

REPLACING POOR INTERVIEW PRACTICES WITH RELIABLE AND VALID PRACTICES THROUGH ROLE PLAYS

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ABSTRACT

Hiring processes in organizations typically include an interview. Of the two basic types of interviews (unstructured and structured) unstructured interviews include varying questions that have no formal guidelines. Structured interviews have consistent job-related questions with benchmark answers to help interviewers compare candidates.

While the relative costs and legal risks are similar for both types of interviews, structured interviews are more reliable, valid, and better in predicting job performance. Even Google's Senior Vice President of People Operations recommends all managers (regardless of their organizations' sizes and industries) include job-specific structured interviews in their hiring practices. Interestingly, job applicants react more favorably to structured interviews.

INTRODUCTION

Hiring processes in organizations typically include at least one interview (e.g., Lussier and Hendon, 2016). There are two basic types of interviews: unstructured and structured. In general, unstructured interviews include varying questions that have no formal guidelines to judge candidate responses while structured interviews have consistent job-related questions with benchmark answers that help interviewers compare candidates (e.g., Phillips & Gully, 2014).

While the relative costs and legal risks (e.g., adverse impact) are similar for both basic types of interviews, structured interviews are more reliable, valid, and better in predicting job performance (e.g., Phillips and Gully, 2014). Even Google's Senior Vice President of People Operations (Laszlo Bock) recommends all managers (regardless of their organizations' sizes and industries) include job-specific structured interviews in their hiring practices (Feloni, 2015). Interestingly, job applicants react more favorably to structured interviews resulting in more positive perceptions of the interviewer and organization (e.g., Phillips and Gully, 2014).

Regardless of compelling reasons to utilize structured interviews, unstructured interviews are more common in organizations. This is due to many reasons including how easy they are to administer and how they can be used to assess several general characteristics (i.e., oral communication skills, interpersonal skills, and fit with the organization's culture) that can relate to many types of jobs. A common misconception reported by the SHRM Foundation is that unstructured interviews provide better information than structured interviews (Pulakos, 2005). In reality, unstructured interviews are generally not recommended (e.g., Daft & Marcic, 2015). Their inconsistent nature makes them difficult to use to compare job candidates and they are not reliable predictors of future job performance.

Due to the prevalence of unstructured interviews, most adult students have experience with unstructured interviews as the job candidate and/or interviewer. Some students are very animated in defending their preferences for unstructured interviews. They tend to prefer the natural conversations that occur during

unstructured interviews. Addressing students' perceptions provide a starting point to introducing more effective organizational practices such as structured interviews. Millennials especially need to understand the reasons why a new technique is useful in addition to how to implement it (Nesvig, 2014). Of course, change is difficult especially when something (like unstructured interviewing) has become more of a habit.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) encourages college professors to help students develop effective management skills. This means helping students improve their skills and address weaknesses. This fits the desire of today's students to gain practical knowledge and skills they can apply immediately and organizations want employees who have skills and experience in practices that will help the organization succeed (e.g., effective interviewing skills that identify optimal job candidates).

As noted above, today's adult students typically are more willing to learn if given the opportunity to voice their resistance. Much of this resistance is based on their past experiences and interviewing techniques that have become habit. Thus, most adult learners must first unlearn ineffective interviewing practices before they can internalize (& exhibit) more effective practices. A good way to address the above is for students to practice (or role play) effective approaches to interviewing.

WORKSHOP

During the workshop, participants will be introduced to the entire role play exercise including preparatory homework, practice exercise and videos, sample job descriptions, structured interview process and form, observation forms, and debriefing the role play and structured interviewing. If time allows, attendees will prepare for and participate in a short role play. They will have the opportunity to ask questions and share their experiences.

The exercise works for undergraduate and graduate students, two job descriptions will be provided during the workshop to give the instructor alternative approaches that reflect the experiences and interests of the students. The author prefers to use job descriptions found on Craigs List and/or organizations' websites (e.g., Google, jetBlue).

The in-class exercise typically includes two 75 minute time periods. The first period utilizes a video to illustrate basic concepts of interviewing and practice the structured interview process. The video, practice, and clarification of how to write situational and behavioral questions and related benchmark answers take approximately 30 minutes. The role play and debriefing occur during the next class period.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST