

Overview

In order to get the information needed from the interview process, meaningful and useful questions should be developed. The following information may be helpful when developing interview questions.

Behavioral Based Questions

Benefits

- Focus on relating past job performance to predict future job performance
- Based on facts
- Structured
- Requires specific examples

Pitfalls

- Assumption that people never change

Example

1. Give me an example of a time when you had to balance multiple projects which were all due at the same time. How did you go about prioritizing your work?

Open-Ended Questions

Benefits

- Require full, multiple-work responses
- Answers produce information upon which can build additional questions
- Can be made more substantive by converting them into Behavior Based questions

Pitfalls

- Can result in ineffective, descriptive monologues or rambling
- Can result in volunteered illegal information

Example

1. How would you describe your ability to deal with difficult customers?
2. What has been your most rewarding accomplishment?
3. What can you tell me about yourself?
4. Why are you interested in the position?

Hypothetical Questions

Benefits

- Based on specific job-related tasks, phrased in the form of problems and presented to the applicant for solutions
- Can be made more substantive by supporting them with behavioral based questions
- Best for applicants with limited or no work experience

Pitfalls

- Opposite of Behavioral Based Questions.
- Ask applicants to guess what they might do in the future.
- Applicant can only respond based on how they think rather than what they know.
- Applicants provide an answer based on what the interviewer wants to hear rather than what they have done on the job

Example

1. Your tenant representative has notified you that they had a complaint from a staff member that one of your employees is harassing them by constantly complimenting them and is making them feel uncomfortable. What steps would you take to resolve the issue?

Closed-Ended Questions

Benefits

- Answered with a single word
- Results in concise answers
- Can be used as a screening criteria question

Pitfalls

- Too many provide limited information
- Inexperienced interviewers often substitute these questions for more meaningful Behavioral Based questions
- Interviewer may come across as unprepared or disinterested

Example

1. Did you enjoy being a customer service manager?
2. How many years of experience do you have programming?
3. You will be required to travel one day a week, will that be a problem?

Probing

We often need more information than we receive from candidates when we ask a question during an interview for various reasons. A probing question is an open-ended follow up question intended to elicit an answer that clarifies ambiguities, provide missing or more-detailed information, or justifies previous statements. A good probing question is worded in such a way to encourage a candidate to provide details in their answers.

Example 1

Question:

Give me an example of a time when you had to balance multiple projects which were all due at the same time. How did you go about prioritizing your work?

Response:

I made a list.

Probing Question 1:

Why did you choose that method?

Response:

It helped me stay organized.

Probing Question 2:

How did the list enable you to stay organized and complete your projects on time?

Response:

I was able to assess and assign each project a priority through a combination of deadline, difficulty, and who assigned it to me. After that, I was able to break down each project into manageable tasks and create a plan to complete project on time. Throughout the process I kept in communication with my supervisor and key stakeholders any issues that I experienced so they were aware and possible solutions to ensure stayed on track. In addition, I ensured the progress was documented.

In the above example, it took two probes to find out additional details from the candidate which enabled the interviewer to get a better sense of the candidate's skill set and experience. Without asking additional questions, the interviewer would not have been able to accurately assess the candidate's skills set and experience. Therefore, it is important to follow up with each candidate until you get the information needed.

During interviewing, probes cannot be planned in advance. It is impossible to know what information will be offered by the candidate. Therefore, it is helpful to be familiar with probing questions and some general ways to obtain additional information from candidates.

Other examples:

- Could you tell me more about...
- So what I hear you saying is...
- Can you give me an example of...
- You just told me about....
- I'd also like to know about....