

Interview Essentials



eBook

Welcome to the Interview Essentials eBook!

In here, you will find a comprehensive guide to the essential role that Human Resources should play in the unique sector of interviewing.

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Do Bizarre Interview Questions Really Find the Best Candidate?

Imagine that you're interviewing for a job and the interviewer asks you, "If you were shrunk to the size of a pencil and put in a blender, how would you get out?" How would you answer? What is the right answer? Have you ever thought about being the size of a pencil? Why are you in a blender anyway? According to glassdoor.com, that is #1 oddball interview question. #2 is "How many ridges are there on a quarter?" Do these seem odd questions for someone to ask you during an interview? They should. They are odd. That's probably the point.



These types of questions are designed to see how well you can think on your feet. There isn't necessarily a right answer to these types of questions. But there is definitely a wrong answer. It goes something like, "Uh... I don't know." If you're faced with one of these questions the first thing you should do is relax and think it through. I don't know how many ridges are on a quarter, and anyone who does has been focusing on the wrong things in life. But, I would probably try to reason it through by looking at the size of a ridge, the diameter of a quarter and hope that I recall the formula for circumference of a circle (it's $\pi * D$ just for reference). The key here is to: (a) not get flustered; and (b) try and think logically and come up with a reasonable answer.

I guess the real question here is the usefulness of such questions. They probably are pretty good at seeing how someone responds to an uncomfortable situation and how quick they are on their feet. After that, I think they are potentially worthless and maybe worse. There are a lot of very smart people who aren't particularly quick on their feet. That doesn't mean that they aren't excellent when faced with a difficult problem and some time to think about it. There are also some people who aren't particularly good at in-depth analysis but who are good at coming up with pithy responses to weird questions.

There are many jobs that require someone to think quickly and handle themselves with aplomb in stressful situations. Salespeople have to do this every day. But there are many that don't. Many brilliant engineers and scientists aren't particularly glib or even quick on their feet. They don't really need to be. You don't solve complex problems in 30 seconds. In any case, it's only one aspect of performance and shouldn't overly influence your decision on the quality of that candidate. It's one factor. Take it for what it is and then move forward. For interviewees, the lesson is to try and remain calm and understand that the reason they are asking you crazy questions isn't to see if you know the answer, it's to see how well you handle yourself.

5 Things to Consider with Online Interview Training Programs

Whether it is due to recent struggles with the economy, the impact of lean initiatives, or general cost cutting goals, organizations are looking for ways to do more with less. Since 2008, many organizations have cut facilitator based training programs because they were seen as costly and non-essential. For some organizations, training programs delivered over the web have become a more cost effective and efficient form of training delivery. However, there are unique considerations when choosing online training programs for your organization. Consider these 5 points when investigating online training programs...

1. Does the program leverage adult learning techniques?

Training research has proven that adults learn differently. In particular, adults are better able to retain information when given direct, concrete examples, receive feedback on how they are doing, and when the content is of importance to them.

2. Is the training engaging and interactive to keep the participants' attention?

One of the biggest concerns with online training is that the delivery method inherently allows participants to ignore the content and work on other tasks as the program runs in the background. A course that is interactive will increase the interest level of the participant and allow knowledge transfer to occur. Great training content is useless if the participant is not paying attention. Consider programs that capture participant responses to practice exercises and samples so that you can identify who paid attention and who did not.

3. Does the program include practice exercises throughout the training?

Related to the point about adult learning theory, it is very important that practice exercises are leveraged throughout the training. This will allow participants to practice what they have learned and receive feedback on how they are doing.

4. Does the online training also offer facilitator led follow-up options?

Depending on the skill set you are attempting to train, it may be necessary to supplement the online program with a short facilitator led follow-up. This is particularly important when the program contains legal content or the need for practice role plays.

5. Does the program allow participants re-enter the training to "refresh" their skills over time?

Often, employees are required to complete training during their orientation period or within specified timeframes. However there are certain skills that, although they can be learned at any point, are not utilized until several months after training occurs. Because of this, it is always a good idea to afford participants the opportunity to re-enter the online training program to refresh their skills just prior to needing those skills.



Are Individual or Panel Interviews Better?

Individual interviews refer to interviews conducted by a single interviewer whereas panel interviews involve more than one interviewer. In the past, some researchers have suggested that panel interviews are superior to individual interviews because they allow more than one person to provide ratings (Warmke & Weston, 1992).



However, this argument doesn't stand up to either practical or empirical scrutiny. In the first place, many organizations use multiple, individual interviews, which allow multiple raters to provide ratings.

Secondly, empirical research indicates that individual interviews are more valid than panel interviews (McDaniel, 1994). That meta-analysis, which was able to evaluate 144 validity coefficients across 23,308 people, in both panel and individual interviews, found that individual interviews were more valid than panel interviews for all types of interviews (i.e. both

structured and unstructured) (.43 vs. .32), for structured interviews (.46 vs. .38) as well as for unstructured interviews (.34 vs. .33). The superiority of individual interviews seems to be greatest for structured interviews, whereas panel and individual interviews perform approximately the same for unstructured interviews.

While panel interviews are not really any more accurate, and may in fact be less accurate, there are some possible advantages to conducting multiple, individual interviews. Panel interviews may, in some cases, be easier for an organization to schedule. There is also the perceived value of having everyone in the same room, hearing the same things from the candidate. It may also improve the ability for interviewers to share their perceptions, ratings, etc. immediately after the interview is completed and therefore make faster decisions.

An organization may therefore prefer panel interviews from a stakeholder buy-in standpoint. From a pure accuracy standpoint, though, you would be better off conducting multiple, one-on-one interviews and then integrating the ratings.

The Just Like Me Complex: How to Use Interview Training to Effectively Interview Candidates

You'll be a great fit – you're just like me!

Here's the scenario – in walks a candidate for a newly vacant marketing position with ABC Corporation. ABC Corporation has yet to implement a corporate wide, standardized behavioral interviewing program, so Jim (the hiring manager) is interviewing Frank (the candidate) using the unstructured process that he's used in the past (which is why there is a newly vacant position – the previous employee wasn't a good fit).

Jim – So, Frank, it says on your resume that you received your Masters from OSU, is Professor James still there?

Frank – Wow, how do you know Professor James? He was my advisor and is a great guy.

Jim – I also received my Masters from OSU and he was my advisor way back when. He is a great guy and is actually the reason I decided to pursue employment here at ABC Corporation. Man, the basketball team is looking good this year; they have a shot at winning the conference.

Frank – They sure do...I actually was a three year letterman on the OSU basketball team.



At this point, Frank is in. Jim has already made his mind up that Frank would be a great fit at ABC Corporation because he went to OSU and he played basketball there. While Frank may very well be a good candidate, Jim has no idea what his past work experience is, if he would fit within the culture of ABC Corporation or if he's even competent enough for the Marketing position.

This scenario plays out at companies all too often. Untrained hiring managers make “gut” decisions about candidates only to find out a few months later that they aren't a good fit. This costs the company time, money and opens them up to legal risk due to the unstructured and invalidated interview. If organizations do nothing else in their hiring process, they must implement a behavioral interviewing program. There are a number of solid options available and most good ones have an online component to help save time and money when training hiring managers.

Take a few minutes to evaluate your current interviewing process. If it isn't a [structured, behavioral based program](#), take the time to research and find one today.

The Best of Both Worlds: Online Interview Training Combined with Classroom Instruction

In a world where the “8-hour” work day is as extinct as the dinosaurs, it has become increasingly challenging for employees to be away from their day-to-day work activities in order to participate in lengthy classroom-based trainings. Let’s be honest, most of us have either sat through all day --or worse than that-- multiple-day trainings in which participants start zoning out, are regularly sneaking to check email and voice mail, and by the end of the process, and become just outright irritable and cranky at the thought of all of the work and extra time they have to put in catching up on what they missed while they were in the training.

While some topics may clearly warrant lengthy classroom training, a way in which companies can reduce or eliminate the need for such “routine” trainings is through the use of effective [e-Learning platforms](#). Advances in online training can be seen across many industries, covering a wide range of topics, including online interviewer training. There are many advantages to participating in an online training course, including the flexibility to work on the course at the participants own pace, completing sections as their work schedule allows. Through the use of technology and unique instructional design methodologies, the learner can participate in interactive and engaging exercises, watch videos to observe positive modeling, and take learning check-point quizzes to self-evaluate their knowledge of the concepts that have been covered. All of these principals can effectively be applied to teaching a participant how to how to conduct a thorough, legally-defensible interview and more and more companies are making the transition to facilitating interviewer training in an online format.



But what about actually practicing their interviewing skills? Well, this is where the best of both worlds comes into play...by choosing to use a *combination* of both online interviewer training and a condensed classroom based training, participants can cover all of the concepts and theory in the online platform which allows the classroom training (remember, the part that involves costly time away from one’s day-to-day responsibilities) to really focus on the core topic of practicing their skills with a live partner.

A review of key concepts, Q&A about the online training, and face-to-face practice with a partner can now be accomplished in virtually an extended “working lunch session” as opposed to a lengthy all-day training session. Another bonus is that often times in trainings such as this, participants arrive for the training with wildly varying levels of knowledge and past experience- when combined with a precursor online training, all participants arrive to the classroom having covered all of the same topic content in advance—which is a big time save and an added bonus to the classroom instructor.

Online training plus shortened classroom training = less zombie-like, irritable and stressed employees

What Do I Do Now?

Interviewing is a unique and complex portion of the hiring process. We hope this eBook has helped clarify some of the major problems in interviewing and interview training and the ways to go about analyzing and fixing those problems.

Learn more about how to effectively interview [here](#).

Have questions? Contact Select International at (412) 358-8595 or email info@selectintl.com.