



Brian Walters and Associates ***Management Consulting Services***

Purpose:

This document addresses the issue of a structured interview in the hiring process. Following this procedure will ensure that better decisions are made when one wants to add an employee to the company's workforce, starting with the applicants who are allowed to proceed to the first interview stage.

Approach:

It is generally accepted that the hiring of a new employee is one of the most inexact sciences that a business manager can possibly face. This is because of the fact that, in an interview situation, the prospective employee is on his best behaviour as it were, attempting in every way to convince the manager that he/she is the best applicant for the job. This will naturally cause negative factors that might ordinarily be present in his/her persona to be hidden.

A manager who is not skilled at extracting the right information from a potential applicant might erroneously accept that this façade is in fact the real employee, leading to the hiring of a person who might in all likelihood not be a good fit for the business.

A structured interview is recommended for the following reasons:

- The presence of a structured interview process significantly reduces the likelihood of emotions clouding the interview process. Without a structured interview, management has to rely a lot more on gut instinct and feel rather than an established procedure in the decision-making process. In that setting, objective factors might be lost in the emotions that the applicant evokes.

This could take the form of an employee who evokes pity but who is otherwise not qualified being allowed to go on in the interview process. It could also take the form of an applicant who could potentially be an asset to the company being removed from the process because of a subjective, non-job-related factor.

- In accordance with federal law, there are several issues that cannot be discussed as part of the interview process. Some examples are the applicant's age, marital status, ethnicity, or whether or not that applicant has ever been arrested. An inexperienced interviewer could conceivably discover that he/she has placed his company in a legal position that cannot be defended simply by asking an illegal interview question.
- The presence of a structured interview allows the interviewer to remain in control of the interview process. This is especially important for newly appointed or inexperienced members of management. Not being sure about the flow of an



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interview might make the interviewer seem weak; it will definitely cause him/her to lose control of the interview.

Methodology:

A typical structured interview is comprised of specific questions. For each question, there is a range of acceptable answers. From that range, for example, there exists a total possible score of 5 points- 0 being the worst possible response to that question, and 5 being the best.

The interviewer should begin the interview by advising the applicant that he/she will be taking notes throughout the interview. Failure to do this will create an unnecessary nervousness in the mind of the applicant at the sight of the interviewer scribbling after his/her answer has been given.

The interviewer will ask the questions, not necessarily in the order that they are presented on the form. In fact, an experienced interviewer will work these questions into a conversation with the applicant, in the process avoiding the impression that s/he is 'reading from a script'.

For each response given by the applicant to each question, the interviewer will rank the response on a scale of 1 to 5. At the end of the interview (after the applicant has been thanked and has left), the interviewer will tabulate the interview score by adding the points that were assigned to each question.

From the total score generated by this process, the interviewer will calculate a percentage that corresponds to the "success rate" of the applicant on the interview. This is done by totaling the rankings on the individual questions, then dividing that number by the total possible score. It is suggested that any applicants who score less than a 60% not be considered for the position.

There are some questions on the form that are considered "knockout" questions. This means that it might not be a good idea to proceed with the applicant in the selection process if he/she did not give a satisfactory answer on any one of those questions, regardless of the score in the overall interview.

Examples of knockout questions might be "Have you ever been convicted of a crime, other than a minor traffic violation? Are you over the age of 16? Are you available to work on weekends?"

Miscellaneous Considerations:

The structured interview process can be a very effective tool. However, its effectiveness can be reduced if certain precautions are not followed.



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- The interviewer should be careful not to treat this document as a checklist, but rather develop a style that incorporates the asking of these questions into a normal interviewing conversation.
- The primary advantage of this system is that it removes the subjectivity from the interview process. It is incumbent on the interviewer to ensure that the subjectivity remains out of the process. An interviewer who is not using the system properly will formulate a final score in his/her mind for a particular applicant, based on subjective factors, then try to tailor the scores on the individual questions to reach that total. The issue of what the final score should be should not be considered until the interview has been conducted.