

Myth

Hiring managers consistently claim that standard (unstructured) interviews are highly effective for finding good hires.

Reality

Unstructured interviews are among the worst predictors of on-the-job success. **Structured interviews are over 2x better** at identifying talent.

So: how can I conduct a structured interview?

1 BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

What are the most important qualities for a successful candidate to have? Rank them before you set eyes on the candidates and try to make sure you ask questions assessing those competencies.

Write out your questions. Ask each candidate the same questions in the same order to reduce subjectivity and make it easier to compare candidates.

For each question, have specific follow-up questions at the ready. Aim to make them as similar as possible across candidates. This lets you dig deeper while still staying on script.

Pilot test. Testing your questions ahead of time ensures that they're phrased to produce the data you're looking for. Try a mock interview with a colleague. Make sure the environment and process is close to the real thing.

Make a rubric. Attempt to remove subjectivity in scoring responses by creating a rubric for each question (e.g., a 1-5 scale). Include example responses for each score on the scale. This will help quantify who the best candidate really is.

Create a "Resume Form". Applicants may emphasize or omit information when they are allowed to submit their own resumes. Create a resume form tailored to your organization's needs to get relevant information (in the same order) from each candidate.

2 DURING THE INTERVIEW

Use the same, diverse set of interviewers for all candidates. A diversity of interviewers is like having diversity in your financial portfolio; it is protective. Having a diverse set of opinions on candidates makes it more likely you'll make the best choice.

Take good notes. Memories are flawed and are influenced by everything from first impressions to how tired you are. Try to score answers immediately for all candidates so you aren't relying on your potentially faulty memory.

Stick to your script.

3 EVALUATING THE INTERVIEW

Remove the word "fit" from your vocabulary...unless you are prepared to explain exactly what you mean by it (not easy!). "Good fit" is often just a proxy for "I like their personality" or "They like the same things I do."

Avoid discussing candidates in informal settings. If conversations about candidates are occurring at the water cooler, the loudest voices or opinions of more senior employees can shape what others will say, creating a false sense of consensus. Also try to keep written evaluations private until it's time to know what each evaluator thinks. In fact, if your group seems to be in strong agreement about candidates, become skeptical and ask which hidden bias may be operating.

State both positive and negatives of each candidate. In the final discussion, ask for both the ups and downs of each candidate. They all have them! When only positive comments are mentioned, we tend to overaccentuate the good qualities of our preferred candidate.

