasers, Algorithms, C/C++ , and Personal.²²

Having a “Skype job interview” doesn’t require special preparations for the employer, but Career FAQs (www.careerfaqs.com.au) says there are things that interviewees should keep in mind. Many of these may seem obvious. However, it’s often the obvious things people overlook (for more on how to take interviews, see Appendix 2 to this chapter, pages 238–239):²³

- **Make sure you look presentable.** You might feel silly sitting at home wearing a suit, but it could make all the difference.
- **Clean up the room.** Whether the interview is from your own home or a busy office environment, the interviewer does not want to see you sitting in front of a pile of junk.
- **Test first.** As Career FAQs says, “Five minutes before the video interview is not a good time to realize that your Internet is down, Skype isn’t working, or your pet rabbit has chewed through the microphone cord.”
- **Do a dry run.** Try recording yourself before the interview to try answering some imaginary questions.
- **Relax.** The golden rule with a Skype interview is to treat it like any other face-to-face meeting. There is a real person on the other end of the call, so treat them like one. Smile, look confident and enthusiastic, try to make eye contact, and don’t shout, but do speak clearly.

COMPUTERIZED INTERVIEWS A *computerized selection interview* is one in which a job candidate’s oral and/or computerized replies are obtained in response to computerized oral, visual, or written questions and/or situations. Most computerized interviews present the applicant with a series of questions regarding his or her background, experience, education, skills, knowledge, and work attitudes that relate to the job for which the person has applied. Some (video-based) computerized interviews also confront candidates with realistic scenarios (such as irate customers) to which they must respond. Such interviews are most often taken online.²⁴

unstructured sequential interview

An interview in which each interviewer forms an independent opinion after asking different questions.

panel interview

An interview in which a group of interviewers questions the applicant.

mass interview

A panel interviews several candidates simultaneously.

structured sequential interview

An interview in which the applicant is interviewed sequentially by several persons; each rates the applicant on a standard form.

Typical computerized interviews present questions in a multiple-choice format, one at a time. The applicant has to respond to the questions on the screen by pressing a key. A sample interview question for a person applying for a job as a retail store clerk might be:

How would your supervisor rate your customer service skills?

- a. Outstanding
- b. Above average
- c. Average
- d. Below average
- e. Poor²⁵

Questions on computerized interviews come in rapid sequence and require the applicant to concentrate.²⁶ The typical computerized interview program measures the response time to each question. A delay in answering certain questions such as “Can you be trusted?” flags a potential problem. The accompanying HR as a Profit Center feature illustrates the bottom line impact such systems can have.

HR AS A PROFIT CENTER

Great Western Bank

When Bonnie Dunn tried out for a teller’s job at Great Western Bank, she faced a lineup of tough customers.²⁷ One young woman sputtered contradictory instructions about depositing a check and then blew her top when Bonnie didn’t handle the transaction fast enough. Another customer said, “You people are unbelievably slow.”

Both tough customers appeared on a computer screen, as part of a 20-minute computerized job interview. Ms. Dunn sat in front of the screen, responding via a touch screen and a microphone. She was tested on making change and on sales skills, as well as keeping her cool. When applicants sit down facing the computer, they hear it say, “Welcome to the interactive assessment aid.” The computer doesn’t understand what applicants say, although it records their comments for evaluation later. To begin the interview, applicants touch an icon on the screen, eliciting an ominous foreword: “We’ll be keeping track of how long it takes you and how many mistakes you make. Accuracy is more important than speed.”

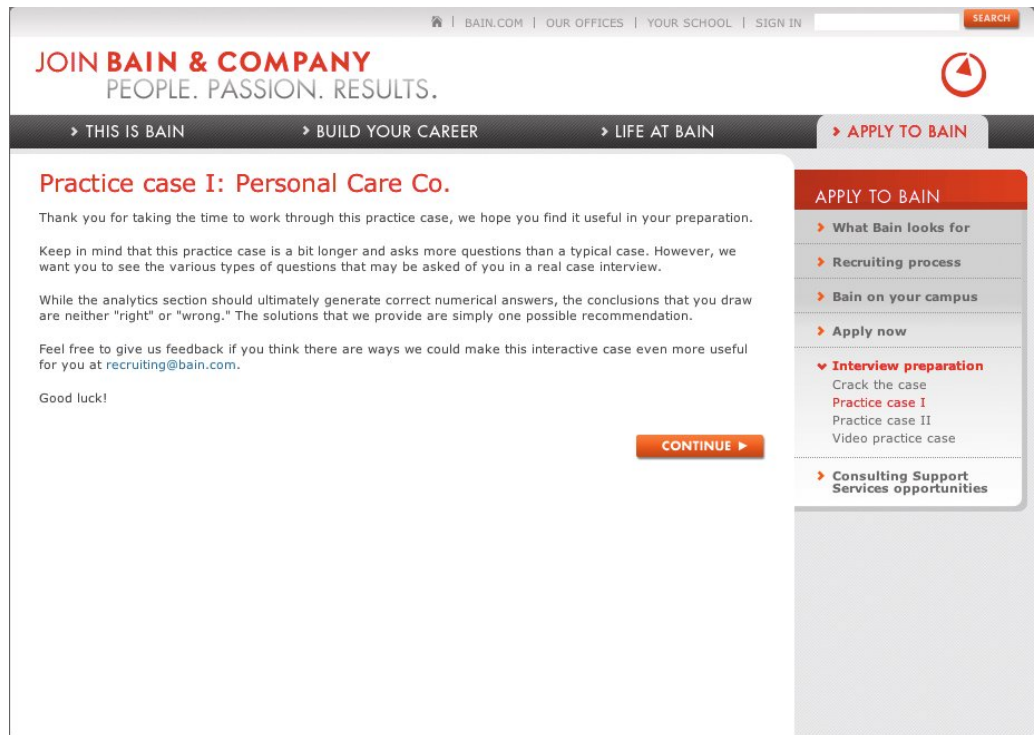
Great Western reports success with its system. It dramatically reduced interviewing of unacceptable candidates, saving valuable HR time and resources. And, partly because the candidates see what the job is really like, those hired are reportedly 26% less likely to leave within 90 days of hiring, significantly reducing the bank’s employee turnover costs.

SECOND LIFE Several employers such as Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard use the online virtual community Second Life to conduct job interviews. Job seekers create avatars to represent themselves in the interviews.²⁸

SPEED DATING For better or worse, some employers are using a speed dating approach to interviewing applicants. One employer sent e-mails to all applicants for an advertised position. Four hundred (of 800 applicants) showed up. Over the next few hours, applicants first mingled with employees, and then (in a so-called “speed dating area”) had one-on-one contacts with employees for a few minutes. Based on this, the recruiting team chose 68 candidates for follow-up interviews.²⁹

BAIN & COMPANY CASE INTERVIEW Bain & Company uses case interviews as part of its candidate selection process. By having candidates explain how they would address the case “clients” problems, the case interview combines elements of behavioral and situational questioning to provide a more realistic assessment of the candidate’s consulting skills. The accompanying screen grab shows Bain candidates how to prepare for the case-based interview.

Source: John Bain & Company, www.joinbain.com, accessed September 2011.



Three Ways to Make the Interview Useful

Interviews hold an ironic place in the hiring process: Everyone uses them, but they're generally not particularly valid. The knack is in doing them properly. If you do, then the interview is generally a good predictor of performance and is comparable with many other selection techniques.³⁰ There are three things to keep in mind.

USE STRUCTURED SITUATIONAL INTERVIEWS First, *structure the interview*.³¹ Structured interviews (particularly structured interviews using situational questions) are more valid than unstructured interviews for predicting job performance. They are more valid partly because they are more reliable—for example, the same interviewer administers the interview more consistently from candidate to candidate.³² Situational interviews yield a higher mean validity than do job-related (or behavioral) interviews, which in turn yield a higher mean validity than do “psychological” interviews (which focus more on motives and interests).³³

CAREFULLY SELECT TRAITS TO ASSESS Interviews are better for revealing some traits than others. A typical study illustrates this. Interviewers were able to size up the interviewee's extraversion and agreeableness. What they could *not* assess accurately were the traits that often matter most on jobs—like conscientiousness and emotional stability.³⁴ The implication seems to be, don't focus (as many do) on hard-to-assess traits like conscientiousness.³⁵ Limit yourself mostly to situational and job knowledge questions that help you assess how the candidate will actually respond to typical situations on that job. We'll explain how to do this later in the chapter.

BEWARE OF COMMITTING INTERVIEWING ERRORS Third, understand and avoid the *various errors that can undermine* any interview's usefulness. We turn to these next.

2 List and explain the main errors that can undermine an interview's usefulness.

THE ERRORS THAT UNDERMINE AN INTERVIEW'S USEFULNESS

One reason selection interviews are often less than useful is that managers make predictable, avoidable errors. We'll look at these next.

First Impressions (Snap Judgments)

Perhaps the most consistent finding is that interviewers tend to jump to conclusions—make snap judgments—about candidates during the first few minutes of the interview (or even before the interview starts, based on test scores or résumé data). One researcher estimates that in 85% of the cases, interviewers had made up their minds before the interview even began, based on first impressions the interviewers gleaned from candidates' applications and personal appearance.³⁶ In one typical study, giving interviewers the candidates' test scores biased the ultimate assessment of the candidates. In another study, interviewers judged candidates who they were told formerly suffered from depression or substance abuse more negatively.³⁷

First impressions are especially damaging when the prior information about the candidate is negative. In one study, interviewers who previously received unfavorable reference letters about applicants gave those applicants less credit for past successes and held them more personally responsible for past failures after the interview. And the interviewers' final decisions (to accept or reject those applicants) always reflected what they expected of the applicants based on the references, quite aside from the applicants' actual interview performance.³⁸

Add to this two more interviewing facts. First, interviewers are more influenced by unfavorable than favorable information about the candidate. Second, their impressions are much more likely to change from favorable to unfavorable than from unfavorable to favorable. Indeed, many interviewers really search more for negative information, often without realizing it.

The bottom line is that most interviews are probably loaded against the applicant. An applicant who starts well could easily end up with a low rating because unfavorable information tends to carry more weight in the interview. And pity the poor interviewee who starts out poorly. It's almost impossible to overcome that first bad impression.³⁹ Here's how one London-based psychologist who interviewed the chief executives of 80 top companies put it:

“Really, to make a good impression, you don't even get time to open your mouth. . . . An interviewer's response to you will generally be preverbal—how you walk through the door, what your posture is like, whether you smile, whether you have a captivating aura, whether you have a firm, confident handshake. You've got about half a minute to make an impact and after that all you are doing is building on a good or bad first impression. . . . It's a very emotional response.”⁴⁰

Not Clarifying What the Job Requires

Interviewers who don't have an accurate picture of what the job entails and what sort of candidate is best suited for it usually make their decisions based on incorrect impressions or stereotypes of what a good applicant is. They then erroneously match interviewees with their incorrect stereotypes. You should clarify what sorts of traits you're looking for, and why, before starting the interview.

One classic study involved 30 professional interviewers.⁴¹ Half got just a brief description of the jobs for which they were recruiting: It said, the “eight applicants here represented by their application blanks are applying for the position of secretary.” The other 15 interviewers got much more explicit job information, in terms of typing speed and bilingual ability, for instance.

More job knowledge translated into better interviews. The 15 interviewers who had more job information generally all agreed among themselves about each candidate's potential; those without complete job information did not. The latter also didn't discriminate as well among applicants—they tended to give them all high ratings.

Candidate-Order (Contrast) Error and Pressure to Hire

Candidate-order (or contrast) error means that the order in which you see applicants affects how you rate them. In one study, managers had to evaluate a candidate who was “just average” after first evaluating several “unfavorable” candidates. They scored the

average candidate more favorably than they might otherwise have done because, in contrast to the unfavorable candidates, the average one looked better than he actually was. This contrast effect can be huge: In some early studies, evaluators based only a small part of the applicant's rating on his or her actual potential.⁴²

Pressure to hire accentuates this problem. Researchers told one group of managers to assume they were behind in their recruiting quota. They told a second group they were ahead of their quota. Those “behind” evaluated the same recruits much more highly than did those “ahead.”⁴³

Nonverbal Behavior and Impression Management

The applicant's nonverbal behavior (smiling, avoiding your gaze, and so on) can also have a surprisingly large impact on his or her rating. In one study, 52 human resource specialists watched videotaped job interviews in which *the applicants' verbal content was identical*, but their nonverbal behavior differed markedly. Researchers told applicants in one group to exhibit minimal eye contact, a low energy level, and low voice modulation. Those in a second group demonstrated the opposite behavior. Twenty-three of the 26 personnel specialists who saw the high-eye-contact, high-energy-level candidate would have invited him or her for a second interview. None who saw the low-eye-contact, low-energy-level candidate would have recommended a second interview.⁴⁴ It certainly seems to pay interviewees to “look alive.”

Nonverbal behaviors are probably so important because interviewers infer your personality from the way you act in the interview. In one study, 99 graduating college seniors completed questionnaires; the questionnaires included measures of personality, among other things. The students then reported their success in generating follow-up interviews and job offers. The interviewee's personality, particularly his or her level of extraversion, had a pronounced influence on whether or not he or she received follow-up interviews and job offers.⁴⁵ Extraverted applicants seem particularly prone to self-promotion, and self-promotion is strongly related to the interviewer's perceptions of candidate–job fit.⁴⁶ Furthermore, “No matter how much an interview is structured, nonverbal cues cause interviewers to make [such] attributions about candidates.”⁴⁷

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT Clever candidates capitalize on that fact. One study found that some used ingratiation to persuade interviewers to like them. For instance, the candidates praised the interviewers or appeared to agree with their opinions. Ingratiation also involves, for example, agreeing with the recruiter's opinions and thus signaling that they share similar beliefs. Sensing that a perceived similarity in attitudes may influence how the interviewer rates them, some interviewees try to emphasize (or fabricate) such similarities.⁴⁸ Others make self-promoting comments about their own accomplishments.⁴⁹ Self-promotion means promoting one's own skills and abilities to create the impression of competence.⁵⁰ Psychologists call using techniques like ingratiation and self-promotion “impression management.”

Effect of Personal Characteristics: Attractiveness, Gender, Race

Unfortunately, physical attributes such as applicants' attractiveness, gender, disability, or race may also distort their assessments.⁵¹ For example, people usually ascribe more favorable traits and more successful life outcomes to attractive people.⁵² Similarly, race can play a role, depending on how you conduct the interview. In one study, for example, the white members of a racially balanced interview panel rated white candidates higher, while the black interviewers rated black candidates higher. (In all cases, *structured* interviews produced less of a difference between minority and white interviewees than did unstructured interviews.)⁵³

candidate-order (or contrast) error

An error of judgment on the part of the interviewer due to interviewing one or more very good or very bad candidates just before the interview in question.

Interviewers' reactions to stereotypical minority behavior are complex. In one study, the researchers dressed the "applicants" in either traditional Muslim attire (black scarf and full-length black robe) or simple two-piece black pantsuits. Both applicants got the same number of job offers. However, interactions were shorter and more interpersonally negative when applicants wore the Muslim attire.⁵⁴

In general, candidates evidencing various attributes and disabilities (such as child-care demands, HIV-positive status, and being wheelchair-bound) had less chance of obtaining a positive decision, even when the person performed very well in the structured interview.⁵⁵

MANAGING THE NEW WORKFORCE

Applicant Disability and the Employment Interview

Researchers surveyed 40 disabled people from various occupations. The basic finding was that the disabled people felt that interviewers tend to avoid directly addressing the disability, and therefore make their decisions without all the facts.⁵⁶

What the disabled people prefer is a discussion that would allow the employer to clarify his or her concerns and reach a knowledgeable conclusion. Among the questions they said they would like interviewers to ask were these:

- Is there any kind of setting or special equipment that will facilitate the interview process for you?
- Is there any specific technology that you currently use or have used in previous jobs that assists the way you work?
- Other than technology, what other kind of support did you have in previous jobs? If none, is there anything that would benefit you?
- Discuss a barrier or obstacle, if any, that you have encountered in any of your previous jobs. How was that addressed?
- Do you anticipate any transportation or scheduling issues with the work schedule expected of this position?

Finally, remember that under the Americans with Disabilities Act, the interviewer must limit his or her questions to whether the applicant has any physical or mental impairment that may interfere with his or her ability to perform the job's essential tasks.⁵⁷

EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION "TESTERS" Employment discrimination is abhorrent, but the use of employment discrimination "testers" makes nondiscriminatory interviewing even more important. As defined by the EEOC, testers are "individuals who apply for employment which they do not intend to accept, for the sole purpose of uncovering unlawful discriminatory hiring practices."⁵⁸ Although they're not really seeking employment, testers have legal standing with the courts and with the EEOC.⁵⁹

For example, a civil rights group sent four university students—two white, two black—to an employment agency, supposedly in pursuit of a job. The civil rights group gave the four "testers" backgrounds and training to make them appear almost indistinguishable from each other in terms of qualifications. The white tester/applicants got interviews and job offers. The black tester/applicants got neither interviews nor offers.⁶⁰

Interviewer Behavior

Finally, the *interviewer's* behavior also affects the interviewee's performance and rating.

Consider some examples. Some interviewers inadvertently telegraph the expected answers,⁶¹ as in: "This job calls for handling a lot of stress. You can do that, can't you?" Even subtle cues (like a smile or nod) can telegraph the desired answer.⁶² Some interviewers talk so much that applicants have no time to answer questions. At the other extreme, some interviewers let the applicant dominate the interview, and so don't ask

all their questions.⁶³ When interviewers have favorable pre-interview impressions of the applicant, they tend to act more positively toward that person (smiling more, for instance).⁶⁴ Other interviewers play district attorney, forgetting that it is uncivil to play “gotcha” by gleefully pouncing on inconsistencies. Some interviewers play amateur psychologist, unprofessionally probing for hidden meanings in everything the applicant says. Others ask improper questions, forgetting, as one study found, that discriminatory questions “had a significant negative effect on participant’s reactions to the interview and interviewer.”⁶⁵ And, some interviewers are simply inept, unable to formulate decent questions.

In summary, interviewing errors to avoid include:

- First impressions (snap judgments)
- Not clarifying what the job involves and requires
- Candidate-order error and pressure to hire
- Nonverbal behavior and impression management
- The effects of interviewees’ personal characteristics
- The interviewer’s inadvertent behaviors

3 Define a structured situational interview.

HOW TO DESIGN AND CONDUCT AN EFFECTIVE INTERVIEW

There are two basic ways to avoid interview errors. One is obvious: Keep them in mind and avoid them (don’t make snap judgments, for instance). The second is not so obvious: Use structured interviews. The single biggest rule for conducting effective selection interviews is to structure the interview around job-relevant situational and behavioral questions. We’ll look next at how to do this.

Designing a Structured Situational Interview

There is little doubt that the **structured situational interview**—a series of job-relevant questions with predetermined answers that interviewers ask of all applicants for the job—produces superior results.⁶⁶ Ideally, the basic idea is to write situational (what would you do), behavioral (what did you do), or job knowledge questions, *and* have job experts (like those supervising the job) also write answers for these questions, rated from good to poor. The people who interview and rate the applicants then use rating sheets anchored with examples of good or bad answers to rate the interviewees’ answers.⁶⁷ The procedure is as follows.⁶⁸

STEP 1: ANALYZE THE JOB Write a job description with a list of job duties; required knowledge, skills, and abilities; and other worker qualifications.

STEP 2: RATE THE JOB’S MAIN DUTIES Rate each job duty, say from 1 to 5, based on its importance to job success.

STEP 3: CREATE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS Create interview questions for each of the job duties, with more questions for the important duties. Recall that *situational questions* pose a hypothetical job situation, such as “What would you do if the machine suddenly began heating up?” *Job knowledge questions* assess knowledge essential to job performance (such as “What is HTML?”). *Willingness questions* gauge the applicant’s willingness and motivation to meet the job’s requirements—to do repetitive physical work or to travel, for instance. *Behavioral questions*, of course, ask candidates how they’ve handled similar situations.

structured situational interview

A series of job-relevant questions with predetermined answers that interviewers ask of all applicants for the job.

The people who create the questions usually write them in terms of critical incidents. For example, for a supervisory candidate, the interviewer might ask this situational question:

Your spouse and two teenage children are sick in bed with colds. There are no relatives or friends available to look in on them. Your shift starts in 3 hours. What would you do in this situation?

STEP 4: CREATE BENCHMARK ANSWERS Next, *for each question*, develop ideal (benchmark) answers for good (a 5 rating), marginal (a 3 rating), and poor (a 1 rating) answers. Three benchmark answers (from low to high) for the example question above might be, “I’d stay home—my spouse and family come first” (1); “I’d phone my supervisor and explain my situation” (3); and “Since they only have colds, I’d come to work” (5).

STEP 5: APPOINT THE INTERVIEW PANEL AND CONDUCT INTERVIEWS Employers generally conduct structured situational interviews using a panel, rather than one-on-one. The panel usually consists of three to six members, preferably the same ones who wrote the questions and answers. It may also include the job’s supervisor and/or incumbent, and a human resources representative. The same panel interviews all candidates for the job.⁶⁹

The panel members generally review the job description, questions, and benchmark answers before the interview. One panel member introduces the applicant, and asks all questions of all applicants in this and succeeding candidates’ interviews (to ensure consistency). However, all panel members record and rate the applicant’s answers on the rating sheet. They do this by indicating where the candidate’s answer to each question falls relative to the ideal poor, marginal, or good answers. At the end of the interview, someone answers any questions the applicant has.⁷⁰

Web-based programs help interviewers design and organize behaviorally based selection interviews. For example, SelectPro (www.selectpro.net) enables interviewers to create behavior-based selection interviews, custom interview guides, and automated online interviews.

4 Explain and illustrate each guideline for being a more effective interviewer.

How to Conduct an Effective Interview

You may not have the time or inclination to create a structured situational interview. However, there is still much you can do to make your interviews more systematic and effective.

STEP 1: FIRST, MAKE SURE YOU KNOW THE JOB Do not start the interview unless you understand the job and what human skills you’re looking for. Study the job description.

STEP 2: STRUCTURE THE INTERVIEW *Any* structuring is better than none. If pressed for time, you can do several things to ask more consistent and job-relevant questions, without developing a full-blown structured interview.⁷¹ They include:⁷²

- Base questions on *actual job duties*. This will minimize irrelevant questions.
- Use *job knowledge, situational, or behavioral questions*, and know enough about the job to be able to evaluate the interviewee’s answers. Questions that simply ask for opinions and attitudes, goals and aspirations, and self-descriptions and self-evaluations allow candidates to present themselves in an overly favorable manner or avoid revealing weaknesses.⁷³ Figure 7-2 illustrates structured interview questions.
- *Use the same questions* with all candidates. When it comes to asking questions, the prescription is “the more standardized, the better.” Using the same questions with all candidates improves reliability. It also reduces bias because of the obvious fairness of giving all the candidates the exact same opportunity.

FIGURE 7-2 Examples of Questions That Provide Interview Structure

Job Knowledge Questions

1. What steps would you follow in changing the fan belt on a Toyota Camry?
2. What factors would you consider in choosing a computer to use for work?

Experience Questions

3. What experience have you had actually repairing automobile engines?
4. What experience have you had creating marketing programs for consumer products?

Behavioral (Past Behavior) Questions

5. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a particularly obnoxious person. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?
6. Tell me about a time when you were under a great deal of stress. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?

Situational (What Would You Do) Questions

7. Suppose your boss insisted that a presentation had to be finished by tonight, but your subordinate said she has to get home early to attend an online class, so she is unable to help you. What would you do?
8. The CEO just told you that he's planning on firing your boss, with whom you are very close, and replacing him with you. What would you do?

- Use *descriptive rating scales* (excellent, fair, poor) to rate answers. For each question, if possible, have several ideal answers and a score for each. Then rate each candidate's answers against this scale.
- If possible, use a *standardized interview form*. Interviews based on structured guides like the ones in Figures 7-1 (pages 216–217) or 7A-1 (pages 236–238) usually result in better interviews.⁷⁴ At the very least, list your questions before the interview.

STEP 3: GET ORGANIZED Hold the interview in a private room where telephone calls are not accepted and you can minimize interruptions (including text messages). Prior to the interview, review the candidate's application and résumé, and note any areas that are vague or that may indicate strengths or weaknesses.

5 Give several examples of situational questions, behavioral questions, and background questions that provide structure.

STEP 4: ESTABLISH RAPPORT The main reason for the interview is to find out about the applicant. To do this, start by putting the person at ease. Greet the candidate and start the interview by asking a noncontroversial question, perhaps about the weather or the traffic conditions that day. As a rule, all applicants—even unsolicited drop-ins—should receive friendly, courteous treatment, not only on humanitarian grounds but also because your reputation is on the line.

STEP 5: ASK QUESTIONS Try to follow the situational, behavioral, and job knowledge questions you wrote out ahead of time. You'll find a sampling of other technical questions (such as "What did you most enjoy about your last job?") in Figure 7-3. As a rule,

Don't telegraph the desired answer.

Don't interrogate the applicant as if the person is on trial.

Don't monopolize the interview, nor let the applicant do so.

Do ask open-ended questions.

Do encourage the applicant to express thoughts fully.

Do draw out the applicant's opinions and feelings by repeating the person's last comment as a question (e.g., "You didn't like your last job?").

Do ask for examples.⁷⁵

Do ask, "If I were to arrange for an interview with your boss, what's your best guess as to what he or she would say as your strengths, weaker points, and overall performance?, and "Tell me about a time when you had to deal with someone difficult—what did you do?"⁷⁶

FIGURE 7-3 Suggested Supplementary Questions for Interviewing Applicants

Source: Reprinted from <http://hr.blr.com> with permission of the publisher Business and Legal Resources, Inc. 141 Mill Rock Road East, Old Saybrook, CT © 2004. BLR® (Business and Legal Resources, Inc.).

1. How did you choose this line of work?
2. What did you enjoy most about your last job?
3. What did you like least about your last job?
4. What has been your greatest frustration or disappointment on your present job? Why?
5. What are some of the pluses and minuses of your last job?
6. What were the circumstances surrounding your leaving your last job?
7. Did you give notice?
8. Why should we be hiring you?
9. What do you expect from this employer?
10. What are three things you will not do in your next job?
11. What would your last supervisor say your three weaknesses are?
12. What are your major strengths?
13. How can your supervisor best help you obtain your goals?
14. How did your supervisor rate your job performance?
15. In what ways would you change your last supervisor?
16. What are your career goals during the next 1–3 years? 5–10 years?
17. How will working for this company help you reach those goals?
18. What did you do the last time you received instructions with which you disagreed?
19. What are some of the things about which you and your supervisor disagreed? What did you do?
20. Which do you prefer, working alone or working with groups?
21. What motivated you to do better at your last job?
22. Do you consider your progress on that job representative of your ability? Why?
23. Do you have any questions about the duties of the job for which you have applied?
24. Can you perform the essential functions of the job for which you have applied?

STEP 6: TAKE BRIEF, UNOBTRUSIVE NOTES DURING THE INTERVIEW

Doing so may help avoid making a snap decision early in the interview, and may also help jog your memory once the interview is complete. Take notes, jotting down just the key points of what the interviewee says.⁷⁷

STEP 7: CLOSE THE INTERVIEW Leave time to answer any questions the candidate may have and, if appropriate, to advocate your firm to the candidate.

Try to end the interview on a positive note. Tell the applicant whether there is any interest and, if so, what the next step will be. Make rejections diplomatically—for instance, “Although your background is impressive, there are other candidates whose experience is closer to our requirements.” If the applicant is still under consideration but you can’t reach a decision now, say so. Remember, as one recruiter says, “An interview experience should leave a lasting, positive impression of the company, whether the candidate receives and accepts an offer or not.”⁷⁸

In rejecting a candidate, one perennial question is, should you provide an explanation or not? In one study, rejected candidates who received an explanation detailing why the employer rejected them felt that the rejection process was fairer. Unfortunately, providing detailed explanations may not be practical. As the researchers put it,

“We were unsuccessful in a number of attempts to secure a site for our applied study. Of three organizations that expressed interest in our research, all eventually declined to participate in the study because they were afraid that any additional information in the rejection letters might increase legal problems. They were reluctant to give rejected applicants information that can be used to dispute the decision.”⁷⁹

STEP 8: REVIEW THE INTERVIEW After the candidate leaves, review your interview notes, score the interview guide answers (if you used one), and make a decision.



Source: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc. [US].

Go into the interview with an accurate picture of the traits of an ideal candidate, know what you're going to ask, and be prepared to keep an open mind about the candidate.

We'll address what *interviewees* can do to apply these findings and to excel in the interview in Appendix 2 to this chapter.

Talent Management: Profiles and Employee Interviews

Talent management is the goal-oriented and integrated process of planning for, recruiting, selecting, developing, and compensating employees. To ensure an integrated, goal-oriented effort, talent management therefore involves (among other things) using the same job profile (competencies, traits, knowledge, and experience) for recruiting as for selecting, training, appraising, and paying the employee.

Profiles can play an important role in employee selection. For example, we saw in Chapter 4 that IBM identified 490 possible roles that represented the building blocks of IBM's various jobs. IBM then identified a profile or set of required skills and competencies for each role (such as engineer).

Managers can use a job's profile to formulate job-related situational, behavioral, and knowledge interview questions when selecting someone for a job or set of roles. Consider a simple example. Table 7-1 summarizes illustrative competency, knowledge, trait, and experience elements for a chemical engineer, along with sample interview questions. Selecting engineers based on this profile helps to ensure that you focus your questions on the things that someone must be proficient at to do this job successfully. The same profile would similarly provide guidance for determining how to recruit candidates for this position, and on what basis to train, appraise, and pay him or her.

TABLE 7-1 Asking Profile-Oriented Interview Questions

Profile Component	Example	Sample Interview Question
Competency	Able to use computer drafting software	Tell me about a time you used CAD Pro computerized design software.
Knowledge	How extreme heat affects hydrochloric acid (HCL)	Suppose you have an application where HCL is heated to 400 degrees Fahrenheit at 2 atmospheres of pressure; what happens to the HCL?
Trait	Willing to travel abroad at least 4 months per year visiting facilities	Suppose you had a family meeting that you had to attend next week and our company informed you that you had to leave for a job abroad immediately, and stay 3 weeks. How would you handle that?
Experience	Designed pollution filter for acid-cleaning facility	Tell me about a time when you designed a pollution filter device for an acid-cleaning facility. How did it work? What particular problems did you encounter? How did you address them?

REVIEW

MyManagementLab

Now that you have finished this chapter, go back to www.mymanagementlab.com to continue practicing and applying the concepts you've learned.

CHAPTER SECTION SUMMARIES

1. A selection interview is a selection procedure designed to predict future job performance based on applicants' oral responses to oral inquiries; we discussed several **basic types of interviews**. There are structured versus unstructured interviews. We also distinguished between interviews

based on the types of questions (such as situational versus behavioral) and on how you administer the interview, such as one-on-one, sequentially, or even via computer/video/telephone. However you decide to conduct and structure the interview, be careful what sorts of traits

you try to assess, and beware of committing the sorts of interviewing errors we touch on next.

2. One reason selection interviews are often less useful than they should be is that managers make predictable **errors that undermine an interview's usefulness**. They jump to conclusions or make snap judgments based on preliminary information, they don't clarify what the job really requires, they succumb to candidate-order error and pressure to hire, and they let a variety of nonverbal behaviors and personal characteristics undermine the validity of the interview.
3. There are two basic ways to **avoid interview errors**. One is to keep them in mind, and the second is to use structured interviews.
 - The structured situational interview is a series of job-related questions with predetermined answers that interviewers ask of all applicants for the job.

Steps in creating a structured situational interview include analyzing the job, rating the job's main duties, creating interview questions, creating benchmark entries, and appointing the interview panel and conducting interviews.

4. Steps in **conducting an effective interview** include making sure you know the job, structuring the interview, getting organized, asking questions, taking brief unobtrusive notes during the interview, and reviewing the interview.
5. **Talent management profiles** can play an important role in employee selection. For example, we saw that IBM identified 490 possible roles employees might play, given IBM's strategic aims. IBM can then identify the skill sets each role requires. Managers can use a job's profile to formulate job-related situational, behavioral, and knowledge interview questions when selecting someone for a job or set of roles.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain and illustrate the basic ways in which you can classify selection interviews.
2. Briefly describe each of the following types of interviews: unstructured panel interviews, structured sequential interviews, job-related structured interviews.
3. For what sorts of jobs do you think computerized interviews are most appropriate? Why?
4. Why do you think situational interviews yield a higher mean validity than do job-related or behavioral interviews, which in turn yield a higher mean validity than do psychological interviews?
5. Similarly, how would you explain the fact that structured interviews, regardless of content, are more valid than unstructured interviews for predicting job performance?
6. Briefly discuss and give examples of at least five common interviewing mistakes. What recommendations would you give for avoiding these interviewing mistakes?
7. Briefly discuss what an interviewer can do to improve his or her performance.

INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP ACTIVITIES

1. Prepare and give a short presentation titled "How to Be Effective as an Employment Interviewer."
2. Use the Internet to find employers who now do preliminary selection interviews via the Web. Print out and bring examples to class. Do you think these interviews are useful? Why or why not? How would you improve them?
3. In groups, discuss and compile examples of "the worst interview I ever had." What was it about these interviews that made them so bad? If time permits, discuss as a class.
4. In groups, prepare an interview (including a sequence of at least 20 questions) you'll use to interview candidates for the job of teaching a course in human resources management. Each group should present their interview questions in class.
5. Some firms swear by unorthodox interview methods. For example, Tech Planet, of Menlo Park, California, uses weekly lunches and "wacky follow-up sessions" as substitutes for first-round job interviews. During the informal meals, candidates are expected to mingle, and the Tech Planet employees they meet at the luncheons then review them. One Tech Planet employee asks candidates to ride a unicycle in her office to see if "they'll bond with the corporate culture or not." Toward the end of the screening process, the surviving group of interviewees has to solve brainteasers, and then openly evaluate their fellow candidates' strengths and weaknesses. What do you think of a screening process like this? Specifically, what do you think are its pros and cons? Would you recommend a procedure like this? If so, what changes, if any, would you recommend?⁸⁰
6. Several years ago, Lockheed Martin Corp. sued the Boeing Corp. in Orlando, Florida, accusing it of using Lockheed's trade secrets to help win a multibillion-dollar government contract. Among other things, Lockheed Martin claimed that Boeing had obtained those trade secrets from a former Lockheed Martin employee who switched to Boeing.⁸¹ But in describing methods companies use to commit corporate espionage, one writer says that hiring away the competitor's employees or hiring people to go through its dumpster are just the most obvious methods companies use to commit corporate espionage. As he says, "one of the more unusual scams—sometimes referred to as 'help wanted'—uses a person posing as a corporate headhunter who approaches an employee of the target company with a potentially lucrative job offer. During the interview, the employee is quizzed about his responsibilities, accomplishments, and current projects. The goal is to extract important details without the employee realizing there is no job."⁸²

Assume that you are the owner of a small high-tech company that is worried about the possibility that one or more of your employees may be approached by one of these sinister “headhunters.” What would you do (in terms of employee training, or a letter from you, for instance) to try to minimize the chance that one of your employees will fall into that kind of a trap? Also, compile a list of 10 questions that you think such a corporate spy might ask one of your employees.

7. The HRCI “Test Specifications” appendix at the end of this book (pages 633–640) lists the knowledge someone studying for the HRCI certification exam needs to have

in each area of human resource management (such as in Strategic Management, Workforce Planning, and Human Resource Development). In groups of four to five students, do four things: (1) review that appendix now; (2) identify the material in this chapter that relates to the required knowledge the appendix lists; (3) write four multiple-choice exam questions on this material that you believe would be suitable for inclusion in the HRCI exam; and (4) if time permits, have someone from your team post your team’s questions in front of the class, so the students in other teams can take each others’ exam questions.

EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE

The Most Important Person You’ll Ever Hire

Purpose: The purpose of this exercise is to give you practice using some of the interview techniques you learned from this chapter.

Required Understanding: You should be familiar with the information presented in this chapter, and read this: For parents, children are precious. It’s therefore interesting that parents who hire “nannies” to take care of their children usually do little more than ask several interview questions and conduct what is often, at best, a perfunctory reference check. Given the often questionable validity of interviews, and the (often) relative inexperience of the father or mother doing the interviewing, it’s not surprising that many of these arrangements end in disappointment. You know from this chapter that it is difficult to conduct a valid interview unless you know exactly what you’re looking for and, preferably, structure the interview. Most parents simply aren’t trained to do this.

How to Set Up the Exercise/Instructions:

1. Set up groups of five or six students. Two students will be the interviewees, while the other students in the group will serve as panel interviewers. The interviewees will develop an interviewer assessment form, and the panel interviewers will develop a structured situational interview for a “nanny.”
2. Instructions for the interviewees: The interviewees should leave the room for about 20 minutes. While out of the

room, the interviewees should develop an “interviewer assessment form” based on the information presented in this chapter regarding factors that can undermine the usefulness of an interview. During the panel interview, the interviewees should assess the interviewers using the interviewer assessment form. After the panel interviewers have conducted the interview, the interviewees should leave the room to discuss their notes. Did the interviewers exhibit any of the factors that can undermine the usefulness of an interview? If so, which ones? What suggestions would you (the interviewees) make to the interviewers on how to improve the usefulness of the interview?

3. Instructions for the interviewers: While the interviewees are out of the room, the panel interviewers will have 20 minutes to develop a short structured situational interview form for a “nanny.” The panel interview team will interview two candidates for the position. During the panel interview, each interview should be taking notes on a copy of the structured situational interview form. After the panel interview, the panel interviewers should discuss their notes. What were your first impressions of each interviewee? Were your impressions similar? Which candidate would you all select for the position and why?

APPLICATION CASE

THE OUT-OF-CONTROL INTERVIEW

Maria Fernandez is a bright, popular, and well-informed mechanical engineer who graduated with an engineering degree from State University in June 2009. During the spring preceding her graduation, she went out on many job interviews, most of which she thought were conducted courteously and were reasonably useful in giving both her and the prospective employer a good impression of where each of them stood on matters of importance to both of them. It was, therefore, with great anticipation that she looked forward to an interview with the one firm in which she most wanted to work: Apex Environmental. She had always had a strong interest in cleaning up the environment and firmly believed that the best use of her training and skills lay in working for a

firm like Apex, where she thought she could have a successful career while making the world a better place.

The interview, however, was a disaster. Maria walked into a room where five men—the president of the company, two vice presidents, the marketing director, and another engineer—began throwing questions at her that she felt were aimed primarily at tripping her up rather than finding out what she could offer through her engineering skills. The questions ranged from being unnecessarily discourteous (“Why would you take a job as a waitress in college if you’re such an intelligent person?”) to being irrelevant and sexist (“Are you planning on settling down and starting a family anytime soon?”). Then, after the interview, she met with two of the gentlemen individually (including the

president), and the discussions focused almost exclusively on her technical expertise. She thought that these later discussions went fairly well. However, given the apparent aimlessness and even mean-spiritedness of the panel interview, she was astonished when several days later the firm made her a job offer.

The offer forced her to consider several matters. From her point of view, the job itself was perfect. She liked what she would be doing, the industry, and the firm's location. And in fact, the president had been quite courteous in subsequent discussions, as had been the other members of the management team. She was left wondering whether the panel interview had been intentionally tense to see how she'd stand up under pressure, and, if so, why they would do such a thing.

Questions

1. How would you explain the nature of the panel interview Maria had to endure? Specifically, do you think

it reflected a well-thought-out interviewing strategy on the part of the firm or carelessness on the part of the firm's management? If it were carelessness, what would you do to improve the interview process at Apex Environmental?

2. Would you take the job offer if you were Maria? If you're not sure, what additional information would help you make your decision?
3. The job of applications engineer for which Maria was applying requires (a) excellent technical skills with respect to mechanical engineering, (b) a commitment to working in the area of pollution control, (c) the ability to deal well and confidently with customers who have engineering problems, (d) a willingness to travel worldwide, and (e) a very intelligent and well-balanced personality. List 10 questions you would ask when interviewing applicants for the job.

CONTINUING CASE

CARTER CLEANING COMPANY

The Better Interview

Like virtually all the other HR-related activities at Carter Cleaning Centers, the company currently has no organized approach to interviewing job candidates. Store managers, who do almost all the hiring, have a few of their own favorite questions that they ask. But in the absence of any guidance from top management, they all admit their interview performance leaves something to be desired. Similarly, Jack Carter himself is admittedly most comfortable dealing with what he calls the "nuts and bolts" machinery aspect of his business and has never felt particularly comfortable having to interview management or other job applicants. Jennifer is sure that this lack of formal interviewing practices, procedures, and training account for some of the employee turnover and theft problems. Therefore, she wants to do something

to improve her company's batting average in this important area.

Questions

1. In general, what can Jennifer do to improve her employee interviewing practices? Should she develop interview forms that list questions for management and nonmanagement jobs? If so, how should these look and what questions should be included? Should she initiate a computer-based interview approach? If so, why and how?
2. Should she implement an interview training program for her managers, and if so, specifically what should be the content of such a training program? In other words, if she did decide to start training her management people to be better interviewers, what should she tell them and how should she tell it to them?

TRANSLATING STRATEGY INTO HR POLICIES & PRACTICES CASE

THE HOTEL PARIS CASE

The New Interviewing Program

The Hotel Paris's competitive strategy is "To use superior guest service to differentiate the Hotel Paris properties, and to thereby increase the length of stay and return rate of guests, and thus boost revenues and profitability." HR manager Lisa Cruz must now formulate functional policies and activities that support this competitive strategy by eliciting the required employee behaviors and competencies.

One thing that concerned Lisa Cruz was the fact that the Hotel Paris's hotel managers varied widely in their interviewing and hiring skills. Some were quite effective; most were not. Furthermore, the company did not have a formal

employment interview training program, nor, for that matter, did it have standardized interview packages that hotel managers around the world could use.

As an experienced HR professional, Lisa knew that the company's new testing program would go only so far. She knew that, at best, employment tests explained perhaps 30% of employee performance. It was essential that she and her team design a package of interviews that her hotel managers could use to assess—on an interactive and personal basis—candidates for various positions. It was only in that way that the hotel could hire the sorts of employees whose competencies and behaviors would translate into the kinds

of outcomes—such as improved guest services—that the hotel required to achieve its strategic goals.

Lisa receives budgetary approval to design a new employee interview system. She and her team start by reviewing the job descriptions and job specifications for the positions of front-desk clerk, assistant manager, security guard, valet/door person, and housekeeper. Focusing on developing structured interviews for each position, the team sets about devising interview questions. For example, for the front-desk clerk and assistant manager, they formulate several *behavioral questions*, including, “Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate person, and what you did.” And, “Tell me about a time when you had to deal with several conflicting demands at once, such as having to study for several final exams while at the same time

having to work. How did you handle the situation?” They also developed a number of *situational questions*, including, “Suppose you have a very pushy incoming guest who insists on being checked in at once, while at the same time you’re trying to process the checkout for another guest who must be at the airport in 10 minutes. How would you handle the situation?”

Questions

1. For the job of security guard or valet, develop five situational, five behavioral, and five job knowledge questions, with descriptive good/average/poor answers.
2. Combine your questions into a complete interview that you would give to someone who must interview candidates for these jobs.

KEY TERMS

unstructured (or nondirective) interview, 214	behavioral interview, 216	panel interview, 218
structured (or directive) interview, 215	job-related interview, 217	mass interview, 218
situational interview, 215	stress interview, 217	candidate-order (or contrast) error, 222
	unstructured sequential interview, 218	structured situational interview, 225
	structured sequential interview, 218	

ENDNOTES

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6. Duane Schultz and Sydney Schultz, *Psychology and Work Today* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), p. 830. A study found that interview structure “was best described by four dimensions: questioning consistency, evaluation standardization, question sophistication, and rapport building.” Chapman and Zweig, “Developing a Nomological Network.”
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APPENDIX 1 FOR CHAPTER 7

How to Create Applicant Interview Guide Process

STEP 1—Create a Structured Interview Guide

Instructions:

First, here in step 1, create a structured interview guide like this one (including a competency definition, a lead question, and benchmark examples and answers, for instance) for each of the job's required competencies:

Competency: Interpersonal Skills
Definition:

Shows understanding, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern; develops and maintains relationships; may deal with people who are difficult, hostile, distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and situations; is sensitive to individual differences.

Lead Questions:

Describe a situation in which you had to deal with people who were upset about a problem. What specific actions did you take? What was the outcome or result?

Benchmark Level	Level Definition	Level Examples
5	Establishes and maintains ongoing working relationships with management, other employees, internal or external stakeholders, or customers. Remains courteous when discussing information or eliciting highly sensitive or controversial information from people who are reluctant to give it. Effectively handles situations involving a high degree of tension or discomfort involving people who are demonstrating a high degree of hostility or distress.	Presents controversial findings tactfully to irate organization senior management officials regarding shortcomings of a newly installed computer system, software programs, and associated equipment.
4		Mediates disputes concerning system design/architecture, the nature and capacity of data management systems, system resources allocations, or other equally controversial/sensitive matters.
3	Cooperates and works well with management, other employees, or customers, on short-term assignments. Remains courteous when discussing information or eliciting moderately sensitive or controversial information from people who are hesitant to give it. Effectively handles situations involving a moderate degree of tension or discomfort involving people who are demonstrating a moderate degree of hostility or distress.	Courteously and tactfully delivers effective instruction to frustrated customers. Provides technical advice to customers and the public on various types of IT such as communication or security systems, data management procedures or analysis.
2		Familiarizes new employees with administrative procedures and office systems.
1	Cooperates and works well with management, other employees, or customers during brief interactions. Remains courteous when discussing information or eliciting non-sensitive or non-controversial information from people who are willing to give it. Effectively handles situations involving little or no tension, discomfort, hostility, or distress.	Responds courteously to customers' general inquiries. Greet and assists visitors attending a meeting within own organization.

FIGURE 7A-1 Three-Step Structured Interview Guide Process

Source: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/107843.pdf>, and United States Office of Personnel Management. Structured Interviews: Interview Guide and Evaluation Materials for Structured Interviews.

FIGURE 7A-1
(Continued)

STEP 2—INDIVIDUAL EVALUATION FORM														
Instructions: Next, in step 2, create a form for evaluating each job candidate on each of the job's competencies: Candidate to be assessed: _____ Date of Interview: _____														
Problem Solving														
Definition: Identifies problems; determines accuracy and relevance of information; uses sound judgment to generate and evaluate alternatives, and to make the recommendations.														
Question: Describe a situation in which you identified a problem and evaluated the alternatives to make a recommendation or decision. What was the problem and who was affected?														
Probes: How did you generate and evaluate your alternatives? What was the outcome? Describe specific behaviors observed: (Use back of sheet, if necessary)														
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>1—Low</th> <th>2</th> <th>3—Average</th> <th>4</th> <th>5—Outstanding</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td> Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve routine problems. Reacts to and solves problems by gathering and applying information from standard materials or sources that provide a limited number of alternatives. </td> <td></td> <td> Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve moderately difficult problems. Identifies and solves problems by gathering and applying information from a variety of materials or sources that provide several alternatives. </td> <td></td> <td> Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve complex or sensitive problems. Anticipates problems and identifies and evaluates potential sources of information and generates alternatives to solve problems where standards do not exist. </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					1—Low	2	3—Average	4	5—Outstanding	Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve routine problems. Reacts to and solves problems by gathering and applying information from standard materials or sources that provide a limited number of alternatives.		Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve moderately difficult problems. Identifies and solves problems by gathering and applying information from a variety of materials or sources that provide several alternatives.		Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve complex or sensitive problems. Anticipates problems and identifies and evaluates potential sources of information and generates alternatives to solve problems where standards do not exist.
1—Low	2	3—Average	4	5—Outstanding										
Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve routine problems. Reacts to and solves problems by gathering and applying information from standard materials or sources that provide a limited number of alternatives.		Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve moderately difficult problems. Identifies and solves problems by gathering and applying information from a variety of materials or sources that provide several alternatives.		Uses logic to identify alternatives to solve complex or sensitive problems. Anticipates problems and identifies and evaluates potential sources of information and generates alternatives to solve problems where standards do not exist.										
Final Evaluation:		Printed Name:		Signature:										

FIGURE 7A-1
(Continued)

STEP 3—PANEL CONSENSUS EVALUATION FORM

Instructions:

Finally, in step 3, create a panel consensus evaluation form like this one, which the members of the panel who interviewed the candidate will use to evaluate his or her interview performance.

Candidate: _____

Date: _____

Panel Consensus Evaluation Form				
<div>Instructions:</div> <div>Translate each individual evaluation for each competency onto this form. If all of the individual competency evaluations are within one rating scale point, enter the average of the evaluations in the column labeled Group Evaluation. If more than one point separates any two raters, a consensus discussion must occur with each party justifying his/her evaluation. The lead interviewer or his/her designee should take notes on the consensus discussion in the space provided. Any changes in evaluation should be initiated and a final evaluation entered for each competency.</div>				
Competency	Final Individual Evaluations			Group Evaluation
	(1)	(2)	(3)	
Interpersonal Skills				
Self-Management				
Reasoning				
Decision Making				
Problem Solving				
Oral Communication				
Total Score				
<div>Consensus Discussion Notes:</div> <div></div>				
Signature Panel Member 1: _____				
Signature Panel Member 2: _____				
Signature Panel Member 3: _____				

APPENDIX 2 FOR CHAPTER 7

Interview Guide for Interviewees

Before managers move into positions where they have to interview others, they usually must navigate some interviews themselves. It’s therefore useful to apply some of what we discussed in this chapter to navigating one’s own interviews. Interviewers will tend to use the interview to try to determine what you are like as a person. In other words, how you get along with other people and your desire to

work. They will look first at how you behave. Specifically, they will note whether you respond concisely, cooperate fully in answering questions, state personal opinions when relevant, and keep to the subject at hand; these are very important elements in influencing the interviewer's decision.

There are six things to do to get an extra edge in the interview.

1. **Preparation is essential.** Before the interview, learn all you can about the employer, the job, and the people doing the recruiting. On the Web or at the library, look through business periodicals to find out what is happening in the employer's field. Who is the competition? How are they doing? Try to unearth the employer's problems. Be ready to explain why you think you would be able to solve such problems, citing some of your *specific accomplishments* to make your case.
2. **Uncover the interviewer's real needs.** Spend as little time as possible answering your interviewer's first questions and as much time as possible getting him or her to describe his or her needs. Determine what the person is expecting to accomplish, and the type of person he or she feels is needed. Use open-ended questions here such as, "Could you tell me more about that?"
3. **Relate yourself to the interviewer's needs.** Once you know the type of person your interviewer is looking for and the sorts of problems he or she wants solved, you are in a good position to describe your own accomplishments *in terms of the interviewer's needs*. Start by saying something like, "One of the problem areas you've said is important to you is similar to a problem I once faced." Then state the problem, describe your solution, and reveal the results.⁸³
4. **Think before answering.** Answering a question should be a three-step process: Pause—Think—Speak. *Pause* to make sure you understand what the interviewer is driving at, *think* about how to structure your answer, and then *speak*. In your answer, try to emphasize how hiring you will help the interviewer solve his or her problem.
5. **Remember that appearance and enthusiasm are important.** Appropriate clothing, good grooming, a firm handshake, and energy are important. Remember that your *nonverbal behavior* may broadcast more about you than does what you say. Maintain eye contact. In addition, speak with enthusiasm, nod agreement, and remember to take a moment to frame your answer (pause, think, speak) so that you sound articulate and fluent.
6. **Make a good first impression.** Remember that in most cases interviewers make up their minds about the applicant during the early minutes of the interview. A good first impression may turn to bad during the interview, but it is unlikely. Bad first impressions are almost impossible to overcome. Experts suggest paying attention to the following key interviewing considerations:
 - Appropriate clothing
 - Good grooming
 - A firm handshake
 - The appearance of controlled energy
 - Pertinent humor and readiness to smile
 - A genuine interest in the employer's operation and alert attention when the interviewer speaks
 - Pride in past performance
 - An understanding of the employer's needs and a desire to serve them

PART 2 VIDEO CASES APPENDIX

Video Title: Talent Management (The Weather Channel)

SYNOPSIS

This video discusses job analysis in some detail, including how employers use the job analysis, who contributes to a job analysis, and writing the job description and the job specification.

Discussion Questions

1. What job analysis tools would you suggest The Weather Channel use to supplement what it's doing now to analyze jobs?
2. What role do you think job analysis plays in talent management at The Weather Channel? What role should it play?
3. How is human resources at The Weather Channel involved in job analysis?
4. If Taylor asked you what strategic HR is, what would you tell her? Does The Weather Channel seem to be practicing strategic HR? Why or why not?
5. What indications, if any, are there that The Weather Channel takes a talent management approach?

Video Title: Recruiting (Hautelook)

SYNOPSIS

The online fashion retailer Hautelook is growing quickly and needs to recruit new employees at a rapid rate. The video discusses the company's methods for recruiting job applicants and for finding the best potential employees from among its applicants. Hautelook prefers to promote internal job candidates, but also to hire applicants who are most familiar with the company—ideally, previous customers.

Discussion Questions

1. Explain the importance of employee referrals to Hautelook's recruiting.
2. Based on the chapter, what other recruiting tools would you suggest a company like this use, and why?
3. How would you suggest Hautelook deal with the problem of receiving too many résumé applications?
4. Given that it loves to promote internally, what other steps would you suggest Hautelook take to facilitate this?
5. From what Hautelook says, is it really necessary for the company to use employment agencies? Why?

Video Title: Personnel Planning and Recruiting (Gawker Media)

SYNOPSIS

Gawker Media founder Nick Denton analyzes how his company responded to the 2007–2010 recession. A key was planning for staffing levels.

Discussion Questions

1. Based on what we discussed in Chapter 5, what advice would you give Gawker regarding how to improve its personnel planning?

2. How is it that some organizations succeed during a recession?
3. Evaluate Gawker Media's practice of recruiting new writers from the people who comment on its sites. How would you suggest the company improve its recruiting practices overall?

Video Title: Employee Testing and Selection (Patagonia)

SYNOPSIS

Patagonia strives to select employees whose values are in sync with the philosophies and values of the company. The interviewing process is a multi-faceted one, in which candidates take part in several group interviews. These interviews follow a very conversational style, in an attempt to reveal as much about a potential employee's interests, passions, and personality as possible. It is important that those hired by Patagonia not only have an interest in outdoor activities and the products the company produces, but also are passionate about preserving the environment, which is the mission of Patagonia.

Discussion Questions

1. If you had to create a talent management-type job profile for the average employee at Patagonia, what would the profile look like in terms of its specific contents?
2. What traits does Patagonia look for in its future employees during the interview process?
3. In what respects does Patagonia's employee selection process reflect a talent management approach to selection?
4. What is the employee turnover rate at Patagonia? Is this higher or lower than the industry average? What reason can you give for why Patagonia's turnover rate is as you described?
5. Describe the interview process used by Patagonia. How is this process similar to others in the industry? How does the process used by Patagonia differ?

Video Title: Interviewing Candidates (Zipcar)

SYNOPSIS

Zipcar is a company that allows customers to share a car for a fee as small as a short cab ride. Individuals who become Zipcar members are able to reserve a vehicle with as little advance notice as 1 hour through any wireless device, unlock a car with a card that members carry with them, and drive for the reserved period of time. The goal of Zipcar is to reduce the number of cars being driven and thereby reduce environmental pollution.

Zipcar is a fast-growing innovative company that supports the environment and is socially responsible. This makes it an attractive place to work for many who are looking for a company that is doing something new. When selecting new employees, Zipcar aims to find people who are passionate about the brand, professional, courteous, and presentable. It wants someone who understands the value of the organization and the culture within which the company operates.

Discussion Questions

1. What makes Zipcar an attractive employer for which to work?
2. What do those doing the actual hiring at Zipcar feel are important characteristics to find in potential employees?
3. List three behavioral and three situational questions that you would use to interview Zipcar employment applicants.
4. According to the video, what practices should you avoid during an interview? How do these compare with those we discussed in Chapter 7?