

THEORY AND TECHNIQUES OF THE INTERVIEW

4. CONDUCTING AN INTERVIEW

4.1. Background Research

A job interview is a type of employment test that involves a conversation between a job applicant and representative of the employing organization. Interviews are one of the most popularly used devices for employee selection. Interviews vary in the extent to which the questions are structured, from totally unstructured and free-wheeling conversation, to a set list of questions each applicant is asked. Research has shown that structured interviews are more valid than unstructured, that is, they are more accurate in predicting which applicants will make good employees. First impressions can play a major role in how an employer perceives you as a candidate. What you say during the first phase of the interview may make a big difference in the outcome, in a good way or in a bad way. In fact, some hiring managers may make a decision to reject a candidate based on what they didn't do when they met them. That's why it's important to pay attention to interview manners and to carefully think through how you will introduce yourself during a job interview.

Typically, a job interview typically precedes the hiring decision, and is used to evaluate the candidate. The interview is usually preceded by the evaluation of submitted résumés from interested candidates, then selecting a small number of candidates for interviews. Potential job interview opportunities also include networking events and career fairs. The job interview is considered one of the most useful tools for evaluating potential employees. It also demands significant resources from the employer, yet has been demonstrated to be notoriously unreliable in identifying the optimal person for the job. An interview also allows the candidate to assess the corporate culture and demands of the job. Multiple rounds of job interviews may be used where there are many candidates or the job is particularly challenging or desirable. Earlier rounds may involve fewer staff from the employers and will typically be much shorter and less in depth. A common initial interview form is the phone interview, a job interview conducted over the telephone. This is especially common when the candidates do not live near the employer and has the advantage of keeping costs low for both sides. Once all

candidates have been interviewed, the employer typically selects the most desirable candidate and begins the negotiation of a job offer.

The interview phase entails the actual conduct of the interview, the interaction between the interviewer and the applicant. Initial interviewer impressions about the applicant before the interview may influence the amount of time an interviewer spends in the interview with the applicant, the interviewer's behavior and questioning of the applicant and the interviewer's post interview evaluations. Pre interview impressions also can affect what the interviewer notices about the interviewee, recalls from the interview, and how an interviewer interprets what the applicant says and does in the interview.

As interviews are typically conducted face to face, over the phone, or through video conferencing (e.g. Skype), they are a social interaction between at least two individuals. Thus, the behavior of the interviewer during the interview likely "leaks" information to the interviewee. That is, you can sometimes tell during the interview whether the interviewer thinks positively or negatively about you. Knowing this information can actually affect how the applicant behaves, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophecy effect. For example, interviewees who feel the interviewer does not think they are qualified may be more anxious and feel they need to prove they are qualified. Such anxiety may hamper how well they actually perform and present themselves during the interview, fulfilling the original thoughts of the interviewer. Alternatively, interviewees who perceive an interviewer believes they are qualified for the job may feel more at ease and comfortable during the exchange, and consequently actually perform better in the interview. It should be noted again, that because of the dynamic nature of the interview, the interaction between the behaviors and thoughts of both parties is a continuous process whereby information is processed and informs subsequent behavior, thoughts, and evaluations.

A typical job interview has a single candidate meeting with between one and three persons representing the employer; the potential supervisor of the employee is usually involved in the interview process. A larger interview panel will often have a specialized human resources worker. While the meeting can be over in as little as 15 minutes, job interviews usually last less than two hours. The bulk of the job interview will entail the interviewers asking the candidate questions about his or her job history, personality, work style and other factors relevant to the job. For instance, a common interview question is "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" The candidate will usually be given a chance to ask any questions at the end of the interview. These questions are strongly encouraged since they allow

the interviewee to acquire more information about the job and the company, but they can also demonstrate the candidate's strong interest in them. When an interviewer asks about the weaknesses of a candidate, they are acknowledging the fact that they are not perfect. However, the interviewer is not really interested in their weaknesses but how they may make up for them. It also displays the skill of self-reflection and the pursuit for self-improvement. Candidates for lower paid and lower skilled positions tend to have much simpler job interviews than do candidates for more senior positions. For instance, a lawyer's job interview will be much more demanding than that of a retail cashier. Most job interviews are formal, where the larger the firm, the more formal and structured the interview will tend to be. Candidates generally dress slightly better than they would for work, with a suit (called an interview suit) being appropriate for a white collar job interview.

A bad hiring decision nowadays can be immensely expensive for an organization, cost of the hire, training costs, severance pay, loss of productivity, impact on morale, cost of rehiring, etc. Gallup international places the cost of a bad hire as being 3.2 times the individual's salary. Studies indicate that 40% of new executives fail in their first 18 months in a new job. This has led to organizations investing in onboarding for their new employees to reduce these failure rates.

4.2. Tips For Interviewees

Your Arrival: When you arrive at the interview site introduce yourself to the receptionist by stating your name and the purpose of your visit. For example: "My name is Tim Jones and I have an interview scheduled with John Smith at 2 pm." You will either be escorted to the interview room or the hiring manager will come out to meet you in the reception area. Again, take the time to introduce yourself so the interviewer knows who you are. Offer to shake hands, even if the interviewer doesn't offer their hand first. It's good etiquette to include a handshake as part of your introduction. Tell the interviewer that it is a pleasure to meet them, smile and be sure to make eye contact. For example: "I'm Tina Lionel, it's a pleasure to meet you." A tip is to avoid sweaty palms stop in the restroom prior to the interview and wash and dry your hands. If that's not feasible, use a tissue to dry off your hands ahead of time.

Questions & Answers: In regards to questions and answers, you can research the most common and interesting interview questions and answers, but before that you should remember that there's a general question common in several interviews "tell

me a little about yourself", and this question must be answered carefully, because it's an opportunity to highlight your skills, achievements and potential value in the position they offer. We recommend you to keep the calm, power and confidence in your voice and expressions along the entire interview, if any situation brings something negative about your experience and characteristics try to turn anything negative into positive, you can and you should prepare yourself for that. Be honest in all of your answers, and if the situation turns difficult try with most favorable terms to describe the situation. Remember that employers ask themselves these questions during the interview: Will this person help the company succeed? Will this person fit with other employees or will he/she cause troubles? It's your task to help the interviewer see the correct person in you.

Body Language: Any interviewer will put special attention to the body, manners and movements of the interviewee. So during the interview you must assume a posture that shows interest, but it's relaxed at the same time. For example sitting on the edge of a chair shows you're tense or uncomfortable. If at any moment you don't feel pretty sure of your posture you can adopt the same posture of the person talking to assume mutual tuning. If you're worried about your hands, they can help you to support your words, but if you feel they're an obstacle, you can lie them on your lap or the arm rest of your chair, but never fold your arms across your body. Don't act like a robot, and use some movements to add meaning to your words, but don't abuse that (practice in front of a mirror to see your mistakes and correct them); and be careful with some movements you can make due to the nervousness because you can irritate people around you. Another important recommendation is to keep the eye contact with the interviewers to give them a sign of trust.

Your heart feels ready to leap out of your chest. Beads of sweat build on your forehead. Your mind is racing. It's not a full-blown interrogation, although it may feel like it. Remember it's just a job interview. While it's no secret that job interviews can be nerve racking, a lot of job candidates spend a significant amount of time worrying about what they will say during their interview, only to blow it all with their body language. The old adage, "It's not what you say, it's how you say it," still holds meaning, even if you're not talking. You need to effectively communicate your professionalism both verbally and nonverbally. Because watching your nonverbal cues, delivering concise answers and expressing your enthusiasm at once can be difficult when you're nervous. Here's a guide to walk you through it: Have them at "hello". Before you walk into the interview, it's assumed that you will have done the following: prepared yourself by reading up on the company and recent company news; practiced what you'll say to some of the

more common interview questions; and followed the "what to wear on your interview" advice. So you're ready, right?

Some hiring managers claim they can spot a possible candidate for a job within 30 seconds or less, and while a lot of that has to do with the way you look, it's also in your body language. Don't walk in pulling up your pantyhose or readjusting your tie; pull yourself together before you stand up to greet the hiring manager or enter their office. Avoid a "dead fish" handshake and confidently -- but not too firmly -- grasp your interviewer's hand and make eye contact while saying hello. Shake your hand, watch yourself. If you are rocking back in your chair, shaking your foot, drumming your fingers or scratching your... anything, you're going to look like the type of future employee who wouldn't be able to stay focused, if even for a few minutes. It's a not a game of charades, it's a job interview. Here's what to do (and not do):

Do's and Don'ts:

- Don't rub the back of your head or neck. Even if you really do just have a cramp in your neck, these gestures make you look disinterested.
- Don't rub or touch your nose. This suggests that you're not being completely honest, and it's gross.
- Don't sit with your arms folded across your chest. You'll appear unfriendly and disengaged.
- Don't cross your legs and idly shake one over the other. It's distracting and shows how uncomfortable you are.
- Don't slouch back in your seat. This will make you appear disinterested and unprepared.
- Don't stare back blankly. This is a look people naturally adopt when they are trying to distance themselves.

However:

- Do sit up straight, and lean slightly forward in your chair. In addition to projecting interest and engagement in the interaction, aligning your body's position to that of the interviewer's shows admiration and agreement.
- Do show your enthusiasm by keeping an interested expression. Nod and make positive gestures in moderation to avoid looking like a bobble head.
- Do establish a comfortable amount of personal space between you and the interviewer. Invading personal space (anything more than 20 inches) could

make the interviewer feel uncomfortable and take the focus away from your conversation.

- Do limit your application of colognes and perfumes. Invading aromas can arouse allergies. Being the candidate that gave the interviewer a headache isn't going to do anything in your favor.
- Do remember that if you have more than one person interviewing you at once, make sure you briefly address both people with your gaze (without looking like a tennis spectator) and return your attention to the person who has asked you a question.

At the close of the interview, say goodbye gracefully. After a few well thought out questions and answers with your interviewer, it's almost over, but don't lose your cool just yet. Make sure your goodbye handshake is just as confident now as it was going in. Keep that going while you walk through the office building, into the elevator and onto the street. Once safely in your car, a cab or some other measurable safe distance from the scene of your interview, it's safe to let go. You may have aced it, but the last thing you want is some elaborate end zone dance type of routine killing all your hard work at the last moment.