Behaviour-Based Interviewing

November 2010

Developmental Services
Human Resource Strategy

Enhancing the lives of the people we support

Icebreaker

- Name
- Role and tenure
- Expectations for the session
- Worst interviewing nightmare (either as interviewer or interviewee)

Objectives

- Build capability in behaviour-based interviewing and assessing candidate information for evidence of competencies by:
  - Practicing conducting behaviour-based interviews
  - Taking effective notes
  - “Coding” candidate data for competencies

Agenda

- Welcome, introductions, objectives and agenda
- Introduction to behaviour-based interviewing
- Getting codable data
- The behaviour-based interview process
- LUNCH
- Practice round 1
- Interview problems and solutions
- Practice round 2
- Assessing the candidate
- Making a hiring decision and checking references

A question ….

What is the cost of making a hiring mistake?

The cost of a hiring mistake

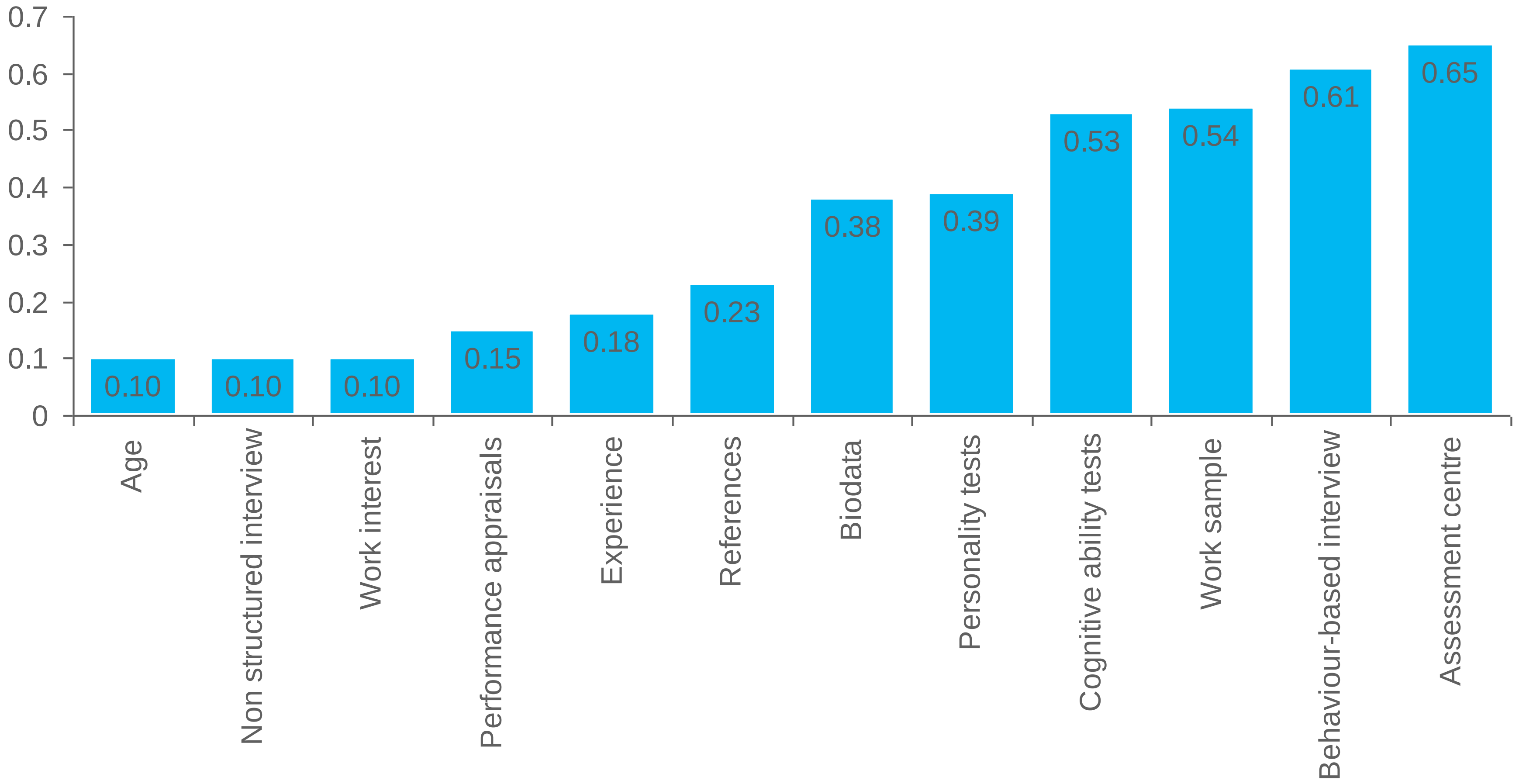
Consider the costs associated with …

- Advertising for the position
- Administrative costs associated with the recruitment and selection process (e.g., pre-employment assessments, background checks, etc.)
- Interview expenses
- Salary and benefits paid to the employee
- Orientation and training
- Loss of productivity
- Missed opportunities
- Lower morale
- Poor job/person "fit" and the negative impact

Cost estimates for a poor hire can be upwards to 1.5 times an individual's annual salary.

- Saratoga Institute, 2001

Selection methods and their validity



Source: Smith, 1988 and Boyle, 1988

Using a competency-based approach for selection …

- Will help to avoid these costs by providing a framework to consistently select, develop and promote employees

1.0

Introduction to behaviour-based interviewing

What is behaviour-based interviewing?

- A structured interview that is used to collect evidence about past behaviour – competencies
  - Uses targeted competency-based questions to gather evidence of the candidate's competencies relative to the competencies required for success in the role
- Based on the premise that *past performance predicts future performance*
- Uncovers behavioural and technical skills
- Reduces tendency toward interviewer bias – candidates typically view this type of interview as fair and equitable
- Increases objectivity and accuracy in selection decisions

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The goal – a good job-person fit

- Different jobs require different competencies
- Different working environments require different competencies
- It is important to get the right job-person fit

Traditional interviews

- Traditional interviews:
  - Ask the candidate how they *would* behave as opposed to how they *did* behave (e.g., “What would you do in this situation…?”)
  - Are usually insufficient to identify the highest potential job candidates
  - May result in more biased and/or ineffective selection decisions

Behaviour-based interviews

- Behaviour-based interviews:
  - Ask the candidate questions that elicit how they have demonstrated specific behaviours in the past (e.g., “Tell me about a time when you had to ….”)
  - Reduce the candidate’s ability to be less than honest
  - Typically result in more effective and unbiased selection decisions

Benefits

- Better job-person fit
- Increased retention rates
- Shorter development period to fully competent performance

Behaviour-based interviews avoid these mistakes made in traditional interviews

- Interviewer talks more than the candidate
- Selection decisions based on first impressions or “gut” instincts
- Interviewer asks inappropriate or potentially illegal questions
- The same general questions are used for every position, making it difficult to judge if a candidate is right for a specific position
- Interviewers disagree on which candidate to hire due to a lack of agreement on criteria for success

2.0

Getting codable data

What is codable information?

- The detail you get from candidates:
  - Actions
  - Feelings
  - Thoughts
  - Statements

  that allows you to determine what competencies and levels they have demonstrated in the past

Criteria for codable data

For data to be “codable” it must:

- Be clearly attributable to the interviewee (“I” vs. “we”)
- Have actually occurred in the past (no “hypotheticals”)
- Have been volunteered by the interviewee
- Be specific

What is codable?

Code	Don't Code
Clear actor	Vague actor
"I"	*"We," "our," "the team"*
Specific situation	Statements describing what the interviewee currently or typically does, or hopes to do in the future
Past actions, statements, thoughts, feelings	The interviewee's current opinions, attitudes, reflections and/or feelings about past situations (hindsight)
Specific	Summarized dialogue

Coding example

Codable

- I knew that the meeting was going well because they started warming up. The father of one of the individuals we serve became much more open and started to talk about issues that were important to him. He became animated and excited when we started talking to him about some of our programs that would be suitable for his son …

Not codable

- “I’m a good judge of people. I can tell if a meeting is going well or not.”
- “We knew that it wasn’t a good meeting!”

Behavioural example

"She had only been in the role for about nine months, and she told me she was frustrated that she was not catching onto some things more quickly. I explained to her, 'This is a very complex process, and it takes quite a bit of time to learn all aspects of it. I think you have a bright future here and I want you to succeed. I want to help you get to where you need to be. I've reviewed your work, and I think I know where you may have gotten confused. I think you missed some of the variables, which impacted the overall result that you got. I'll need you to do this again tomorrow – I'd like you to walk me through your thinking as you do it so that I can help you identify other things you can do differently that will get us the results we're looking for.'"

Behavioural example

"I was trying to increase interest in one of our programs. I knew some of my colleagues had done some innovative things to increase participation, so I got them together and we brainstormed and discussed some different ideas. I put together a plan incorporating some of their suggestions and presented it to my manager. He approved my plan, and I successfully got program participation up by 20%."

Exercise: Identifying codable data

1. With a partner, review the statements on pages 5-7 of the Participant Workbook and determine whether or not they are codable. Refer to the Coding Chart on pages 3-4 in your workbook to help you complete the exercise.
2. Be prepared to report out to the large group.

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The behaviour-based interview process

Pre-interview preparation

In preparation to conduct a behaviour-based interview, you will need to:

1. Define the job requirements (refer to the job description):
   - What are the key accountabilities for the position?
   - What are the credentials, qualifications and/or educational requirements you are seeking in the candidate?
   - What technical skills are required?
   - What experience, if any, is required?
   - Which competencies are required for the position?

Pre-interview preparation, continued

2. Design the selection process:

- Identify who will be involved in the interview process
- Determine the screening process
- Determine the interview process, including:
  - How many interviews will be conducted with candidates?
  - Who will conduct the interviews?
  - Which competencies will be explored with the candidate (Note: If conducting multiple interviews or using multiple interviewers, determine which competencies will be covered in each interview and/or by each interviewer.)
  - Who will set up the logistics of the interview process?
  - Will there be any additional assessments or testing required as part of the interview process?
- Arrange a meeting to evaluate candidates and make a selection decision
- Plan the reference check process

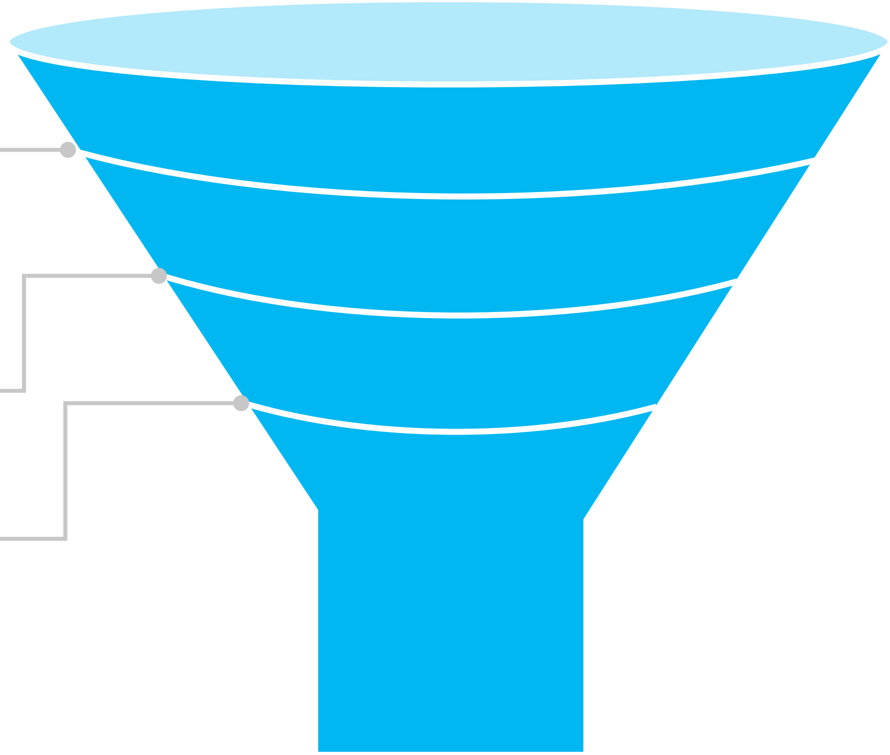
The behaviour-based selection funnel

- Multiple hurdle process
- Broad, less costly assessment methods used to pre-screen candidates
- Specific, more labour intensive assessment methods used to assess individual competencies

- Application form
- Self assessment questionnaire
- Resume screen
- Cognitive ability test

- Behaviour-based interview
- Work simulations

- Behaviour-based reference check
- Final selection decision



Pre-interview preparation, continued

3. Review/prepare the *Behaviour-Based Interview Guide*
   - A key tool to guide you through the interview
   - It includes:
     - A script of the key points to cover in the interview
     - The competencies for the role
       - Identify which competencies to explore with the candidate
     - Targeted selection questions for each competency
       - Identify which questions you will ask
     - Space for taking notes during the interview
     - An Interview Summary page to capture the interviewer's assessment of the candidate

Interview and selection phases

① Prepare for the Interview

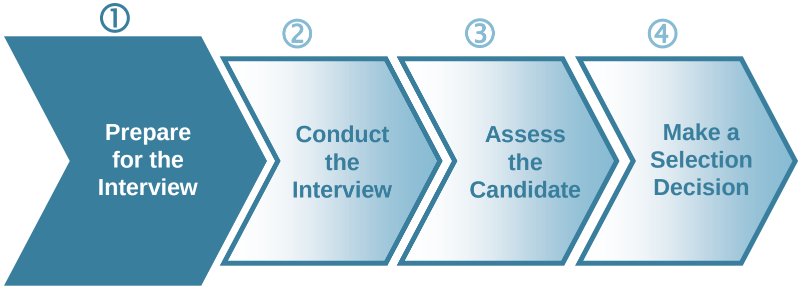
② Conduct the Interview

③ Assess the Candidate

④ Make a Selection Decision

Phase 1: Prepare for the interview

- Review the following:
  - The behavioural competencies to explore with the candidate and the targeted selection questions for each competency
  - The candidate’s resumé/application
  - The job/position description
  - The “script” in the interview guide
- Arrange a quiet place for the interview



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Phase 2: Conduct the interview

1. Open the interview and establish rapport	5 minutes
2. Career history	10 minutes
3. Specific recent events – Targeted selection questions	60 minutes
4. Ask any final questions	3 minutes
5. Give the candidate an opportunity to ask questions	10 minutes
6. Close the interview	2 minutes

① Prepare for the Interview
② Conduct the Interview
③ Assess the Candidate
④ Make a Selection Decision

1. Open the interview

- Use the opening to build rapport and make the candidate feel at ease:
  - Greet the candidate
  - Introduce yourself and your role
  - Ask a question such as “Did you have any problems finding our office today?” “Are you enjoying the weather?”
- Explain the purpose and structure of the interview
- Mention:
  - Timeframe for the interview
  - Note-taking

2. Review the candidate's career history

- Review the candidate's career history and key job responsibilities starting with the most recent position
- Probe for more information about the candidate's technical knowledge, education and expertise, as appropriate
- Ask the following types of questions:
  - *What is/was your position?*
  - *What are/were your responsibilities?*
  - *Do/did you have any direct reports? If so, how many?*
  - *What key skills are/were required in the job?*
  - *What technical abilities do you possess that you feel are relevant to this job?*
  - *How have you demonstrated these skills/abilities?*
  - *Which of your previous positions do you feel most prepares you for this job?*
- Explore any gaps in employment

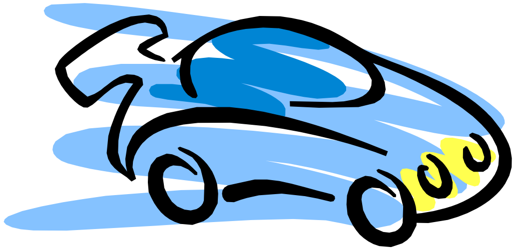
Remember to ask the candidate what caused them to make the job choices they did along the way.

3. Conduct the behaviour-based interview

Explain the process for the behaviour-based component of the interview:

1. You will be asking them to share several stories within the last 1-2 years
2. For each story, have candidates describe the:
   – **Context** – have the candidate provide a brief overview of the situation or challenge (2-3 sentences) to give you the context
   – **Actions** – have the candidate describe the actions he/she took in the situation
   – **Results** – have the candidate describe the results/outcome
3. You will likely be interrupting them as you probe for the necessary level of detail
4. Remind the candidate to speak in the first person – to focus on “I” vs. “we”
5. Ask the candidate if they have any questions before beginning

Competencies are the fuel that drive the car!



Gathering behavioural data – the process

Ask the targeted competency question

Context:

Get a 2-3 sentence overview of the situation or challenge and what led up to it.

Actions:

Have the candidate describe the actions he/she took in the situation.

Probe for what the candidate:

- **Did**
- **Said**
- **Thought**
- **Felt**

Results:

Have the candidate describe the results or outcome of the situation – how did it end? What was accomplished?

Begin by asking a targeted competency-based question

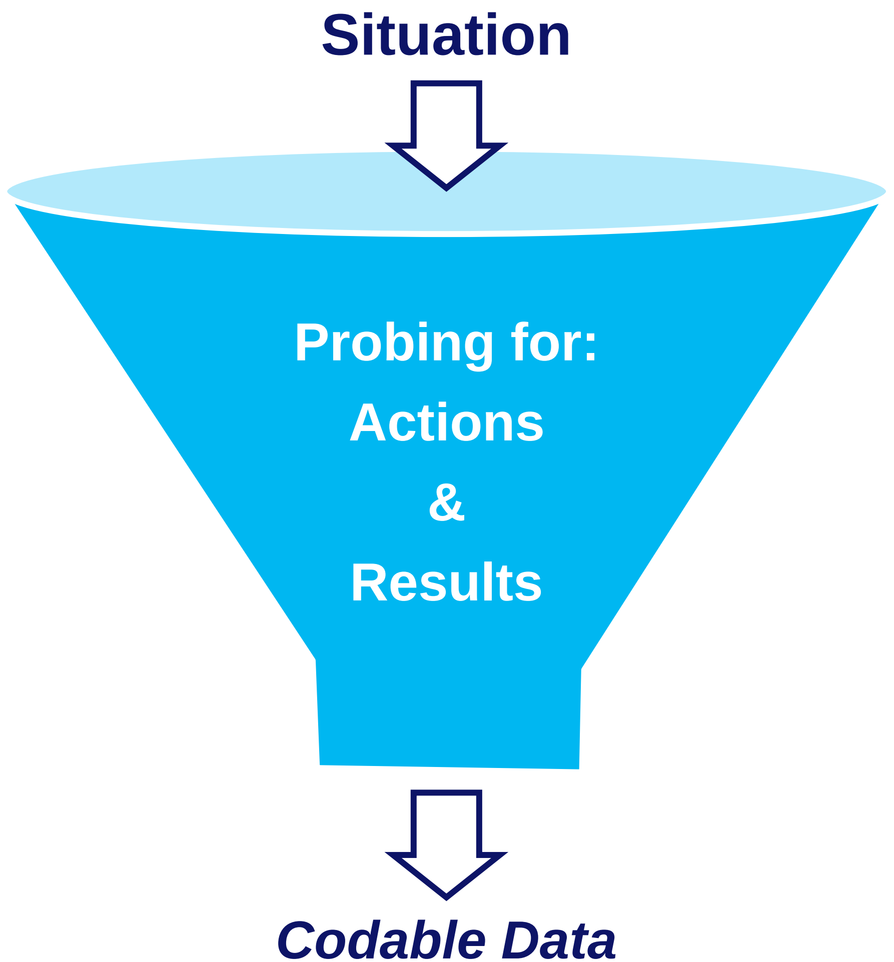
Targeted competency-based questions are typically phrased as follows:

- “Describe a time when...”
- “Tell me about a time when...”
- “Give me an example of...”
- “Give me an example of a time when...”

Getting a good overview of the context

- **Context overview:**
  - *"We typically hold various fundraisers throughout the year to raise additional funds for some of our unique programs. I knew that given the current economic climate, what we had always done in the past wouldn't work, so I wanted to come up with a new way of raising money. I did some research and seized an opportunity to hold a different type of fundraiser."*
- **It is helpful to find out what led up to the situation to provide more context:**
  - *"I noticed that the amount of money we were raising had been declining year over year for the last few years, and wanted to consider new opportunities for increasing the funds we raise without requiring more work."*

Getting to the detail



Probing for actions *and* intent

Actions **and** **Intent**

Why probe for intent?

- Actions describe what a person did or said
- Intentions explain the *why* behind the behaviour
- Both are critical to accurately identify the correct competency

Candidate: "...so I told him to clean up his act!"

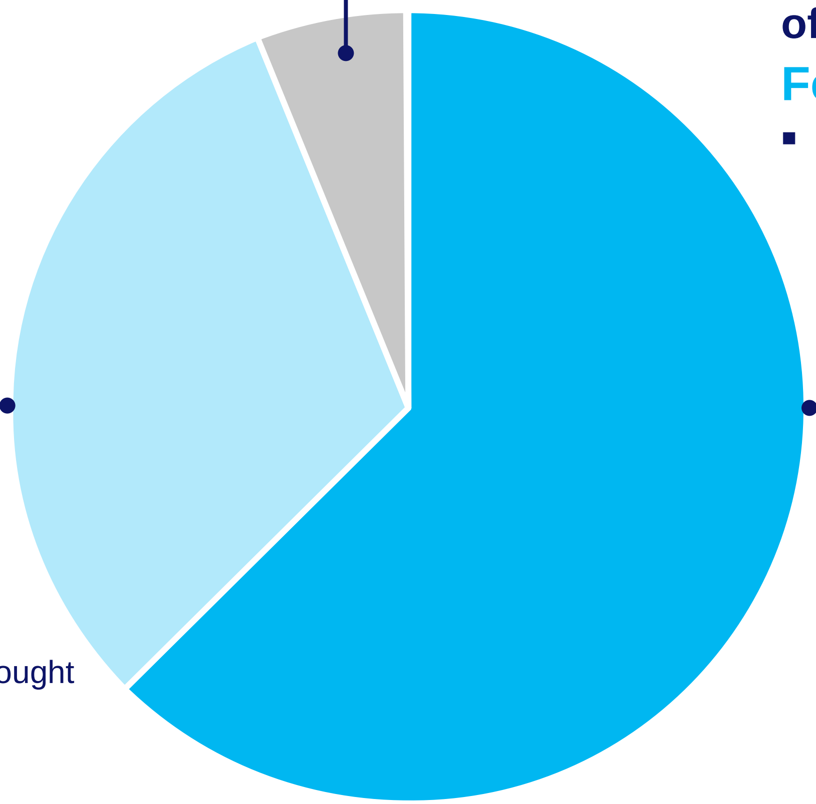
Interviewer: "What was going through your mind when you said that?"

Candidate: "I wanted him to understand that his behaviour was disruptive to the team."

Examples of follow-up probes

- Who was involved?
- What did you actually say?
- What did you do?
- What were you thinking? What was going through your mind?
- How were you feeling? How did you feel when that happened?
- What happened next?
- How did the situation end – what was the outcome/result?

Probing guidelines



5% - 10%
of the time

Feelings

- How people felt

25% - 40%
of the time

Thoughts

- What people thought

50% - 60%
of the time

Actions

- What people said
- What people did
- What happened next

Interviewing do's and don'ts

Do's

- Develop rapport
- Follow a consistent interview guide for all candidates
- Use effective interviewing and probing techniques and keep questions in the past tense
- Remind the interviewee to use "I" instead of "we", as appropriate
- Keep interviewee focused on what he/she actually did (vs. usually do) – stay out of the "woulds"
- Listen actively
- Take lots of notes

Don'ts

- Ask leading questions
- Accept "we" comments
- Violate legal requirements
- Ask questions that shift the interviewee into present, future and conditional tenses
- Accept personal beliefs/values/ philosophies (e.g., "I think it's really important to not only listen, but to try to read someone's body language.")
- Play psychologist

Note-taking – the value of good notes

- Increases reliability and validity of the hiring process
- Reduces potential for bias
- Increases accuracy of coding
- Limits reliance on memory for decision making
- Provides a paper trail

Tips for note-taking

- Ensure that you are completely familiar with the competencies being assessed
- Take notes throughout the entire interview
- Capture the candidate's actions, thoughts, feelings and statements – as much as possible, write down exactly what the candidate said
- Collect high quantities of information

4. Ask any additional questions

- Once you have completed the behaviour-based component of the interview, ask the candidate any additional questions you may have

5. Give the candidate an opportunity to ask questions

- Before closing the interview, give the candidate an opportunity to ask questions, for example, about:
  - The position
  - The organization
  - Next steps, etc.

6. Close the interview

- Inform the candidate of next steps
- Thank the candidate for their time

4.0

Interview practice

Interviewing practice - roles

You will work in trios, taking turns playing the following roles:

- Interviewer
  - Selects a competency and targeted competency question from the Interview Guide – the interviewer should discuss their selection with the interviewee to ensure it is a competency around which he/she has situations to share
  - Opens the interview and establishes rapport
  - Sets up the behaviour-based component
  - Gets the situation overview
  - Probes for detail and takes notes around actions and the result/outcome
- Interviewee
  - Responds to questions asked by interviewer
  - Provides feedback to the interviewer
- Observer
  - Observes the interview
  - Completes an Observation Checklist
  - Provides feedback to the interviewer

Interviewing practice round 1

1. The interviewer will have 20 minutes to conduct the interview, setting up the behaviour-based component and exploring one competency. Try to get the candidate to share two situations if time permits.
2. Following the interview, the observer will have 5 minutes to provide feedback.
3. Switch roles and complete steps 1-2 until each person has had a chance to play each role.
4. Once everyone has played the role of interviewer, take a few moments to reflect on your performance and feedback, and note ideas for what you will do differently in the next round on page 11 in your Participant Workbook.

Interview problems and solutions

Potential Problem	Possible Solution
Interviewer asks questions that are too complicated. Candidate is unsure about how to respond to follow-up questions.	**Keep your questions simple.** **Ask:** ■ *"How?"* ■ *"When?"* ■ *"Who?"* ■ *"Then what happened?"* ■ *"What did you do?"*
Candidate is giving too much information, too fast, or the information is scattered.	**Say:** *"I'd like you to slow down a bit. Will you go back to…?"* **OR** *"I'm not sure I understand that sequence. Could you walk me through it?"*

Interview problems and solutions, continued

Potential Problem	Possible Solution
Interviewer probes for detail too soon.	First let the candidate give a broad picture of the story. Then probe for details.
Candidate says he/she can't remember the actual words in a conversation.	**Say:** *"Just give me the flavour of it. What sort of things did you say?"* **OR** *"Try to reconstruct the dialogue right now to describe your memory of what happened. Make believe that I'm the person you were talking to."*
Candidate seems uncomfortable.	Let the candidate know when he/she has given you the appropriate level of detail. **Say:** *"That's exactly the kind of information/detail I'm looking for."*

Interview problems and solutions, continued

Potential Problem	Possible Solution
Candidate cannot remember a specific incident.	Remain silent to give the candidate a chance to think. If necessary, say any of the following: ■ *"Is there anything else you have done in a previous job or at school?"* ■ *"Was there anything else you did during that time?"* ■ *"Can you give me an example from your work life or personal life?"*
Candidate talks of the philosophy of doing the job and remains abstract or vague, or discusses hypothetical situations.	Ask for specific examples. You can say any of the following: ■ *"Can you give me a specific example when?"* ■ *"What did you actually say to him/her?"* ■ *"How did he/she respond to that?"* ■ *"What did you say then?"*

Interview problems and solutions, continued

Potential Problem	Possible Solution
Candidate is evasive or refuses to answer questions because he/she is concerned about revealing confidential material about him/herself or others.	**Say:** *"I don't need any names. I just need to understand what your role was in the situation – what you said, did, thought and felt."* **OR** *"It's OK to disguise the organization and people's names. I'm only interested in what happened and your part in it."*
Candidate rambles or talks about topics unrelated to the situation.	**Say:** *"I wish we could talk more about that but I really need to hear about a specific incident."* **OR** *"That's interesting but we have a lot more ground to cover. Can we get back to the incident? You were saying that…"*

Interviewing practice round 2

1. The interviewer will have 20 minutes to conduct the interview, setting up the behaviour-based component and exploring one competency. Try to get the candidate to share two situations if time permits.
2. Following the interview, the observer will have 5 minutes to provide feedback.
3. Switch roles and complete steps 1-2 until each person has had a chance to play each role.
4. Once everyone has played the role of interviewer, take a few moments to reflect on your performance and feedback, and note ideas for what you will do differently going forward on page 12 in your Participant Workbook.

5.0

Assess the candidate

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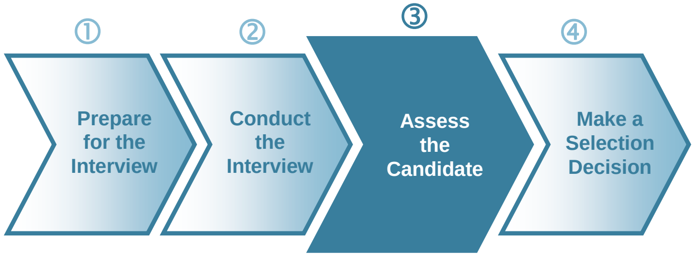
Phase 3: Assess the candidate

- Try to arrange time immediately following the interview to code the data you gathered
- Review your notes and look for codable data
- Rate the candidate on each competency:
  - Review the behavioural levels of the competencies explored with the candidate and compare to the data you gathered – tick the appropriate level demonstrated by the candidate
- Enter the behavioural level demonstrated for each competency on the Summary Page at the back of the Interview Guide
- Make any additional notes on strengths and areas for development and your recommendation
- Do not compare thoughts about a candidate with other interviewers (if applicable) until everyone has completed their evaluation



Exercise: Coding candidate data

1. Review the notes you took in both practice rounds and code the data.
2. Review your work with a partner.
3. Be prepared to share examples of codable data with the large group.

6.0

Make a selection decision

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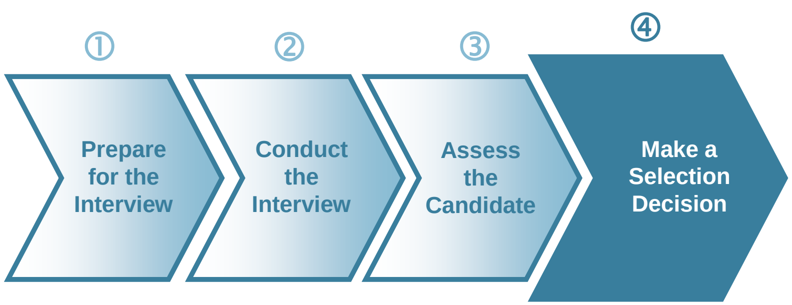
Phase 4: Make a selection decision

1. Review one candidate at a time including:
   - The rating for each competency
   - Behavioural examples/evidence to support the ratings
2. Consider all other data you have about the candidate
3. If there are multiple interviewers, discuss your conclusions
4. Make a hiring recommendation
5. Conduct reference checks and any other checks as required in your organization (e.g., criminal checks, checks with regulatory colleges, etc.)
6. It is recommended that only after all checks have been completed should you make an offer to the candidate



Tips for making a hiring decision

- Keep an open mind
- Be objective
- Evaluate all candidates interviewed
- Compare candidates' skills/knowledge and behaviours to the selection criteria, not to other candidates
- Document your decision and rationale
- Do not allow biases to affect your decision

Checking references

- The reference check is the tool for verifying and validating candidate information, including:
  - Work history
  - Attendance
  - Degrees, certificates, licenses
  - The reason for any gaps in employment
  - Competency strengths
- Ensure references are current
- Ensure you maintain confidentiality

Reference check process

- Explore the relationship of the reference to the candidate
- Confirm details provided by the candidate
- Ask questions pertaining to the competencies and other relevant areas
- Take sufficient notes
- Summarize information and compare with interview data

Tips for reference checking

- Be sure to get specific, behavioural information for the competencies
- Ask for a behavioural example when a reference offers an opinion or impression
  - “Why is that?”
  - “Can you think of an example that would demonstrate that?”
- Explore differences in the information provided by references by asking for specific examples
- Keep reference check information confidential

In summary …

- Behaviour-based interviews are based on the premise that *past performance predicts future performance*
- A clear understanding of the competencies you will be exploring with job candidates is critical to conducting effective behaviour-based interviews
- When conducting behaviour-based interviews, focus on the three key elements: **C**ontext, **A**ctions and **R**esults
- Become comfortable explaining the behaviour-based interview process to candidates
- Avoid letting biases come into play when making selection decisions.
- Be familiar with the Ontario *Human Rights Code* to avoid asking “illegal” questions
- Take very detailed notes during the interview
- Conducting reference checks for external recruits is highly recommended – use your behaviour-based interviewing skills to gather behavioural data about the candidate

Questions?