

Behavioral interviewing for technicians, management

An applicant's past behavior is the best indicator for what their future holds

I've conducted thousands of interviews throughout my career, and the only secret that has come to light is that preparation is key to a successful interview process. On average, potential employees have had between 8 and 16 employers in their lifetime. By the time they reach you, many have been "trained" to interview and have heard all of the potential questions and their outcomes. How often do you interview potential employees? Often times even after the best interview by the best interviewer, applicants still know themselves better than the interviewer does. A good interview provides the applicant with a detailed, realistic preview of the position so they can self-select in or out of the process —thus introducing the need for behavioral interviewing. Let's listen to ATI Coach Colter Shaffer tell it: The past is the best predictor of the future; people are likely to do what they have always done. Behavior-based questions about the applicant's past provide the best factual data for making good hiring decisions.

What Is behavior-based interviewing?

Behavior-based interviewing is a technique that examines past behavior to determine if the candidate will fit within your business model. It focuses on listening to applicants' answers rather than bombarding them with closed-ended questions that produce a yes or no answer, which allows you to hire based on the facts by gaining insight into how the candidate will react when placed into your work environment. The process is very structured and normally has a core set of open-ended questions pertaining

to the position, which reduces intuition-based hiring mistakes.

There is a wide range of benefits from the behavioral interviewing process. It allows you to evaluate the presence/absence of critical-job related skills, attitudes and values. It helps you to hire the best candidate and avoid costly hiring mistakes. It helps to determine how the candidate is likely to act if put into the position. Last, this process helps ensure that you stay legally compliant during the interview process. It also allows you to identify the four types of applicants you will come across in the process: the unable/unwilling, unable/willing, able/unwilling and the able/willing applicants.

Creating the ideal interview setting

The idea of setting the tone is to make the applicant feel that the interview is focusing on them. You need to create a bond as quickly as possible so that the candidate can build a relationship with you. This is important to ensure you get honest answers to your questions. Make eye contact as much as possible and take notes. Set up the seating so the candidate is sitting next to you, not across from you — you don't want any barriers separating you. Being on the same level as the candidate will strengthen the bond and help build rapport. The interview should be uninterrupted and in a safe environment for the potential employee.

Initial interview anatomy

The initial meeting should include a five-step process that makes a 30-minute interview. The first stage should begin with explaining how the interview will

be conducted, setting the tone for the meeting, lasting five minutes. Next, review the resume chronologically while asking open-ended questions to confirm the information. This should take around 15 minutes. Then, you will dive into each inconsistency by asking the right questions, which should take an additional 15 minutes. Then, you go into selling the job and the organization, assuming it's going well. This should last about eight minutes. Last, close the interview and advise the candidate on the next step in the process. Ensure you take detailed notes and follow up with them.

Asking the right questions

Most behavioral interviews will consist of open-ended questions to get a true re-

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flection of the candidate's qualifications. Although this is true, closed-ended questions still serve several purposes to help in the process. If you feel the candidate is feeling nervous, you can ask a yes or no question to put them at ease. You can use these questions to verify information without getting a long detailed response, which would waste valuable time. You can also use closed-ended questions to probe a candidate to lead into a truthful answer. An example would be asking, "Did you work under tight deadlines?" Then asking, "What were the circumstances?" On average, 60 percent of your interview questions should be behavior-based questions, beginning with words like "Describe a time," "Give me an example," "What did you do?" and "How did you feel?"

Stages of questioning

There are several stages of the interview process where you want to ask specific questions to garner a specific response. For building rapport you could ask, "I noticed you lived in _____, how do you find living here in _____?" During the confirmation stage you could ask, "What courses did you take?" Or "How did you go about achieving your goals?" When probing a candidate, be sure to ask supporting questions until you get the answer you're looking for. An example would be as follows:

Interviewer: "How did you implement your plan?" **Candidate:** "I had a meeting and discussed the process and how to get things done." **Interviewer:** "What processes did you apply and how did you measure it?" **Candidate:** "I conducted a role-play event where we all participated in critiquing each other to form a fluid process," or, "We measured it by the number of surveys that were submitted, which we used as an accountability opportunity." As you see in the example, the candidate didn't give the exact response needed to the original question. So the interviewer probed further, and asked the

same question in a different way in order to get a more detailed response.


Another effective technique used in behavioral interviewing is the pause method. Once you ask a question, pause, no matter how uncomfortable the silence gets. Hold the silence until they issue a response, then continue with the next line of questioning. This creates the impression that no matter what, you need a valid response, and you are willing to wait until they can give you that information.

It is also important to sequence your questions to obtain any unfavorable information. You could ask a candidate, "Tell me about a time when you successfully worked with a difficult boss." Then follow up with, "Tell me about a time when you had difficulty working with someone." You will get the information you need because the applicant speaks spontaneously and doesn't fight you, withdraw or babble. The idea is to have the applicant leave the interview saying three things: I liked the description of the job; I think the interviewer liked me; and I have no clue if I'm going to be offered the job.

Using your collected data

In the decision-making process you should look for consistency in the events you discussed. Also, gauge the amount of favorable versus unfavorable information you collected, such as overstatement of accomplishments. Ask yourself, does this person, while qualified, "fit" within my

business? Look back at your notes referring to body language and eye contact — were they smiling or did they seem excited? Everything from the moment they entered the building should be considered in the decision-making process. Were they on their phone, or did they seem interested in the surrounding environment? Did they acknowledge my co-workers as they passed by, or are they standoffish? Did they look happy sitting, or were they antsy and needing to keep moving? When they came in, did they own the room? These are all questions to ask yourself because they show how the candidate will conduct themselves in the future. A good candidate will recognize they are at your business for an opportunity. With that being said, they should act like they are excited to be there and interested in being part of the team. They should want to stand out and be noticed in a positive light.

If you would like the ATI Hiring Checklist to help you prepare for your next interview, simply go to www.ationlinetraining.com/2017-06 for a limited time. 



CHRIS "CHUBBY" FREDERICK is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI's 115 associates train and coach more than 1,400 shop owners every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. This month's article was written with the help of Coach Colton Shaffer. chubby@autotraining.net

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