POSITIVE CAREER ADVICE

A Hiring Managers Guide for Effective Interviewing

Supporting you to not miss out on incredible talent in a scarce hiring market

Evolving Hiring Market

As the recruitment landscape continues to evolve post-COVID, many employers consider emerging trends as they build on the efficiencies of this 'new world' of working. 2020 saw a global-wide move to virtual recruitment with new systems and tool integration pressures, and 2021 saw a seismic shift in the hiring market to the lowest unemployment figures witnessed in decades alongside candidate short and skill deprived talent pools.

In 2019, we would never have predicted the challenges and changes in 2020 and beyond. However, with significant change comes great opportunity, and as the hiring landscape evolves alongside technology, employer demand and candidate expectations, there are some exciting trends on the horizon.

Before considering how we hire, it's essential to consider these emerging trends to ensure that we evolve our recruitment practices to get ahead.

- Building an attractive employer brand
- Delivering a great candidate experience
- Fewer geographical limitations
- Virtual, becoming the new reality
- The remote revolution
- Building a talent pool
- Intelligent social marketing
- Streamlined automation
- Equity, Diversity & Inclusion
- Sought after soft skills

"LinkedIn and Microsoft say Companies must rethink their approach to hiring if they are to adapt to labour market instability, improve workforce diversity and close the burgeoning skills gap."

The Evolving Interview

Like many employers looking to expand their team, you may have the dream candidate in mind. However, if you are holding out for the ideal candidate in a skill-short market, this will be a sure-fire way to delay the recruitment process and miss out on the best person for the job.

Interviewing is an art and a skill. It's about being fully aware of what the candidate brings to your organisation, asking essential questions and being highly observant. It's the ability to uncover potential and capability rather than safely relying on job requirements and experience.

Remember, every interviewer was once an interviewee, and it's vital to keep this in mind. Interviewers should approach an interview with empathy, compassion, curiosity, an open mind and preparation.

Positive Career Advice has created the 'Hiring Managers Guide for Effective Interviewing' to support you.

Whether you're an experienced interviewer looking to sharpen your skills in the current hiring market or new to interviewing, this guide will help ensure you don't miss out on incredible talent in a scarce market.

Three Interview Formats

How you interview candidates does more than save costs and time. It impacts the way candidates perceive your organisation and how valued they feel as potential employees. An interview process can make or break an employer's brand.

The following three interview formats each have their pros and cons. Your interview structure and content define your hiring success, so consider pairing different interview formats with your well-prepared questions.

BIOGRAPHICAL INTERVIEW

A fact-based interview to gain an overall impression of a candidate, their personality, attitudes and background. More conversational without specifying particular skills. Useful to explore CVs - gaps, career choices, reasons for leaving.

When using this style, consider questioning using the Biographical Ripple effect to examine the candidate's roles individually.

Pros

- Helpful to put the candidate at ease talking about themselves
- Useful to understand insights into decisions they've made, management styles and cultures they've worked in
- Useful to understand their career history

Cons

- Only scratches the surface
- Does not delve into skills and competencies
- Feels like a process and does not challenge the candidate

Biographical Ripple

Example Questions

- Tell us about yourself?
- What can you offer the company?
- What attracts you to this role in particular?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What did you like/dislike about that role?
- What was your reason for leaving that position?
- Why did you choose to study that particular qualification?
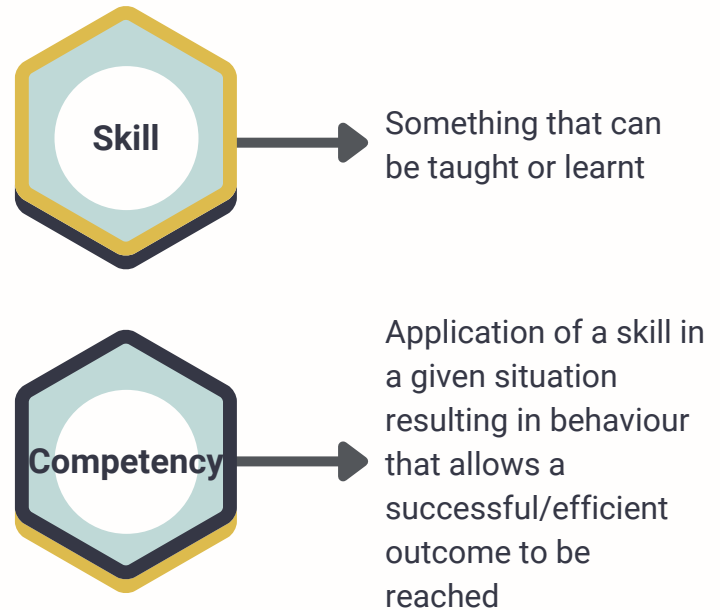
COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW

Sometimes referred to as a structured or behavioural interview, a competency-based interview tests skills and behaviours in various circumstances.

Questions are designed to provide specific examples of how a candidate has reacted, dealt with and behaved in particular situations.
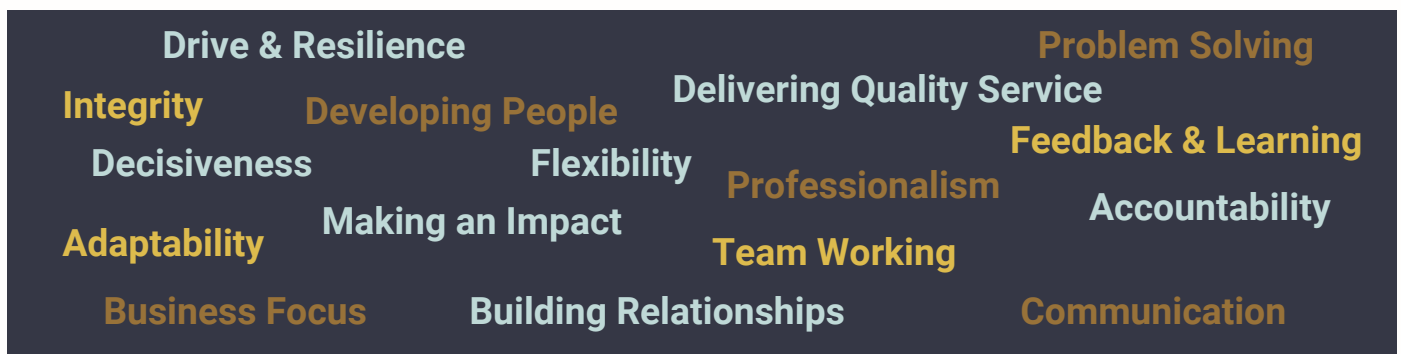
Interviewers craft questions according to the job to find out how the candidate performs when faced with dilemmas.

Competency V's Skill

Skill → Something that can be taught or learnt

Competency → Application of a skill in a given situation resulting in behaviour that allows a successful/efficient outcome to be reached

Consider the competencies you will ask them to demonstrate aligned to the role you are hiring. Create questions around each competency. Consider what good looks like and create a scoring matrix to capture evidence, scoring '1' for insufficient evidence to '5' for solid evidence.

Example Competencies

Drive & Resilience   Problem Solving
Integrity   Developing People   Delivering Quality Service
Decisiveness   Flexibility   Feedback & Learning
Professionalism   Accountability
Making an Impact
Adaptability   Team Working
Business Focus   Building Relationships   Communication

Pros
- Brings application to life
- Ability to see how they perform in relevant scenarios
- Deeper more informed insight into their skills and how they use them

Cons
- Easier to prepare for and therefore may not have experienced all they portray (can be scripted)
- Answers rooted in past experience and not future capability

Example Questions
- Tell me about a time when you had a disagreement with a colleague and how you overcame it?
- What has been the most challenging project you have worked on and why?
- Describe a situation where you successfully worked as part of a team?
- Describe a situation when you had to complete a piece of work to a high standard while meeting a strict deadline?

Sometimes a candidate may use 'we' instead of 'I' when responding to a competency-based answer. You need to understand *their* contribution and input into the situation.

Use the 'SCR Triangle' to delve deeper. You will likely understand the *'situation'*. However, to understand their *'contribution'* ask them, "What input did you have?" or "How did you make that happen?" and to understand the *'result'*, "how did you feel about your achievement?", "what personal feedback did you receive?" or "what did you learn from this?"

SCR Triangle

Situation

Contribution   **R**esult
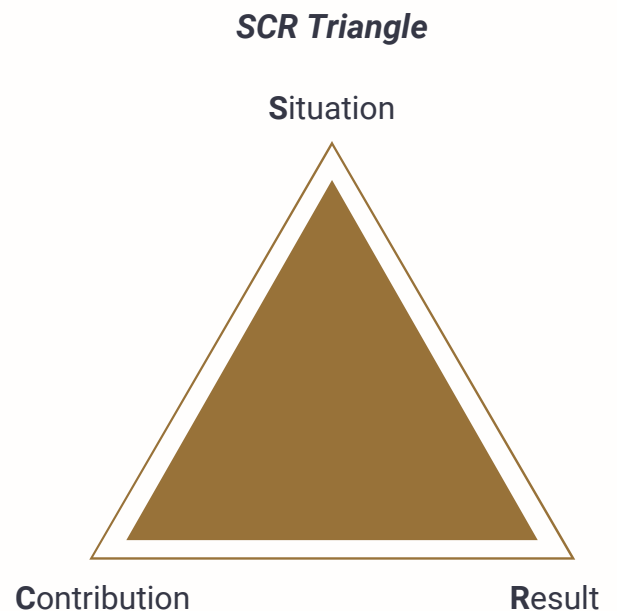
STRENGTH-BASED INTERVIEW

Recent reports suggest that with more automation on the landscape, companies are looking for softer skills such as openness to change, adaptability, good communication skills, curiosity, and innovative and critical thinking, which are all components of team success. This style of the interview looks at 'enjoy vs can do'.

The simple psychology behind this approach is that if you understand your strengths and match these to a job, you will perform it better, enjoy it more and achieve more significant career advancement.

Candidates are also more likely to come across better when talking about what they are naturally strong at—achieving a better experience for the candidate and you, as the interviewer.

Performance
Do well

Energy
Feel good

Use
Do often

" A strength is something that you do well and enjoy doing. When using a strength, people feel authentic and energised as they deliver successful performance"

Pros

- Assesses a candidates potential rather than purely relying on previous experience
- Helps candidates relax and feels more natural for them
- Helps you get a feel for who they are and what they are like

Cons

- Not assessing their competencies
- Potential for interviewer to form a bias

Example Questions

- What would you do even if you didn't get paid?
- What activities come naturally to you?
- What makes a good day for you?
- What do you enjoy/least enjoy doing most?
- What gets done on your 'to do' list? What never gets done?
- In your life, what have you been most proud of? Why is it significant to you and what did you learn from the experience?

SUMMARY

It is essential to use a mixture of the three formats to achieve more significant interview success. You will feel more confident that you have thoroughly interviewed the applicant and create a better candidate experience.

Candidate Behavioural Signs

| Weakness	Strength
- Anxious - Drained - Agitated - Inauthentic - Shorter responses - No or few examples	- Relaxed - Energised/Focused - Higher tone - Terminology - Authentic - Passionate - Visualise - Rich and detailed responses

Essential interviewer behavioural traits

Supportive	Challenging
- Build rapport/put at ease - Actively listen - Positive body language - Empathy - Help build confidence in candidate to see the true person	- Probing questions to dig deeper - Gauge candidates agility. Ability to think on feet - Probe for personal contribution/feelings - How would they change things given the chance

Types of Questions

There are many types of questions you can use in interviews. Like the different interview formats, you need to use a mixture of question types to help gain further information and seek clarification on relevant skills, attitudes and opinions. However, you will need to try and avoid some types of questions.
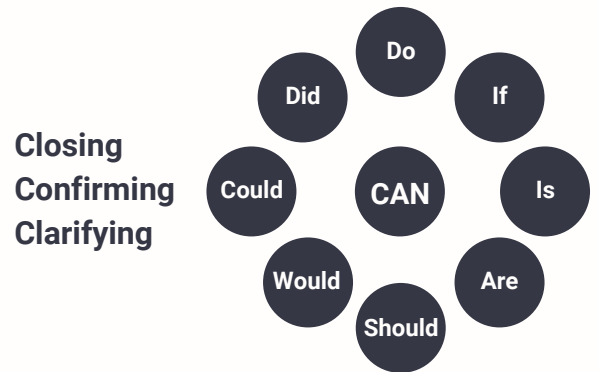
Open Questions

An open-ended question is a question that will provide more than a "yes" or "no" response. Open-ended questions require a longer answer.
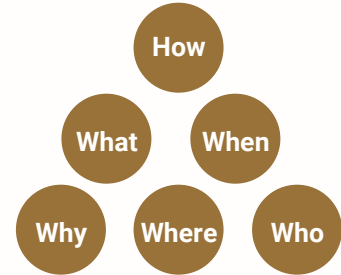
Closed Questions

Close-ended questions provoke a simple response from a respondent, a "yes" or "no" answer. Be careful of the volume of closed questions you ask and be conscious not to ask many at the beginning of the interview, as this will affect the ability to build rapport.

Probing Questions

As we all know, interview nerves are natural, so if it takes a while for the candidate to relax and provide evidenced answers, use the T.E.D technique. Follow on from the last subject and delve for a more in-depth answer.

"Tell me more......"
"Explain......" } **T.E.D**
"Describe ......"

Questions to avoid - Leading, Multiple Choice, Hypothetical & Discriminatory

There are several types of questions that interviewers should avoid in interviews.

Multiple-choice questions are confusing and do not create a great interview experience. *Leading questions* are a form of 'fake interviewing' as you may be unknowingly trying to elicit an answer you need to hear. *Hypothetical questions* include "What would you do if...." and provide little evidence or value. Finally, it should go without saying that asking *discriminatory questions* about a candidate's "protected characteristics," including age, disability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, marriage, pregnancy, and gender reassignment, should always be avoided and could open a company up to a discrimination lawsuit.

Objectivity Errors

We need to be aware of when we may become subjective with our decision making based upon or influenced by our previous experiences, personal feelings, preferences and opinions. Commonly referred to as 'unconscious bias'.

Our brain receives 11 million pieces of information a second, and our conscious minds can only process a fraction of what our unconscious mind is taking in, which is why we make snap decisions and judgements.

Being more self-aware can prevent us from making quick judgements on a CV or a person. Consider "am I thinking positively or negatively towards this person, and are the judgements I am making helpful in the interview process".

Halo Effect

When you think more favourably about someone because you like them but you don't really know them. Negative characteristics will likely be overshadowed.

Horn Effect

The opposite of 'Halo'. When you develop an unfavourable attitude with someone based upon initial impressions without really knowing them. Positive characteristics can be overlooked as a result.

Confirmation Bias

When we have an initial perception about a candidate, and then we look for and focus on information that supports that initial belief. This includes asking irrelevant, non-essential interview questions that confirm our beliefs and overlook red flags that contradict that belief.

Affinity Bias

The similar to me effect. We are likely to favour people we have an affinity for and hire someone who may not be the best person for the job. Affinity bias can also affect who gets promoted and invested in for future development.

Perception Bias

Perception bias is when we believe something is typical of a particular group of people based on cultural stereotypes and assumptions.

Interview Preparation

Why Prepare?

- Gives you confidence
- Shows a level of professionalism
- Relaxes the candidate (& you!)
- Helps you achieve the outcome you desire

What to Prepare

- Ensure relevant forms are completed
- Interview room booked

- If a face-to-face interview, prepare the environment and ensure enough light and heat.
- Don't forget refreshments.

- If a virtual interview ensure you are set up in a quiet place to focus.
- Check your tech by doing a test run.
- Send out a top tips guide to interviewees to ensure they are set up for success.

- Ensure you are dressed smartly.
- Have a pen and notepad to take notes.
- Frame of mind - leave whatever is happening on your desk behind to fully engage with your interviewee.

- Read through the CV in advance to help you prepare any key questions you would like to ask or find out more about and get the best from your interviewee.

Active Listening

It is important to remember that your candidate needs to do most of the talking. Active listening is giving your undivided attention and acknowledging their answers. Ensure you are listening with all 'senses' and show you are hearing through your body language to build rapport.

Listen 2/3's of the time

Interview Structure

Interview Preparation - is vital to give you confidence, relax both you and the candidate and achieve the outcome you desire.

Build Rapport - is important to make the candidate feel at ease so that they are relaxed and prepared to be open and honest with you.

Set the scene - the more the candidate knows about the process, the more relaxed and confident they will feel. Remove the fear of the unknown!

Questions - gain a thorough understanding of the candidate and their desires using a balance of questions types and interview formats.

Motivators - understand their circumstances and motivators. What's important to them in the future? Explore their values? How committed are they to leaving their current position?

What questions do they have for you? - Ensure you allow time for them to ask you questions. A well-prepared interviewee will have some ready. The quality of their questions can also be a good indicator of their interest and engagement.

inform - increase their engagement by enlightening them on the role, the department, the company, the benefits and future prospects. Show your enthusiasm for the culture and what it's like to work for your organisation.
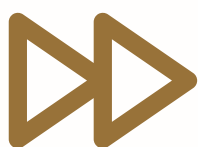
Next steps - manage expectations on timescales and the remaining process to show you value their time. Ensure you do not over promise and under deliver as this may lead to disengagement. If timescales need to change, ensure that you always keep the candidate informed.

The importance of meaningful feedback

Regardless of the interview outcome, it's important to provide all interviewees with feedback.

Why is this important?

- **Protecting your brand reputation** - It ensures that the candidate has a good impression of your organisation and that you value their time.
- **Not this time but next time -** While this role may not be right, there could be another position in the future this candidate may be suitable for.
- **You owe it to the candidate -** A good applicant will spend a significant amount of time preparing for an interview. It's basic courtesy to give them some meaningful feedback, and this doesn't have to be time-consuming.
- **It makes you better as an interviewer -** Getting into the habit of providing consistent and detailed feedback for all candidates after interviews can really help you as an interviewer. You may see patterns which can help you hone your interview technique. Is the reason nobody is getting a certain question right because of the way it is being asked? You will learn from your mistakes, and may even notice some unconscious bias creeping into your feedback around one of the protected characteristics.
- **It helps the candidate** – constructive feedback will ultimately help the candidate improve and leave them feeling motivated rather than frustrated. This can only be a good thing!

Constructive Feedback

We prefer to give positive feedback to negative feedback because it feels more comfortable to deliver. The benefit of providing constructive feedback in any situation is that it helps people improve. However, candidates often receive no feedback or are fobbed off with something generic such as 'you weren't the right fit' or 'the other candidates performed better'. This limiting feedback is very frustrating for candidates and won't help them improve for their next interview.

Top Tips - prior to providing feedback

B **Balanced** - Provide positive and negative feedback focused on strengths and development areas. When delivering feedback avoid words such as 'but' and 'however' as this will focus the conversation on the negative.

O **Objective -** Share feedback that is evidenced-based or is tangible. It should not be based solely on your perception, feelings or emotions. Be aware of phrases such as 'I think' or 'I feel'.

O **Observed -** Provide feedback that you have personally seen or heard yourself. Delivering feedback on behalf of a third party is hard to justify.

S **Specific -** You don't need to address every question in the interview but try to give a couple of specific answers that the candidate gave, and how they could have answered better.

T **Timely -** Providing constructive feedback at the earliest opportunity so that the information is fresh in the minds of all concerned.

E **Easy in Number -** Only give 3 or 4 areas of feedback at any one time. Choose to focus on what will make the biggest positive difference to them.

R **Receiver Led -** Prior to providing feedback check how they feel it went. Ask questions such as, 'when did you feel most confident?', 'where do you think you could have done better?'

Top Tips - delivering feedback (S.B.I.F. Model)

Situation - Provide specific examples, e.g. "when I asked you to expand on your achievements...."

Impact - Communicate the impact their answer had on you. "By not being succinct with your answer gave the impression that you may ......"

Behaviour - Only communicate the behaviours you directly observed. "...., you could have expanded more on the answer you gave"

Future - Discuss how the candidate can change the behaviour in the future. "How could this feedback support you with future interviews?"

Summary

At Positive Career Advice, we create market-relevant and researched guides for both employers and job seekers so that they can stay ahead of the curve.

For many employers, recruiting new staff is not an everyday occurrence. At Positive Career Advice, we continuously monitor the market to ensure that your hiring approach is robust and attractive to top talent while supporting you to remain competitive and amplifying your employer brand.

Please get in touch if you require any further advice or wish to locate a recruitment organisation who can support you with your hiring efforts.

Positive Career Advice

www.positivecareeradvice.com