

# INTERVIEW STYLES

## 1. Behavioural Interviewing

### What is the Behavioural Interview?

The behavioural interview is based on the premise that the best way to predict future behaviour is to determine and evaluate past behaviour. This type of interview is different, and takes special preparation and skill to perform well. First, an employer determines a profile of desired behaviours. Some behaviours and characteristics employers may attempt to measure include:

- Customer service
- Communications
- Teamwork
- Initiative
- Planning
- Organization
- Motivation
- Problem-solving
- Leadership
- Stress Tolerance
- Flexibility

Next, the interviewer asks an open-ended question designed to stimulate recollection of a situation that would lead to a desired behaviour. Some examples of situations that may provoke desired or undesired behaviours are:

- Balancing/prioritizing several tasks within a short period of time.
- Handling customer conflict.
- Dealing with an unproductive or uncooperative colleague.
- Finding better ways to perform a task.

The interviewer asks for an overview of the situation, including the candidate's role, other players involved, key events, and the outcome. The interviewer may ask follow-up questions like, "What did you do?" or "What did you say?" For example, for flexibility, the interviewer might ask: "Describe a situation that required several things to be done at the same time. What was your action? What was the result?" For leadership, the interviewer might ask: "Describe a situation in which your efforts influenced the actions of others. What was your action? What was the result?"



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The acronym “STAR” provides a guide for formulating answers for behavioural questions.

S- Describe the Situation in which you were involved.

T- Describe the Task to be performed.

A- What was your Approach to the problem?

R- What were the Results of your actions?

The interviewer documents your responses and compares actual behaviours in a situation to the desired profile of behaviours.

## Differences between Behavioural and Traditional Interviews

- The behavioural interviewer will ask a candidate to provide details and will not allow him/her to theorize or generalize about events and actions.
- The behavioural interview will focus on actual past action, not what you “should” or “would” have done. Some interviewers, however, will follow-up with questions such as, “Looking back on this experience, what would you have done differently?”
- The behavioural interviewer is more interactive with the candidate and will continue probing with follow-up questions or refocusing in order to get the information needed.
- The behavioural interview may be longer and the interviewer will likely be taking copious notes.

## 2. Case Interviewing

A case interview is a job interview in which the applicant is given a question/situation/problem/challenge and asked to resolve the situation. The case problem is often a business situation or a business case that the interviewer has worked on in real life.

After the applicant is given information about the case, the applicant is expected to ask the interviewer logical and sequential questions that will enable the applicant to understand the situation, probe deeper into relevant areas, gather pertinent information and arrive at a solution or recommendation for the question or situation at hand.

Firms use case interviews to evaluate analytical ability and problem-solving skills; they are looking not for a “correct” answer” but for an understanding of how the applicant thinks and how the applicant approaches problems.



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**During case interviews, interviewers are generally looking for the following skills.**

- Numerical and verbal reasoning skills
- Communication and presentation skills
- Business skills and commercial awareness

Candidates are often asked to estimate a specific number, often a commercial figure (such as market size or profitability). Candidates are expected to demonstrate reasoning rather than produce the exact answer.

## **3. Structured Interview**

Sometimes referred to as a patterned interview, the structured interview is very straightforward. The interviewer has a standard set of questions that are asked of all candidates. This makes it easier for the interviewer to evaluate and compare candidates fairly. The main purpose of a structured interview is to pinpoint job skills that are essential to the position.

Developing thought-provoking questions involves a careful and thorough analysis of the position to determine the core competencies required. These may include skills such as verbal and written communication, decision-making, consensus-building, time management, honesty, team-building, and interpersonal skills. Many organizations will give each candidate a score using a specially planned rating scale (for example: a 1 to 10 scale). The questions selected for the interview can be situational, observational, or personal; this depends on the position and the interviewer. There should also be flexibility for the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and explore further interesting elements of a candidate's answers.

### **The Benefits or Features of the Structured Interview**

- It is legitimate and reliable.
- It controls the flow of the interview.
- It addresses the employee's particular concerns.
- It makes the interview the same for every interviewee, and this ensures equal opportunity.
- Similar competencies are evaluated in each meeting, which controls reliability.
- Questions are pre-written, reducing nervousness for the interviewer.
- It maximizes the interviewer's time and company expense.



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## 4. Situational Interview

Situational interviewing techniques focus on what candidates would do in a specific situation. This technique involves questions that describe a hypothetical situation based on challenging, real life, job-related occurrences and ask the candidates how they would handle the problem. The interviewer plays a role such as that of an irate client or customer, or a difficult team member.

What makes situational interviewing techniques more effective than behaviour? Situational questions may be useful with less experienced candidates. Inexperienced candidates can demonstrate their competencies as they might relate to your company through simulated situations.

Situational interviewing is not a replacement for the traditional or behaviour interview methods, but should be an addition to enhance the interview and make it more effective. Situational questioning will probe for job-related skills that you may not find under the more traditional interview methods. Candidates who have been trained to handle the traditional interview questions will find it more difficult to respond to situational and behaviour questions. Interviewers must be patient with the applicants because the use of situational and behaviour questioning requires some thought and applicants may not have been exposed to these types of questions. The interviewer should expect periods of silence while the applicant formulates answers, but, at the same time, they should be persistent in requesting specific information using what they have learned from past situations.

## 5. Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured Interviews are a method of interviews where questions can be changed or adapted to meet the respondent's intelligence, understanding or belief. Unlike a structured interview they do not offer a limited, pre-set range of answers for a respondent to choose, but instead advocate listening to how each individual person responds to the question. Unstructured interviews are not specifically formatted, but generally use some key questions to sense a candidate's qualifications. These types of interviews are designed to use questions based on the candidate's responses. Many of the questions are open-ended and progress along the topic.

However, because each interviewee is asked a different series of questions, this style lacks the reliability and precision of a structured interview.

## 6. Panel Interview

A Panel Interview is a technique that allows several members of a hiring company to interview a job candidate at the same time. Members of a panel interview team typically include the hiring manager, a departmental colleague and a member of the human resources department.

During a panel interview each member of the interview team takes turns asking the job applicant questions. This allows each member of the team to hear the same response given by each applicant.



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Normally the interview team has a pre-established list of questions they will ask of each candidate interviewing for a particular job.

Since each applicant is asked the same set of questions and all members of the panel hear the same response from each applicant, this process makes the decision making process much easier. Panel interviews are an efficient method of conducting interviews; however, they may be more stressful on the job applicant due to the large number of people present at the meeting.

## 7. Pre-Screening Telephone Interview

The telephone interview or candidate screen allows the employer to determine if the candidate's qualifications, experience, workplace preferences and salary needs are congruent with the position and organization. The telephone interview saves managerial time and eliminates unlikely candidates. While it is recommended to develop a customized interview for each position, this generic interview will guide you.

You want to ask enough questions to determine if the person is a viable candidate. Remember, you have already screened many resumes and applications to come up with your short list of telephone screening candidates. These should be your best prospects at this point in your recruiting process.

## 8. Cross-Cultural Interviewing

Although interviews are used widely in the selection of suitable job applicants, recruiters may unconsciously be operating from culturally biased frameworks. Effective techniques, which include establishing rapport with the candidate, building a relationship, and choosing appropriate interview styles, are important for practitioners. Some of the ways that culture influences the interviewing process are not initially obvious. People are often concerned about the ability to understand the words used by a non-native speaker of English. However, there are many other issues that have a great impact on the interview process:

- Different ways of using language
- Intonation
- Phrasing and expressions
- Different norms for body language
- Physical expression of emotion
- Social customs such as hand-shaking
- Different cultural expectations:
  - How to deal with conflict
  - How to show respect
  - When to show emotion



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## Things to Think About

Cultural values may be different across any of the elements listed below.

