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WHITEPAPER

The Role of the Interview: Ready for a New Job?

DID YOU KNOW?

Using well developed assessments that are properly validated in your operating environment might be the most significant competitive advantage your company will acquire.

Introduction

The in-person interview is a common step in the hiring process. In fact for many contact centers, it is the only job candidate evaluation conducted. In the June 2009 issue of *Fast Company*, Dan and Chip Heath, authors of *Made to Stick*, wrote a column titled, “Why It May Be Wiser to Hire People Without Meeting Them.” The article made some excellent points about the effectiveness of interviews for evaluating job candidates. The article also raises some important points for contact center hiring managers to understand and consider. With technology enabling additional methods to evaluate job candidates and the home agent model creating more virtual hiring processes, does the interview add value as a pre-hire tool? If it does, what is the right role for the interview?

Types of Interviews

The interview can take multiple forms. Before we discount the interview’s effectiveness entirely, we should briefly understand the types of interviews being used in contact centers today. The interview is a selection process designed to predict future job performance on the basis of applicants’ oral responses to oral questions (McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994).

Interview Form	Description	Predictive Power
Unstructured Interviews (i.e. maybe I’ll get lucky)	An unstructured interview involves a process whereby different questions may be asked of different applicants, at the interviewers’ discretion (Arvey, Miller, Gould, & Burch, 1987).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unstructured interviews have lower predictive power than other types of interviews and other assessments.• Reliability is also a significant concern because the interview is not standardized leading to a wide range of possible results.

Situational Interview

The interviewer describes to the candidate a job-related scenario or situation and asks the candidate what he/she would do under the given circumstances. Interview responses are then scored using a scoring guide constructed by job experts.

- Other assessment alternatives have been proven to have higher predictive power.

Structured Behavioral Interview

Interviewees are asked standardized questions regarding how they have handled past situations that were similar to circumstances they may encounter on the job (Motowidlo, Carter, Dunnette, Tippins, Werner, Burnett, & Vaughn, 1992). Probing questions for additional details are also used. Responses are then scored using behaviorally anchored rating scales.

- Schmidt & Hunter (1998) found the validity of structured interviews to be significantly better than for unstructured interviews.
- Research indicates that other selection procedures may have higher validities in relation to job performance (Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Motowidlo et al., 1992).

Benefits and Challenges with Interviews

Now that we have introduced some common forms of interviews, we can review standard benefits and challenges associated with the interview process.

Benefits

- Helps create engagement with candidates
- Evaluates communication skills
- Evaluates candidate's commitment to opportunity vis a vis dress, grooming, preparation, etc.
- Enables evaluation of candidate's ability to think on their feet
- Certain types of interview strategies can have predictive power
- Creates sense of empowerment among interviewers

Challenges

- Poor and unskilled interviewers...most people think they are an excellent interviewer
- Extraverts tend to perform more effectively...extraversion doesn't predict performance in most jobs
- Some of the most popular interviews don't predict performance
- Hiring manager doesn't always conduct interview in call center space
- Expensive when compared to most

- Can be in-person or phone-based
- Candidates expect and rarely question it
- tests/assessments
- Easier to fake
- Variance in the process
- Recruiter incentive to pass candidates to meet hiring production goals

Does the interview add value?

If structured correctly, the interview can provide value. Choice of interview format is the critical first decision. Research and practical results suggest that the structured behavioral interview is the right interview form to use. In addition, interviewers must receive consistent, constant training on interview administration. And, interviewers must undergo frequent quality assurance testing to make sure that the variance between interviewers is controlled.

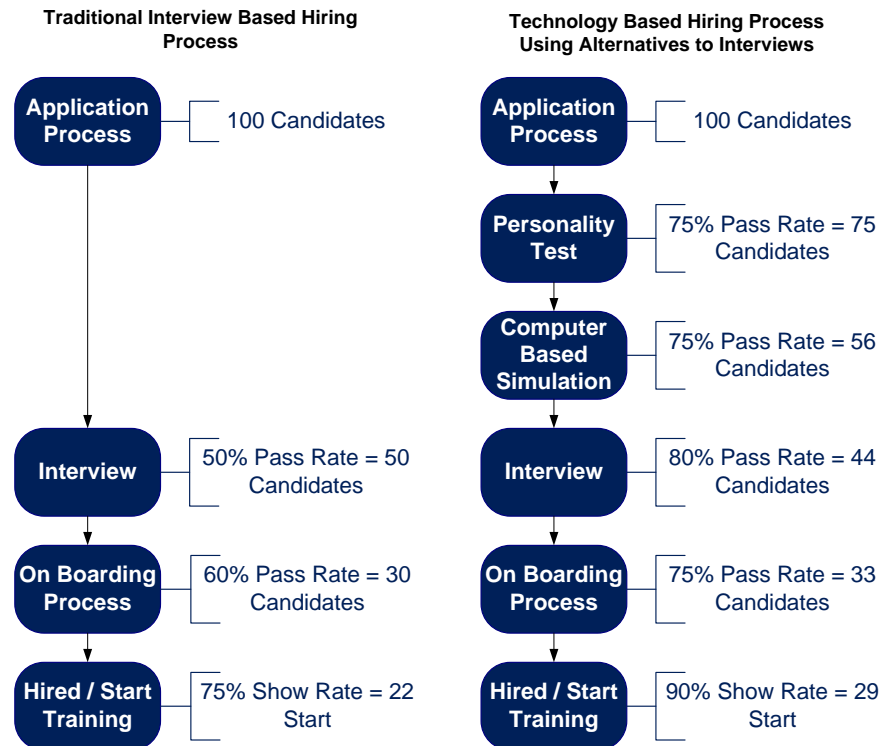
In addition, including the interview, via phone or in-person, adds an ideal opportunity for candidate engagement. Technology is allowing significant improvements to the hiring process. From removing cost, speeding processes, and improving overall hiring results, the gains from technology cannot be disputed. However, recruiting is still a contact sport. Candidates expect some type of personal interaction. Technology also allows disgruntled job candidates to post comments about negative experiences, blast unfriendly hiring processes, and quickly join forces against some companies. The interview, by allowing interaction with the job candidate, creates an opportunity to diffuse some of those issues and engage the candidate.

Alternatives to Interviews that Generate Greater Value

While the interview does provide value, research suggests that other types of assessments offer better predictive power. For the contact center hiring manager, that means screening out candidates who have a higher risk of attrition and poor job performance. Before we address the role of the interview, it is important to understand some of the alternatives to the interview.

Alternatives	Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer based Simulations • Personality Assessments • Cognitive Ability Assessments • Situational Judgment Tests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective • Never Get Tired • More Predictive of Retention and Job Performance • Allows technology to be used to automate the process and streamline workflow models • Better Face Validity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harder to engage the interviewee

What is the right role for the interview then? Given that the interview has reduced predictive power compared to other assessment options and that the interview does allow some key benefits with candidate engagement, the structured behavioral interview should be retained but moved to the end of the hiring process. Hiring workflow should be designed to use lower cost and higher validity options (like the alternatives mentioned above) upfront and then finalize hiring decisions using interviews. The goal of this process is to generate a lower cost but more predictive hiring model that reduces the chance of a bad hiring decision. The model to the right provides an example of two hiring workflows:



In the traditional interview model, the recruiters will need to interview 100 candidates that have successfully completed the application process. In the technology led model, the recruiters will only need to interview 56 candidates. Assuming that each interview is 60 minutes for preparation, discussion, and review, this saves \$66,000 in opportunity cost (60 minutes x 44 candidates x \$25/hour).

In addition, the recruiters are interviewing a more qualified candidate pool. And, because the candidate pool is better qualified because of the alternative assessments being used, the on boarding pass rate and show rate are also higher. The net result is a better hiring yield at a lower cost.

In Summary

Using well developed assessments that are properly validated in your operating environment might be the most significant competitive advantage your company will acquire. While your competitors are hiring the best interviewees, you'll be discovering the true stars and placing them into jobs that will maximize their engagement and performance.

References

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About FurstPerson

What we do:

- Develop and operate web-based pre-hire, employee selection assessments that help contact centre organisations hire and develop the right employees.

Our experience:

- Thirteen years of research and implementation experience working with all major call types including customer care, sales, collections, win back, and technical support.
- Implemented our solutions in over 250 labor markets in the United States, Canada, UK, the Philippines, and Latin America.
- Significant industry experience in telecommunications, insurance, outsourcing, financial services, retail, travel, and business services industries.
- Home agent hiring since 2002.
- Average client is a multi-site, multi-call type organization with complex hiring workflow models and job profiles.
- Developed award-winning assessments featuring interactive simulations.

Differentiators:

- Predictive assessments with demonstrated bottom line results ranging from:
 - Improved new hire performance (up to 40%)
 - Reduced turnover (up to 70%)
 - ROI – \$1 invested yields \$10 to \$20 in return
 - Lower recruiting expense
- Hiring solutions based on empirical research supported by ongoing job and validation analysis.
- Customized solutions leveraging our extensive contact centre hiring expertise and industry leading assessment solutions.

To learn more about FurstPerson, please visit our website at www.furstperson.com or email us at info@furstperson.com or call us at 888-626-3412.

