

INTERVIEWING — TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCE

Obtaining the truth from candidates in the interview is becoming increasingly difficult. A recent study found 57 percent of candidates who recently had been interviewed believed that telling lies during the job interview is acceptable. What do candidates lie about? Thirty-three percent exaggerate their skills, 28 percent omit negative information, and 27 percent lie about their salary level. Some even lie about having a college degree.

What can we do to interview more successfully in light of the false information often presented in the interview?

First, recognize that there is ample room for error in the whole interview process. It provides only a small sample of an applicant's behavior and, more often than not, the candidate's verbal facility (or lack of it) determines how favorably he is perceived. Since interviewers have their own biases and often interpret the same information in different ways, it is no surprise that interviewing is a highly flawed process for making decisions about the success of a candidate for any given job.

Often interviewers are poorly trained and do not focus on the most important job factors. They get distracted by the applicant's background and previous job experiences, who the applicant knows, or where he went to school. Or they ask hypothetical questions, such as "What would you do if. . . ."

There are four major questions that must be answered in the interview:

- Can the person do the job?
- Will the person do the job?
- Can the person work with others?
- Will the person grow?

The first "can-do" factor requires some measurement of the candidate's skills, experience, training, etc., to determine the level at which she will be functioning in the job. *Job experience does not equate to job effectiveness.*

Just because somebody can do the job, however, does not mean he will do the job. Determining motivation, job interests, reliability, and overall job fit is the second most important question to answer.

The ability to work with others is very often the critical factor in job success. The interview provides an opportunity to uncover an applicant's people attitudes and ability to work cooperatively with others. Often these attitudes, however, are masked by good social skills. We can all be charming for the brief period of a job interview.

The final question is whether the person will grow in the job, continue to learn, and be ready for changes that inevitably will occur. The ability to grow ultimately provides more return on the

company's investment in the individual when he can assume more responsibility and produce increasingly valuable results.

Behavioral Interviewing Increases Accuracy

Accuracy in evaluating candidates is greatly enhanced when selection decisions are based on specific job-related examples of the candidate's past behaviors. Statements about specific behaviors exhibited in the past have much greater validity than statements about attitudes or feelings. We all say that we are going to do the right things, but do we actually do them?

It is important not to telegraph what you are looking for but to ask candidates to give you specific examples of how they handled a situation. For instance, ask how they approached an unhappy customer or ask about a disagreement at work and how they dealt with it. Or ask them to give you an example of a time when they had multiple demands occurring at once with similar due dates. Again, how did they handle it?

In evaluating the applicant's response, it is important to understand the context in which the behavior occurred. Is the behavior appropriate to the situation? Was there something the individual should have done that wasn't done? Is it believable? What did the candidate actually do to handle the situation and what were the results? Ask follow-up questions so that you fully understand the response.



Behavioral interviewing greatly reduces the candidate's ability to fake, although it does not entirely eliminate it. It has the advantage of using specific past behavior to predict future behavior and does not simply rely on what the applicant says he will do or has reported on the resume. Obtaining several examples for a given behavioral skill greatly enhances your ability to evaluate a candidate's competency. This style of

interviewing helps you to identify more clearly a candidate's strengths and limitations, looking for patterns in the behaviors.

When using behavioral interviewing questions based on key job competencies, you increase your chances of receiving answers to the important questions about whether the candidate can and will do the job and will work well with others. Training hiring managers will help them to integrate behavioral interviewing skills into their selection procedures.

Interviewing provides for only a limited sample of behavior. You can increase your chances of accuracy by combining interviewing with psychometric testing, references, and background checks. All of these tools together increase the odds of hiring right the first time and avoiding the consequences of hiring individuals who do not tell the truth.