



## What Do We Really Know About the Employment Interview?

### **What is the truth concerning the effectiveness of the interview?**

Validity research has been conducted on the employment interview for 80 plus years and the results demonstrate that there is a marked difference in the effectiveness of the interviewer depending on whether the interview is structured or non-structured. Structured interviews are typically characterized as those having pre-planned questions tied to the competency requirements of the job and that follow a pre-planned process for the evaluation of responses. Non-structured interviews are characterized as those conducted by interviewers with little or no structure or guidance.

When interviewers are left to their own devices, the employment interview is no better than flipping a coin. It has little or no predictive power. When interviewers follow a structured approach, the employment interview has been shown to have high validity. Three different statistical reviews (meta-analytic studies) of the literature on the validity of structured interviews yielded overall average validities of .62 (Arvey and J. Campion, 1982), .44 (McDaniel et al, 1994) and .57 (Huffcutt and Arthur, 1994). For those readers unfamiliar with validity coefficients, these results indicate that structured interviews are as powerful or more so than such well accepted selection techniques as ability tests and assessment centers.

### **What are some recognized best practices for optimizing interviews?**

*Start with a Competency Analysis* - Linking interview questions to the competency requirements of the job ensures that the interview process is job-related and that information is being gathered concerning the full range of competencies that are needed for job success. Typically, competency requirements are established by having one or more job content experts go through a systematic review of behaviorally defined competencies and indicate the competencies associated with job success as well as their relative importance.

*Pre-plan Interview Questions* - Planning the interview questions in advance ensures that the questions asked during the interview are designed to elicit the kind of information needed to make an objective determination of candidate potential. It also ensures that each interviewer has a roadmap for success and makes optimal use of their time with the candidate and that the responsibilities for gathering information across interviewers has been carefully thought out. It also ensures that

the same questions are asked of each candidate which provides a common framework for a fair and objective review of each candidate's potential.

*Use Behaviorally Based Questions* - Not all interview questions are good. Well-designed interview questions provide information about the candidate's behavior in job relevant situations. Perhaps the easiest to design (and many argue the best) behavioral questions are those designed to elicit examples of past behavior in critical job relevant situations. There is ample evidence to support the premise that past behavior predicts future behavior.

*Structure the Evaluation Process* - It is essential that all interviewers follow a common evaluation standard and process. The standard should be related to the requirements of the job and not to the relative quality of the candidates interviewed. The "best of the bunch" still may not be a qualified candidate. Interviewers should be able to defend their evaluations using factual information about candidate responses rather than "gut feel".

*Provide Interviewer Training* - Interviewer training is a key component for driving consistency and quality across interviewers. Ideally interviewer training should be both efficient as well as effective and include such topics as: Using a Structured Interview Guide, Asking Effective Questions, Managing the Interview Process, Evaluating Responses Accurately, and Maintaining Legal Defensibility.

References:

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