



# How to Conduct a Successful Interview

Presented by the  
U.S. Office of Personnel Management



# Agenda

- When does the hiring manager conduct the interview?
- Structured versus Hiring Manager interviews
- Steps for a successful interview
  - Developing interview questions
  - Preparing for the interview
  - Conducting the interview
  - Taking notes
  - Other tips
- Things to avoid
- Additional resources



# When to Conduct the Interview?



# Structured Interview vs Hiring Manager Interview

## Did You Know?

Structured Interview	Hiring Manager Interview
All candidates are asked the same questions	All candidates are asked the same questions
All candidates are given the same amount of time to respond	All candidates are given the same amount of time to respond
Notes are scored	Notes are <u>NOT</u> scored



# Steps for a Successful Interview

- Developing interview questions
- Preparing for the interview
- Conducting the interview
- Taking notes
- Other tips



# Developing Interview Questions

- Hiring manager interviews are well-suited for assessing competencies such as:
  - Teamwork
  - Oral Communication
  - Interpersonal Skills
  - Conflict Management
  - Influencing/Negotiating
- Hiring manager interviews typically assess 4-6 competencies unless the job is unique or at a high level



# Developing Interview Questions

## Tips for Writing Interview Questions:

- Reflective of the job and tied to competencies identified through the job analysis
- Open-ended
- Clear and concise
- Free of jargon
- Written with superlative adjectives (e.g., most, last, worst, least, best)
- Potentially provide a context for the question



# Developing Interview Questions

More Tips for Writing Interview Questions:

- Use the STAR Model
  - Interview questions should elicit three important pieces of information from the candidate:
    - **Situation or Task:** Describes the context or background for the event or the tasks involved
    - **Action:** Describes exactly what was done or what would be done
    - **Result:** Describes the consequence of the candidate's actions



# Develop Interview Questions

- Behavioral

- Draw from candidate's actual behavior during past experiences that demonstrate job-related competencies
  - The underlying premise is that the best predictor of future behavior on the job is past behavior under similar circumstances



- Situational

- Present realistic job scenarios or dilemmas and ask how applicants *would* respond
  - The underlying premise is that people's intentions are closely tied to their actual behavior



# Example Behavioral Question

- Example Competency: Interpersonal Skills

Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.

- Example Question:

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



# Example Situational Question

- Example Competency: Interpersonal Skills
  - Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.
- Example Question:
  - A very angry client walks up to your desk. She says she was told your office sent her an overdue check 5 days ago. She claims she has not received the check. She says she has bills to pay, and no one will help her. How would you handle this situation?



# Develop Probe Questions

- It may be necessary to use probe questions to guide the candidate in providing the three important pieces of information necessary to accurately assess their response
  - Do not use leading probes that convey the answers
  - Do narrow in on the candidate's specific roles and actions
    - Seek clarification when candidates say “we did...” or “our group...”
    - Seek clarification when candidates are vague
  - Do not challenge by word or expression any statements made by the candidate
  - Do ask open-ended questions unless looking for a yes/no response



# Example Probes for Behavioral Questions

- Situation/Task probes
  - Who was involved?
  - What factors led up to this situation?
- Action probes
  - How did you respond?
  - What was your role?
- Result probes
  - What was the outcome?
  - Is there anything you would have done differently?



# Example Probes for Situational Questions

- Situation/Task probes
  - Why do you believe this situation occurred?
  - What do you consider to be the most critical issues in this situation?
- Action probes
  - What is the first thing you would say or do?
  - What factors would affect your course of action?
  - What other actions could you take?
- Result probes
  - How do you think your action would be received?
  - What do you consider as benefits of your action?



# Preparing for the Interview

- Know the tasks and competencies
- Be organized and prepared for each interview
- Look and act professional



# Preparing for the Interview

- Create a comfortable atmosphere
- Ensure the interview room is quiet, non-threatening, and accessible



## Did You Know?

Creating a positive atmosphere helps candidates relax, encourages them to reveal more, and promotes a positive image of your organization.



# Knowledge Check

Creating a comfortable atmosphere for candidates:

- A. Is not needed
- B. Helps candidates relax
- C. Encourages them to reveal more
- D. Promotes a positive image of your organization

Answer: All but A. Although not required, creating a comfortable atmosphere for the candidates makes for a better interview experience for everyone.



# Conducting the Interview

- Warmly welcome the candidates
- Explain the interview process
- Ask if they have any questions for you



# Conducting the Interview

- You CAN ask the candidates about their:
  - Specific roles and responsibilities at past or current jobs
  - Likes and dislikes pertaining to their work
  - Job knowledge and other job-related experiences



# Conducting the Interview

- You CANNOT ask the candidates about their:
  - Age
  - Sex
  - Race
  - National Origin
  - Religion
  - Marital or family status
  - Disabilities or health status
  - Any other job-irrelevant factor



# Knowledge Check

Which of the following CANNOT be asked during an interview?

- A. Candidate's race
- B. Candidate's religion
- C. Candidate's health status
- D. Candidate's ability to speak Spanish

Answer: All but D. You CAN ask a candidate about their ability to speak a foreign language if that is deemed critical to successful job performance (via a valid job analysis).



# Conducting the Interview

- Avoid giving non-verbal queues as an interviewer
  - Nodding head
  - Tapping the pencil
  - Looking at other objects instead of at the candidate
- Avoid evaluating non-verbal behaviors of the candidate
  - Fidgeting
  - Tapping of feet
  - Shaky voice



# Taking Notes

- You'll want to take good notes in case you need to refer to them later
- Good notes:
  - Summarize the content and delivery of actual responses
  - Are professional and non-judgmental
  - Are of sufficient quality and quantity to justify your evaluations



# Taking Notes

- Your notes should NOT:
  - Be evaluative statements about the candidate, his/her responses, or his/her personality
  - Refer to demographic characteristics of the candidate



# Knowledge Check

Your notes should include the following:

- A. Candidate's current work responsibilities
- B. Candidate's role in latest projects
- C. Candidate's attire (to help jog your memory later)
- D. Candidate's goals for the next 5 years

Answer: All but C. Your notes should NOT include comments about the candidate's appearance or anything else that is not job-related.



# Other Tips

## Did you know?

Interviewing is a two-way street: While you are evaluating candidates, they will also be evaluating you.

To make the interview the best experience for everyone, some additional tips are presented on the next slide.



# Other Tips

- Be a good and unbiased listener
- Maintain control of the interview
- Treat all candidates the same
- Ensure your notes are comprehensive, professional, and non-judgmental
- At the end of the interview, thank the candidates and explain next steps
- Remain fair and objective during evaluations



# Things to Avoid

- Don't rely on first impressions
- Avoid negative emphasis
- Don't focus on superficial factors
- Beware of candidate-order effects
- Don't succumb to pressure to hire
- Don't over emphasize nonverbal behavior



# Knowledge Check

The following should be avoided EXCEPT:

- A. Taking a candidate's appearance into account
- B. Giving greater consideration to a candidate who went to same college you did
- C. Trying to fill a position quickly
- D. Interpreting a candidate's answers and their non-verbal cues

Answer: All should be avoided. Only focus on the candidate's responses.



# Additional Resources

- Personnel Assessment and Selection Resource Center  
<http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/assessment-and-selection/>
- Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures  
<http://www.uniformguidelines.com/uniformguidelines.html>
- Structured Interviews: A Practical Guide (2008)  
<http://apps.opm.gov/ADT/ContentFiles/SIGuide09.08.08.pdf>



# Questions? Comments?

If you have additional questions or comments, please contact us at:

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