



Ropella360

A catalyst for connection

ropella360.com

WHITE PAPER

Techniques for Behavior-Based Interviewing



> Techniques for **Behavior-based Interviewing**

Several Ropella employees serve as coaches for their children's youth sports teams, most recently baseball and t-ball. Before the start of the season, the kids go through a "Skills Assessment" – everyone who has signed up demonstrates their ability to play: hitting, catching, and running the bases. Coaches grade the kids, and use the results to evenly distribute talent across teams. As practices begin, they know which kids on their team are likely to be superstars, and which are going to need a lot more attention in order to develop their potential.

Once practice actually starts, though, anything can happen. Two kids with approximately equivalent skills and level of experience can take two completely different paths. One may indeed earn stellar statistics, propelling his team to victories, while the other may stagnate while his teammates grow and end the season as more of a liability than an asset.

What is the difference? It could be any number of traits that a skills assessment isn't designed to measure: work ethic, an eagerness to learn, and an ability to work well as part of a team.

The same is true in hiring. Looking at a candidate's skills and experience is only going to reveal so much information – especially since as many as 30% of jobseekers exaggerate their accomplishments on their resume. You need to know more than that in order to be able to select the best candidates from among the good to poor ones – research shows that hard qualifications like college degrees and years of experience are less predictive of job success than soft skills like creativity and empathy. When you find out more about candidates' ability to function in the position while using their skills, along with their real character and behavior, it will help you to better understand each candidates' likelihood of success.

The most effective interviewing techniques focus more on the behavioral experiences of an individual rather than on the skills and past training. It is believed that if an individual has the right attitude, aptitude and behavior, that they can learn whatever skills are needed for the position.



Use Reporter's Questions for Best Results

The basic reporter's questions – Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How – are the tools you need for behavioral analysis. By applying them to the issues related to behavior (such as work ethic, ego, persuasiveness, courage, etc.), you can determine the value of a candidate for a particular position. In order to ask the right questions, you will need to determine beforehand which traits are essential for someone who will be successful.

A good interviewer will use behavioral questions to approve or eliminate candidates accordingly. A nurse who is currently working at a competitor's organization might have everything you think you're looking for: an advanced degree, conferred with honors; many years of experience in the field; and right in the middle of your target compensation range. A lack of the right behavioral traits, however, may indicate that she would not work out well in the position you have available. They could even indicate that you are looking at the problem child of the other organization – and not at the superstar you need. There still is some truth to the adages "You can't teach an old dog new tricks" and "A leopard can't change its spots," and the right kind of interviewing can reveal potential problems.

If your interviews determine that someone has the right traits even without all of the specific skills, then you may want to train and develop them further to hone their skills. This kind of person will be worth the investment of time.

Top Questions to Get Behavioral Responses

When seeking to assess a candidate on a behavioral trait, you want to formulate your questions to elicit a response based on that trait. For example, if you want to find out how creative a candidate is, you can ask, "In what ways have you demonstrated creativity at work in the last 60 days?" Or, you might ask, "What kind of creative project have you done recently at work? Was it successful?"

Here are some key behavioral areas you might investigate in an interview, along with the key traits you want to uncover.

Intelligence

- Analytical
- Conceptual
- Creative
- Objective
- Cultural

Work Ethic

- Commitment
- Pride
- Passion
- Empathy
- Desire To Lead

Get Things Done

- Focused/To The Point
- Solutions Oriented
- Goal Oriented
- Pride In Results
- Prioritize

Courage

- Willingness To Dissagree

- Perseverance
- Stand Up for Belief

Ego

- Self Confidence
- Self Reliance
- Presence

Persuasive

- Empathy
- Desire To Convince
- Problem Solver

Communicator

- Clear And Concise
- Complete Answers
- Listening Skills

Resourceful

- Creative
- Flexible
- Low Supervision

Leadership

- Responsibility
- Team Player

Team Costs

During most candidate selection processes, only candidates who pass the early pre-screening stage (focused on hard qualifications) are sent on to the hiring manager for interviews. At this stage, the hiring manager should be focused on behavioral questions to determine which candidate will be the right fit for the job and the organization. Questions need to be asked to determine their depth of experience as well as their cultural fit into the specific department. If the candidate is going to be interviewed by more than one person, the questions should be divided so as to not duplicate the same material. This will enable the interviewers to cover more ground.

When behavioral-based interviewing is used, some powerful results are certainly worth noting:

- Increased retention leads to decreases in turnover of up to 50 percent.
- A more experienced staff improves outcomes and quality.
- Improved client satisfaction drives higher levels of productivity and employee satisfaction.

All of these factors work together to improve outcomes and client satisfaction, as well as the organization's financial performance.

The Value of Behavioral Interview Questions

When seeking to assess a candidate on a behavioral trait, you want to formulate your questions to elicit a response based on that trait. For example, if you want to find out how creative a candidate is, you can ask, "In what ways have you demonstrated creativity at work in the last 60 days?" Or, you might ask, "What kind of creative project have you done recently at work? Was it successful?"

If you were a candidate applying for a job, think about how you would describe yourself when asked to finish this sentence, "I am a _____."

Following are the top five responses for this sentence, "I am a _____":

- team player
- self-starter
- hard worker
- dependable employee
- people person

Now consider what these responses tell you as an interviewer. What do you now know about the person who gave you these responses? Nothing really. Only a vague interpretation of the candidates' own opinion of themselves (or, worse, a vague idea of what the candidate thinks you want them to be, as opposed to who they actually are). The basis of behavioral interviewing is that the past performance of an individual is the best way to predict future behavior. During the interview process, questions are asked in a way that gives the candidate the opportunity to tell you about past performances, experiences, or skills. You should tell the candidate to give as many specific details as possible when they give their answer. His or her response will enable you to tell how they would perform in situations that are similar to the ones they will encounter in your open position. Have you ever applied for a mortgage for a home? Besides the paperwork and fees, what information

is the mortgage company most interested in? You can be sure that they will take a serious look at your credit score and credit history. Why? They will base your ability to pay in the future largely upon your actual repayment history and how you handled your finances in the past.

The difference is, you can't lie about your credit score, while candidates can lie on their resume. The use of a credit score to assess financial responsibility is just one of many examples of where past behavior is used to predict future performance.

Whether to accept a second date, how you bet on a horse race, and whether you ask a babysitter to come back a second time to watch your children are all examples of how we use specific past behavior to inform our everyday decisions. Our hiring decisions should be treated with the same due diligence.

Comparing Results from Different Types of Questions

Let's take a moment to look at what kind of information we can expect to receive from both a behavioral and a traditional approach – and then compare them.

Here are two examples::

- At ABC Technologies, our clients are our top priority. Many clients find themselves with urgent IT needs and their stress level is very high. If they become upset with something that has happened or something they feel should have happened but didn't, we need to continue to be responsive. We call this service recovery. Do you have experience with service recovery?
- At ABC Technologies, our clients are our top priority. Many clients find themselves with urgent IT needs and their stress level is very high. If they become upset with something that has happened or something they feel should have happened but didn't, we need to continue to be responsive. Can you tell me about a time that you worked with an upset client, how you dealt with it and what the outcome was?

The facts given in the above information is the same – only the ending is different. Now let's see how these two questions differ in the information they elicit.

Question 1 can be answered with a simple “Yes” or “No.”

This will seriously limit the flow of information being given. Even if the candidate specifies their years of experience in service recovery, you won't have any idea of how successful they have been in these situations.

Question 2, on the other hand, encourages the candidate to provide information that will let the interviewer see how well he or she performed under similar situations.

Non-behavioral-based questions are often closed-ended. Candidates can answer with a “yes” or “no” or another brief, non-specific response. Facts and figures are easily exaggerated, or answers tailored to what they think the interviewer is looking for.

Behavioral-based questions, on the other hand, are always open-ended. Candidates must answer with a specific, detailed example or story, which is harder to make up on the fly. Behavioral-based questions are not hypothetical. Do not use language such as, “What would you do?” Use prompts such as, “Tell me about a time when you...” Anyone can tell the bank that they will pay on their mortgage each month; whether or not this is true is a different story.

Choosing the Behavioral-Based Questions You Need

At this point you are probably wondering: How might I identify the skills that are most important and critical to success in a given position? As a hiring manager, how to I develop behavioral-based questions that help me identify the right person for the job?

Start by identifying the must-have soft skills for the position. Perhaps they need to have an entrepreneurial mindset, excellent attention to detail, and an ability to work cross-functionally within a complex matrix organization.

The book *The Right Hire* can help you to identify these key traits and implement them into a comprehensive system of assessment. The following resources can also help you to identify these key traits:

The job description.

- The characteristics of your top performers, especially on the skills and behaviors they demonstrate on a daily basis.
- Your organization's standards of behavior.
- Personality profiles.
- Tests.

The next step is to identify and prioritize the job-specific competencies that are most important in order to ensure the candidate will be successful in the new position. Let these serve as a foundation upon which you can develop the behavioral-based questions that will allow you to recognize these traits in your candidates.

For the highest priority characteristics, you may want to consider creating a Skills Survey – a pre-interview questionnaire that candidates can take the time to formulate their answers from the comfort of their own homes. A Scorecard will allow you to assess these answers against an objective standard, so you can determine which candidates are worth investing in a phone or face-to-face interview. When you get to the interview, you will already have a good idea of how well the candidate will fit into your organization, and you can tailor your questions to dig deeper into the information they have already provided.

> Sample Questions for Behavior-based Interviews

Listed below are examples of behavioral-based interview

Exercising Good Judgment

What is the most difficult decision you have had to make? How did you arrive at that decision? What was the result of your decision?

Describe a situation where you handled decisions under pressure or when time limits were a factor. What was the outcome?

Critical Thinking Skills

Describe a time when you had to analyze a problem and generate a solution. What was the result?

Tell me about a situation that did not work out as expected and for which you were responsible for deciding the next steps. Where did this lead?

Exercising Initiative

Can you tell me about a time when you went beyond your manager's normal job expectations in order to get the job done? How were you recognized?

Tell me about a time when you identified a new, unusual, or different approach for addressing a problem or task. What was the benefit?

Client Orientation

Describe a time when you had an irate client. How did you handle the situation?

Continuous Learning

Tell me about a specific situation when you did not have the knowledge or skill to complete a task or assignment. How did you overcome this challenge?

Initiative

Give me an example of when you had to go beyond the call of duty to get the job done. How were you rewarded?

Adaptability

Give me an example of a time when you had two important projects competing for your time. How did you select the priority?

Teamwork

What did you do in your last job to contribute to a team environment? How were you recognized for your contribution?

Communication

Tell me about a time when you had a miscommunication with a team member or client. How did you resolve this communication breakdown?



Ropella360

A catalyst for connection

850.983.4777 | ropella360.com