



Assess Advantage

HIRE TOUGH • MANAGE EASY

How to Inject Some 'Truth Serum' Into Job Interview Questions

In my last blog post, I discussed the dangers of using your intuition to evaluate candidates during a traditional job interview, which has been scientifically proven to be a very POOR predictor of future job performance. Traditional job interviews tend to lead the Interviewer to select a candidate they *like* rather than the candidate that has the most *potential*.

Recently LinkedIn Talent Solutions conducted a global sample of 9000 hiring managers. Interestingly, around 75% still base their hiring decisions on the interview, believing it is 88% effective! What is even more telling is that a majority of interviews were one-on-one. Moreover, an interview panel was used for just 48% of the interviews.

Despite the popularity of the job interview, science has continually demonstrated its poor validity. The jury is very clear that charismatic, well-presented candidates are not necessarily good performers (see last week's post about Narcissistics). However, we usually assume they are (a well-documented interview bias).

Traditional interviews cannot evaluate the candidates' soft skills, like empathy, conscientiousness, desire to serve, emotional stability, learning and problem solving etc. Around 63% of LinkedIn's sample base reported the evaluation of these soft skills is where the traditional interview fails, and yet organisations are still hanging their hat on this old school hiring tool.

In short, the interview only evaluates a candidate's learned behaviours, whereas the soft skills of innate behaviours are typically evaluated on gut feel and emotion.

The job interview is never going away, and it shouldn't, what is needed is a new strategic direction coupled with a validated [Talent Assessment](#) of soft skills. I like to flip the normal procedure and position the interview towards the back of the selection

process, thereby stopping an early bias based on first impressions. It also helps you inject questions from your earlier filters to validate the candidates' values and cultural fit to your organisations.

With the above in mind, here are some interview questions to tease out the candidates' truth as it relates to their past performance. Remember, past performance reflects future performance.

Although not specifically based competency questions, these questions will unearth behaviours that will help understand the candidates' job fit to your culture. It will also give the candidates a strong indication that you will be contacting previous managers/supervisors. Here are my 'truth serum' questions:

- 1) *Who was your previous boss or supervisor? (Ask them to spell the name – as you write it down, it indicates you are going to contact – even if you don't intend to do so – if it's a simple name, like Smith, ask is Smith spelt with a 'Y' or an 'I' – you get the idea)*
- 2) *How was (name) as a boss/supervisor*
- 3) *If I was to call your former employer, what two or three things would he/she say that you should keep on doing?*
- 4) *Moreover, what two or three things would he/she tell us that you should do less of, or indeed, stop doing?*

You'll be amazed at the amount of truthful, telling information this voluntarily brings forward.

In summary, the outcome of your interviews will greatly improve when:

- 1) You use an interview panel with one leader.
- 2) Structure the interview with a step-by-step process
- 3) Every candidate gets the same set of questions
- 4) Have panel members score responses for later vetting

While I have stressed the need to *structure* your interviews, you will greatly increase your chances of avoiding a bad hire if you *structure* your total hiring process. Stop hiring like its 1999. Technology now helps you gather all the information you need (can they do the job, and how will they do the job) before your first face-to-face

interview. Technology will also cut your time to hire and save on management time and recruitment costs. [Ask us how!](#)

Written by Rob McKay MA (Hons) Organisational Psychology

AssessAdvantage

www.assess.co.nz