

## INTERVIEW SKILLS

**Introduction:** An interview definition can be crafted as a gentle conversation between two people or more where questions are asked to a person to get the required responses or answers. Usually two groups or two individuals sit facing each other in an interview. The person asking questions is the interviewer and the person answering the questions is the interviewee.

**Objectives of Interview:** The Objectives or goals of an interview as following:

- ❖ It helps to verify the information provided by the candidate. It helps to ascertain the accuracy of the provided facts and information about the candidate.
- ❖ What the candidate has written in the resume are the main points. What other additional skill set does he have? All these are known by conducting interviews.
- ❖ It not only gives the interviewer information about the candidate's technical knowledge but also gives an insight into his much needed creative and analytical skills.
- ❖ Helps in establishing the mutual relation between the employee and the company.
- ❖ It is useful for the candidate so that he comes to know about his profession, the type of work that is expected from him and he gets to know about the company.
- ❖ An interview is beneficial for the interviewer and the interviewee as individuals, because both of them gain experience, both professionally and personally.
- ❖ It helps the candidate assess his skills and know where he lacks and the places where he needs improvement.
- ❖ The interview also helps the company build its credentials and image among the employment seeking candidates.

During the Interview: Give a firm but gentle handshake when you meet your interviewer(s), sit when invited to do so, make direct eye contact and remember to smile. From the moment you meet, your communication with the interviewer forms part of the decision-making as to whether to recruit you; in fact most decisions are made within the first three minutes! So, you need to be aware of both your verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

- **Verbal communication:**
  - Show genuine interest in the position
  - Listen and answer the questions asked

- Never argue a point
- If you do not understand or hear a question, ask for it to be repeated
- Do not interrupt
- **Non-verbal communication:** Appearance and mannerisms are VERY important – think of body language and facial expressions
  - Put your feet squarely on the floor or cross your legs at the ankle
  - Put anything you are carrying on the floor
  - Rest your hands in your lap
  - Not your head to show you are listening
  - Do not fidget
  - Be serious but do not forget to smile

#### Types of Interviews:

1. **Based on the count of people involved:** ex.: Personal interview, Group interview, Panel interview
  2. **Based on the planning involved:** ex.: A structured interview, unstructured interview
  3. **Based on judging the abilities:** ex.: Behavioral-based interview, Problem-solving interview, Depth interview, Stress interview
  4. **Based on the facilities or settings:** ex.: Telephonic interview, Online interview, Job Fair interview, Lunch interview, Tea interview
  5. **Based on the task:** ex.: Apprenticeship interview, Evaluation interview, Promotion interview, Counseling interview, Disciplinary interview, Persuasive interview
1. Based on the count of people involved:
    - a. **One-to-one interview (Personal interview):** It is the most common among the interview types, it involves the interviewer asking questions maybe both technical and general to the interviewee to investigate how fit the candidate is for the job.
    - b. **Group interview:** This involves multiple candidates and they are given a topic for discussion. They are assessed on their conversational ability and how satisfactorily they are able to have their own views and make others believe in them. Here, the best among the lot gets selected.

- c. **Panel interview (Committee Interview):** The interviewers here are a group from among the company people who are in a senior position and usually, the panel interview is when the candidate is supposed to make a presentation. But many-a-times it could be for the job interview as well.
2. Based on the Planning Involved:
- a. **Structured interview (Formal interview or guided interview):** Here in the traditional form of an interview, the questions asked are all in a standard format and the same is used for all the candidates. This is to assess the ability of all the candidates impartially.
- b. **Unstructured interview (Informal interview or conversational interview):** This is the opposite of a structured interview. Here the interviewer has a definite idea in mind about the questions to be asked, but it doesn't follow a certain format. The interviewer may deviate and a conversation type interview follows.
3. Based on Judging the Abilities:
- a. **Behavioral-based interview:** The interviewee is asked questions about past work experiences and how it was dealt with in a particular situation. This helps the interviewer understand the candidate's future performance based on his past experiences. Here the candidates need to provide examples when they have handled situations. The probing maybe in detail to assess the candidate's behaviour and responses and this determines the candidate's future job prospects.
- b. **Problem-solving interview (Task-Oriented interview):** Here the interviewer is more concerned about problem-solving abilities be it technical, managerial, creative or analytical skills. This is the most common among the interview patterns and it may involve either writing and answering a questionnaire set or answering the technical questions orally.
- c. **Depth interview (In-depth interview):** When you need to ascertain everything about the interviewee right from life history, academic qualifications, work experiences, hobbies, and interests; you conduct the depth interview. Here the interviewer has a clear idea about the questions he will be asking but once the question is asked, he allows the conversation to flow and is more of a listener.

This interview takes time and more of a friendly approach of the interviewer towards the interviewee.

- d. **Stress interview:** Very rare, but such interviews are conducted to see how the candidate will be able to react in stressful situations and to assess if he will be able to handle the crisis at his job.
- e. **Tactics involved include:** Completely ignore the candidate by maybe, making a phone call in the middle of the interview.
  - i. Or some other tactic like continuously is interrupting the candidate when he answers the questions.
  - ii. Trying to enforce your point of view forcefully even if he disagrees.
  - iii. Asking a whole lot of questions all at once.
  - iv. Interrupting him by asking another question not related to his answer.

4. Based on the Facilities or Settings:

- a. **Telephonic interview:** This interview is conducted over the phone and its main objective is to narrow down the probable list of candidates so that only the most eligible ones finally get shortlisted. This is done in the initial stages and before the personal interview. Also when the candidate is far-off, the company first conducts a telephonic interview and if satisfied then arranges the travel expenses for a one-to-one interview.
- b. **Online interview (Video interview or Skype interview):** This interview may be done by instant messaging, online chats, email or through videos. This involves the interviewer asking questions just like in a personal interview. This is done based on situations like if the interviewee resides far-off or if the interview at the appointed time gets cancelled due to valid reasons. Also, it is more convenient for the interviewer that he can fix the interview at his spare time and convey the message to the candidate a few hours before or so. This helps as the interviewer doesn't need to inform the candidate many days in advance.
- c. **Job Fair Interview (Career Fair interview):** Here the interviewer does a mini-interview to know the qualifications and the technical knowledge. Then basic

technical questions are asked to know if the candidate can proceed further for the main interview. This is a very short interview to net only the potential candidates.

- d. Lunch interview:** This interview is more of a conversational interview mainly designed so that the interviewer gets to know more about the candidate. This also helps the interviewer to assess how the candidate conducts himself in a less-formal environment and how he presents himself.
- e. Tea interview:** This is the same as a lunch interview but only that it differs in the time limit. Here the interviewee gets less time to prove himself. The interviewer here has a structured format for questioning since there is a time limit.

5. Based on the Task:

- a. Apprenticeship interview:** Here the candidate is a novice and the interview is a very formal one with general questions and some skill related questions being asked.
- b. Evaluation interview:** In this interview, a fixed set of questions are asked and a scoring system evaluates the points scored. This type of interview negates the scope of the personal bias of the interviewer.
- c. Promotion interview:** This is for an employee of the company seeking a higher position for career enhancement purposes.
- d. Counselling interview:** When employees are called and their problems and solutions are discussed within the organization, such meeting type interviews are called counselling interviews.
- e. Disciplinary interview:** Here an individual or number of employees or sometimes the employee union is interviewed for their misconduct or non-performance. This is more sort of a meeting between the manager and the employees to get the problem resolved.
- f. Persuasive interview:** The interviewee here has to persuade the interviewer to accept his point of view as in case of an employee persuading his manager to implement some changes in the policy or a sales manager persisting on selling a product.

**Guidelines for Effective Interviewing:** The job of an interviewer spans from preparing the right set of questions to assessing the answers of the candidates and then finally selecting the best candidate for the job. So then what are the guidelines for effective interviewing for interviewers or employers.

- ❖ Know the candidate beforehand: Review the bio-data clearly before the interview process. Know the candidate, his qualifications, his experiences, and his skill sets. This will give you an idea of the line of questions to be asked to the candidate.
- ❖ Jot down questions both the technical and non-technical ones: Note down all the questions you need to ask so that they help you in getting an assessment of the candidate. Ask questions related to the role and responsibilities the post needs and see if the candidate is ready to assume the roles responsibly.
- ❖ Prepare an outline of the interview: Know how you will go about the process of interviewing the candidates. Make a structured plan so that you are able to review the candidate properly.
- ❖ Be a responsible interviewer: See to it that you ask appropriate questions. How you behave and conduct yourself while asking questions is as important as the interviewee answering his questions.
- ❖ Assess the candidate thoroughly: Whether it is the technical skills or creative skills, assess the candidate and seek all relevant information. Look at their conversational skills and how convincing they are.
- ❖ Allow the candidate to speak: Your job of talking is limited to asking questions. So listen and don't talk or interrupt in between. Thus you will be able to gather all the relevant and required information from the candidate.
- ❖ Be professional and ask job-related questions: You don't want to miss on a potential candidate by being too professional or being too personal. Be polite and draw a line between being professional and personal. Let all your questions be related to the job so that the candidate will feel at ease to answer the questions.
- ❖ Do a follow up: After the interview, do let the candidates know of their job status. That way you extend your professional courtesy and help in building the credentials of your company.

**Dress for Success:** You also need to prepare what you are going to wear in advance. What you wear does not have to be new, but it does have to be clean and neat. Dress smartly in an outfit which is comfortable to wear and fits. It is probably preferable to wear a suit of a dark, plain colour and men should wear a tie. Women can wear a skirt or smart trousers with a coordinating jacket. Your shoes should be comfortable and clean. Your hair should be neat and remember to keep any jewellery to a minimum. Your visual appearance is very important and you want to make the right impression. Looking good will also boost your confidence.

### Typical Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself
- Why have you applied for this job?
- Why have you applied to this company?
- What evidence can you offer that demonstrates you have the skills we are seeking?
- Can you give me an example of a problem you have solved?
- Why did you choose your particular degree?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Where do you see yourself in five years' time?
- What do you do in your leisure time?

### Interview Checklist:

- ✓ DO
  - Remember that first appearances count – how you dress and act
  - Smile, make eye contact and acknowledge all members of an interview panel
  - Shake hands in a firm but gentle way, not crushingly strong
  - Wait to be asked to sit down
  - Make sure you sit correctly and comfortably before starting
  - Show interest
  - Answer the question asked
  - Keep positive at all times

✓ DO NOT

- Be late
- Fidget or look at your watch
- Argue
- Put anything on the interviewer's desk
- Say anything negative
- Appear indifferent
- Appear aggressive or act in a superior way – nobody likes this!
- Show too much interest in money and holidays