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HIRE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  26

Chapter 7 | Techniques for Behavior-
Based Interviewing

Techniques for Behavior-Based Interviewing

Looking at a candidate's skills and experience is only going to reveal so much information. You need to know more than that in order to be able to select the best candidates from among the good to poor ones. When you find out more about their ability to function in the position while using their skills, along with their real character and behavior, it will help you to better understand the candidate's likelihood of success.

Why this is important can be seen by comparing two football players who play the same position. For the sake of the example, let's say that they both have the same skills and level of experience. Looking a little closer, you find that one of them has better statistics than the other and makes more money. What is the difference? They're both professionals. The one with the better stats is apparently putting forth better effort, which puts him in the right place at the right time. It is likely that he will be successful no matter what team he joins.

Today's interviewing techniques focus more on the behavioral experiences of an individual rather than on the skills and past training. It is believed that if an individual has the right attitude, aptitude and behavior, that they can learn whatever skills are needed for the position.

Use Reporter's Questions for Best Results

The basic reporter's questions – the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How – are the tools you need for behavioral analysis. By applying them to the issues related to behavior, such as work ethic, ego, persuasiveness, courage, etc., you can determine the value of a candidate for a particular position. In order to ask the right questions, you will need to determine beforehand which traits are essential for someone who will be successful in it.

A good interviewer will use behavioral questions to approve or eliminate candidates accordingly. A nurse who is currently



The Six Reporter's Questions Will Give You Better Results Faster

working at a competitor's organization might have all sorts of experience working with patients. A lack of the right behavioral traits may indicate that she would not work out well in the position you have available. This could even indicate that you are looking at the problem child of the other organization – and not at the superstar you need. There still is some truth to the adages, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," or, "A leopard can't change its spots," and the right kind of interviewing can reveal potential problems.

If your interviews determine that someone has the right traits, then you may want to train and develop them further to hone their skills. This kind of person will be worth the investment of time.

Top Questions to Get Behavioral Responses

When seeking to assess a candidate on a behavioral trait, you want to formulate your questions to elicit a response based on that trait. By way of an example, if you want to find out how creative a candidate is, you can ask, "In what ways have you demonstrated creativity at work in the last 60 days?" Or, you might ask, "What kind of creative projects have you done recently at work? And was it successful?"

Here are some key behavioral areas you might investigate in an interview, along with the responses you want to hear.

Intelligence

- a) Analytical
- b) Conceptual
- c) Creative
- d) Objective
- e) Cultural

Work Ethic

- a) Commitment
- b) Pride
- c) Passion
- d) Empathy
- e) Desire To Lead

Get Things Done

- a) Focused/To The Point
- b) Solutions Oriented
- c) Goal Oriented
- d) Pride In Results
- e) Prioritize

Courage

- a) Willingness To Disagree
- b) Perseverance
- c) Stand Up For Belief

Ego

- a) Self Confidence
- b) Self Reliance
- c) Presence

Persuasive

- a) Empathy
- b) Desire To Convince
- c) Problem Solver

Communicator

- a) Clear And Concise
- b) Complete Answers
- c) Listening Skills

Resourceful

- a) Creative
- b) Flexible
- c) Low Supervision

Leadership

- a) Responsibility
- b) Team Player
- c) Proactive Vs. Reactive

During most candidate selection processes, only candidates who pass the early pre-screening stage are sent on to the hiring manager. At this stage, the hiring manager should be asking behavioral questions to determine the right person for the job. Questions need to be asked to determine their depth of experience and ones that are also related to their cultural fit into the specific department.



*Asking the Right Questions Will Give You the Right Answers
You Need*

If the candidate is going to be interviewed by more than one person, the questions should be divided so as to not duplicate the same material. This will enable the interviewers to cover more ground.

When behavioral-based interviewing is used in a healthcare organization setting, some powerful results are certainly worth noting:

- Increased retention leads to decreases in turnover of up to 50 percent.
- A more experienced staff improves clinical care, outcomes, and quality.

- Improved patient satisfaction drives higher levels of productivity and employee satisfaction.
- All of these factors work together to improve clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction, as well as the organization's financial performance.

Behavioral Interview Sample Question

Here is an example of behavioral interviewing. If you were a candidate applying for a job, think about how you would describe yourself when asked to finish this sentence, "I am a _____."

Following are the top five responses for this sentence, "I am a _____":

1. team player
2. hard worker
3. people person
4. self-starter
5. dependable employee.



Is a Team Player What You Are Looking For?

Now consider what these responses tell you as an interviewer. What do you now know about the person who gave you these responses? Would you answer:

- Nothing really
- Only vague information
- Candidates' own opinion of themselves.

The basis of behavioral interviewing is that the past performance of an individual is the best way to predict future behavior. During the interview process, questions are asked in a way that gives the candidate the opportunity to tell you about past performances, experiences, or skills. You also tell the candidate to give as many specific details as possible when they give their answer. His or her response will enable you to tell how they would perform in tasks that are similar to the ones in your open position.

Here is a reason for doing this from everyday life. Have you ever applied for a mortgage for a home? Besides the paperwork and fees, what information is the mortgage company most interested in? You can be sure that they will take a serious look at your credit score and credit history. Why? They will base your ability to pay in the future largely upon your actual repayment history and how you handled your finances in the past.

This is just one of many examples of where past behavior is used to predict future performance. It is also used to make everyday decisions concerning second dates, how you bet on a horse race, whether or not you ask a babysitter to come back a second time to watch your children, etc.



Past Performance Is Often Used to Predict Future Performance

Comparing Results from Different Types of Questions

Let's take a moment to look at what kind of information we can expect to receive from both a behavioral and a traditional approach – and then compare them. Here are two examples:

1. At Prestige Medical Center, our patients are our top priority. Many patients find themselves in the hospital unexpectedly and their stress level is very high. If they become

upset with something that has happened or something they feel should have happened but didn't, we need to continue to be responsive. We call this service recovery. Do you have experience with service recovery?

2. At Prestige Medical Center, our patients are our top priority. Many patients find themselves in the hospital unexpectedly and their stress level is very high. If they become upset with something that has happened or something they feel should have happened but didn't, we need to continue to be responsive. Can you tell me about a time that you worked with an upset patient, how you dealt with it and what the outcome was?

The facts given in the above information is the same – only the ending is different. Now let's see how these two questions differ.

Question 1 can be answered with a simple "Yes" or "No." This will seriously limit the flow of information being given.

Question 2, on the other hand, encourages the candidate to provide information that will let the interviewer see how well he or she performed under similar situations.

- Non-behavioral-based questions are closed-ended. Candidates can answer with a "yes" or "no" or other brief, non-specific response.
- Behavioral-based questions are open-ended. Candidates must answer with a specific example or story.
- Behavioral-based questions are not hypothetical. Do not use language such as, "What would you do?" Use prompts such as, "Tell me about a time when you . . ."
- Behavioral-based questions are tougher to answer. They reveal what candidates did, not what they would do hypothetically.

Choosing the Behavioral-Based Questions You Need

At this point you are probably wondering the following:

- How might I identify the skills that are most important and critical to success in a given position?

- As a hiring manager, how do I develop behavioral-based questions that help me identify the right person for the job?

Before you ever start preparing your questions, you need to be aware that much of the work is done beforehand for you. You just need to use the tools mentioned throughout the book, *The Right Hire*, such as the SMART Search Prep Questionnaire and the SMART Skills Survey. When you use these tools in the meeting with the hiring manager, to align expectations and organize interviewing strategies, you will have a thorough understanding of the skills needed and will be able to identify the major issues for the position.



We Have Provided the Tools You Need

Once you have the information, here are the steps you can follow to get the behavioral-based questions needed to determine the best candidate. After you have completed identifying the core competencies and skills needed for the position, add these resources:

1. The job description
2. The Skills Survey
3. The Candidate Scorecard
4. Personality Profiles you plan to use
5. Tests you plan to use
6. The characteristics of your top performers, especially the skills and behaviors they demonstrate on a daily basis
7. Your organization's standards of behavior.

The next step is to identify and prioritize the job-specific competencies that are most important in order to ensure the candidate will be successful in the new position. Let these serve as a foundation upon which you can develop your behavioral-based questions. (For a comprehensive list of job and work environment competencies and questions for consideration, go to www.ropella.com/therighthire, and download our Behavioral Interviewing Techniques Guide).

Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviews

Listed below are examples of behavioral-based interview questions for some common, healthcare related competencies:

1. Exercising good judgment

- What is the most difficult decision you have had to make? How did you arrive at that decision? What was the result of your decision?
- Describe a situation where you handled decisions under pressure or when time limits were a factor. What was the outcome?

2. Critical thinking skills

- Describe a time when you had to analyze a problem and generate a solution. What was the result?
- Tell me about a situation that did not work out as expected and for which you were responsible for deciding the next steps. Where did this lead?

3. Exercising initiative

- Can you tell me about a time when you went beyond your manager's normal job expectations in order to get the job done? How were you recognized?
- Tell me about a time when you identified a new, unusual, or different approach for addressing a problem or task. What was the benefit?

4. Patient orientation

- Describe a time when an irate patient or patient family member confronted you. How did you handle the situation?

5. Continuous learning

- Tell me about a specific situation when you did not have the knowledge or skill to complete a task or assignment. How did you overcome this challenge?

6. Initiative

- Give me an example of when you had to go beyond the call of duty to get a job done. How were you rewarded?

7. Adaptability

- Give me an example of a time when you had two important projects competing for your time. How did you select the priority?

8. Teamwork

- What did you do in your last job to contribute to a team environment? How were you recognized for your contribution?

9. Communication

- Tell me about a time when you had a miscommunication with a team member or patient. How did you resolve this communication breakdown?

THE RIGHT HIRE

“The most important decisions that business people make are not *what* decisions, but *who* decisions.”

- Jim Collins, Author of *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... And Others Don't*



In most organizations, making the right hire means the difference between success and failure. This book helps you recruit great people and keep them loyal to the organization by helping you understand, assimilate and execute today's best processes, programs and practices for Sourcing and Marketing to potential candidates, Assessing and Recruiting top talent, Retaining & Training employees and Transforming your organization for the better.

What you will learn from this book

- How to successfully execute the all-important preparation stage of talent sourcing
- What to do to bring into alignment the whole interview-selection team
- Where to scout, network, and narrowcast in order to recruit the best candidates
- What techniques to use to screen and assess talent using proven tools
- How to use behavioral-based questions and interviewing techniques to uncover quality information that leads to great hiring decisions
- What can be done to dramatically improve the negotiations, offer, acceptance, start date and on-boarding processes
- And much, much more...

“People interviewing have choices, and *The Right Hire* presents the right things to do not only attract the top talent, but also to assess for culture fit, personal characteristics, experiences and credentials that will fit with your opportunity. With the growing need for companies to hire the very best talent available, *The Right Hire* is a must read.”

- Steve Watson,
International Chairman, Stanton Chase

“Too often making the right hire is seen as a matter of luck. It should not be. Follow the steps in this book and it will improve your success rate dramatically.”

- Yves Lermusi, CEO, Checkster



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Patrick B. Ropella is Chairman & CEO of the Ropella Group, a 25-year-old international Executive Search, Leadership Transformation, and Corporate Consulting firm in Florida with clients among the world's most prestigious corporations. The Ropella Group focuses on working with mid-level management and executive-level leaders regarding their search, leadership, and/or consulting needs across most roles and functions. Patrick authored the book and web based training program, *The Right Hire – Mastering the Art of SMART Talent Management*. The SMART Talent Management System covers Sourcing, Marketing, Assessing, Recruiting, Retention, Training and Transforming top talent. Patrick's status as a thought expert, and writer on talent management & leadership has been promoted, featured and published in a wide variety of trade magazines and business publications, and leadership and executive search industry blogs and journals. Patrick regularly speaks at webinars, career fairs, conferences, trades shows and more. For more information about Growing Your Great Company through Ropella services, visit www.ropella.com, or call Patrick Ropella at (850) 983 - 4777.