

10 Reasons Why the Interview is a Poor Predictor of Future Job Performance

A recent study by the University of Toledo demonstrated that a group of interviewers had, for the most part, made up their mind within 15 seconds of meeting the candidate - that's as long as it takes for the parties to sit down!

Hiring and retaining talent is always promoted by business leaders as the key to business success; but most managers are less “scientific” about hiring their “greatest resource” than when buying a piece of office equipment – they replace rigorous analysis and referencing with instant impressions, emotion and gut feel.

Every day I see managers basing their decision to employ on what the candidate looks like – *Manners and Expressiveness*, plus, what they can do - *Knowledge, Skills, Training, Experience, Education*.

The job interview is the most popular hiring tool, however, it is the most expensive (management time), least valid and therefore the most dangerous. Here are some common problems hiring managers are guilty of when interviewing prospective employees.

1. Judging the candidate's abilities based on first impressions

It's human nature; we are innately wired to judge people as soon as we meet them. In psychology we call this the Fight or Flight Syndrome. Based on animal behaviour, we are wired to instantly assess – do we stay and be prepared to fight, or do we remove ourselves from the situation?

This instant judgement is usually based on appearance and mannerisms. After all, in the first few minutes of meeting someone, these two characteristics are all we have to base our judgement on.

Making decisions about future job performance based on appearance and manners is very dangerous. Just because a person looks good and is polite doesn't mean they can do the job well.

2. Basing the interview on the Can Do instead of the Will Do.

“Can Do” qualifications such as educational, technical credentials, experience etc should not be given priority over the “Will Do” such as attitudes, motivations, personality and learning and problem solving ability. Whilst the interview and the CV will help identify the “Can Dos”, it is impossible to understand the “Will Do” via the CV or interview. The ONLY valid way to unearth future work behaviour is through a valid and reliable [psychometric assessment](#) (employee profile).

3. The Halo Effect.

This is the most common interview bias - letting one factor (e.g., hobbies, sports, acquaintances) influence everything else. The Halo Effect overlaps with first impression. Imagine the manager as a keen yachting enthusiast and the candidate is an ex-America's Cup sailor. We like people who are like ourselves and likability is a big persuader. This is one reason why the interview should be structured and conducted by two people. This lessens the effect of allowing one (usually personal) factors to influence the interview outcome.

4. Answering questions for the candidate.

Interview question should be open-ended. Question like, "I guess you left your last job for a better opportunity?" begs a positive reply. You need questions that seek behavioural examples. You cannot evaluate the candidate's future potential based on answers that are mere opinions or “yes” or “no” responses.

5. Not probing vigorously.

This links to opinions, accepting unsupported or vague claims instead of probing for concrete details like names, dates, budget figures, exactly what happened, when, why and how. Probing is an important aspect of interviewing, so is paraphrasing – stating what the candidate has said in your own words and non-verbal communication – eye contact, nodding your head and showing you are listening intently.

6. Asking questions that focus on the future, not past performance.

Past behaviour reflects future behaviour. Interview questions must be based on getting concrete examples of what the candidate has done, not what they think they can do (opinion). For example, "Would you be willing to work around the clock to

meet a deadline?" rather than "Can you tell me about a time when you worked around the clock to meet a deadline?"

7. Over-selling the position – Talking too much.

Managers are often guilty of this one. In their enthusiasm for their company, and to impress the candidate, the manager uses up most of the interview time doing the talking. An interview should have the candidate talking 80% of the time and the manager 20%. Likewise, overselling the position at interview and having the employee receiving an unpleasant surprise on their first day on the job is not conducive to a long stay.

8. Choosing the best of a bad bunch.

Failing to cast your net wide enough will lessen your chances of a good hire. Hiring is time consuming and a chore most managers detest. Once the field has narrowed, the manager is often pressured to fill the position, opt for a "warm body" choice rather than starting over. At this stage of the process, they are looking for a reason to hire and negate negatives as manageable or trainable.

9. Lack of initial preparation – Do you know what you are looking for?

Hiring is a lot like supermarket shopping; if you don't have a list you will get more than you need, get things you don't want, spend more money, not get all the things you need and then have to go back and do it all over again!

Not taking the time to list out exactly what the position requires for success and failing to track this throughout the hiring process is a lot like our shopping analogy.

If you understand the performance facts (competencies) required for the job, you can then frame a behavioural question for each competency thus covering all of these off at interview. Also it's a good idea to pre-read the résumé in detail before the interview. Managers often feel they can wing it – lack of preparation leads to piss poor performance. To be fully prepared, invest a few dollars in our [recruitment kit](#)

10. An unstructured one-on-one interview

I see this type of interview all the time. Our local coffee shop, in the middle of an office complex, is often like a recruitment agency, two people chatting over a cup of coffee. The manager talking, the candidate nodding, the questions more like

statements. This is a breeding ground for the aforementioned biases: the Halo Effect, first impression, hiring on appearance and manners, lack of interview structure.

A great deal of research and scientific evidence demonstrates interview reliability and validity can be increased by concentrating on these key areas:

- TRAIN interviewers.
- Ask the SAME behavioural questions (base on the job competencies).
- Do job analyses BEFORE you begin the hiring process.
- Ignore salient PRIOR information.
- Make sure you RATE each area of the selection process – particularly the interview and make your ratings descriptive – i.e. exceeds, meets, does not meet etc (job requirements). Our [Recruitment Kits](#) include a tracking and rating sheet for the total process and interview.
- Always use TWO or MORE interviewers

Hiring is an arduous process for any manager. Taking short-cuts will bounce back on you six months down the track. It's all about job fit. Only a diligent, structured process that measures both the “can do” (application forms) and “will do” (psychometric profiling) and validated this information with a thorough reference and background check will ensure you never hire a “horror story”.

Rob McKay MA(Hons) Organisational Psychology

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