

Structured Interviewing



2006

Why Selection Matters

- The average cost of turnover is 150% of an employee's salary
- The profit difference between a "good" and "average" employee in a \$30,000 job is about \$12,000 per year
- Mistakes are expensive
- Legal liability

What Do We Want?

- High level of performance
- Attendance
- Tenure
- Safety
- Creativity and innovation
- Organizational citizenship behaviors
- People who play nice

Considerations in Determining the Role of Selection

- How easy is it to learn the job?
- How easy will it be to find ideal applicants?
- Are we an employer of choice?
- What are our resources?
 - Money
 - Time
 - An excellent training department
 - Supervisors who enjoy mentoring

Optimal Employee Selection Systems

- Are Cost Effective
 - Cost to purchase/create
 - Cost to administer
 - Cost to score
- Are Valid
 - Based on a job analysis (content validity)
 - Predict work-related behavior (criterion validity)
- Reduce the Chance of a Legal Challenge
 - Face valid
 - Don't invade privacy
 - Don't intentionally discriminate
 - Minimize adverse impact

Unstructured Interviews are Not Optimal

- They are:
 - Unreliable
 - Not valid
 - Legally problematic
- Because they:
 - Are not job related
 - Rely on intuition, "amateur psychology," and talk show methods
 - Suffer from common rating problems
 - Primacy
 - Contrast
 - Similarity
 - Bias

Common Unstructured Interview Questions

- Where do you see yourself five years from now?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What are your greatest weaknesses?
- What subject did you most enjoy in college?
- Why should I hire you?
- Why are you interested in this job?

Mike's Top Ten Stupid Interview Tricks

- A manager at Wells Fargo won't hire MBA's who take more than 60 seconds to scan the menu at lunch
- A CEO wouldn't hire applicants who salted their food before tasting it
- Holiday Inn doesn't hire applicants who smile less than four times during the interview
- An HR professional wouldn't hire applicants who didn't have the back of their shoes properly shined
- An auto insurance executive takes off points for education – "I don't want the valedictorian, I want the kid who sold cigarettes in the bathroom."

Mike's Top Ten Stupid Interview Tricks

- An HR manager asked applicants about their favorite book
- A town manager likes to leave the room, not come back, and then wait to see how long an applicant will wait
- An HR recruiter asks applicants, "If you could be any animal, what would you be?"
- A local school superintendent won't hire men with hair in their ears
- Any interviewer who does not use structured interviews!

Structured Interviews are Optimal

- They are:
 - Reliable
 - Valid
 - Not as prone to legal challenge
- Because they:
 - Are based on a job analysis
 - Ask the same questions of each applicant
 - Have a standardized scoring procedure

Comparison

	High Structure	Low Structure	Meta-analysis
Validity	$r = .57$ Very High	$r = .20$ Low	Huffcutt & Arthur (1994)
Gender Differences	$d = .00$ None	$d = .23$ Moderate	Huffcutt, et al (2001)
Racial Differences	$d = .13$ Low	$d = .51$ High	Huffcutt, et al (2001)

Structured Interview Goals

- Understand the Applicant
 - Clarify and confirm resume information
 - Obtain new information
- Predict Job Performance
 - Ask questions focused on past behavior
 - Ask questions focused on knowledge and skills
 - Ask questions focused on future behavior
- Predict Organizational Fit
 - Use several interviewers
 - Combine interview impression with test scores
- Sell the Organization to the Applicant
 - Provide information about the position/organization
 - Answer the applicant's questions

Interview Formats

- Structure
 - Unstructured
 - Structured
 - Levels of structure
- Style
 - One-on-one interviews
 - Serial interviews
 - Return interviews
 - Panel interviews
 - Group interviews
- Medium
 - Face-to-face
 - Telephone
 - Videoconference
 - Written

Creating the Structured Interview Steps

- Conduct a thorough job analysis
- Determine best way to measure each KSAO
- Construct Questions
- Determine rating anchors for each question
- Choose two or more members for the interview panel



Creating the Structured Interview Conduct a Thorough Job Analysis

- Tasks performed
- Conditions under which they are performed
- KSAOs needed to perform the tasks
- When KSAOs are needed
 - Before hire
 - After hire
- Critical incidents of poor and excellent performance

Creating the Structured Interview

Determine the Best Way to Measure each KSAO

- Interview questions
- Psychological tests
- Simulations or job samples
- Reference or background checks
- Training and experience ratings



Exercise

Choosing a Selection Method

- Customer service skills
- Ability to install an electrical outlet
- Typing speed and accuracy
- Hard working and reliable

Creating Interview Questions

Areas to Avoid

- Criminal record
 - You can ask about *convictions*
 - Is it related to the job?
 - How long ago?
 - How serious?
 - You cannot ask about *arrests*
- Military service
 - You can ask about training and experience
 - You cannot ask about the type of discharge
- Eligibility to work
 - You can ask if they are eligible to work in the U.S.
 - You cannot ask if they are a citizen unless it is a direct requirement of the job
- Family
 - You cannot ask about marital status
 - You cannot ask about children
- Outside activities
 - You can ask about professional organizations
 - You cannot ask about religious, political, or ethnic organizations

Issue	Illegal Question	Legal Question
Work availability	Are you married? Do you have child care concerns?	Can you work overtime without notice?
Age requirements	How old are you? When did you graduate from high school?	Are you at least 21 years of age?
Ability to perform the job	Do you have any disabilities?	Are there any tasks in the job description that you cannot perform with or without an accommodation?

If you are going to ask a question, you must ask it of ALL applicants!

Issue	Illegal Question	Legal Question
Potential problems	Have you ever been arrested?	Do you have any criminal convictions? Explain.
Insurance/Benefits	Any family questions are inappropriate	Get the information after the person has been hired
Skills	What organizations do you belong to?	Are there any relevant skills you have learned from non-work related organizations? What are they?

Creating the Structured Interview

Construct Interview Questions

- Clarifiers
- Disqualifiers
- Past focus (behavioral description)
- Skill or knowledge focus
- Future focus (situational)
- Organizational fit focus



Clarifiers

- Are the only questions that will differ among applicants
- They are not used in the scoring
- Clarifiers
 - Obtain missing information
 - Clarify information on the resume or application that doesn't make sense

Examples of Clarifiers

- I noticed that you do not have an education section on your resume, could you tell me about your educational background?
- I noticed a three-year gap between two of your jobs, could you tell me a little about that?
- You were a bench hand at AT&T. What is that?
- Why did you leave your job at McDonalds?

What Clarifiers Would You Ask for the Resumes on the Next Two Pages?

Matthew “Bucky” Crenshaw

27122 East Bay Ridge Road

Radford, VA 24141

(540) 555-5656

Professional Strengths

- Five years of customer service experience
- Good math skills
- Get along well with people
- Supervisory experience
- Can work any kind of cash register

Work Experience

Sales Associate (January, 1997 – present)

J.C. Penney, Christiansburg, VA

Responsibilities include helping customers with their purchases, stocking shelves, and taking inventory.

Salesperson (March, 1994 – May, 1996)

Ties for Guys, Roanoke, VA

Helped customers find ties that best matched their shirts and suits. Received three raises.

Teller (August, 1991 – February, 1994)

Pulaski Community Bank, Pulaski, VA

Responsible for opening new accounts, helping customers with transactions, and ensuring that the teller drawer is accurate. Left to take better paying job.

Education

High School Diploma (1991)

John Wayne High School, Tustin, CA

Highlights:

- Completed three college courses
- President, AMFAM club
- 3.3 GPA
- Lettered in two sports

Disqualifiers

- Questions in which a wrong answer will disqualify a person from further consideration
- Areas
 - Work schedules (overtime, days of work)
 - Start dates
 - Criminal/driving/credit history
 - Willingness to perform tasks
 - Minimum qualifications (e.g., age, licenses, degrees, experience)
 - Previous work problems
 - Being fired (frequency, reason)
 - Job hopping
- Disqualifiers must be
 - Job related
 - Consistently applied
 - Something that cannot be overcome by other skills

Examples of Disqualifiers

- Can you work at least one weekend a month?
- Can you work overtime without notice?
- Do you have any felony convictions?
- Would you be willing to treat a patient with AIDS?
- Do you have a valid driver's license?

Disqualifiers for Your Job

Past-Focused Questions

- Focus on what the applicant *has* done rather than what they *can* do
- Best predictor of future performance is past performance
 - Past situation must be similar to future situation
- Can tap directly related experience (e.g., bank teller) or experience with similar skill set (e.g., customer service)
- Can tap
 - Experience
 - Knowledge
 - Skill
- Probably not ideal for entry-level jobs

Examples of Past-Focused Questions

- When dealing with customers, it is inevitable that you are going to get someone angry. Tell us about a time when a customer was angry at you. What did you do to fix the situation?
- The job of network engineer requires a good deal of customer service. Tell us about your previous customer service.
- This job involves persuading employees to follow our safety rules. Tell us about a time in the past when you had to persuade an employee to do something.

Past-Focused Questions for Your Job

Skill-Level Determiners

- **Definitional questions**
 - What is a lathe?
- **Knowledge questions**
 - At what age does an applicant become a protected class?
- **Causal questions**
 - What would happen if you used a knife that did not have a sharp blade?
- **Situational questions**
 - What would you do if an Excel formula resulted in an incorrect calculation?
- **Explanatory questions**
 - Why do you unplug a printer before working on it?

Examples of Skill Determiners

- A customer brings you his check book and says that he cannot get it to balance. What is he probably doing wrong? How would you explain the error to him?
- A client calls and tells you that she has 10 computers in a 30' by 100' room and that she wants to network the computers. What questions would you ask her? What parts would you need to compile to complete the task?
- Several months after installing the above network, the client calls and says that nothing will print on the printer. What could be going on?

Skill Level Questions for Your Job

Future-Focused Questions

- Also called situational questions
- Can tap an applicant's
 - Knowledge
 - Problem-solving ability
 - Experience
 - Common sense
- Be careful about using situations that
 - Require training/experience if the position is entry level
 - Require knowledge of company knowledge, policy, or philosophy
 - Are easy to fake

Examples of Future-focused Questions

- Suppose that you were scheduled to work on Saturday. A friend calls on Thursday and says that you get to use a condo at the beach for free—but it has to be this weekend. What would you do?
- Imagine that you told a client that you would be there at 10:00 a.m. It is now 10:30 and there is no way you will be finished with your current job until 11:30. You are scheduled to meet another client for lunch at 12:00 and then be at another job at 1:15. How would you handle the situation?

Future Focused Questions for Your Job

Organizational-Fit Questions

- Designed to tap how well the applicant will fit with the
 - Organization
 - Department
 - Supervisor
 - Coworker
- These are the most difficult types of questions
- Care must be taken so that characteristics such as age, sex, or race are not considered

Examples of Organizational-Fit Questions

- Under what type of supervisor do you work best? Is there a type of supervisor for which you have trouble working?
- What type of work pace is best for you?
- Describe your sense of humor?
- Describe your experience working with a culturally diverse group of people.

Organizational Fit Questions for Your Job

Using Questions to *Provide* Information

- At times you might want to include at the beginning of the question
 - Why it is being asked
 - Information that provides a realistic job preview
- The purpose is not to screen, but to inform
 - You don't expect anyone to fail
 - The actual answer only matters if it serves as a disqualifier

Heavy Lifting and Strenuous Activity

This job involves lifting about 1,500 crates per shift. These crates can be as heavy as 100 pounds, with most being between 40 and 60 pounds. On a typical shift, you might lift a 50 pound crate 500 times. During the shift, you will be constantly bending, stooping, walking, standing, climbing, and squatting. This lifting and physical activity is performed at a fast pace.

Are you able to do this? Yes No

Are you willing to do this? Yes No

Constructing the Rating Scale

Basic Scoring Issues

- There has to be a correct/better answer
- Goal is for all interviewers to give the same score
 - The more concrete the scoring, the better the reliability
- There is no magic number of scale points
 - How many points does it take to measure what you need?
 - Two (yes/no, pass/fail)
 - Three, four, or five?
 - Seldom do you need more than five
 - Keep as simple and as easy to use as possible

Three Common Approaches

- Correct/Incorrect Approach
- Typical Answer Approach
- Key Issues Approach



Sample Question

You are working as a teller and have a long line of waiting customers. A customer runs to the front of the line and yells that he bounced a check and was charged \$20, which caused other checks to bounce. He then swears at you and tells you that he will not leave until the problem is solved. You are unable to check on his account because the computer is down. What would you do?

Typical Answers Scoring

5. Because I do not have the information and the line is long, I would call my supervisor and have her talk to the customer in her office away from everyone else
4. While trying to calm him down, I would call my supervisor
3. I would try to calm him down and explain to him that the computer is down
2. I would explain that I cannot help him because the computer is down, and ask him to come back later
1. I would tell him to get to the end of the line and wait his turn
I would ignore him until he went away

Key Issues Scoring

- Acknowledged the long line and concern for other customers
- Recognized the need to calm the customer
- Recognized the need to get the customer away from the other customers
- Recognized that help could not be immediately given because the computer was down
- Was not confrontational with the customer

Heavy Lifting and Strenuous Activity

This job involves lifting about 1,500 crates per shift. These crates can be as heavy as 100 pounds, with most being between 40 and 60 pounds. On a typical shift, you might lift a 50 pound crate 500 times. During the shift, you will be constantly bending, stooping, walking, standing, climbing, and squatting. This lifting and physical activity is performed at a fast pace.

Are you able to do this? Yes No (If no, disqualify)
Are you willing to do this? Yes No (If no, disqualify)

Describe previous jobs or activities in which you had to do a lot of heavy lifting and a lot of activity such as bending, stooping, walking, standing, climbing, and squatting. Did you like this work?

- _____ (5) 2 or more years experience, liked the work
- _____ (4) Less than 2 years experience, liked the work
- _____ (2) No work experience, but activities and hobbies involve heavy lifting and strenuous activity
- _____ (1) No previous experience of any kind with heavy lifting and strenuous activity
- _____ (0) Previous experience, but didn't like the conditions
- _____ Applicant is not able or willing to work in these conditions
(disqualify)

Q3: Safety Orientation

Safety is an essential aspect of this job. Describe experiences you have had that indicate your commitment to safety. Have you received any safety awards? (Place a check next to the highest response associated with the applicant's answer)

- (5) Received an individual safety award
- (4) Received a safety award as part of a team
- (3) Served on a safety committee at work
- (3) Made suggestions on how to improve safety
- (2) Has never been hurt at work or hurt anyone else
- (1) Worked on a job in which safety was stressed
- (0) No real experience with safety issues
- Applicant expressed a lack of regard for safety or had been in many accidents (disqualify)

Scoring Interview Style

- Style includes
 - Body language
 - Paralanguage
 - Dress
 - Grooming
 - Speaking ability
- If you want to include style in the scoring
 - Be sure it is relevant
 - The job itself
 - An indicator of motivation/maturity?
 - Have a structured scoring system
 - Consider that culture may be a factor
 - Consider whether you are eliminating good people (style over substance)

Conducting the Interview

Select Interviewers

- Use at least 2 interviewers
- Consider gender and race representation
- Consider best format
 - Panel interview
 - Serial interviews
- Important Point:
 - A structured interview does not mean that you can't ask follow-up questions!



Prior to the Interview

- Inform the Applicant
 - Give as much notice as possible
 - Explain what will happen and how long it will take
 - Provide a job description and information about the company
 - Provide directions and contact information
- Make Arrangements
 - Parking
 - A room to interview
 - Private
 - Uncluttered
 - Phones turned off
 - Let the receptionist know who you are expecting
 - Have applicants' resume in front of you
- When the Applicant Arrives
 - Be prompt
 - Be friendly

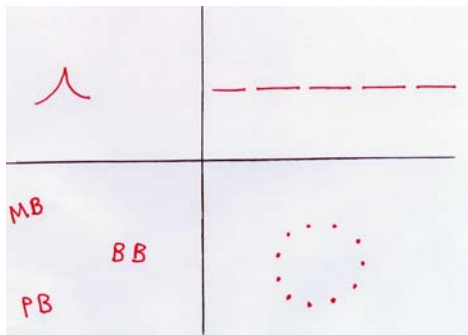
Conducting the Interview

- Build rapport
- Explain the process and the agenda
- Ask the questions
- Score the answer and take notes after each question
- Provide information about the job and the organization (e.g., salary, benefits, climate)
- Answer interviewee's questions
- End the interview on a pleasant note

Use Active Listening Skills

- Make eye contact
- Lean forward slightly
- Show you are listening
 - Head nodding
 - Comments
 - Umm
 - Interesting!
 - Caution: Be careful with your listening responses
 - Don't make casual remarks ("That's really cool.")
 - May unintentionally provide feedback to applicant

Listening Exercise



Using Probes

- Probes are follow-up questions
- Ask probes when
 - The applicant did not provide enough information to accurately score the question
 - The applicant did not answer the question asked
 - Could be a sign of deception
 - Could be they didn't understand the question
 - Too much of this might indicate future problems
- Use open vs. closed sentences
 - *Do you like working in teams?* vs. *How do you feel about working in teams?*
- Use words like "describe," "how," "when," "what," "why," "how"
- Stop probing when
 - You have enough information to score the answer
 - The topic becomes a potential legal problem (e.g., family issues, disability)

Probing Exercise

1. Question: Tell me about a time when you showed good work ethic.
Answer: I think I am a hard working person

Probing question:

2. Question: Describe your most recent work in a team
Answer: I like working with my coworkers on projects.

Probing question:

3. Question: Give an example of a time how you showed good leadership
Answer: I had to have and show real leadership when I was in customer service.

Probing question:

4. Question: Give an example of when you used good communication skills to solve a problem with a customer.

Answer: I am an excellent problem solver and communicator. I had to tell a customer last week that it was too late for him to return his product to the store.

Probing question:

5. Question: Describe a time when you had to deal with conflict in the workplace.
Answer: There's a lot of conflict in jobs where you deal with customers. Whenever conflict occurred that involved me, I was able to resolve the conflict.

Probing question:

What If.....

The applicant:

- doesn't talk enough?
- talks too much?
- gets nervous?
- doesn't answer right away?

Reaching Agreement

- Two Options
 - Statistically combine ratings
 - Reach consensus
- Who to Hire
 - Top score?
 - Top few scores or pass/fail?
 - Combine with other information
 - Be sure to be consistent

After the Interview

- Keep all interviewees informed of your progress
- Tactfully reject the applicants who are not hired
- Document, document, document



Q1: Tell me about your previous restaurant experience.		
	5	Has more than 1 year of experience as a server in a high-class restaurant
	4	Has less than 1 year of experience as a server in a high-class restaurant
	3	Has more than 1 year of experience in a restaurant that was not a high-class restaurant
	2	Has less than one year of experience in a restaurant that was not a high class restaurant
	1	Has no experience as a server in a restaurant
Q2: At your previous serving jobs, about what percent of the bill did you receive in tips?		
	5	Over 19%
	4	16-19%
	3	15%
	2	Less than 15%
	1	Never received tips at a previous job
Q3: What hours are you available to work?		
	5	Any shift and any day
	4	Nights and weekends only
	3	Nights or weekends
	2	Days only
	1	Never on Saturday or Sunday
Q4: Suppose that a customer received a steak that was not cooked properly, what would you do?		
	5	Apologize, offer to get the customer a new steak, and remove the steak from the bill if the customer seems upset
	4	Apologize, offer to get the customer a new steak, and automatically remove the steak from the bill
	3	Apologize and offer to get the customer a new steak
	2	Get the customer a new steak
	1	Apologize to the customer
Q5: Suppose that you have a very angry customer, what would you do? (Give a point for each strategy that the applicant mentions and a point if the applicant gives all the answers in the proper order)		
	1	Let the customer vent, listen
	1	Apologize for the problem
	1	Ask the customer what you can do to solve the problem
	1	Do what the customer asks (within reason)
	1	Answers were given in the proper order
Q6: You notice that a customer's glass of iced tea is half-empty. What should you do?		
	5	Ask if the customer would like some more tea (applicant also provides the reason that one should ask)
	4	Ask if the customer would like some more tea
	3	Bring a new glass of tea
	2	Fill the customer's glass
	1	Wait until the glass is empty

Q7: Restaurant Knowledge: Give one point for each correct answer		
	What type of wine (red, white) goes best with a marinara sauce?	<i>Red</i>
	What is in a White Russian?	<i>Vodka, Kahlua, cream</i>
	On which side of the plate does the salad fork go?	<i>Left side</i>
	An Italian dish with the word <i>pollo</i> contains what?	<i>chicken</i>
	A customer asks for a white wine; would you give him the Chardonnay or the Merlot?	<i>Chardonnay</i>
	Should the tip be computed before or after taxes have been added?	<i>Before</i>
	What should a steak cooked medium look like?	<i>A little pink inside</i>
	What is calamari?	<i>Squid</i>
	Can a parent order a glass of wine for her underage child?	<i>No</i>
	Which of these spices would not be considered sweet: basil, tarragon, fennel, or cloves?	<i>Cloves</i>

Question	Points
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
TOTAL	