



MCQUAIG PRESENTS

THE QUICK GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWS





Introduction

When making a new hire, arguably the most important step in the process is the interview. Whether it is happening in-person or remotely, interviews are your chance to get a real sense of who your candidate is. It's your opportunity to probe deeper into a candidate's skill set in order to predict what their potential future performance might be. Some interviews involve multiple stages. Other involve multiple people. No matter how you choose to set up your interview structure, though, there are strategies you can use to improve the overall effectiveness of your approach.

Time with a candidate is limited and shouldn't be wasted. Streamlining how you interview can help you stay on track when talking with a candidate, ensure you get to your high priority questions, and improve the type of information you receive. All that can help you make a more informed hiring decision which, hopefully, allows you to avoid bringing the wrong person into the team. From the questions you choose to the way you approach candidate experience, let's explore key strategies to improve your interview style.

Did you know?

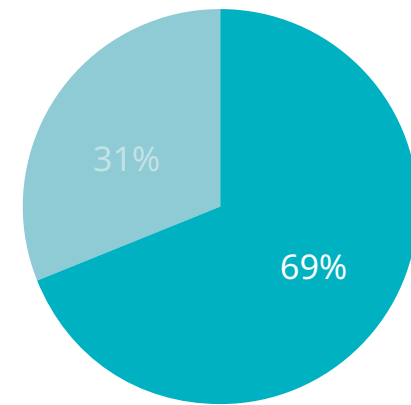
33% of bosses claim they know if they'll hire someone within the first 90 seconds of an interview¹



What do the numbers say?

What do we know so far about interviews? While no one interviews in the exact same way, what can we learn from current stats on the state of the modern interview?

- The average hiring process takes 42 days²
- Most corporate job postings receive 250 applicants on average³
- Only 2% of candidates who apply for a role make it to the interview stage⁴
- An ideal job conversion rate between interviews and offers should be around 30%⁵
- On average, it takes 22.9 days to interview⁶



69% of candidates who had a bad interview say they'd never apply again⁷

There are many moving pieces to interviews that can jeopardize your hire from relying too heavily on instinct to constructing too long or complicated a hiring process. Meanwhile, candidates are experiencing your approach first-hand and making judgements about the company as a result. The last thing you want is a candidate to have a negative experience and then go out into the world to talk about it. Instead, trying improving the interview process with the following strategies.



Tactics to improve your next interview

Be prepared

No one likes feeling like their time isn't important. While you might have given dozens of interviews in your career, don't just walk into one without doing the ground work first.⁸ Take time to review your candidate's resume or LinkedIn profile and make notes of any areas you want to ask about in more depth in-person. If the candidate has a website or prominent online presence, spend a moment reviewing it so you have a better sense of the person you're going to meet. Remember, candidates are vetting interviewers during the hiring process too. A disinterested or unprepared interviewer sends a clear message about how a company prioritizes its people.

Welcome the candidate

When your candidate shows up for the interview, don't just dive into it. Take a moment to set the stage and welcome your candidate.⁹ If you're hiring in-person, ask if they need anything like a cup of coffee or a pen to take notes. Once settled, go over the schedule of the interview with the candidate so they know what to expect. This is particularly important if the candidate will be meeting multiple interviewers in a row that might be asking about different areas of expertise. When the candidate has everything they need, then you can start the interview. Taking a minute to make sure everything is explained ahead of time helps settle the candidate's nerves and creates a stronger foundation for a positive interview experience.





Tactics to improve your next interview

Ask behavioural interview questions

The kinds of questions you choose to use in an interview can impact what sort of information you walk away with. Behavioural interview questions ask for specific examples of past performance, making them a better choice when meeting your candidate.¹⁰ There's a lot you can tell about a candidate's potential from how they've dealt with previous challenges. These kinds of questions probe a deeper level of information and require a candidate to do more than simply answer yes or no. Consider using questions that start with, "Tell me about a time when..." or "What's one example of how you achieved..." in order to prompt the candidate to tell you a story, rather than a routine response. These kinds of questions also give the candidate more of an opportunity to highlight the skills and abilities they view as important.

Use a structured interview approach

Drawing from behavioural interview questions is a great place to start but you'll likely want to pair them with a structured interview approach with your candidate. A structured interview is when you ask your candidate a pre-determined set of questions in a standardized order.¹¹ This helps you compare candidates more fairly since you are able to collect similar types of information in a more uniform way. A structured interview approach also helps keep the interview on track and avoids wasting time on tangents that may not add any useful insight to your hiring decision. Plus, a structured approach combats unconscious bias as all candidates have the opportunity to answer the same questions since interviewers are working from a set script.





Tactics to improve your next interview

Let the candidate speak

This one might seem self-evident but sometimes interviewers find themselves taking up too much of the talking time. It's human nature to want to contribute to a conversation you're a part of, especially when you have interesting information you could potentially share with a candidate. Developing a rapport during the interview goes a long way toward improving the candidate experience and increasing your odds of someone accepting an offer but it's a careful line to walk. You don't want to be too chummy or you might waste time on small talk rather than investigation. But you also don't want to be too standoffish or your candidate won't want to move further along in the hiring process. Don't forget about non-verbal cues either.¹² There's a lot a candidate can say without uttering a word.

Gain peer insight

Have you considered using peer interviews? Finding a candidate who's the right match for a team is vital and one of the best ways to do that is to ask your team members to be a part of the hiring process. Peer interviews are a great way of exposing the candidate to your company culture and giving them a real opportunity to ask about the daily life at an organization.¹³ Candidates are often more willing to ask questions to peers rather than managers and might ask about management style, work load, benefits, and employee engagement. On the employer side of things, letting team members meet potential new hires is an easy way of seeing whether there's a good match with those already in place.





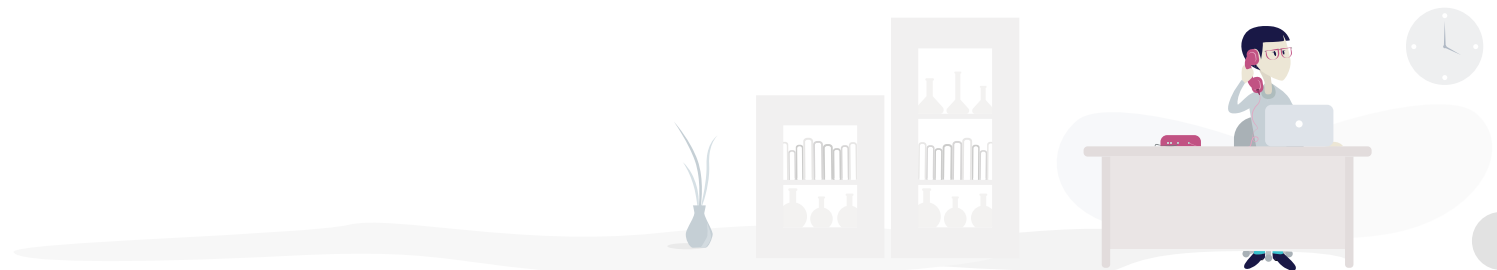
Tactics to improve your next interview

Use assessments

One way to understand the inner workings of your candidates more quickly is with the help of psychometric assessments. Assessments designed to examine personality, cognition, or behaviour are crucial tools in the interview process as they can give you a better sense of a candidate's future potential. They can also impact what questions you select to use in your interview process as you'll have advanced insight into a candidate's strengths and weaknesses allowing you to probe areas of interest more effectively. Having more information about a candidate helps make the interview more targeted and your ultimate decision better informed. That being said, assessments should never be used alone to make a hiring decision. Instead, view them as one piece of the hiring puzzle that can contribute valuable insight throughout the process.

Follow up

The top pet peeve of most candidates is usually the lack of communication they have with potential employers. If you're going to interview, have a plan in place for how you'll let candidates know the outcome of your hiring process.¹⁴ If a candidate doesn't get the job, how will you tell them? Are you going to use a form response or will you send feedback to help them improve? There's really no right or wrong way to follow up so long as it's respectful and prompt. Don't leave your candidates hanging for weeks, especially if you know right away they won't be moving forward. This all goes back to the very basic tenet of respecting other people's time. After all, you never know what the future holds. Taking a moment to say goodbye to a candidate today might open the door to them returning to you with different skills tomorrow.





Interview questions

A quick Google search will prove there are hundreds of potential interview questions out there to draw from next time you need to meet a candidate. Which questions you choose to use depends on your search criteria but when you can, try to avoid the old classics like, “Where will you be in 5 years?” They don’t add much to the over interview process and take away available time you could use to ask a more probing question. Consider some of the following variations to help you move away from asking yes or no questions.

1. Tell me something about yourself that isn’t on your resume.
2. What do you love best about your current job?
3. What would your family say is a weakness for you?
4. Tell me about a time you were faced with a conflict at work and how you overcame it.
5. How do you like to be managed?
6. Which accomplishment in your professional life are you most proud of?
7. How would your coworkers describe you if they could only use 3 words?
8. What’s the biggest decision you’ve had to make in the past year and how did you make it?
9. Tell me about a time you had too many tasks and not enough resources. What did you do?
10. Describe your last long-term project and how you ensured it stayed on track.



Using assessments to help you interview

At McQuaig, helping you hire more effectively is at the heart of what we do. We have a number of psychometrically valid assessments designed to assist hiring managers as they narrow down their candidate choice. These assessments include:

The McQuaig Job Survey: Understand the requirements of a role before you start interviewing. By creating an ideal candidate profile, you can make your hiring process more targeted. Profiles can be created from selecting ideal traits, surveying employees already in the role, or compiling feedback from key stakeholders with knowledge of the position.

The McQuaig Word Survey: Temperament lays the foundation of who we are and how we interact with others. By learning more about a candidate's temperament, you can gain a better understanding of how they might work and succeed if hired into a role. The *Word Survey* report highlights a candidate's management and work style, how they communicate, their attitudes and interests, and their motivation and personality to determine if they're a good fit for both the position and company culture.

The McQuaig Mental Agility Test: Did you know cognitive ability is one of the best predictors of future performance? Mental agility tests are a good way of determining a candidate's basic cognitive level and how they approach problem solving and mental reasoning.

For more information about McQuaig and our suite of assessments, please visit www.mcquaig.com.



Conclusion

Interviewing is one of the most important steps in any hiring process. It's hard to gain a sense of who your candidate truly is without meeting them in some way, whether online or in-person. Interviewing effectively, however, is another matter entirely. It's easy to waste the time you have with a candidate if you're interviewing without putting a plan in place. Poor interviews lead to poor information being collected which means you'll be stuck making a hiring decision without all the facts.

Instead of relying on instinct or chance, take the time to structure your interview approach. Plan how you'll interact with a candidate and what sort of questions you'll use. If you're leveraging assessments decide when you'll send them to a candidate and if you're using multiple or peer interviews, make sure everyone knows the schedule. Being prepared for an interview isn't as easy as snapping your fingers but when you put the right effort in, you see real results in the quality of candidates entering your company. Don't fall into the familiar traps of interviewing the same way you have for decades. Make a plan, be prepared, and find the right candidate for your team.

"I am convinced that nothing we do is more important than hiring and developing people. At the end of the day you bet on people, not on strategies."

– Lawrence Bossidy¹⁵



Notes

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