

Tips for best practice interviewing

By Hilary Sayers on 29th November 2013

Behavioural interviewing is a concept well known to HR professionals. It's known to produce consistently better results than other recruitment selection techniques. But how many of us can claim to exercise best practice in our behavioural interviewing, or can really help line managers improve their technique and, therefore, their interviewing results?

Here are four key points to consider in best practice interviewing:

1. Understand the position you are seeking to fill.

A well-prepared position description is essential, as it will define the job's:

- Objectives – the overriding purpose of the position; why it exists.
- Accountabilities – what will the incumbent be accountable for? What outputs does the position deliver?
- Responsibilities – the day-to-day tasks and activities that the incumbent will be involved in.
- Challenges – are there any inherent challenges in the job that will need to be overcome?

2. Determine the critical competencies of the job.

Every job role requires different competencies, but all jobs within an organisation may require some central, common competencies. Competencies are a universal language that helps us understand and measure on-the-job performance. Selecting the right competencies to interview for is a complex and important task. Complex because competencies cover a very wide range of skills and important because, if well conceived, they can provide an organisation with a real competitive edge.

3. Planning for the Interview.

Behavioural interviewing, built on the notion that past performance is the best predictor of future performance, structures questions to bring out real work experiences, rather than considered responses to hypothetical questions. Behavioural interview questions typically begin with "Tell me ...", "Describe ...", "What have you ...".

When conducting a behavioural interview it can help to keep in mind that individuals can learn, and build skills, from both good experiences and bad. It is important to note some people who do things naturally, with little understanding of why they do it, may have difficulty explaining their behaviour.

4. Assess the candidates' learning agility.

Most candidates will have to develop some skills on the job, and learning agility is a key predictor of a person's ability to adapt, grow and learn on the job. Agile learners will typically be able to provide evidence of learning from their experiences during an interview.