

Choosing the Right Learner: Benefits of a Structured Interview

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How Do You Pick a New Learner?

- Medical students/residents/fellows are selected based on a variety of criteria
 - Academic performance
 - Standardized tests
 - Grades
 - Research/publications
 - Evidence of leadership
 - Letters of recommendation
 - The interview

The Traditional Interview

- The interviewer generally asks a series of questions about the candidate's previous experience and/or goals for the future
- Generally open ended
 - Why do you want to be a physician?
 - Where do you see yourself in 5 or 10 years?
 - Identify strengths/weaknesses
- Can often be anticipated and prepared for by the candidate

The Perfect Interview

- Would identify behavioral characteristics deemed critical to the job at hand
- Would satisfy the usual psychometric criteria of any selection process
 - Standardization
 - Reliability
 - Validity
 - Fairness
- Must discriminate fairly between applicants
- Methodology must be acceptable to applicants

The Interview

- What are your goals in the interview?
- What questions do you usually ask?
- Do you get the information you need to meet your goals?

The Ideal Interview

- Generally not designed to evaluate academic qualifications; grades and scores suffice
- Rather, the perfect interview would help to evaluate other domains
 - Integrity
 - Leadership
 - Empathy
 - Ability to work as a team
 - Work ethic

New Strategies

- Increasingly the business world is moving to structured interview techniques
- Widespread belief that structured interviews offer better insight and more consistency of result; easier to compare candidates and more reliable
- Two strategies have gained popularity:
 - Situational Judgement Tests
 - Behavioral Based Interviewing (BBI)

Objectives for Today

- Encourage you to think about what you are really looking to evaluate in an interview and whether or not your current strategies are working
- Review and contrast two popular structured interview techniques
- Outline basic constructs for developing questions in each technique

Situational Judgement Tests

- Type of psychological test which presents the applicant with realistic, hypothetical scenarios
- Goal is to assess judgement required for problem solving in typical work situations
- Applicant asked what he/she would do in specific situations
- Generally multiple choice format
- Goal is to ask questions that directly assess relevant job related behaviors

Situational Judgement Tests

- Unlikely that practice can improve performance as answers are not always arrived at logically
- Can tap into a wide range of constructs from problem solving and decisional skills to interpersonal constructs

Item Characteristics

- SJT items vary widely in format.
- Like most forms of multiple choice items, they have a stem and several responses.
- Item stem: *Everyone in your work group has received a new computer except you. What would you do?*
- Item responses are possible actions.

Example Question 1

This morning, you found a fax in your in-box that seems to concern a colleague's home business. She normally does not use the fax for business purposes.

- The **most** effective response to this situation would be:
- The **least** effective response to this situation would be:

Answers:

- a) Politely, tell your co-worker that you will inform the manager the next time you catch her using office resources for private business.
- b) Report the incident to the manager.
- c) Put the fax in the manager's mailbox without saying anything to anyone.
- d) Put the fax in your co-worker's mailbox without saying anything to anyone.
- e) Give the fax to your co-worker and remind her that office equipment is not supposed to be used for personal use.

Example Question 2

You and a co-worker are working on a complex project that demands a great deal of effort from both of you. Your co-worker is frequently absent as a result of burnout and stress from his personal problems. You do not know much about the circumstances, nor have you known him for long. Your co-worker contributes very little to the project, and, as a result, you are putting in an excessive amount of overtime in order to keep the project moving ahead. You feel that your health may begin to suffer if you continue to work as many hours.

- The **most** effective response:
- The **least** effective response:



Answers to Sample Question 2

- a) Ask other co-workers to help you manage your workload.
- b) Raise the issue with your manager and request additional help to ensure that the project is completed on schedule.
- c) Meet with your co-worker to request that he does his share of the work.
- d) Continue to put in overtime to keep the project moving ahead.
- e) Offer to help your co-worker deal with his personal problems.

Are Such Questions Useful?

- Depends on how the questions are written
- Requires careful identification of what types of judgment the examiner is looking for
- Need organizational consensus on what is the right answer
- Biggest benefit is that once developed, the tests are standardized and not subject to interpretation

Overview of SJT Test Development

- Identify a job or job class for which a SJT is to be developed
- Write critical incidents
- Sort critical incidents
- Turn selected critical incidents into item stems
- Generate item responses
- Edit item responses
- Determine response instructions
- Develop a scoring key

Identifying Critical Incidents

- Think about a time when someone did a really good job.
- Think about a time when someone could have done something differently.
- Think of a recent work challenge you faced and how you handled it.
- Think of something you did in the past that you were proud of.

Turn Critical Incidents into Stems

- Working from the critical incidents, write item stems.
- Consider asking the same question in different ways or scenarios.
- The same item does not need to be written twice, but you need to decide how redundant the items are permitted to be.

Components of Questions

- Stem Length
- Stem Complexity
- Response Instructions
- Evaluation of the responses

Stem Length

- Some stems are very short (*You find the fax in your mailbox*).
- Other stems present very detailed descriptions of situations (*Your coworker is under stress and is not carrying his end of the load; you are now feeling burned out and falling behind in the project*)

Stem Complexity

- Complexity: Stems vary in the complexity of the situation presented.
- Low complexity: One has difficulty with a new assignment and needs instructions.
- High complexity: One has multiple supervisors who are not cooperating with each other, and who are providing conflicting instructions concerning which of your assignments has highest priority.

Response Instructions

- Variety of ways to instruct the applicants to respond:
 - What would you most likely do?
 - What would you most likely do? What would you least likely do?
 - Pick the best answer.
 - Pick the best answer and then pick the worst answer.
 - Rate each response for effectiveness.
 - Rate each response on likelihood that you would do the behavior.

Response Instructions

- The various response instructions fall into two categories:
 - Knowledge
 - Behavioral tendency

Generate Item Responses

- Have subject matter experts with different levels of experience/expertise write additional responses for each stem.
- Prompts for writing responses:
 - What would you do?
 - What is the best thing to do?
 - What is a bad response that you think many people would do?

Response Instruments and Faking

- Applicants may recognize that what they would most likely do is not the most effective response.
- Some applicants may choose to misrepresent their behavioral tendency.

Behavioral Interviewing

- Designed to assess specific skills
- Touted as being better at assessing how an applicant will perform on the job
- Commonly used in business sector
- Much less commonly employed in the field of medicine
- Principle of the technique is that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior

Behavioral Interviewing

- When asked yes/no, or hypothetical questions, the applicant can tell the interviewer what he/she wants to hear
- Eg: If asked, “what would you do if the deadline on a project was moved up”, answer would be to put in extra time
- Easy for the applicant to guess the “right answer”
- Difficult for the interviewer to assess what a candidate would actually do

Behavioral Interviewing

- Compare to: What have you done in the past when you needed to meet a tight deadline?
- Follow with probing questions:
 - How many hours did you put in?
 - Were you successful in completing the task?
 - How did you feel about having to put in overtime?
 - How were you compensated?

Behavioral Interviewing

- Applicant is asked a series of standardized questions
- Designed to get the applicant to respond to how he/she handled specific situations in the past
- Candidate is expected to describe situations from the past and his/her feelings and/or observations about the situation
- Allows the interviewer to assess proficiency in one or more job related areas

Steps in the Process

- First step in the process is the identification of the skills that you are looking for
 - Which are the most important?
 - Which are the least critical?
- Once the skills are identified, need to develop questions that will ask about behaviors that reflect the desired skills
- Then need to analyze the answers
 - How do the answers reflect the needed skills?

Identification of Skills

- Name five skills that you want in a future physician (ie a medical student)
- Rank them in order of importance
- How does your ranking change if the applicant wants to go into:
 - Internal Medicine?
 - Pediatrics?
 - Pathology?
- Should the skill set be differentiated at this level?

Sample Skills Analysis

- Coping
- Tolerance of Ambiguity
- Decisiveness
- Spoken Communication
- Assertiveness
- Energizing
- Policy and Procedure
- Alertness
- Analytical Problem Solving
- Decision Making and Problem Solving
- Leadership
- Goal Setting
- Written Communication
- Commitment to Task
- Interaction
- Perceptivity
- Organization and Planning
- Creativity
- Versatility
- Reading the System
- Team Building

Competencies

- Another way to approach this issue is to consider the six ACGME competencies
 - Medical knowledge
 - Patient care
 - Interpersonal Communication skills
 - Professionalism
 - Practice Based Learning
 - Systems Based Learning

Developing the Questions

- Classically begin with opening statements such as:
 - Tell me about a time when. . . .
 - Can you describe a situation where
- Can be casually inserted into an interview OR more formally asked
- Generally followed up with more questions to more specifically explore all aspects of the situation

Typical Questions: Identify the Skill

- Describe a difficult problem that you tried to solve; how did you identify the problem? How did you go about trying to solve it?
- Describe a time when you tried to persuade someone to do something that they were not inclined to do?
- Describe a time you decided on your own that something needed to be done; what do you do to get it done?

Practice Interviews

- Pair off in twos
- Each pair should identify:
 - The applicant
 - The interviewer
- Take 10 minutes and “conduct” the interview
- Reflect on how the interview went
 - As the applicant, how did the interview feel?
 - As the interviewer, what kind of knowledge about the “applicant” did you obtain?