

A few notes to better explain the behavioral interviewing process. The concept was developed by Dr. Paul Green, from the University of Tennessee.

If you would like further explanation about how to make the interview process more effective, give me a call.

## **BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING OVERVIEW**

When selecting employees, two skills are assessed. The technical skills and the performance skills. The technical skills are the specific knowledge and skills required to perform the work such as typing, computer skills, accounting principles, and engineering principles. These skills are typically learned through formal training and are best assessed through the job application and / or formal written or other examination process. The performance skills are working habits or special abilities that are typically learned thorough life's experiences rather than formal training. Goal setting, team building decisiveness are examples of performance skills. These skills are best assessed through the interview and reference checking process.

The trait interview has been the traditional solution to hiring. The interviewer concentrates on personality characteristics such as assertiveness, dominance, or persistence to "explain" why people act the way they do. This approach attempts to match the candidate's traits to the behavioral skills required to successfully perform the job. A trait is a word that summarizes a relative permanent characteristic of a person. For example, words such as aggressive, likable, creative, and ambitious summarize what a person is like. It is very difficult for an interviewer to use traits to predict job performance as a candidate can fake a trait in the interview.

The behavioral interview avoids the use of trait words to understand job candidates. The behavioral interview uses the candidate's past behavior patterns to predict future behavior on the job. This approach assumes that "the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior." For example, the number of jobs a person has had in the past is recognized as a good predictor of future turnover, or the candidates past personality conflicts suggestions that there will be personality conflicts in the future.

During the behavioral interview, the candidate will typically begin with a trait answer such as "I'm a hard worker," "I'm honest," or "I'm dependable." Because the candidate wants to get the job, it is smart to assume that the candidate's self-description will paint them in the best light. The behavioral interviewer probes deeper. The interviewer guides interview responses into descriptions of specific life history events and asks questions about assets and liabilities, challenges and problems, and successes and failures. Behavior examples contain references to:

- Names
- Dates
- Numbers
- Times
- Location

Recognize that past behavior does not predict absolutely. People do change, but the behavioral approach takes advantage of the likelihood that, once a behavioral pattern is set the chances are that it will continue.

Keys to getting specific examples:

**THREE - FIFTHS RULE --**

The candidate should be able to answer three out of five questions asked -- if not they are probably holding back information.

**TWO - THIRDS RULE --**

The candidate should give reference to at least three out of five specifics (name, dates, numbers, times, and location). Keep probing until you get the specific -- otherwise they will be giving you a general answer.

Behavioral interviewing not only makes better predictions about an applicant's job success, but it is more legally defensible. Interviews emphasizing past behavior provides verifiable data. The rationale for the interviewer's decision and recommendations becomes a matter of fact, not a matter of dispute.

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## RECEPTIONIST

### SKILL DEFINITIONS

- 1 - **Policy and Procedures:** Able to interpret policies/procedures consistent with the organization's goal in being of service to customers.
- 2 - **Oral Communication:** Able to provide information and interpret policies / procedures in a clear and concise manner.
- 3 - **Project/Task Orientation:** Committed to performing quality work assigned and completing tasks on schedule.
- 4 - **Attention to Detail:** Able to be alert to all aspects of the work place, including telephone and walk-in customers as well as co-workers.
- 5 - **Flexibility:** Ability to do many things well and be able to modify/change work directions to respond to changing needs.
- 6 - **Coping with Stress:** Able to maintain a professional attitude toward work problems and others in the work place during stressful times.

**RECEPTIONIST**

**STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

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**BENEFITS STATEMENTS**

1. The purpose of our meeting today is to get to know you better and to find out how your past experiences and/or knowledge fits the job for which you are applying. Before we finish you will also be given the opportunity to ask any questions you may have about the job for which you are applying.
2. We will be looking for specific examples of your past experience which will help us predict how you will perform in this position.
3. We will be taking notes as we will want to make sure we don't forget anything. We don't want to confuse you with the other candidates, and we want to make sure we are accurate.

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**INTERVIEW OPENER QUESTIONS**

1. To get us started, tell us why you are interested in this position.
2. Take a couple of minutes and give us a general overview of the education and / or experiences you have had which relates to the job for which you are applying.

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**TECHNICAL SKILLS QUESTIONS**

1. Describe the types of multi-line switchboards you have worked with in your past work experiences.
  2. Give details about the number of incoming lines, transfer lines, and holding capabilities, etc.
  3. Describe the kinds of telephone and counter receptionist duties you have had in your present and previous jobs. Give me some idea of the number of calls and walk-in customers you receive in a typical day. What word-processing systems have you worked with? Tell me the advantages and disadvantages of each of the systems.
  4. Describe the kinds of materials you were responsible for entering into the word processing system and what was the review process for the entered information.
  5. Describe your past experiences in scheduling appointments. Where was the experience obtained and for who were appointments scheduled.
  6. What is your straight typing speed and production typing speed? What kinds of typing have you done in the past. (Example: forms, letters, reports, etc.).
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## PERFORMANCE SKILLS QUESTIONS

### **POLICY AND PROCEDURES:**

1. Give me an example of the kinds of policies and procedures you had to interpret and follow in your previous work experiences?
2. Give me an example of a time when you broke company policy and tell me what happened?
3. Give me an example of a time when you conformed to policy when you felt it would have been better or easier to do otherwise?
4. Have you ever faced a situation when others in the office broke policy? If so, what was the result and what was your reaction?
5. Have you worked for an organization where there was a constant changing of the policies, procedures, and goals. If so, give me an example, and tell me how you handled the ambiguity?

### **ORAL COMMUNICATION:**

1. It is sometimes difficult to sell your ideas to upper management. Give me an example of a time when you were successful in selling your ideas?
2. Give me an example of a time when you felt you were particularly good in communicating with an irate citizen?
3. Give me an example of a time when you did not handle an "upset" customer or co-worker as well as you could? What was the result?
4. What experience have you had in speaking before your peers and supervisor in selling your ideas?
5. Tell me about the most difficult interpersonal challenge you have had to face in your past work experience? What were the results of that situation?

### **PROJECT/TASK ORIENTED:**

1. Tell me about a time when you were particularly pleased with yourself in your commitment to a task or a project?
2. Give me an example of one of the biggest mistakes you have made in your past work? Give me an example of the biggest cost mistake? Biggest savings?
3. Give me an example of a time when you had to be attentive to details? Tell me what you did to insure accuracy?
4. Tell me about a time when you were not as attentive to details as you should have been? Tell me what happened?
5. Tell me about an organization you have worked for in the past that was not very attentive to details, and how did you react to the situation?

### **ATTENTION TO DETAIL:**

1. Give me an example of a time when you "tuned out" a demanding co-worker who was interfering with you doing your job? Tell me what happened?
2. Give me an example of one of the biggest mistakes you have made in your past work? Give me an example of the biggest cost mistake?
3. Give me an example of a time when you had to be attentive to details? Tell me what you did to insure accuracy?
4. Tell me about a time when you were not as attentive to details as you should have been? Tell me what happened?
5. Tell me about an organization you have worked for in the past that was not very attentive to details, and how did you react to the situation?

### **FLEXIBILITY:**

1. Describe the most difficult person you have ever had to work with and tell me how you handled the situation?
2. Give me an example of a time when you had to "change horses" in the middle of the stream and tell me how you handled the situation?
3. Describe a situation which called for you to "roll with the punches" and you were not as flexible as

- you could have been?
4. Describe a situation where it was necessary for you to negotiate a solution or compromise. What was the result?
  5. Tell me about the most demanding boss you have ever had to work for, and tell me what you did to meet his/her work demands?

**COPING WITH STRESS:**

1. Give me an example of a time when you had to handle or deal with a particularly stressful situation? How did you handle it?
2. What kinds of work pressures do you find the most difficult to deal with?
3. Give me an example of a time when you were particularly pleased with yourself in the way you handled a stressful situation? What was the outcome of that situation?
4. Give me an example of a time when you were disappointed in the way you handled a stressful situation? What was the outcome of that situation?
5. Tell me about a time when you "lost your cool" in front of a customer or co-worker and tell me what was the results?

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**WRAP-UP QUESTIONS**

1. That is all of the questions we have prepared for you, but have we asked you enough questions to get a good understanding of your ability to perform the duties of the \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Did we fail to ask anything that you expected us to ask about your work background as it relates to this job?
3. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us about your background?

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**INTERVIEWEE QUESTIONS/RESPONSES**

1. What questions do you have for me?

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**ACTION PLAN**

1. I want to thank you for taking the time to be interviewed for the position of \_\_\_\_\_. We have \_\_\_\_ other applicants to interview and we will be completed with our interviews on \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. We should complete the selection process by \_\_\_\_\_. You should hear from this office no later than \_\_\_\_\_.
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