

Behavioral Interviewing: The Art of the Good Interview

In theory, the face-to-face interview is the time to get a good read on a candidate's work style and potential. In reality, it's often not the case—just think of how many times a new hire has “surprised” you with his or her lack of experience or motivation . . . or both.

Behavioral interviewing, on the other hand—which is based on the premise that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations—allows you to get to know a potential candidate and how he or she will perform on the job. According to Quintessential Careers, “behavioral interviewing is said to be 55 percent predictive of future on-the-job behavior, while traditional interviewing is only 10 percent predictive.” It's an incredible difference, yet The College of Brockport in New York reports that only 30 percent of companies use this interviewing technique.

The secret to behavioral interviewing's success is it's a comprehensive process that uses a series of job- and culture-specific in-depth questions. Leddy Group has been using behavioral interviewing for the last decade. “It's almost like magic,” said Susannah Chance, VP of Human Resources for Leddy Group. “When you ask specific and structured questions that reflect the job and the working environment, the candidate's answers really do tell you everything you need to know.”

There are generally six steps to follow in conducting a behavioral interview:

1. **Focus on the job.** Each position has its own set of required and desired behaviors and competencies. Develop your must-have list for the job you're trying to fill.
2. **Focus on the skills.** Now that you've identified the behaviors and competencies, determine the specific skill sets that are necessary to succeed in the job.
3. **Focus on *focused* questions.** You know what you want in a candidate, now develop specific and very detailed questions that will give you more than yes or no answers. For example, you could ask a potential secretary if he or she knows how to schedule appointments using Outlook, but to get a better idea of his or her skill set, you could ask the benefits and drawbacks of scheduling a meeting with Outlook. In addition, you should ask questions that will help you determine if the candidate would be a good fit within the company and the specific department. For example, ask questions that relate to your company culture.
4. **Focus on the interview.** Even if you go off on tangents during the interview, make sure to ask each question on your list and take detailed notes on all the answers.
5. **Focus on the responses.** When you ask the right questions, the potential candidate will give you a strong indication of the way he or she will perform on the job. For each response, rank the answer on a scale of 1 – 3 (1 being “strongly demonstrated skill” and 3 being “did not demonstrate skill”).

6. **Focus on the results.** When you ask the same in-depth questions to all your candidates, you'll be able to easily compare them based on identical elements. In most cases, this means your ultimate decision is the right candidate for the job.

“We recently sourced a Purchasing & Inventory Control Manager through Leddy Group,” said Andrew White, HR Manager for Upper Valley Press, Inc. “Our experience from the pre-screening dialogue through final selection resulted in a well-matched candidate who has stepped into our organization with no disruption to productivity. We feel strongly that ‘job fit’ is a blend of skills and temperament. Behavioral interviewing helps us identify how candidates will apply their skills within our organization.”

For more information on how Leddy Group can use behavioral interviewing techniques in placing your future candidates, please contact Susannah Chance at 866-LEDDY HR.