



INTERVIEW

as if Your Bottom Line
Depends on it!

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Introduction

Unless you have a human resources background, it is likely that those who do most of the interviewing in your company have little or no training on this subject. Interviewing is not typically discussed in business degree programs and is rarely taught before someone has to make their first hire. This implies interviewing is an innate talent, or simply not important. Both messages are wrong.

There are many books on the subject of interviewing, and for good reason. Hiring errors cost seven to nine weeks of pay for an entry-level person, about a year's salary for a professional person, and several years' salary for senior executives and specialized professionals. We do not present the following pages as a complete answer to the subject of interviewing but offer it as a place to begin. You must define and implement an appropriate interview process to generate the right outcome every time. Use this document as a design template or to test your current system.

This booklet is designed to provide specific interview tips based on STM's Behavior, Motivation, and Competency assessments. This should aid you in screening out a greater percentage of poor candidates and reducing the number of candidates you have to assess to find the best possible employee for the unique needs of your company. Even if you are not familiar with or don't use STM's assessments, this guide can help you interview to key behaviors, motivators, attitudes, and talent.

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Interview Types

There are two basic interviews—**The Screening Interview** and **The Exploration Interview**. This material summarizes information we have accumulated over the years about interviewing and links your interview to STM's assessments that many of our clients use to select their final candidates. What we present here can allow you to interview to the assessments and make better choices in selecting finalists and investing in hiring assessments with STM.

For most candidates you will review a résumé and cover letter to determine if the candidate meets your basic knowledge and experience requirements. Details of how to handle this step can be found in our booklet *The Hiring Process*. The **Screening Interview** is used to determine if the candidate should be seriously considered for employment. You are going beyond the aptitude issues to confirm that the candidate meets your requirements for *attitude and fit*.

The **Exploration Interview** is used with the candidate to explore specific issues raised by earlier interviews and assessments. There may be a series of Exploration Interviews until you are sure you know everything you need to know about the candidate and are convinced he or she will be a *great employee*.

The objective is not simply to fill a position or select the best person from the applicant pool; the objective is to select exactly the right person to fill the right seat in your organization. A perfectly acceptable outcome is that you go through the interview and assessment process only to conclude that none of the applicants are suitable. While that can be frustrating and time consuming, it is far better to find out before you hire the person that they cannot perform to your expectations. Hiring the wrong person is far more costly in the long run.

The Screening Interview

There are two rules of thumb for an interview to screen out poor and mediocre candidates:

- ✓ Do not give the benefit of the doubt.
- ✓ Do not leave the interview with unanswered questions.

Before you pick up the phone and call the candidate, do the written documents received from the candidate meet your expectations? There are specific tips for this stage in our booklet, *The Hiring Process*, but the basic rule, do not give the benefit of the doubt, means checking for:

Good Signs

- ✓ All requested information was submitted
- ✓ Relevant education and experience
- ✓ Ever increasing responsibilities
- ✓ Consistent career focus

Bad Signs

- ✓ Spelling, grammar, and formatting errors
- ✓ Significant turnover or “job hopping”
- ✓ Significant gaps in their employment history
- ✓ Missing information (cover letter, dates, etc.)

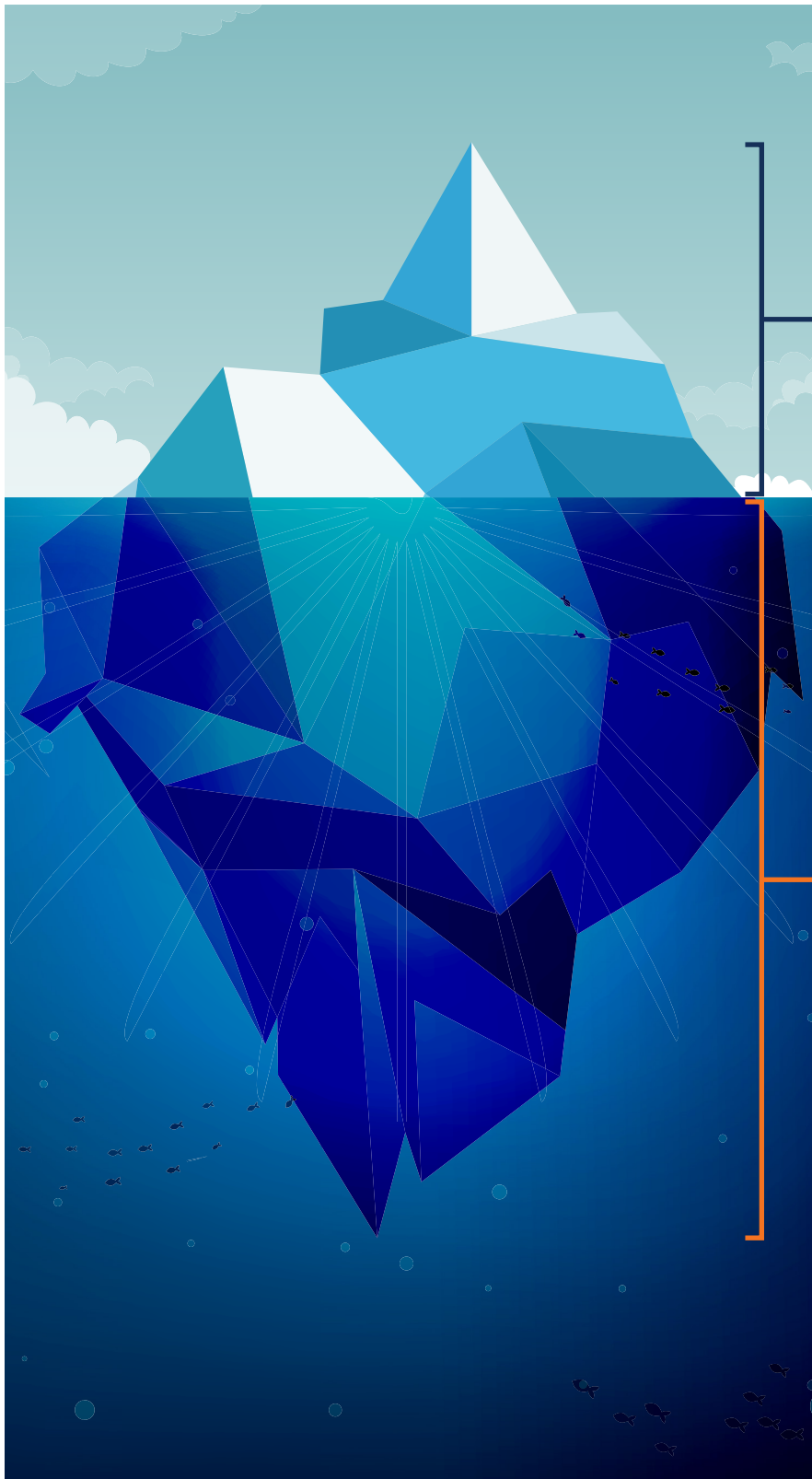
If you do not like what you see here, the chances are that it is not going to get any better. Stop now and save yourself time, money, and frustration!

If the candidate meets your expectations to this point, schedule a 30-minute phone or video appointment to screen for the non-tangibles such as behavior, motivation, attitude, and fit. The following sections address the **Screening Interview** with each of STM’s assessments in mind. This generates more useful information and may help you eliminate candidates before you invest in formal assessments.

The entire interview process is predicated on the fact you know what you are looking for. If you do not have a clear benchmark, it’s important to put some thought into what you really need in the role. Breaking the list down into must-haves, should-haves, and nice-to-haves is a good way to get organized and set priorities.

STM assessments are valuable in that they can tell us if the candidate meets or exceeds your benchmark or expectations. The traditional hiring dilemma was that even if we knew what we were looking for, we simply had not reliable assessment to determine if the candidate met the standard. Now we do. But even if not using STM assessments, using these concepts can be very helpful in sharpening your interviewing skills and making better decisions.

How the Assessments are Related



Behaviors

How one is perceived to perform (Communication Style)

Behaviors are visible and observable. They are not about us as much as how we are perceived by others. We are judged by how we communicate and interact with others.

Motivators

Why one performs

Motivators shape Behaviors. They show how we determine the importance of people and things around us and what spurs us to action.

Competencies

Will one perform? (Capacity, Attitudes, Energy and Drive)

Competency shapes both our Behaviors and Motivators. It informs how we think about the world around us and ourselves. Competency includes attitudes, beliefs, energy and drive.

Attributes

Predict performance (Common Business Success Factors)

Attributes are specific factors common in business and organizational life that speak to our predicted performance.

Behaviors

Interpersonal behavior is the first thing we notice about anyone we meet. We tend to make a judgment in about ten seconds that this person is like me or not which translates into, *I like them or not*. This is how most interviews proceed—the entire judgment about the candidate is based on whether or not we like them! Behavior, however, is about 50-60% accurate in predicting success in a position. Behavioral assessments are far more effective in determining how someone will interact with managers, colleagues, clients, and vendors than in predicting how they will perform. That being said, it is important to evaluate behavior in an objective fashion in order to establish fit within a team, communication style, and how they build relationships with people. At another level, behavior can tell you something about stress which may indicate underlying problems.

By example: If you are hiring someone to sell to a hard-nosed, business-oriented client who is frequently blunt and occasionally even rude, you need to hire an assertive, direct, and equally hard-nosed salesperson. The client's impression of a quiet and reserved salesperson will likely be negative, and the new salesperson may well be intimidated by this client. No matter the motivational profile of the salesperson, this relationship is doomed to fail. If your client base is broad and includes all sorts of different people, you may want to hire a salesperson who is flexible, customer oriented, and has outstanding interpersonal.

Any question at all can yield behavior information. You need not have a specific set of questions in order to interview for behavior. Your feelings and reactions to the person are important as you are attempting to determine if the person can work with you and your team, but we want to be sure to take you beyond your feelings. Key things to listen for during this segment of the interview:

- ✓ **Pace**—How fast do they speak? Do they dominate the conversation? Do they interrupt?
- ✓ **Tone**—Are they quiet or loud? Are they deferential and diplomatic? Are they blunt and plain?
- ✓ **Focus**—Are they people or task oriented? What do they mention first?
- ✓ **Emotion**—Are they controlled or driven? Do they wear their feelings on their sleeve?

Behavior is relatively easy to interview for, you have been doing it all your life. Behavior is by definition observable and will reveal itself during an interview. Here are some tips about interviewing for behavior. Note the shorthand notation in capital letters:

Tip #1: *Behavior is about how the candidate talks, not what he says.*

D: Dominance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Loud, fast, dominates the conversation ✓ Blunt and to the point ✓ Decisive, quick to make a decision and may exhibit anger <p>TASK FOCUSED AND EXTROVERTED</p>
I: Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Friendly, humorous, dominates the conversation ✓ Optimistic and people oriented ✓ Open and enthusiastic <p>PEOPLE FOCUSED AND EXTROVERTED</p>
S: Steadiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Quiet, relaxed, and friendly ✓ Team oriented and not emotional ✓ Prefers that things stay the same <p>PEOPLE FOCUSED AND INTROVERTED</p>
C: Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Quiet, diplomatic, accurate, and precise ✓ Clean, neat, and detail oriented ✓ Risk averse, safety conscious <p>TASK FOCUSED AND INTROVERTED</p>

Motivators

The single most important factor for determining suitability to fill a position is the candidate's motivational profile. Each position and each organization will motivate its employees in a certain way and if the candidate is likewise motivated, she will be happy in the position. Happy employees make good employees. If you are looking for a manager to develop a promising team of entry level people, you will need to hire someone who is motivated by mentoring and sharing what they know with others. A candidate with years of experience and demonstrated success in a wide range of areas, but who is not motivated to teach, mentor or help others will be disengaged and fail to meet your expectations.

Motivation is by definition an internal and intangible quality. How can you interview for this? Think about areas of your life where your motivation is most evident. Is at work or at play? In other words, is what motivates you more evident in your *vocation or avocation*? Your motivation is revealed most clearly by what you do in your free time or as a hobby.

A caveat before we continue. Motivation is NOT associated with Behavior. Consider this exchange:

What do you like to do when you have the free time?

I am a voracious reader. I read all the time.

What course or classes have you taken recently?

I love taking classes and learning new things. I am enrolled in night school.

The benchmark for the position is someone who is motivated by learning and studying new things. Is this person motivated to learn? The correct answer is *I have no idea!* Reading a book or taking a class are *behaviors* and can be driven by any number of *motivators*. You need to know *why* they are taking a class or reading the book. To get beyond the mere behavioral elements in the above exchange you must dig a bit deeper. In this exchange we see the candidate has no particular interest in learning:

What do you like to do when you have the free time?

I am a voracious reader. I read all the time.

What are you reading right now?

I have not had the time recently to read anything but school texts, I am enrolled in night school.

What was the last book you read before you enrolled in school?

I love reading science fiction. I read Asimov's Foundation Trilogy two summers ago.

What are you taking in school?

Business courses.

Sounds like it keeps you busy, why are you taking business courses?

I have been in the same position for four years and my employer tells me that with a degree I can become a manager, I will get a substantial raise.

There is nothing wrong with wanting a raise, but what this exchange reveals is that the candidate is not motivated to learn and most likely motivated to make money and or get ahead. If you really need a learner in this position, this candidate may not be the right choice.

This table indicates some hobbies and activities that might confirm motivation, but you always have to push a bit harder to uncover whether the hobby or activity is truly indicative of the motivation. Some behaviors, such as reading, are suggestive of multiple motivators but there are subtle differences you can look for. Note the shorthand notation in capital letters:

Tip #2: *When you think you have your answer, ask two more questions to be sure.*

Knowledge & Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reads trade journals, current events, biographies, history, non-fiction ✓ Takes classes, seminars, education opportunities ✓ Teaches, coaches, mentors others <p>LEARNING AND EDUCATION FOCUSED</p>
Return on Investment (ROI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No true hobbies ✓ Most activities directly related to making more money and often include long hours at work <p>VALUE AND MONEY FOCUSED</p>
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Competitive sports, showy cars and activities ✓ Politics, leadership positions on volunteer boards ✓ Hobbies that involve leading others or self to win or stand out in some way <p>POLITICAL CONTROL AND RECOGNITION</p>
Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Painter, musician, or craft-related hobbies ✓ Interest in languages including computer languages, culture, or mathematics ✓ Nature, travel, non competitive sports, and self improvement activities <p>CREATIVE AND SYSTEMS FOCUSED</p>
Helping Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regular or long term volunteer service ✓ Teaching, coaching, mentoring or simply being with others ✓ Active in social issues that are other-focused <p>HELPFUL AND FOCUSED ON OTHERS</p>
Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Religion or other strongly held beliefs ✓ Activities and interests related to history and the past ✓ Deep commitment to activities related to family, community, and certain events <p>PRINCIPLE AND BELIEF FOCUSED</p>
Peace & Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Meditation, massage, or other physical/spiritual methods to seek balance ✓ Interest in eastern cultures or methodologies ✓ Interested in organizations and tools that promote peace and unites others <p>BALANCE AND TRANQUILITY FOCUSED</p>

INTERVIEWING TO MOTIVATORS

Knowledge & Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Which is more important, action or knowledge? ✓ Would you consider yourself to be an expert in something? What is it? How did you go about gaining that knowledge? ✓ Tell me about what you especially enjoy about learning things. What topics or subjects do you enjoy? ✓ How comfortable are you in taking the time, energy, and effort required to master a subject or topic you currently know very little about? How about one in which you have very little interest?
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Return on Investment (ROI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How important is earning a lot of money to you? What do you consider to be a “lot of money”? ✓ Where would you like to be, financially, in 5 years? 10 years? Why? ✓ What role does earning a significant income play in your job choices? In staying in a job? ✓ Would you consider yourself to be a bottom line, practical thinker or are you more theoretical or philosophical? Why do you say that?
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What role does being in control of a situation play in your job satisfaction? How important is it for you to control your own destiny? ✓ How important is independence to you? Power? Influencing others? What would be your level of satisfaction with a job if you had none of these? ✓ How good are you in taking directions from others? How much do you like doing so? ✓ How do you go about influencing others to act? Give me a concrete, real-world example of a time when you were able to move a group of people to action and exactly how you did it.
Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ How would you rank the importance of creativity and self-expression in your work? ✓ How do you personally express your unique creative side? ✓ Within your work environment, what single event, problem, and/or unexpected situation has the potential to throw you off balance more than anything else? ✓ What would you say you are most sensitive to in your work environment and/or in general?
Helping Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is there ever such a thing as “too much” service? Explain your answer to me, please. ✓ Is there ever a point when employees should stand up and tell their manager that they are being mistreated? Give me an example of a circumstance where that might be the case. ✓ Tell me how you would service an account that kept having problems with your product and kept coming back yet showed no promise of future business. ✓ What would you do if an employee was missing an undue amount of time due to a family crisis? How would you handle it? At what point would you take corrective action? What would that action be?
Guiding Principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Is there an absolute right and absolute wrong? ✓ How do you decide what is right and what is wrong? ✓ Tell me about “rules”. Give me an example of a rule that you follow relative to managing or leading others. Where did you learn that rule? How flexible is it? ✓ Have there been situations in your work experience when you were absolutely convinced that your rules or standards were superior to your employer’s? If so, why were they better? Were you able to convince your employees that yours were better? ✓ Do you sometimes feel that things would be easier and better if there were fewer rules and procedures? Please elaborate.
Peace & Harmony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Do you often find yourself taking on the role as the peacekeeper in a group or on a team? ✓ How do you feel about the importance of having a balanced work/life? ✓ Do you prefer to avoid conflict situations or face them head on? ✓ As a reward for good performance, would you prefer to be given paid time off or no time off but you get a bonus check?

Competency Assessments

This is the most challenging profile to determine by interview, but the most important. This assessment is the differentiator. If your candidate appears to have the right behaviors and the correct motivators for the position, you need to determine their attitudes, thinking process, and energy levels to make an accurate final decision. There are 6 Dimensions that you need to understand:

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Empathetic Outlook	EMPATHY FOR OTHERS They see others as individuals. HIGH: Anxious to please others; cannot say “no” MEDIUM: Healthy respect for others but able to keep some distance as appropriate LOW: Does not “read” people well; likely to hurt or offend others without realizing it
Practical Thinking	PLANNING, DETAILS, AND SOCIAL SKILL They see process and projects unfolding ahead of them. HIGH: Enjoys projects and handling the details; may be poor delegators MEDIUM: Very good with projects and details but understands that things happen with the best laid plans LOW: Cannot see the detail or how projects flow from “A” to “Z;” pessimistic
Systems Judgment	RULES AND PROCEDURES They see the need for rules and structure. HIGH: Control and rule oriented; tends to “tell not sell;” dependent on procedures or direction from others MEDIUM: Knows what is required and how to communicate it to others; flexible and good delegators LOW: Rebellious of authority and weak communicator; does not like to manage or be managed

INTERNAL FACTORS

Self Esteem	THEMSELVES They see themselves clearly. HIGH: Highly self-satisfied; often refer to themselves rather than others MEDIUM: Healthy confidence but sees the need for improvement LOW: Depressed, negative, or overly focused on external matters
Role Awareness	THEIR WORK They see their personal or professional roles clearly. HIGH: Loves what they are doing; hardworking and highly engaged MEDIUM: They are OK with what they are doing, but see room for improvement around them LOW: Negative and unhappy about what they do, do not see things getting better

Self-Direction	<p>THE FUTURE</p> <p>They see the future they want clearly.</p> <p>HIGH: Clear about where they are going, but may be to the point of “marching to their own drummer;” has high energy</p> <p>MEDIUM: Reasonably clear about how to move forward and optimistic about the future; solid energy</p> <p>LOW: Negative and completely disconnected from the future; ineffective communicator</p>
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To dig deeper into attitudes, ask questions about past employers and companies for whom the person has worked. Someone with a rebellious attitude may not be able to resist bad-mouthing previous employers and managers. While many people change jobs because of poor management, you need to determine if this candidate caused the problems or found themselves on the receiving end of poor management. Low Systems Judgment makes managing them a challenge and they will have trouble managing others. Their lack of clarity about the rules, procedures, and systems hobbles their ability to communicate clear expectations to others.

You should be able to rate each of the six factors high, medium, or low by listening carefully to the candidate’s answers to all your questions. The following specific questions may also be useful and are presented in the same order as the preceding table.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Energy is critical, but we need to know if the energy is directed in a useful way. Depending on the position you are seeking to fill, the benchmark will clarify key factors for success. There are a few super men and women out there, but many people are capable of being very successful with a bit of development or coaching. The interview can tell you if the person is trainable or coachable. Here are some ways to figure that out.

Empathetic Outlook—Empathy for Others

This is a very important factor. A great test for this is talking to your receptionist and others about how the candidate treated them. Also watch for inappropriate jokes and comments. A low-empathy person simply does not realize their comments are offensive because they cannot “read” other’s body language or subtle messages. This is especially difficult in a leader as people will feel the lack of respect and caring. Use questions about handling delicate personnel matters to measure Empathy for Others. The key separation you must make is the candidate’s level of empathy and their ability to distance themselves from other’s problems. Most every business position benefits from strong empathy, but stop short of being a “people pleaser.”

- ✓ Describe a time when you had to deal with a particularly difficult situation with a colleague or customer. How did you handle it?

- ✓ Describe your favorite supervisor and your least favorite. What distinguished the two?
- ✓ Have you ever had to set aside your own priorities for the good of the team?

Practical Thinking—Planning, Details, and Social Skill

This is also a very important factor. Have the candidate walk you through the process of planning and executing a project. The ease and thoroughness with which they do this is a good indicator of high Practical Thinking. Quiz them about how they handle problems, unexpected events and changes. A good planner has considered all the possibilities and has the capability of rethinking the plan on the fly. Strong scores here suggest mastery of the details and great social skills. The latter point is critical—they master projects and details and people relationships the same way; they know them inside out and can get to a desirable outcome. Now your challenge is to separate a person with outstanding social skill from a manipulator. This is a fine line sometimes, and the answer may come from the next factor.

- ✓ On a complex project, what tools do you use to keep yourself organized?
- ✓ How do you get started with a complex project? [For a leader:] How do you get your team organized for a complex project?
- ✓ How do you handle interruptions and unexpected problems?

Systems Judgment—Rules and Procedures

This will help you determine how to best manage the candidate and how they respond to rules, plans and structure. If you pick up an overall negative tone, beware.

- ✓ Set up a hypothetical situation about following procedures versus getting something done.
- ✓ If you were in charge of your last company, what changes would you make?
- ✓ How do you communicate expectations to employees?

Tip #3: Listen carefully to what the candidate sees most clearly around him.

INTERNAL FACTORS

We are very interested in the candidate's answers to questions about the future, their work, and themselves as this tells us about their energy levels. You have to be cautious as sometimes these factors are low for reasons of a temporary nature like personal difficulties, a job layoff, or other serious yet temporary problems. But you must still keep in mind that their energy level will be low and they may not hit the ground running. The immediate future may be a plateau rather than a steep incline. Youth will do this also as a young person may not have great direction or role awareness for lack of knowledge or experience. Take into account the whole person.

Self Esteem—Themselves

One of the classic energy drains is something we call the bureaucratic mindset. This person has a high opinion of themselves and sees no particular need to improve or even work hard. This is someone, no matter their age, who has already “retired” and forgot to mention it to anyone. Signals abound but are most often confused with self-confidence. Self-confidence is a good thing; it means they present well and strongly. Being overly self-assured means the only thing important to me is me. This person has never made an error or a mistake; and shows no interest in self-improvement. Nothing and no one is as important as themselves and for that reason you do not want to hire them! The best way to judge this factor is by listening to all their answers on other subjects—if it always comes back to them no matter the question, one has to assume that their self-esteem is through the roof.

- ✔ Tell me something about yourself that others may be surprised to know about you.
- ✔ If there was something in your past you were able to go back and do differently, what would that be?
- ✔ When we contact your last supervisor and ask which area of your work needs the most improvement, what will we learn?

Role Awareness—Their Work

Listen closely to the candidate’s attitude about projects and work. How much do they like their work today? Do they talk about projects and opportunities with a rising tone and excitement in their voice or do they, as one client reported, yawn every time you ask about their work, favorite projects, or the people they work with?

- ✔ What is the favorite thing you do in the course of your day?
- ✔ What would you like to be doing in an ideal world?
- ✔ How do you like to be managed?

Strong, clear, and rapid fire responses again suggest that the individual has high Role Awareness and probably works overtime just because they love what they do and lose track of time.

Self Direction—The Future

This is a critical line of questioning. Ask questions about the future at different points during the interview:

- ✔ What do you want to accomplish this first year? How about the first two or three years?
- ✔ What will you be doing ten years from now?
- ✔ How does this position fit in with your overall career plan?

Specific, clear, and rapid answers to these questions suggest the person has a clear vision of the future and they have had it for some time. This speaks directly to Self Direction and may spill over to Role Awareness. By example, would you consider the following a specific and clear answer to a future oriented question?

I will be able to double sales in that department and consistently gain high marks from the customers. We will be celebrating our success and growth over the years with a PR campaign and internal celebrations. The employees will be happy because raises and promotions are handed out like candy at Halloween.

How specific is this answer? After you weed out generalities and non-measurable statements, what do you really have? Nothing. When we say that someone is not clear about the future, they may literally tell you “I don’t know” in answer to your question, BUT if they are socially adept and good verbally, such as someone with a high Influencer behavior style, they can think on their feet and talk for hours at the drop of a hat. To repeat: You want specific, clear answers, not general sentiments. Here is how a high energy person might answer your question. Notice the specificity and well thought out process behind the words:

I am convinced that organizations are successful because they have great people. My strategy would begin with changes in how we choose, manage, and promote staff. I would seek out people with high energy and a strong work ethic and coach them to take on more responsibility. With the right people in the right seats in our organization we will be able to dramatically increase productivity while keeping costs at the same or lower levels. Next, we would...

This answer delivered at a rapid-fire clip and in a firm manner, suggests that they have been thinking about this issue and know exactly how to move the organization. You have to put this in context with all your other conclusions such as being articulate and good on their feet. But a consistent picture of high energy, focus on the future, and clarity of purpose on two or three different questions would be convincing enough to take such a candidate to the next level and have them do an assessment, check references, and conduct Exploration Interviews.

Tip #4: *Energy comes from within. No specific goals, direction, desires, or dreams? No energy.*

The Exploration Interview

The purpose of the exploration interview is to establish the significance of issues raised by any résumé reviews, Screening Interviews, assessments, reference checks, and so on. Perhaps the candidate understands their

deficiency in one area and has taken steps to modify their behavior over the years, thereby blunting the significance of a cited deficiency. Conversely, perhaps the candidate is unaware of their behaviors and the impact on those around them, which would exacerbate the urgency of the problem. Most candidates have some unattractive qualities, and the question comes down to this: *Are you aware of the significance of the issues and are you willing to take the management time and effort to resolve them, or can you live with the issues?*

Formulate hypothetical scenarios about typical events in your organization and develop a series of questions around each scenario. The questions should be designed to reveal the candidate's thinking about the situation without coming right out and asking a yes/no question about that situation. Each question should be asked without elaboration and with an open-ended invitation for the candidate to respond. Each successive question around the same hypothetical scenario should build the stress level, and provide additional insight as to the candidate's true feelings on the matter. Listen carefully.

Do not be surprised when you get the "right" answer to a hypothetical question. As you follow-up with an "escalator" question and add a level of stress, watch the candidate's body language and non-verbal response. Be prepared for more revealing answers as you stay with this escalation technique for at least three iterations—pay as much attention to the words spoken as to body language, humorous comments, and unguarded comments. To the last point we remind you about the TV detective "Columbo." Peter Falk would solve his cases by asking the key question as he was getting up to leave, or while chit-chatting with the suspect, rather than in his formal interview or interrogation.

Humor is an issue worth a few additional comments. People use humor to convey ideas they feel cannot be said directly. An off-hand response that "I would fire the guy!" (said with a big grin of course) could translate into, "I'm serious, I would fire the guy." But perhaps the candidate is not comfortable just saying so. Humor can also be used as a defense, "What would you do, leave me hanging out to dry on that one?" (said with a big grin, again) means that they are detecting a difference of opinion here and want to know where you stand.

Let's go through an example:

The assessment suggests that the individual sticks to their ideas dogmatically and will not change their approach with people or their job under any circumstances. This is a customer service manager candidate. The good thing in this style is that the candidate will not "give away the store;" on the other hand it could be a problem if the candidate never bends the rules for unhappy customers. The object of the Exploration Interview is you need to establish just how flexible or inflexible the individual will be.

Tip #5: *Hiring Issues become Management Issues as soon as you hire the candidate.*

Tip #6: *Successful interviewers talk 10% of the time; the candidate talks 90% of the time.*

Tip #7: *70% of communication is non-verbal. Watch body language carefully.*

Develop a scenario:

A very unhappy customer is on the phone demanding redress for the problems experienced with your product. Ask the candidate, *how would you handle that individual?* Expect a conventional and correct answer, and encourage the candidate to keep talking.

Escalator Question #1:

In the course of the complaint you understand the customer has had two replacement products installed over the past three months and your technician is still not able to make it work properly. How would you handle this? Because you have added a bit of stress, you may get a more interesting answer—but still, a savvy candidate knows that he cannot just give away the store or shut down a complaining customer, so expect another “right” answer.

Escalator Question #2 assumes the candidate has given in to the customer:

You would refund the money without investigation or talking to the field technician? Wouldn't that get expensive? These are \$25,000 units! Conversely, assume the candidate has refused to give in to the customer. *The customer is really angry now and wants to talk to the CEO. Is that the result you want?* As you escalate the stress factors you will get a more accurate picture where the line between flexibility and inflexibility lies in order to make an accurate hiring decision.

Escalator Question #3:

We recommend three questions only to fully explore the subject. You are watching the candidate to see that they remain calm, have confidence in their approach and are well aware of the various boundaries in the situation. If you need another question or two to be certain, a good way to keep them talking is to introduce a twist based on their response, as in the previous example.

Again, the words are less important than body language. Crossed arms suggest defensiveness or discomfort. Shifting in one's seat is the same. Slouched back in the chair with hands behind the head suggests ease and comfort or perhaps over familiarity or devil may care. Behaviors are predicted by the assessment, and so if someone is flagged as introverted and quiet—do not hold it against them that they were quiet and soft spoken in the interview. If that style will not work with your clients—then you should not be interviewing them in the first place. Conversely, the glad-handing, broad smiling, talkative candidate is exhibiting their natural behavior. Whatever the behavior, look at the body language in context of the assessment and the specific position you have in mind. If you do not get your questions answered—have someone else conduct an Exploration Interview on those points or plan a new line of questioning yourself.

Tip #8: Hire only for Aptitude and run the risk of firing for Attitude.

Review: The Interview Process

Interviewing is the most critical job in your company. Hire the wrong manager or president or carpenter, and find out just how much damage can be caused by one uncaring, disloyal, or accident-prone employee. Following is a basic interviewing model.

STAGE 1: The First Date

Each stage leading to the final interview is designed to screen out applicants who clearly do not measure up, which avoids the expense of time and money to conduct a thorough face-to-face interview or assessment. The first thing you need to do is scan the resume for the minimum requirements for the position. If the candidate passes this lowest level of screening, phone him or her for a 30-minute interview. The purpose of the interview is to *scan the person for the minimum behavior, motivation, attitude and fit requirements for the position.*

For this phone or virtual interview have one or two scenarios prepared that are most indicative of what is required in the position. Prepare questions concerning issues with the résumé—gaps, frequent job changes, lack of training and so on. Have another couple of questions ready about basic requirements such as relocation, travel, pay, etc. In addition to the hard answers you are looking for, judge their MOTIVATION, BEHAVIOR and COMPETENCY ASSESSMENTS as outlined in the Screening Interview section of this booklet. If the client fails the “first date” scan, thank them and hang up the phone fast. If not, invite them to participate in the next stage of the interview process.

STAGE 2: The First Kiss

It makes sense to assess the candidate after the Screening Interview and before the more intense Exploration Interviews and reference checks. *The next steps depend on you knowing exactly what you are looking for because you have well defined expectations and a clear benchmark for this position.* In either case the assessments do two things:

- ✓ They confirm that the candidate is right for this position, and
- ✓ Provide a wealth of material from which to plan and prepare Exploration Interviews.

It is important to plan the interview as the Exploration Interview is a time intensive and critical stage in the hiring process. You have gone to great lengths to avoid interviewing the obviously wrong candidate, and so it is quite likely the person before you is attractive in many ways. It is imperative that the interview, or more likely, the multiple interviews are well planned and carefully designed. The critical step is to develop a series of scenarios that will decisively validate or eliminate red flags raised by the assessments. The assessments plus your knowledge of the position are key inputs.

Tip #9: *Your mother was right. Don't kiss on the first date.*

Tip #10: *Assess for all positions. A hiring mistake is costly no matter if it is the Receptionist or Chairman of the Board.*

STAGE 3: Meeting Your Parents

We encourage group interviews where possible. When you do that, each interviewer takes on a distinctly different set of issues and prepares to ask questions in that area. Others may ask clarifying questions on that topic, but the lead person will take notes, ask his/her prepared questions and be in charge of that segment. A typical format:

Interviewer 1—Focus on technical capability, knowledge, and suitability for the role. Interviewer chosen for technical competence.

Interviewer 2—Focus on management knowledge, skill and suitability. Will this candidate get things done through our people, will she develop our people and can she confront inappropriate employee behavior and poor results? Develop hypothetical situations you know will arise because they have come up before, or you anticipate certain conflicts among people or between this candidate and particular staff members. Interviewer chosen for competence as people manager.

Interviewer 3—Focus on leadership knowledge, skill, and suitability. Will this candidate be the one to take us to the future, are they excellent communicators, and is their vision consistent with ours? Establish hypothetical scenarios based on where you see the company headed. Interviewer chosen for competence as leader.

Interviewer 4—Focus on behavior, motivation, and attitudes suitable for the position. This person may largely be an observer to the interview. Validate the assessments and explore issues raised by the assessments. *Interviewer chosen for their knowledge of behavior, motivation and attitudes as a success factor in hiring selection.*

Immediately following the departure of the candidate (ideally), each interviewer reports back to the rest of the interviewers their notes, findings, and conclusions. The key is to make sure each interviewer heard the same thing. Score the candidate against pre-determined criteria.(see Appendix 1) to make apples-to-apples comparisons among candidates.

There may be multiple interviews. The more critical the position, the more people you will want to involve with the interview. Supervisors and managers, teammates, colleagues from around the company, perhaps even key customers, vendors, or strategic partners. Given the possibility of many interviewers taking many different points of view, it is important to use a standard set of criteria to judge the applicants.

Key Reminders

- ✓ **Know yourself.** If you are highly optimistic and willing to help or please others, know that you will have trouble being objective about a candidate's flaws. This is an issue for most interviewers.
- ✓ **Know exactly what you are looking for (and not looking for) in a candidate.** Assessments and interviews are only useful to the extent you are clear about your expectations, have a well-defined benchmark, and accurate Job Description.
- ✓ **Do not yield the benefit of the doubt.** Chase down every contradictory statement, inconclusive answer, and outstanding question. Introduce stress into the interview process and be prepared to quantify and compare each candidate's predicted success in the position.
- ✓ **Finally, plan for and be organized about each interview.**

Re-cap of the Ten Interview Tips:

- 1:** *When you think you have your answer, ask two more questions to be sure.*
- 2:** *Behavior is about how the candidate talks, not what he says.*
- 3:** *Listen carefully to what the candidate sees most clearly around him.*
- 4:** *Energy comes from within. No specific goals, direction, desires, or dreams? No energy.*
- 5:** *Hiring Issues become Management Issues as soon as you hire the candidate.*
- 6:** *Successful interviewers talk 10% of the time; the candidate talks 90% of the time.*
- 7:** *70% of communication is non-verbal. Watch body language carefully.*
- 8:** *Hire only for Aptitude and run the risk of firing for Attitude.*
- 9:** *Your mother was right. Do not kiss on the first date.*
- 10:** *Assess for all positions. A hiring mistake is costly no matter if it is the Receptionist or the Chairman of the Board.*

APPENDIX 1: Candidate Interview Evaluation

Candidate's Name: _____ Date: _____

Position Interviewed for: _____

Interviewer: _____

Scoring System: 4 – Excellent 3 – Very Good 2 – Average 1 – Unsatisfactory

CRITERIA	SCORE	COMMENTS
Education		
Technical Qualifications		
Experience		
Curiosity / Fast Learner		
Detail Management / Organization		
Strategic Thinking		
Communication / Listening Skills		
Relationship / People Skills		
Teamwork		
Engagement		
Enthusiasm / Attitude		
Goal Achievement		
Independent / Remote Work		
Cultural Fit		
Overall Evaluation		

Education	Does the candidate possess appropriate knowledge, certifications, or training necessary for the position?
Technical Qualifications	Does the candidate possess the required technical skills to perform well in the position?
Experience	Does the candidate have the depth of experience relevant to this position? Have they demonstrated success in relevant situations over time?
Curiosity/Fast Learner	Have they made an effort in the past few months or few years to enhance their knowledge in their field of expertise or expand their knowledge in new areas?
Detail Management/Organization	Do they possess the ability to organize themselves for large and complex projects? Do they employ effective tools or techniques? For Leaders: Are they able to prepare their teams for large and complex projects?
Strategic Thinking	Critical for Leadership roles. Are they good at presenting or explaining complex ideas? Are they able to see “the forest for the trees?”
Communication/Listening Skills	Does the candidate demonstrate the ability to present their thoughts clearly and effectively? Are they equally good at listening to and understanding others?
Relationship/People Skills	Have they demonstrated an ability to resolve differences and turn around difficult situations?
Teamwork	Did the candidate demonstrate, through answers and overall demeanor, good teambuilding and interpersonal skills?
Engagement	Does the candidate demonstrate an interest in improving or growing in their role or industry?
Enthusiasm/Attitude	Did the candidate express enthusiasm for the position and a positive attitude throughout the interview?
Goal Achievement	Does the candidate have a clear and specific definition of their path to success? How do they show that they are a self-starter?
Independent/Remote Work	(Only relevant to remote workers and leaders) Have they demonstrated the ability to make difficult decisions without much support? Are they comfortable with ambiguous situations or situations where they do not have “perfect” knowledge?
Cultural Fit	Based on the candidate’s attitude, demeanor, and answers, will they contribute to the direction of this organization? Do they share the values of your company and your clients?

Recommendation (circle): Hire Consider Do Not Hire Better Qualified for Another Role

APPENDIX 2: Hiring Calculator

This tool can help you dollarize the value of hiring the right employee the first time—and is a useful exercise to lend urgency to your selection process. Following is a simplified version:

	SALARY COSTS	HARD COSTS	SOFT COSTS	VACANT ROLES
DIRECT COSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Salary Signing bonus and training expenses Benefits Taxes and other costs for a Total Salary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separation processing including coaching, counseling, “managing” and other direct expenses Recruiting costs for search firms, ads, resume screening, interviewing, reference checking, background checks, testing, and other onboarding costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bad public relations, impacts on vendor relations, cost of other relationship issues Lost productivity of executive team—what they could have been producing while dealing with these issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lost income or benefit while this key position is vacant
PRODUCTIVITY COSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time it takes to get up to speed in this position extended by their total direct salary cost for the period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burden placed on co-workers or direct reports extended by the average salary of all the people affected for the period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lost productivity on key projects or initiatives Good employees who left because of this person’s management style—and the cost to replace them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lost income or benefit due to the unnecessary departure of good employees

Now, add up the numbers in each box—what is the Total Salary (white box)? \$ _____

What are the Total Costs (add up all the gray boxes)? \$ _____

Calculate the ratio of Total Costs/Total Salary: Turnover Cost Ratio _____%

Typically, turnover cost is 100% to 200% of the extended salary, or more.

Multiply your ratio by the salaries of people who have left, on average, each year.

Annual Turnover Cost \$ _____

APPENDIX 3: Interview Questions You Can and Cannot Ask

These guidelines will help you distinguish between lawful, acceptable interview questions and those that are unlawful. These guidelines are not complete and only provide major highlights. Remember: any question that is not specifically job-related may be construed as unlawful. Generally, if you do ask a question, you must consistently ask the question in every interview.

CATEGORY	OK TO ASK	DO NOT ASK
Age	<p>If hired can you provide proof of age and / or submit a work permit?</p> <p>Are you over or under 18? (If not, proof of age and work permit required)</p>	<p>What is your date of birth?</p> <p>How old are you?</p>
Arrests & Convictions	<p>Have you been convicted of any crime?</p> <p>Are any felony charges pending? Give details. (You must tell applicant a conviction is not an automatic bar to employment but is only considered as fitness for job performance.)</p>	<p>Have you ever been arrested?</p> <p>Have you ever been charged with any crime?</p>
Birthplace	<p>Only relevant for background check.</p>	<p>Where were you born?</p> <p>Where were your parents born?</p>
Citizenship	<p>Are you a US citizen?</p> <p>Do you intend to remain in the US?</p> <p>Can you submit proof of citizenship or immigration status?</p> <p>If you are not a citizen are you prevented from becoming lawfully employed because of visa or immigration status?</p>	<p>What is your country of citizenship?</p> <p>Whether or when you or family members became naturalized citizens.</p> <p>To submit a copy of your naturalization papers.</p>
Credit Rating	<p>Can you be bonded? Only if job related.</p>	<p>Questions about credit rating, charge accounts, ownership of car, etc.</p>
Disabilities & Health	<p>Are you capable of performing the essential tasks and duties of the position as they have been explained to you?</p>	<p>Are you handicapped?</p> <p>Do you have a disability?</p> <p>Have you ever been treated for any of the following illnesses...?</p> <p>Have you ever had a Worker's Compensation claim?</p>
Education	<p>Describe your academic, vocational or professional education.</p> <p>Please list the schools you've attended.</p> <p>What is the highest grade you completed?</p>	<p>List the dates you attended or graduated from high school or college. (Some employment applications may ask for attendance dates to account for employment gaps.)</p>

CATEGORY	OK TO ASK	DO NOT ASK
Emergency Contact	Name and address of a person to be notified in case of emergency	Name and address of a relative to be notified in case of emergency.
Handicaps	Describe or demonstrate the job function and ask whether the applicant can perform the function with or without reasonable accommodation. If asked, must be asked of every applicant.	General questions about whether they are handicapped or the nature or severity of their handicaps
Height & Weight		What is your height and / or weight?
Marital & Family Status	Name and address of parent or guardian only if applicant is a minor. Are there any activities, commitments or responsibilities that may hinder the work attendance requirements?	Marital status: spouse's name, employment, etc. Maiden name. Preference among Ms., Miss, or Mrs. Are you pregnant? Do you expect to be pregnant within the year? Do you live with your parents? With whom do you reside? Number & age of children, or intent to have children. About child care arrangements.
Military Record	Are you a veteran of the US Armed Forces or State Militia? If yes, describe any training or education received while in the military.	Type, conditions or dates of military discharge or about experiences in other the US Armed Forces or State Militia.
Name	Have you worked for this company under a different name? Does this company need any additional information about a change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname to check your work record?	Any inquiries that would indicate marital status, maiden name, ancestry, national origin. Has your original name been legally changed? Inquiries about preferred courtesy title: Miss, Mrs., Ms.
National Origin & Language	What languages do you read, speak or write fluently? Only if job related.	Ancestry, lineage, national origin, descent, parentage or nationality. Nationality of parents or spouse. Native language and how acquired proficiency.
Organizations	List memberships in any professional or trade organizations or other organizations that you consider relevant to your ability to perform the job. What office, if any, do or did you hold? Inquiry into any organization that the applicant is a member only if providing the name does not reveal race, religion or ancestry.	List any or all social organizations, clubs, societies, and lodges to which you belong.
Photographs	May inform that a photograph may be required after hire only if job related.	Submit a photograph with application or before hire. Can only request after hiring.

CATEGORY	OK TO ASK	DO NOT ASK
Race & Color		Race, complexion, color of hair, eyes or skin.
Religion & Creed	Are you available to work Saturdays or Sundays if needed? Only if job related.	Religious affiliation, denomination, church, parish, pastor, minister or rabbi, religious holidays observed.
Relatives	Do you have any relatives already employed by this company? If yes, please list their names.	List names and addresses of relative(s) to be contacted in case of emergency.
References	Name of persons willing to provide professional or character references for you. Who referred you here?	What is the name of your pastor, minister or rabbi?
Residence	What is your current address? How long have you resided at that address? What was your former address and how long did you reside there? Only for background checks.	Do you own or rent? Can you give the names and relationships of the persons residing with you?
Sex	Only permissible where a Bona Fide Occupational Qualification exists.	Are you male or female? Any inquiry related to sex or ability to reproduce. Any inquiry related to sexual orientation.
Salary / Pay	What are your salary/pay expectations?	Any inquiry related to salary or pay history.



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