

Assessment Methods:

Behavioural Interviewing

Benefits of the behavioural interview

- Enables the exploration of the candidate's previous knowledge, experience and behaviours, providing evidence of existing capabilities in response to real or hypothetical situations rather than the candidate's self-assessment
- A versatile assessment method that can be used to assess for all role types and capabilities
- Past performance has the strongest correlation to future success and the behavioural interview is one useful way to assess that past performance
- However, the interview in isolation has only a 0.51 predictive validity and therefore needs to be used in combination with other capability assessment methods to achieve more reliable results.¹

At what stage of the selection process should interviews be used?

Interviews are best used once you've narrowed the candidate pool by means of other assessments, as they tend to be resource intensive.

Interviewing as a conversational tool?

Through a conversation, behavioural interviews allow both the agency and candidate to explore whether the candidate's knowledge, experience and capabilities are relevant to the role.

Behavioural interviews provide agencies with useful insight into what a candidate thinks and feels, what they value most within a workplace

setting, and what motivates and engages them to perform in their role.

Agencies can also utilise the interview as an opportunity to clarify and seek further information about previous assessment results.

What is behavioural interviewing?

Behavioural interviewing is based on the premise that if a candidate has demonstrated the behaviours of interest in the past then the same behaviours are likely to be demonstrated in the future. The technique therefore focuses on exploring a candidate's past experiences in demonstrating behaviours that support the capability level of interest in a future role.



Subconscious bias can affect our choices of “suitable” candidates. We tend to select the person who is most like the type of person we associate with the role (which has been demonstrated through Harvard University’s research on Implicit Association). Typically, a multi-person gender balanced panel is used to limit the possibility that an individual panel member’s biases will influence the final decision.

Behavioural interviewing is a structured means of assessing candidates against the type and level of requirements for roles at all levels and across all occupational fields. Care must be taken to ensure that the questions crafted are appropriate and relevant to the type and level of capabilities needed in the specific role.

The interview is just one of a number of assessment tools and should not be treated as the only determinant of the final selection decision. The relative weight to be given to the interview and all other forms of assessment to be used should be determined as part of the initial planning for the recruitment process.

What are some examples of behavioural interviewing questions?

Questions can be devised to assess a candidate’s past experiences in relation to one or more capabilities. All the interview questions provide an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their communication skills. Each question should ideally assess no more than 2 capabilities.

Examples of interview questions which assess two capabilities include:

- Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer? What did you do and what was the outcome? **[Commit to customer service/ Communicate Effectively]**

- Give me an example of a time when you analysed an established work process and recommended solutions that resulted in improvements to your work? **[Think and solve problems/ Influence and Negotiate/]**
- What is the most stressful work situation you have had to deal with? What happened and how did you deal with the situation? **[Display Resilience and Courage/ Manage Self]**
- Give an example of a time when you have led a team to improve organisational performance? **[Inspire Direction and Purpose/ Optimise Business Outcomes]**

For each question asked, the interviewers are seeking to record the Situation, Task, Action(s) and Results (STAR approach); also known as the Situation, Action or Outcome (SAO method) that the candidate describes.

How does behavioural interviewing work in practice?

Prior to interviewing candidates, the panel discusses and agrees on:

- The number and type of questions to be asked in order to cover the spectrum of required capabilities at the required level.
- The type of responses expected from candidates for each question to demonstrate the capability at the required level.
- The relative weighting for each of the interview questions (they may be equally weighted or they may vary).
- The allocation of questions to panel members.
- The interview length.



- When and how much probing will be permitted in the interview situation for all candidates. (Interviewers should record in their notes the probing question(s) asked).
- The panel should also decide, prior to the interviews, whether clarification or probing is needed for one or more candidates in relation to any previously completed assessments (e.g. self-reported preferences in a personality questionnaire to better understand how someone will behave in their next role). These questions should be asked after the common set to be asked of all applicants.

During the interviews, interviewers should:

- maintain a conversational flow to allow the candidate to be at ease
- take detailed notes (and where possible, record candidate comments verbatim) to support post interview panel discussions (these should be kept after the interviews as part of the official record of the selection decision and to provide a basis for evidence-based feedback to candidates)
- allow enough time between interviewing candidates to discuss the performance of each candidate and rate their performance while it is 'fresh' in the interviewer's memories.

Probing questions during interviews:

The panel can use probing questions to:

- check the veracity of claims made by candidates
- assess the depth and breadth of their individual responsibility/ actions in achieving the business outcomes they cite as examples

- explore their thinking styles and motivations.

For example:

Capability Question: Tell me about a time when you had to overcome a particularly difficult obstacle in order to achieve results.

Probing example questions include:

- Why did you choose that approach?
- What were the results?
- How did you feel about that?
- If you had to do it all over again, what if anything would you do differently?

Post each of the interviews and again once all interviews have been conducted, the interview panel should:

- Review their ratings across all candidates on each of the interview questions to ensure they have not rated a candidate more leniently or more harshly because they were interviewed first, in the middle or last.
- Agree on the referees to be contacted (including whether additional referees should be sought) and on the issues to be explored in the referee reports.

Once the referee reports have been received, the panel should finalise the selection decision having regard to all assessment results and the agreed relative weight to be given to each assessment tool.

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¹ Schmidt, F. & Hunter, J. (1998). The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and Theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings, *Psychological Bulletin*, 124 (2), 262-274

