

Selecting the Best

Using Behavioral Interviewing

Selecting the best person to fill a job is identified as a key issue by hiring managers in all types of businesses. The consequences of hiring the wrong candidate run the gamut from lower productivity, loss of customers, employee turnover, workplace violence, legal claims, lowered morale and significant financial losses. Consider the financial ramifications of hiring the wrong person as a senior executive. Still, managers often don't perform the proper due diligence in determining the hiring criteria, yet alone in the interview process.

One of the most useful practices for better hiring results is a behavioral interview method. A behavioral interview is one in which the candidate is asked to describe specific examples of past performance. This provides the

interviewer with a glimpse into the candidate's past behavior in order to assess how the candidate might perform in a similar situation in the future.

For example, for a managerial position, the interviewer will want to ascertain the candidate's approach to handling performance issues by stating: "Describe a time when you had to address a challenging performance situation with a staff member." The interviewer may need to follow-up with questions such as "What did you do to try to ensure that the employee improved his/her performance?" and "What was the outcome?" to drill down further to determine the candidate's depth of experience, managerial style and judgment.

One company currently using the process is First Class Child Care, Inc., a

not-for-profit child care organization with several locations on Long Island. Sandy Einsidler, director of First Class at EAB Plaza, finds the process to be "very effective. I am able to better uncover specific details of a candidate's experience and skills."

Open-Ended Questions

Behavioral questions are open-ended and ask for a specific example of performance from the past without signaling the "right" or expected answer. Behavioral examples have three key components:

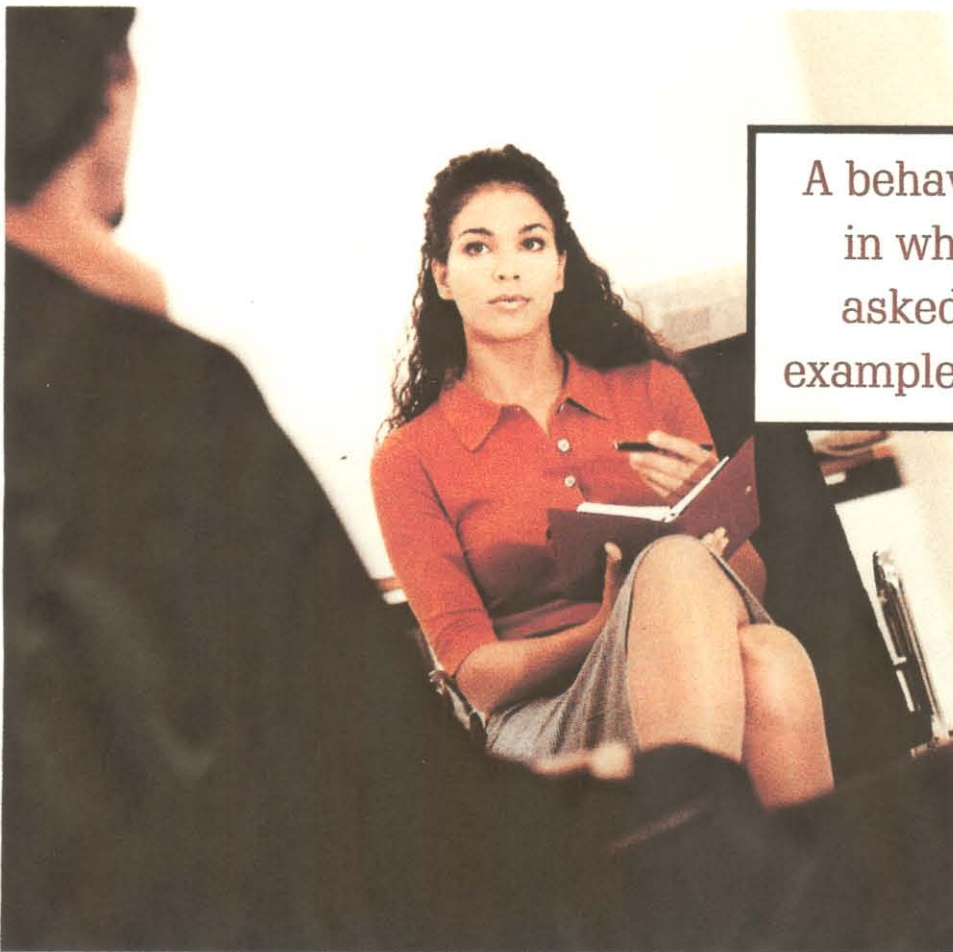
Situation. What was the context in which the example took place? Describe a time when you had to deal with an angry or upset customer.

Action. What did the individual actually say or do? What did you do to try to calm the customer down?

Result. What was the outcome as a result of the action taken in the particular situation? How was the issue resolved?

Before developing behavioral interview questions, the hiring manager must first determine the competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) important for the position. This can be determined through an analysis of the job description as well as interviews and observations of those in the role. The manager should also consider the traits needed to fit into the company's culture and values.

It is helpful to have several questions prepared for each competency. This



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allows the interviewer a choice of questions and also provides a selection of questions to use between multiple interviewers.

Here are some tips to get the most from behavioral interviewing:

- Prepare your questions in advance, basing them on critical competencies for the role.
- Have the candidate interviewed by more than one person, dividing questions on different competencies.
- Explain to the candidate at the start of the interview that you will be asking a series of questions designed to obtain specific examples of his/her past experience and performance.
- Use follow-up questions to elicit more concrete, specific responses or ask the candidate to elaborate further on responses.
- Provide non-verbal encouragement to the candidate, such as nodding or smiling.
- Use silent pauses to indicate that you would like the candidate to continue with his/her response.

Evaluate the candidate's responses and how these compare to the expectations for the position. Compare the interview results to those of other qualified candidates and to the results of any other screening tools, such as psychometric instruments, skills-based testing, and reference and other background checks.

Einsidler says that behavioral interviewing "has changed the way I select employees. I am more thorough and organized and feel confident that I've hired the right person for the job." Behavioral interviewing is easy to implement, with a minimal amount of training and is very effective. It's a worthwhile investment to ensure that you are hiring the right employees and leaders for your business. ♦



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