

The Structured Interview: What and Why

Exactly as the the name suggests, we are talking about a style of interview that is defined by built-in structure.

Also called “Structured Behavioral Interview,” “Pattern Interview,” “Quantitative Interview,” this is a process of interviewing that uses a set of carefully designed scripted questions and highly specific guidelines for interpreting candidate responses.

The “structure” of the interview itself is in both the exact content and order of the questions and in the interpretation and analysis of responses.

HAVE YOU EVER MADE A BAD HIRE?

Mistakes in hiring are largely due to the subjective nature of most hiring processes and the lack of measurable objective criteria on which to base the selection.

The TargetSuccess Predictive Behavior-based Structured Interview provides an objective, measurable process for selecting the best talent for a specific job.

“In studies done by industrial psychologists it [the structured interview] has been shown to be the only kind of interviewing that has any success at all in predicting worker performance in the workplace.” From: [What the Dog Saw](#) by Malcolm Gladwell

Corporate America and the Federal Government understand the importance of screening and profiling tools such as our Structured Interview and Screening Sketch.

A recent issue of **Time Magazine** has a cover story devoted to describing the growth of profiling tools used by Fortune 500 corporations and the transformative results being achieved “*How High Is Your XQ: Questions To Answer In The Age Of Optimized Hiring*”.

The United States Office of Personnel Management and the United States Postal Service have extensive documentation and systems in place using profiling tools and structured interviews. Many states have modeled their own hiring selection processes after the Federal model, for example Arizona:

“...the unstructured interpersonal interview can be one of the most unreliable and invalid methods of selection available”

Arizona Government Human Resources Division

And straight from the Federal Government's manual:

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*Excerpted from The United States Office of Personnel Management:
“Structured Interviews, A Practical Guide”*

Structured vs. Unstructured Interviews

Employment interviews can be either structured or unstructured. Generally speaking, structured interviews ensure candidates have equal opportunities to provide information and are assessed accurately and consistently.

Structured Interview

- All candidates are asked the same questions in the same order.
- All candidates are evaluated using a common rating scale.
- Interviewers are in agreement on acceptable answers.

Unstructured Interview

- Candidates may be asked different questions.
- A standardized rating scale is not required.
- Interviewers do not need to agree on acceptable answers.

At first glance, the unstructured interview appears attractive due to its loose framework, discretionary content, and conversational flow. Yet, these same features make this type of interview very subjective, which reduces its accuracy and invites legal challenges.

Research consistently indicates unstructured interviews have little value in predicting job performance.

Unstructured interviews typically demonstrate:

- Low levels of reliability (rating consistency among interviewers).
- Low to moderate levels of validity (the extent to which the assessment method measures what it is intended to measure, e.g., job performance).

The Structured Interview: What and Why

The Structured Interview has a number of key advantages. One is **controlling subjectivity**.

We all know the hiring process involves both objective and subjective selection processes. Examples of the objective process are determining whether proper credentials are in place, is there a criminal history, etc. The prime example of subjective process is the traditional interview.

Subjectivity certainly has its place. Does this person fit in the culture of your organization? Does this person present themselves well? Can you work with this person? All very valid questions that should be answered. But only as part of a larger process that is as completely fair and unbiased as possible.

The Structured Interview offers that fair and unbiased platform and gives you a powerful tool to supplement your objective selection process.

Another advantage is a proven process for **identifying excellence**.

Questions in the TargetSuccess Structured Interviews are carefully designed to evaluate behavioral characteristics that are associated with excellence and success.

Behavioral attributes focused on closely align with accepted standards such as the ISLLC “dispositions”.

From www.opm.gov (Federal Office of Personnel Management):

A structured interview is an assessment method designed to measure job-related competencies of candidates by systematically inquiring about their behavior in past experiences and/or their proposed behavior in hypothetical situations.

Generally speaking, structured interviews ensure candidates have equal opportunities to provide information and are assessed accurately and consistently.

Structured interviews are popular because they are more personal than other assessment methods. Other benefits of structured interviews are:

- They can evaluate competencies that are difficult to measure using other assessment methods (e.g., Interpersonal Skills)
- All candidates are asked the same predetermined questions in the same order
- All responses are evaluated using the same rating scale and standards for acceptable answers

Structured vs. Non-structured

- Quantitative vs. Qualitative
- Consistent by design vs. Inconsistent by design
- Scripted vs. Free-form
- Time efficient vs. Time intensive

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Of course there are more advantages and reasons to implement structured interviews in your hiring process, like

- **controlling bias**
- **increasing consistency**
- **maximizing fairness**
- and more

But most important is that long term use of tools like this that purposefully and methodically select people that are most likely to be passionate, caring, intelligent, resourceful, communicative, industrious, loyal, in short **EXCELLENT**, will positively transform the culture of your organization, dramatically reduce turnover, and make it more and more certain for every student to have a positive learning experience each and every day.

It is important to understand that in order to properly execute a structured interview, in particular how to evaluate responses, requires training. So, in addition to providing the interview script itself and interpretation “look-fors,” TargetSuccess also provides comprehensive training in the use of our Structured Interview as well as a complete set of on-line tools to support your implementation.

When you are ready to begin implementing next-generation hiring tools such as screening profiles and structured interview, you will find that

- TargetSuccess specializes in hiring tools for education organizations.
- TargetSuccess tools are available for a fraction of the cost of the “Big Names.”
- TargetSuccess tools are of the highest quality and proven effectiveness.

Call us for personalized introduction to what we do and how we do it.



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