

The importance of effective interviewing

by Ross Clennett

Last month I read a news report about interviewing. The article detailed the results of research conducted by Chandler Macleod regarding the interview experiences of candidates. The report made for depressing but unsurprising reading. The 'highlights' of the research were:

- 40% of respondents had **declined an offer** because of a poor interview experience
- 69% had experienced no response or feedback **after a full interview**
- 42% had experienced **discrimination** in an interview
- 30% had experienced **rudeness** in an interview
- 22% had been asked **inappropriate questions**, with respect to such things as their marital status, weight, dating habits (?) and sexual preferences

These stats just confirm a sad truth about recruitment - there are too many people interviewing who are untrained at effective interviewing techniques and as a result, conduct very poor interviews.

The impact of these ineffective interviewers being let loose on unsuspecting candidates is revealed in the above results of Chandler Macleod's research. The report further reveals that of those people who experienced a bad interview, **81% of them told up to 10 people about that bad experience!**

Let me share my own recent experiences with you:

My neighbour, who arrived from India about a year ago, holds a degree, speaks perfect English, presents herself immaculately and from what I can tell, shows all the desired attributes of a willing and capable employee. When I asked her about her recent job hunting experience she told me "*I went to see one agency and at the interview the consultant told me that the only jobs available for Indians in Melbourne are as taxi drivers*". As you can imagine my jaw hit the floor! Last year I witnessed an agency recruiter tell a candidate in interview that she was unsuitable for a job because "*she was the wrong star sign*".

I wish I could say that these two examples are a figment of my vivid imagination, but unfortunately they're not. These are examples of interviews conducted by allegedly professional recruiters.

Interviewing is similar to coaching in that what appears to be 'just a conversation' is in fact a structured, purposeful dialogue with a clear outcome in mind.

If you want to be an effective interviewer and avoid the unhappy consequences that Chandler Macleod's research details, here are my **Top 7 Tips**:

1. **Ask the right questions:**
Before an interview commences, understand what you need to know from the candidate to assess their appropriateness for the job and the **questions** you will ask to most effectively discover that information. Questions that address issues irrelevant to job performance (eg. age, marital status etc) are not only useless questions but they annoy and deter good candidates (see CM research).
2. **Build high rapport:**
High rapport gains you high quality information. Low rapport gains you low quality information.

3. **Use a structured, behavioural interview format:**
By doing so you increase your chances of identifying the most suitable candidate for the job from 20% to 80%. Profiles International offers some great Placement Reports that provide tailored behavioral interview questions for a particular candidate in a particular role.
4. **All good candidates have choices:**
Never assume the candidate wants the job you have on offer. Have a couple of powerful selling points that clearly demonstrate the benefits of your opportunity.
5. **Past Job Performance:**
Understanding the context (ie degree of difficulty) of a candidate's past job performance is critical in ranking competing candidates and making an effective job match.
6. **Use evidence based answers drawn from past performance:**
These answers are the only effective way to assess competencies. Theoretical knowledge or speculative answers ('would do', 'could do', 'should do') have a low correlation to actual competencies and performance.
7. **Core competencies and primary motivators:**
Understand both the core competencies and the primary motivators of the candidate to ensure that they can do the job and want to do the job. An effective way to understand the core competencies of the role and each candidate's fit to these competencies, is by assessing each candidate using the ProfileXT assessment from Profiles International.

Effective interviewing skills ensure you dramatically **increase** your chances of identifying the most suitable person for the job, the first time.

Ineffective interviewing skills not only dramatically **decrease** your chances of identifying the most suitable person, they also have the unintended consequences of damaging your reputation with the people you most need to impress – **high calibre candidates**.

“This article was adapted, with permission, for Profiles International from an original article published in InSight, the newsletter for subscribers to www.RossClennett.com. Ross is an expert on recruitment and the recruitment industry in Australia. His articles are published regularly in Australia and the USA.”

If you would like to know more about using Placement Reports, which provide tailored behavioural interview questions and percentage JobFit for each candidate, please email Mark Purbrick (mark@profiles.net.au)

For a free Fact Sheet on improving Recruitment Processes, please make your request by emailing info@profiles.net.au