



The Job Interview Guide v3

Job Interview and Other tips for Recruitment and Staffing Professionals

By [EmployPrep – White label candidate preparation software](#)



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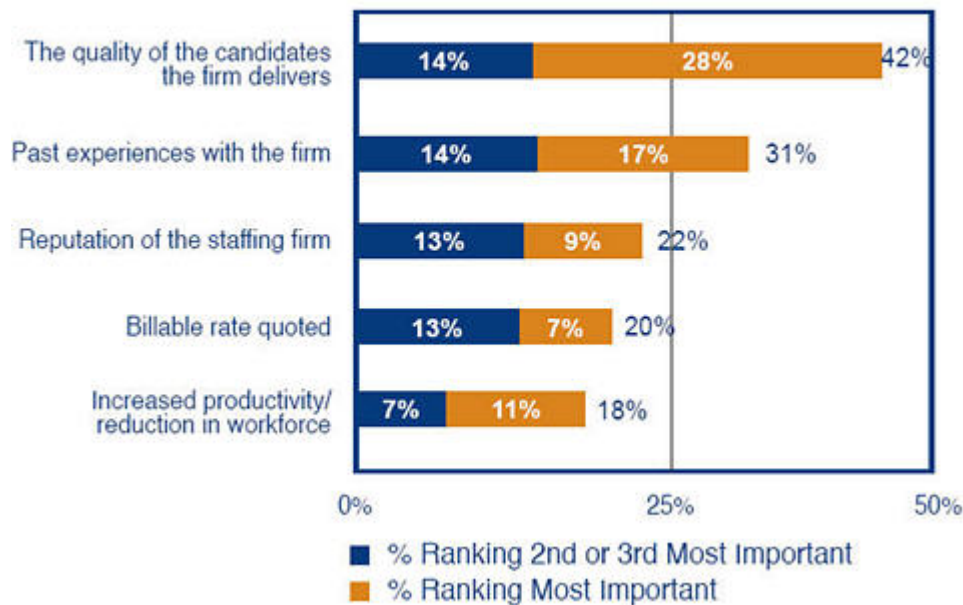
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Interviewing is a critical step in the recruitment process. For a staffing company, the interview provides an opportunity for you to qualify your candidates to see if they meet your client’s job requirements. It also represents an opportunity to make a positive impression on candidates whether you place them or not. Remember that you bypass more candidates than you place, yet each candidate represents an opportunity to create a positive [staffing brand](#). As such, if done correctly, the interview serves provides an important quality control mechanism and recruiter [branding tool](#).

Importance of Staffing Quality

Quality is important to every business and industry, Recruitment and Staffing is no exception. In the 2008 staffing industry study conducted by Inavero Institute (formerly iLoyalty), the quality of candidates delivered ranked as the number one most important criteria when employers decided on a staffing firm.

Figure 4- Top Five Selection Criteria



(*Information from 2008 annual Inavero Institute staffing industry study. This study surveyed 500 companies, represented \$100M annual staffing budget, with a median external staffing budget of \$50K).



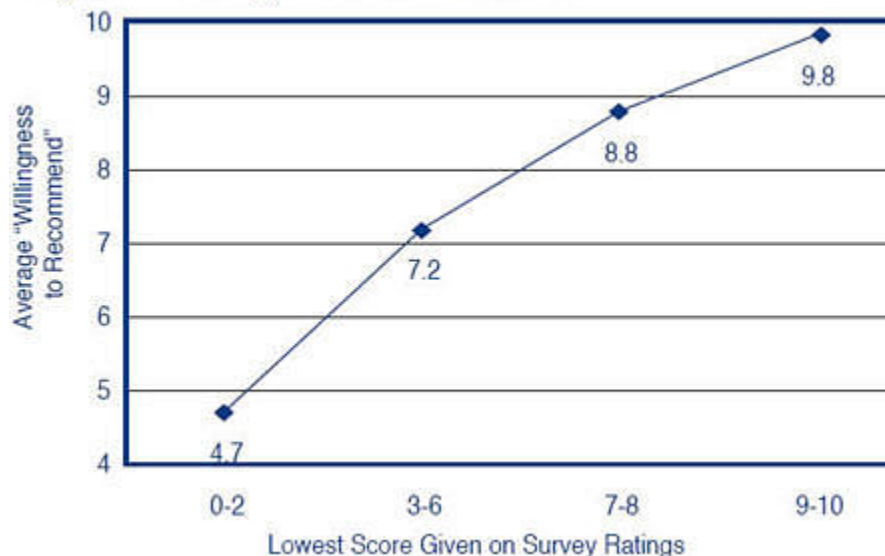
The Cost of Service Failure

While most recruiters I have worked with were [excellent staffing providers](#), I have known recruiters who submit candidates that are not really qualified hoping that they might make a placement. Their reasoning is that it doesn't hurt to "toss a name in the hat". While this reasoning appears harmless, it might end up costing in the long run.

When thinking back to my corporate HR days, and a staffing company consistently sent me poor candidates, it made me doubt if they really took enough time to understand my company culture, the job requirements and so forth. When this continued, it was very likely that we discontinued working with that staffing company. The reason is simple, outsourcing is suppose to give a client less work to do not more work by having them review bad resumes and interview unqualified candidates.

So what is the cost of submitting poor resumes, unqualified and unprepared candidates? What is the cost of failing to deliver quality? In the Inavero study mentioned earlier, it examined the impact to a staffing company when it fails to deliver quality service. This was accomplished by examining the relationship between a staffing company's service failure and their client's willingness to recommend them. The study contained 39 questions that rated staffing service delivery within 7 dimensions. The employers rated their primary staffing provider on a 10-point scale (with 10 representing the most positive perception).

Figure 6- Willingness to Recommend





The results of this study show that there is a dramatic decrease in the employer's willingness to recommend their primary staffing company with even one low service rating. In other words, employers appear to be very unforgiving and sensitive to service failures. These results are not surprising when you consider all the studies historically conducted in marketing showing the significant cost of irate customers and word of mouth marketing.

These findings highlight the importance of staffing quality and they come as little surprise. Having been on the client side as a corporate human resources professional, I have designed RFP processes, worked closely with hundreds of hiring managers as well as staffing service providers. And whether it was deciding on which recruitment and staffing provider to place on our vendor list or awarding contracts, direct hires or temps, our number one consideration was the quality of candidates. So what does staffing quality have to do with interviewing? Proper interviewing is a critical step to help ensure candidate quality.

Chapter 2 - Know the Job

If you want a successful hire, a great placement, the very first step is: You got to know the job. While this sounds simple and perhaps even common sense, this is where many recruiters and HR folks fall down. When I say know the job, it starts with knowing the responsibilities but it goes beyond that. Knowing the job for a successful placement means not only knowing what the job duties, but also, the company culture, how the job fits in the organization, within the department, and so on.

Recruiter recruiting for a job that they do not really understand happens all the time. Why does this happen? Well, this happens for a host of reasons that include a hiring manager that is "too busy" to sit down with you and articulate what they are really looking for and what the job requires. Other reasons include a lack of job descriptions and postings, or really out dated ones. Sometimes, it is just the nature of the business where clients call you needing someone yesterday. Other times, it is due to the nature of staffing professionals. Staffing professionals are typically high energy, enthusiastic salespeople. They want to "get out of the gates" as fast as possible and start their search. Because in the staffing business, it is often a race for time to get the resource (especially for those rare skill sets). However, starting your search without fully understanding the job requirements is a recipe for disaster.

Time invested upfront with the hiring manager to determine what the job does will pay big dividends down the road. But where do you begin your research? A good place to begin to learn about the job is the job posting and/or job description. While these two documents are different, in that the job description simply describes what the job does



and the job posting is an advertisement to hire with, I will use the terms interchangeably in this document since what I am going to say will apply to both.

Job Descriptions and Postings

As mentioned, begin with the job description. Ask your client if they have a job description and posting for your job order. Now when it comes to job related documents is important to always remember that job descriptions are a “snapshot in time”. The shelf-life of a job description really depends on how fast the job duties are changing. In some industries, job descriptions are more time sensitive than others. For example, in information technology changes are happening so fast that the shelf-life for these jobs is much shorter than those in carpentry or truck driving where the rate of change is much slower. So be mindful of this when working with job descriptions.

So when receiving your job description from your client, it is a good idea to review the job posting and description with your client, ask old the document is and determine if any of the duties have changed since the creation of the document.

What you do if your client does not have a job description? This is not uncommon, many companies do not have job descriptions. While this is unbelievable from an HR perspective, not having job descriptions is very common especially in small to medium sized companies (it’s hard to understand a company not documenting what their employees do but happy to pay them for it. This puts them in a bad position to maintain the internal equity or pay structure and similar bad position to handle work related grievances). If your client does not have job descriptions, well then create one for them or facilitate the process to create one with them. Doing this will prevent a bad hire from not understanding the job fully. In addition, helping your clients write job descriptions when working a job order will demonstrate your value add to your client.

Note: Job Description as the Foundation of HR Functions

*The job description is often known as the foundation of HR functions. The reason for this is because the job description guides recruitment, performance management, learning and development and so forth. For example, by first understanding the job’s duties, you will know the KSA’s required to perform such work, and ultimately better understand how to hire for the job. In this way, the job description serves as the foundation for **recruitment and selection**. The same logic applies to performance management. Once you know what the job does, you can then know what the expected outcomes and results are for this particular job. For example, if you know the job duty is to “sweep floors”, then you will expect that an outcome for this duty is a “clean and immaculate floor”. Knowing the expected outcomes for a job can then serve as the foundation for **performance management**.*



Don't Reinvent the Wheel

While writing job descriptions is not a favorite activity for any staffing professional, it does not have to be labour intensive. You do not have to reinvent the wheel, there are many good free resources out there that will help you cut your time in half.

A good source of job information is the NOC. The [NOC](#) stands for National Occupational Classification is a Canadian system of job classification. It has a government website that contains job classification information. You can use it to look up job analysis information such as job descriptions, hiring requirements, common work environment analysis, and so on. The good thing about this system and the job documents found there is the rigor and standardization that goes into each job. The documents found there simply describe the job in the simplest terms and does not contain the confusing flowery language sometimes found in many company written job ads. The NOC has a great search feature that allows you to find the job you are trying to fill. You can use this as a foundation and edit it to reflect the specific requirements and to add marketing flair.

Another good source of job information is online job boards. Job boards such as [Monster](#) and [Careerbuilder](#) contain virtually every job description. You can go onto these sites and easily search for the job description or posting that you desire.

So don't reinvent the wheel, use resources like the NOC and online job boards to provide a starting point to write your job description and posting.

Interview the Hiring Manager

Once you have your draft job description created, it is a good idea to have a sit down with the hiring manager to review it and ask questions. This will give the hiring a chance to provide clarification of job requirements through dialogue. The goal here is at the very least understand what the job does. When reviewing your job documents with your client, some of the questions you may want to ask include;

- Of these responsibilities which are the most important to you, and the organization?
- What are the typical problems at this job handles?
- How much autonomy does this job have?
- Who will this job have to speak to in order to perform its duties?
- Describe the work environment?
- What's the most common error committed in this position? How does that impact the company?



- What kind of education is required in this position? Identify degree, diploma, certification, professional association names and acronyms. How would you prioritize these educational requirements?
- What kinds of work history with potential candidates come from? Identify job titles, industries, competitors, and so on.

At this stage while asking your client what they want, be careful of the “manager's wish list”. The “manager's wish list” is client wants someone with a Ph.D. to file papers. So here is your opportunity to provide your expertise, share your knowledge of the job market, candidate pools, and so forth. It is also your chance to frame and ground your client's expectations. Your goal is to find a balance between the managers' wish list and the job requirements. The objective is to create a vision that is realistic as well as satisfy your client. If you fail have a clear understanding of the job requirements and a realistic candidate profile, you might as well be off on a search for the Loch Ness Monster.

So ensure you review the job documents with the hiring manager and ask whatever question you need to ensure that you have a thorough understanding of the job that you are hiring for.

Chapter 3 - Company Culture and Soft Skills

When staffing professionals start their search, most often we focus on the “main components”: the education and experience. While this is the basic part of the search, it's important to understand your client's company culture. Why you may ask? Because, the most common reason a hiring manager bypasses a qualified candidate in an interview is due to “fit”. When a hiring manager simply states a lack of fit they usually mean the candidate will not fit into the culture and the team. Sometimes, they will use the term fit, other times they'll say they didn't get the right “feeling” from the candidate, or perhaps they'll say that they'd make a “connection” with a candidate. Most often when you drill deeper down, all this means that they do not feel the candidate would fit into the culture.

Even if your candidate is hired, are you home free? Absolutely not, because the reason most new employees are terminated, it is not due to a lack of technical skill or experience but again back to the “fit”. The most common reason for terminating a new hire is because they do not fit into the team or organization. And not fitting into the culture often comes from a combination of simply not fitting in and [a lack of soft skills](#).



So when searching for resources look at the soft skills and assess a culture fit. From HR perspective, this makes sense, because it is always easier to teach technical skill and provide on-the-job training for skills gaps, than to try to change personality traits and culture. For example, if you were asked to hire a sales person for your client in the paper industry. It would be far easier to hire a sales person, who is naturally friendly, outgoing and then provide training on product knowledge rather than higher someone knowledgeable in paper products, but who was very introverted.

How to Get a Sense of Company Culture

So you need to understand your client's culture to make a great placement. Where do you begin to understand your client's culture? Well, a good way to get a sense of the company culture is to simply ask the hiring manager. Ask the hiring manager to describe the culture at work, and within the team. Ask them how working there differs from other employers they have worked with? What kind of atmosphere do they create at work? Ask them to describe their own management philosophy and style and so forth.

Another good way to get a sense of the culture is to conduct a site visit. Not only will the site visit help you build stronger relationships with your client, but also it will help you experience the work atmosphere for yourself. The other reason why you need to conduct a site visit is because sometimes the culture and atmosphere the hiring managers perceive is very different than the ones the employee sees. A site visit will allow you a chance to see for yourself the work atmosphere your candidate will be a part of.

Taking a walk through the work area will give you a sense of what it is like to work there. Stop by the employee/union bulletin board and to see what the issues are, and what is being communicated. Is it filled with retirement party and company celebration posters, or is it filled with union and employee grievances? Walk through the employee lunch area. Do employees take their lunch or are they at their desk, working through their lunchtime? All of this will help you understand the company culture and in turn, help you find the right person for this client. At the very least, you will know how to describe the work environment to your candidate when asked. So enough can't be said about investing time up front to ensure you understand the job, the culture, and qualifications which set the foundation for great hire.



Chapter 4 - Developing Job Interview Questions

Now that you have a good understanding of what the job does, who you're looking for, and the culture in which the incumbent will work, it's time to create some good job review questions. You will now rely on all the information that you've gathered up to this point to develop your questions. You will want to create job interview questions to not only to assess the job requirements (education and experience), but also to assess soft skills and culture fit.

In this section we will focus a lot on behavioral questions. Before we go further on how to create good job interview questions, let's do a quick review of behavioral questions.

Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral questions are based upon the theory of past behavior. That is past behavior is a good predictor of future job performance. How a candidate handled a situation the past will give a good indication of how they will handle a similar situation in the future. Not only is the world of job interviewing relying on this theory of past behavior, but well-known and established systems like the criminal justice system also relies on this theory.

Behavioral questions are very prevalent in the human resources industry. Studies of shown that this style of interview question is a better predictor of job performance than the traditional job interview question. Behavioral questions ask the candidate to recall a work situation in the past. They are used to assess competencies anywhere from problem solving, tolerance for stress, to risk taking and so forth. Behavioral questions start with phrases like:

- Tell me about a time when...
- Describe a situation where you...
- Given example, when...

Here are some examples of behavioral questions:

- Tell me about a time when your work was criticized?
- Give me an example of when you had to make a decision without all the information and details that you would have preferred.
- Describe a situation where you identified a problem before anyone else?

What's the difference between a traditional interview question and a behavioral interview question? For example, suppose you were trying to assess competency of conflict resolution. A traditional job interview question would be something like:



“Tell me how you feel about conflict resolution” or “What are the steps in conflict resolution”.

A behavioral question would be phrased as follows:

“Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an angry or abusive customer. How did you handle it?”

Now that we have explained the theory of behavioral interviewing, let’s look at how to create your own behavioral interview questions for your specific client and job order.

Creating and Customizing Behavioral Questions

“The answer you get depends on the question you ask”

So how do you create great behavioral interview questions to help you assess and select the right candidate? To help you get started, we have attached a handbook of behavioral interview questions for your convenience. This handbook contains behavioral questions to assess the most common job required competencies like problem solving, communication, conflict resolution and so forth. However, if you want to get the most out of your questions, you must customize the questions for your specific job order and client. So how you customize and target your behavioral questions? Well start with your job description and posting.

Simply refer to the job description that you've already created. Based on the **prioritized** job and hiring requirements, create your customized behavioral question. I will illustrate with an example below of just how easy it is to create your own customized behavioral interview questions. The assumption here is that you have already created an up-to-date and prioritized job description and posting.

Example:

Suppose your a client asked you to hire an accountant. Based on your discussions with the hiring manager and your analysis of the job, you have identified that the main responsibility is to **“perform accounts reconciliation”** and the main soft skill are **“detail orientation, analytical and problem solving”**.

Step 1: Identify a prioritized responsibility from the job posting:

“Perform accounts reconciliation to the general ledger... reconciling various balance sheet accounts to subsystems”



Step 2: Identify a prioritized soft skill identified on job posting:

“Detailed oriented, analytical and proven problem solver”

Step 3:

Find an appropriate behavioral question to assess the competency of problem solving and detailed orientation. You may use one of your own or one outlined in our behavioral questions manual.

“Tell me about a time when you identified a problem before anyone else or your superiors?”

Step 4:

Drawing on your job documents, blend or “contextualize” your behavioral question with your prioritized job function and requirements.

“When reconciling various balance sheet accounts to subsystems: Tell me about a time when you noticed a source of potential loss for a company or identified an undetected financial error before anyone else. What did you do about it?”

You can see that the question created above, assesses the most important competency as identified by the hiring manager (detail orientation, problem solving) through the most important job responsibility again as identified by the hiring manager (accounts reconciliation).

By following these steps when creating your job interview questions, you ensure you ask the right question to get the right answer to find the right candidate. And best of all, you use your time wisely by asking the most important questions.

This approach can be applied to any job order to help you create good behavioral interview questions. Below are some examples to show you how easy it is to contextualize behavioral questions for various jobs.

Customer Service – assessing the core competency of conflict resolution

Behavioral question to assess core competency of conflict resolution + core job function of handling returns/complaints =

Describe a time when you had to deal with an irate customer i.e. on a return, exchange or complaint who was abusive to your client service staff. How did you handle it?



Education/Teaching – assessing the core competency of classroom management

Behavioral question to assess core competency of classroom management + core job function dealing with students =

As an educator, often you have to handle situations where you have a student with behavioral challenges. Tell me about a time when you had to handle a student who was misbehaving very badly and disrupting your class.

Additional probing questions you can ask: *How did you handle it? What did you learn from this experience to help you improve your teaching skills?*

Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation

Whether you are operating in Canada, United States or elsewhere you must be aware of the applicable laws against discrimination when hiring. In this section, the information and examples are based on the laws in Canada. This is not intended to be legal counsel, as the training programs that help employers prevent discrimination and ensure compliance can be extensive and beyond the scope of this document. However, in this section I will focus on the common issues that come up in a job interview. It will be assumed that you are familiar with the applicable discrimination laws that govern your company. As such, I will look at common questions that typically should be avoided and provide best practice alternatives.

Not only does anti-discrimination practices apply to you but it is a wise idea to see if your client has been provided the necessary training to hire within the human rights. Since if your client asks your candidate an inappropriate question, it will not only create a bad impression for your company but it may also open you up to legal action.

If you are in doubt or have any question, seek advice from your local labour lawyer or contact the appropriate government department for advice. It is important that you find out which legislation your company falls under (federal, provincial, state) to ensure you meet compliance. In Canada, most employers fall under provincial legislation but some are under federal jurisdiction and can depend on a variety of factors like industry, whether or not your company provides a inter-provincial/international services, and so on. For example, Canadian Banks, Telecom, and Railway fall under federal legislation. The key is to seek advice and get the right information to ensure compliance and prevent complaints.



Interviewer Questions that Don't Discriminate

Don't Ask	Best Practice	Situation
How old are you?	This job requires you to be 19 or over to be able to perform it's duties. Are you able to meet this requirement?	Example, you need to hire a bartender and you are unsure how old the applicant is.
Are you married? Do you have kids? Do you go to church on Sundays?	This work involves shift work and overtime when necessary. Are you able to meet this requirement? Are there any circumstances that would prevent you from meeting these requirements? This job will require you to travel 30% of the time, will you be able to meet this requirement? Are there any circumstances that would prevent you from meeting these requirements?	Example, you need to hire for a position that works weekends, evenings, overtime and travels.
Do you have any physical and/or mental health problems?	This job requires lifting of up to 40 lbs. Can you meet these requirements? Will this pose a problem for you? Do you have any condition that could affect your ability to do the job?	Example hiring for a warehouse position.



Chapter 5 – Job Interview Evaluation and Scoring

STAR Technique

Before we get into the details of evaluating your candidate's interview responses, let's take a moment to talk about the STAR method. STAR is a technique commonly taught by professional recruiters, career counselors and job interview coaches to help candidates structure their answer to a behavioral interview question. STAR is an acronym that stands for situation, task, action and result. While it is an excellent technique for candidates, interviewers can use it too.

When listening to a candidate's answer sometimes you can get lost in the details. To help you navigate the details, listen for each STAR component when your candidate responds to help you hone in on the most important elements of each answer. Also when using this structure when taking notes, it will help keep them organized and easy to compare one response to another.

Example Of Interviewer's Using STAR Method

“Tell me a time when you were on a team and you didn't see eye to eye with a team member, what did you do?”

S Situation- Listen for a particular situation to provide context to the answer.

Candidate: “In my last job with Global Telecom, I was assigned to the Y25 project team with 10 other members to rollout and implement the new software system-testing tool within a 4-week period.”

T Task- Listen for a detailed task that your candidate clearly responsible for and had to complete. Even though your candidate worked as part of a team, it is important that you are clear on what his or her own responsibilities were.

Candidate: “I was responsible for all n-tier application testing for all systems within the Lower Mainland with one other team member. We had to ensure there wouldn't be any problems with the application once we started to rollout the systems to other parts of the Province. Problem was this team member and I could not see eye to eye when coming up with a testing process/methodology.”



A Action- Listen for the specific action that your candidate took to complete the task or solve a problem.

Candidate: “Since this team member was more senior than I, I respected his knowledge but I didn’t agree with his testing process and vice versa he didn’t agree with my ideas. I decided the only way we were going to work effectively is to meet up 1 on 1 during lunch (in a comfortable environment). I explained my frustration and went over both our process plans in detail. I told him if we were going to work effectively, we both have to be on the same page. Basically we discussed everything out in the open.”

R Results- Listen for the results and outcomes of your Candidate’s action. Did your Candidate demonstrate achieve successful results? What was the final outcome?

Example: In the end, the testing process was rolled-out without delays. We both compromised on a single process and everything worked out perfectly. We gained more respect for one another and we continue to keep in touch. Most importantly, the testing was rolled-out on time and on budget.

False Stars

False STARS are responses by applicants that are difficult to interpret by the interviewer. While these responses may be acceptable in everyday conversation, they don’t allow you to isolate the candidate’s role through a specific example of an actual previous behavior. False STARS are typically statements of feelings and opinions, or statements of what an applicant “would do” or “would like to do” or vague statements.

Feeling As Fact – watch for candidates who reply using statements of opinion or feeling. For example:

- “I was really great at planning”
- “I thought I was the best manager and deserved more responsibility”
- “I showed a lot of initiative in making my sales calls”

The Use Of “We” – watch for candidates who use “we” to demonstrate that they are team players. Unfortunately, you cannot be sure what the candidate’s role was in this situation. Listen for we and clarify by asking, “What was your specific role in this task, team, etc.”

- “We developed a strategic plan and software”



Would Haves – watch for candidates who use conditional statements. For example:

- “I would have achieved the targets”
- “In this situation, I would call the customer”

Remember behavioral questions rely on the theory of past behavior. As an interviewer you are looking for a specific example where your candidate demonstrated a certain behavior. When listening to the response, the candidate's role, that is what they actually did do, how they actually did handle a situation must be clear. In the above examples of false STARs, you can see that each statement does not provide the information required for an accurate evaluation.

Job Interview Scoring:

Although every organization may have their own job interview evaluation & scoring process, here are a few processes we have implemented with success.

Rating Scale:

Rating scales can be anything from a 5-10 point rating scale, we prefer and suggest the 5 point rating scale. The 5 point rating scale is the simplest and easiest to use when rating candidates. The more points in a rating scale, the more points of distinction you create. However with greater points of distinction comes with a greater difficulty in discerning the differences. For example, how difficult would it be to rate a candidate on a 20 point scale? How hard would it be to distinguish between a 16 and 17? For this reason, we have chosen to use a 5 point scale.

Designing a scale with an equal number of positive and negative statements can prevent the problem of bias, since consent on positively keyed items will balance consent on negatively scaled items. However, central tendency and social desirability can be problematic for raters who are indecisive or like to “sit on the fence”.

Five Point Scale:

1	2	3	4	5
Poor	Weak	Average	Good	Excellent



Creating the Evaluation

With all evaluations, the recruiter should evaluate everything from a candidate's appearance, body language and handshake to specific competencies required for the position.

Process #1: First Impression Points

Create generic points to evaluate for all positions regardless if it's junior to senior level. These are known as "first impression" evaluation points. Some of these include:

- Grooming
- Attire
- Handshake
- Eye contact
- Tardiness
- Gum Chewing
- [Preparation](#) (has portfolio)
- General Attitude (enthusiastic, passive, opinionated etc.)

For many of these you can also add a "Yes" or "no" rating scale along with the 5 point rating scale.

E.g.: Candidate chewing gum?

Yes:	<input type="checkbox"/>	No:	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Process #2: General Assessment – Candidate Resume and their [Preparation](#)

Here you want to go through a candidates resume to confirm and validate that they actually have the knowledge, skills and abilities specified in their resume. You also want to find out if the candidate took the time to prepare and know more about the position posted and company.

General Assessment Includes:

- Knowledge of the position, did the candidate take the time to read and understand the requirements?
- Knowledge of the company, did the candidate take the time to research the company prior to the interview?
- Years of experience in specific field related to position posting?
- Working knowledge of specific technologies (have the required technologies listed from position posting)



- When asked to go through resume, does the candidate confirm all information is valid? (E.g. Gaps in employment, working knowledge or general knowledge of specific experience?)

Example: Rating Scale to Assess Years of Experience:

How many years have you worked as an accountant (senior position)?

	<i>Years of experience</i>	
<i>Poor</i>	1	0-1
<i>Weak</i>	2	2-3
<i>Average</i>	3	4-5
<i>Good</i>	4	6-7
<i>Excellent</i>	5	8+

We have provided you an example of how to assess and score the General Assessment, see our Sample Evaluation Form that we have provided in the following pages.

Process #3: Position Specific Points.

In this process you want to ensure the candidate has all the required competencies for the position. In most cases, you will want to use behaviour based questions to capture responses. Using behavioral questions is a good idea since most employers use them. By listening to specific examples of your candidate's past work experience, this provide you a stronger validation. Look for more than a "yes" or "no" response to any of these questions.

Probing Questions:

Many times the candidate may not provide the specific response to the initial question. This may be a result of nervousness, lack of [preparation](#) or experience or perhaps poor question design. Recruiters should always have additional probing questions to ask along with the behavioural question. The probing question acts as a bit of a "push" when a recruiter is not happy with a candidate's response. Probing questions encourage the candidate to elaborate and provide critical information. Remember, with probing questions recruiters the goals is encourage the candidate, give them some help without actually giving the candidate the answer.



Example: Using Probing Questions

Tell me about a time during a project you have managed when a team member came to you with a complex issue that they needed to talk about? How did you resolve the issue?

Probing question:

- What was the specific project?
- How did the complex issue start?
- What steps did you take to resolve the issue? Follow-up? End result?

What is the recruiter looking for in the response?

- Described the project, lead a large group.
- Took appropriate steps necessary to resolve the issue.
- Handled the issue well, and resolved the issue.
- Team member is satisfied with the results. Result is positive.

If the candidate's response meets all the criteria the candidate will score high on the 5 point rating scale. If specific information is either missing or response is average, the candidate will score average or poorly. This Position Specific section of the checklist, recruiters use behavioral questions to weed out the good candidates from the poor. A thorough interview will result in sending strong candidates to your clients.

Sample of Evaluation Form:

Candidate: John Smith Position: Web Developer Interviewer(s): Janet Peters, Sandra Burrows, Manjeet Mann Date: July 1 st 2008			Poor (1)	Weak (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
First Impression							
Grooming			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional Business Attire			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tardiness			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handshake			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eye Contact			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chewing Gum		Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> No: <input type="checkbox"/>					
Business Portfolio		Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> No: <input type="checkbox"/>					
Overall Attitude			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total:							



	Poor (1)	Weak (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
General – Resume and General Preparation					
Knowledge of position, did the candidate take the time to read and understand the requirements?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Knowledge of company, did the candidate take the time to research the company prior to the interview?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Years of experience in specific field related to position posting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working knowledge of specific technologies:					
PHP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photoshop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ASP	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
.Net	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
VBScript	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CSS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XML	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
JavaScript	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
When asked to go through resume, does the candidate confirm all information is valid? (E.g. Gaps in employment, working knowledge or general knowledge of specific experience?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total:					
	Poor (1)	Weak (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Position Specific: Behavioural Based					
Please describe your experience in working with an individual to help that person succeed on a particular project or in their daily assignments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Probes:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you ensure that you gained the individual's input with regard to how they could be successful? What was the process you used to assist the individual in going from their current situation to one where they were successful in completing projects/daily assignments? What was the outcome? 					
Tell us about a time when you needed to work closely with a colleague(s) on a project?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Probes:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the process decided on that would be used for working on the project? Were there obstacles encountered? How were they overcome? Tell us about the relationships between you and your colleague(s) working on the project. 					



Tell us about a time when you dealt with a client who felt that he/she was being treated unfairly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Probes:					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you ensure your understanding of the client's concerns? What was your approach to dealing with the client? What was the outcome of the situation? 					
Total:					
Total Evaluation Score:					

Weighted Scoring

When the criterion is not weighted the assumption is that one requirement is worth the same as the other. Sometimes, hiring managers will value one skill or job requirement more than the other for a particular position. Weighting your rating scale will allow you to reflect your client's priorities for the job. While weighting adds some additional complexity to the evaluation process, there are some benefits of doing so.

The exercise of weighting job requirements will help you to put a realistic framework around managers with unrealistic expectations. Weighting will help you make better hiring decisions especially when a candidate does not meet ALL the job requirements. In these situations, you can still determine if the candidate meets the job requirements your client values most. This will prove beneficial especially in situations when working with unrealistic clients on a job order for a difficult to fill position.

To weight the job requirements you can rank all the requirements or simply assign a value to each job requirement. Using the example above, we will illustrate focusing on the position specific portion of the evaluation form.

Example: Weighted Evaluation Form

Total:					
	Poor (1)	Weak (2)	Average (3)	Good (4)	Excellent (5)
Position Specific: Behavioural Based					



Teamwork (2)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Please describe your experience in working with an individual to help that person succeed on a particular project or in their daily assignments?					
<u>Probes:</u>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you ensure that you gained the individual's input with regard to how they could be successful? What was the process you used to assist the individual in going from their current situation to one where they were successful in completing projects/daily assignments? What was the outcome? 					
Ethics (3)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Describe a situation in which you demonstrated a strong ethical stance at work, despite pressure to do otherwise?					
<u>Probes:</u>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the risks involved in taking the strong stance that you did? How did you overcome the pressure to change or weaken your stance? How did the position you took affect the relationships that you have with the others involved? 					
Conflict Resolution (1)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tell us about a time when you dealt with a client or co-worker who was irate and perhaps even verbally abusive?					
<u>Probes:</u>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you ensure your understanding of the person's concerns? What was your approach to dealing with the angry person? What was the outcome of the situation? 					
Total:		2		8	15
Total Evaluation Score:	25				

Scoring Example:

Teamwork = 8 [Good (4) x weight (2)]

Ethics = 15 [Excellent (5) x weight (3)]

Conflict Resolution = 2 [Weak (2) x weight (1)]

Evaluation Traps

As interviewers, we all strive to be an impartial, fair and consistent. However, as unprejudiced as you may be, we all have our biases that might influence the way we evaluate our candidates. So how do we ensure we are not negatively influenced by our own personal views? The first step is to be mindful of common interviewer mistakes made when evaluating candidates. Below are a few very common mistakes made when rating interview responses.



Leniency – This is the “Mr. Nice Guy” interviewer who gives high scores to every candidate on every competency. The problem with this type of evaluator is it is difficult to distinguish between candidates. The truly strong scores are visible with this method.

Strictness - This evaluator is what I like to call “Mr. Stingy”. He is the opposite to the “Mr. Nice Guy”, in that he gives every candidate a low score. With this type of evaluator not only is it difficult to distinguish between all the low scores but they often want more candidates cause the ones they evaluated were “all bad”.

Extreme - This evaluator is a combination of the “Mr. Stingy and Mr. Nice”. This evaluator is extreme by only giving really high scores or really low scores.

Central Tendency - This interviewer rates everyone as medium. He is what I like to call “Mr. Fence Sitter” because he likes to stay in the middle.

Similarity - We tend to like those who appear sound look like ourselves. So as an interviewer, be aware of this trap and be open-minded to candidates that may not be similar to yourself.

Halo Effect - This is when one rating influences the way we rate all other areas. For example the candidate impresses us in one area and then we rate them positively on all other areas. This can also go the other way, where the candidate freezes on the first question and then we rate the candidate poorly in other areas. This kind of error comes from interviewers who make the following logic mistake “if I scored her excellent in leadership, then she must have good communication skills too”.

Attractiveness - Quite simply, we rate attractive people more positively. Unfortunately “packaging” does influence our decisions. But choosing a customer service person who is attractive but has poor communication, conflict resolution skills or with no empathy is a recipe for disaster. This is not a model search, this is an interview.

As mentioned, the first thing you can do to prevent these common evaluation mistakes. Additional preventative steps you can take are to ask each candidate the same interview questions. By asking your candidates the same questions you can more easily make an “apples to apples” comparison.

Another thing I recommend is to periodically take a look at your average score awarded over time and compare them against the interview team’s average. Doing this will help you identify your potential scoring patterns.



Chapter 6 - Setting up and Running the interview

Comfortable Setting

When setting up the interview be “candidate friendly”. If possible, try to accommodate your candidate. The days of candidates thankful to get an interview, begging for a job are over (especially with the star candidates). Remember, your candidate has likely taken a day off work or has come in to see you on his or her free time. So try to be flexible and accommodating with your interview times and locations. Find out about your candidate’s commute, and offer to meet at a halfway point. Find a coffee shop and conduct your interview over a cup of coffee. Not only is this a candidate friendly practice, but you may also find that you get better interviews from a relaxed candidate in neutral setting.

Whether you are conducting the interview from your location or a coffee shop, it is important to pay attention to the environment. Take note of the light, heat, seating, and so on and make the necessary adjustments to ensure a comfortable interview climate. A comfortable candidate will interview better give you a better chance of finding the right talent.

Always make sure that you have water, coffee, tea, or some beverage to offer your candidate. Many candidates already feel nervous in an interview, along with a lot of talking creates for a very thirsty candidate with a very dry mouth. Again the goal is to make the candidate feel comfortable and at ease. So that they can provide you with information that you are looking for.

Opening the Interview - Setting the Tone and Building Rapport

A key to a successful interview is starting it off right. How you open the interview is very important as both the things you say and don’t say sets the ground rules for the rest of the interview.

Build Rapport

The best way to build rapport is smile, maintain eye contact, and listen actively. You can build rapport by listening actively. This shows the candidate that you are focused on them and what they say matters to you. Empathy and active listening is very effective in getting a nervous and quite candidate to open up. However, it can also cause the candidate to provide more information than is needed and take up valuable interviewing time.

“Why did you leave your previous job?”



Candidate:

I have been in the same position and level for 7 years and it was time for a change. It was a dead end job.

Recruiter:

It sounds like you felt that you felt stuck and saw no career and developmental opportunities there.

Extrapolate career goals based on your candidate's values:

I get the sense that you really value career growth in a job. Describe the kind of change you are looking for in your new job.

Opening Statements

Opening statements are statements that you begin the interview with. It helps frame and focus your interview. It also helps create a professional atmosphere and will help put your candidate at ease since in your opening statement you will explain the interview process. Here is an example of an opening statement:

“So how do you feel about getting started? Well my role here at ABC Professional Staffing is Senior Recruiter, I have been in the staffing industry for 15 years and with ABC for 5 years specializing in information technology. As you know today, I am here to interview you for the role of Web Developer for my client, a high profile employer in the Video Game Industry. I would like to spend the first 5 minutes just getting to know you a bit better. I would like to hear more about your background, education and experience. In the next part of the interview, I will ask you some questions to get specific examples of what you have done. To allow me to determine job suitability for my client, I will need you to help me by making sure that you give me specific examples of things that have actually happened. You can take your time when thinking of an example and if you get stuck just let me know and we can skip that question and circle back. If have any questions about the position, I would be glad to answer them at the end of the interview, so I will make sure to leave enough time for that. I will be taking notes during this interview because I am really interested in your background and it will help remind me later of your qualifications.”



Interview Not Interrogation

Last but not least, the most important element in creating an environment where your candidate can be comfortable and relaxed is you! Over the years, I have interviewed with many hiring managers and other recruiters and have witnessed tremendously different interview styles.

Beverages, air conditioning, and comfortable chairs are meaningless if you do not create a warm and welcoming environment with your personality. Be aware of your own body language. Are you leaning away, distracted, and looking else where? Are you making eye contact and smiling? Interviewing is tiring and after a full day of interviewing, it's hard to be high energy and friendly for that last candidate but it is so important. Some hiring managers and recruiters I have worked with interview are more like interrogators. Rather than looking for evidence of how the candidate is qualified and evaluating, these interviewers are more focused on looking for a reason to demonstrate how the candidate is not qualified. These interviewers are mistrustful by nature and are more focused on looking for inconsistencies rather than getting the information needed to evaluate. I call these "hard interviewers", while in some industries like policing this might be acceptable and even purposeful, I find you will get better results when your candidate is relaxed. So remember the candidate is nervous enough as it is, it is your job to do what you can to help them feel at ease.

Chapter 7 - Closing the interview

When you feel like you have obtained all the information that you're looking for it's time to close the interview will. At this point it is important that you give the candidate a chance to ask you some questions. The biggest turnoff for a candidate is to be grilled with questions for an hour and then only given a minute to ask questions. So leave adequate time for questions. Remember that your candidate is making very big decision that will impact his or her life.

As an interviewer, here is where you have to do your homework. You must be prepared to answer your candidate's questions. This means you should know something about what makes working for your client special. In addition to understanding the total compensation (based and variable pay, benefits, time off, etc.) You must also know something about the clients employee programs.

Employee Programs and Initiatives like:

Job shares, flex-time, educational reimbursements, compressed work weeks, training programs, developmental opportunities, exercise facilities, and so on.



To sell your client to your candidate, you need to be up to date on company news and information. For example, has your client won any awards recently? Do you have any examples of community involvement and environmental responsibility? More than ever, corporate social responsibility is playing an increasingly greater role in our decisions as consumers as well as potential employees.

Your candidate is making a big career decision and it is your job to provide them with the information they need to make an informed decision. Doing this will not only benefit your candidate, but will help your client prevent a bad hire due to poor fit.

Chapter 8 - Overcoming Objections, Uncovering Landmine, Career Counseling

During your interview, it is beneficial to uncover any potential concerns from your candidate about the opportunity and provide clarification where needed. You may do this by probing your candidate to find out if they have any concerns and determine what they are looking for in their next job/employer. Some questions you may ask here include:

“Tell me what was the main reason why you left your previous position/employer?”

“What are some of the reasons causing you to look for other opportunities?”

“What are you looking for in your next job?”

“When you review this opportunity, what concerns or reservations do you have with this job?”

“How long have you been dissatisfied at work?”

“What have you done to resolve your sources of job dissatisfaction?”

Once you understand your candidate's concern and needs, you may better address them. So for example if your candidate left her previous employer because she felt it was a dead-end job, it would be time to describe the growth and career development opportunities offered by your client. Career development can include formal and informal opportunities. Things like training programs, special project work, mentoring programs, tuition and education reimbursements and so on all fall under the career development topic.

It is a good idea to have an employer fact sheet made up for each of your clients with points of interest for potential candidates. Things to include on this fact sheet can include employer awards, environmental position, community involvement, HR programs and so on.



If your candidate cites inadequate compensation as the motivator for leaving or looking for new opportunities, then you must be aware that such a candidate might be susceptible to counter offers. The same applies if your candidate indicates that the source of job dissatisfaction is relatively new and if they have done very little to resolve the issues. We will discuss counter offers and how to handle them in more detail in the next section.

While it is tempting to want to think short-term and make a placement, it is important to help your candidate make the right decision for them whether or not this means you make a placement. Putting your candidate first and being their career advocate and counselor will help you build long term success with both your clients and candidates through referrals and repeat business.

Chapter 9 - Counter Offers

In today's talent short employment market, it is wise to assess the possibility for a counter offer. This is particularly true the more senior or specialized the position and if the candidate is a key player in the company. It would be wise to have a discussion with your candidate about this possibility and how they might handle it.

Preparing your candidate for a counter offer is neither sneaky nor underhanded. It is simply acknowledging the fierce competition for resources that is happening in the current labour market and adopting prudent practice.

What Does The Counter Look Like?

So how does preparing your candidate for a counter offer look like? Well the best way to prepare is to engage your candidate in a discussion on this topic and ask how they might react? Here you want to describe in as much detail as possible how the counter offer might look like. It is a good idea to learn about the various "save tactics" and help your candidate prepare for them. Former candidates from the organization would be a great resource. In general, the approaches of "employee save tactics" are generally similar. They can include the following:

- An offer of more compensation and benefits
- An offer of increased responsibility
- Assignment to a high profile project
- A promotion
- A visit or several visits from upper management and respected colleagues persuading you to stay
- A visit from HR to act as mediator to resolve sources of dissatisfaction
- An offer for a leave of absence or time off for cooling off and reflection



- An offer of reassignment to another team where there is no conflict
- Promises of change with no concrete offer or definite details and timelines

In fact, some organizations have formed “employee save teams” that have been specially trained and are activated when key employees give notice. These teams have strategies, tactics and authority to make counter offers.

Put on Your Career Counselor Hat - Ask Questions and Listen

When preparing your candidate for a counter, help them focus on the material points by asking questions and then listen. Some of the questions to ask include:

- What do you think the motivators are for this counter offer?
- Will the counter offer address the symptom or the root cause? Does it provide temporary relief or does it offer a long-term solution?
- Your role is help your candidate clarify exactly what made them want to leave or look for a new job.
- What have you done to resolve the issues?
- What is the likelihood for change?
- What are you looking for in your new job? (Help them clarify exactly what type of change they are looking for)

Here you must engage your candidates in an honest and realistic discussion and listen. It is very important to resist the temptation of a quick commission. Instead, your goal is to help your candidate make the best decision for them, whether this means they take the job or not. If you push your candidate to take the offer when it is not the right fit for them, chances are they will quit shortly or not perform well. You will lost the trust that you have built with your candidate, as well as the chance of any referrals. Your client will lose their confidence in your ability to find good people that fit into their company and culture. So take off your salesperson hat and put on the career counselor hat. Your candidate will sense it when you put their needs ahead of your own and it will go along way in building future business.

Chapter 10 – Feedback

Whether you are on the agency side or client side, staffing professionals often focus their attention on the candidates they place. After all this makes sense since you rely on these individuals to help you get paid. However it is just as important to pay attention to the people you place as it is with the people you bypass. Remember that for every 1 person you place, you bypass many more. Each one of these candidates will walk away with some impression of your staffing agency. No doubt they will talk about their experience with you with other candidates. Therefore, each candidate that



you encounter represents an opportunity to build your [staffing brand](#). What kind of impression do you want them to walk away with? What kind of experience are you wanting to create?

The impact of staffing brand may not be as immediate but consider that the person you just bypassed might know of someone who is more suitable. There is good chance that the candidate you bypassed might be able to refer to you to someone who may better meet your client's requirements. Remember they have spent years in their careers and have extensive networks from professional associations and alumni. Wouldn't it be nice if you can get a referral? Especially if you are working on a specialized position that is hard to fill? What if another job order came up some time later that better suits this candidate, wouldn't be great if you had developed a good enough relationship with your candidate to call on them and they would be glad to hear from you?

I have heard my share of horror stories from candidates complaining about their experience with agency recruiters. Below are some basic tips based on the top complaints I have heard.

3 Tips on Creating Positive Word of Mouth with Candidates

As I mentioned in the last chapter, show **genuine care about your candidate's career** whether or not you decide to represent them. After all, they are likely making the biggest decision in the placement. There's a good chance you are a good talker, but are you a good listener? Take the time to listen to what your candidate is looking for in their career. This also means taking time to carefully review the candidate's qualifications, giving feedback about resumes, and interviewing skills. Considering the [importance of a good interview](#) with your client, prep your candidates before sending them out to interviews since many candidates "[unskilled and unaware](#)" when it comes to their own interview skills. If you cannot help them, refer them to another trusted professional whether this means to another staffing provider, resume writer, or interview coach or even a good career book. By giving your candidates [employment preparation resources](#), you demonstrate your commitment to their careers.

Open and honest communication. Be open and honest with your candidates. This means when you give feedback to your candidates, be honest. Candidates seek your employment expertise and appreciate your honest feedback. It goes a long way in establishing your credibility. This can also mean be upfront with details like pay rates. Not every staffing company tells their candidate what their commission is but some do. From my experience, the staffing companies who have an open compensation policy often have a positive reputation and are trusted more. If you don't disclose this to your candidates, well I suppose you better hope they do not find out. This reminds me of a time when a staffing company marked up their fees by 100% but did not tell their contractors. When these consultants discovered what their staffing company was billing them out at, there was serious mutiny (and I hate to say it but I chuckled since it reminded me of the days when I handled compensation issues with the union reps.)



Set clear expectations. This kind of relates to the honest and open communication point above. Here simply create clear expectations on role and responsibilities for both you and your candidate. How often have I heard a qualified candidate, whose recruiter went MIA after promising to be in contact? Conversely, how many candidates went MIA, also known as the infamous no show for their interview? Set clear expectations to avoid misunderstanding and promote a harmonious candidate/recruiter relationship.

So by focusing not only on the candidate you place, but also the ones you didn't and ensuring that all applicant's who touch your recruitment process have a positive experience, you will be well on your way to creating a positive Candidate buzz.

For more information about [promoting your staffing company](#) and creating a positive a positive word of mouth advertising in recruitment and staffing, see the article "[Building the Buzz for Your Recruitment Company](#)".

Chapter 11 – Measuring Success

So how do you know how well your interview process is working? How would you know if improvements have been made? Like the old saying goes, “what gets measured gets done”. By implementing a measurement process and using metrics, you show your staffing team, clients and candidates that quality and continuous improvement matters.

Metrics like **quality of hire** and **send out to hire ratios** can use to help you monitor the effectiveness of your interview process and candidate quality. **Time to fill ratios**, especially for revenue generating positions can be used to show your client the daily cost for jobs not filled and thus [prove your staffing value](#). In addition, measuring your performance can allow you to benchmark against your client to prove your value. The message you want to show your client through measurement is not that you provide a “warm body in the seat”, but that *they can find better candidates* with your service than they could without. Further, that you can do all of this quicker than they could alone and thus save them money. These key measurements and can be the difference between being perceived a transactional service provider to strategic staffing partner.



Chapter 12 – About EmployPrep

“After all the effort you put into finding good candidates, why not provide them a valuable job preparation resource and send them better prepared to an interview?”



[EmployPrep](http://www.employprep.com) is the only "white-label" [career training software](#) as a service (SaaS) for the staffing and recruitment industry's candidates. Your candidates gain a competitive edge through professional online career training – covering everything from resume writing to advanced interview skills. And all they need is a computer with Internet access. This online career training tool is fully customizable, easy to set up, and showcases your staffing and Recruitment Company's name, logo and colors, etc. integrates easily with your website.

For more information about EmployPrep, visit www.employprep.com, for an [overview](#) or you may contact us to [request a free trial](#).

Thank you for your interest in EmployPrep's, **"The Job Interview Guide"**. We hope you enjoyed this book, and invite you to [subscribe in a reader](#) or be [notified by email](#) to get updates to information, tips and tools for the staffing and recruitment industry.



Appendix A

Top 20 Behavioral Interview Questions

INTRODUCTION

This section contains the most common behavioral interview questions to assess the **top 20 job required competencies** common across all jobs. The following list has been



compiled based on our experience having hired for many different jobs, in a variety of industries, at all levels.

We have not only provided you the questions that will likely be asked by Human Resources professionals but we have also included key “**search for**” points. These key points are the ones that your interviewer or panel will be looking for in your answer.

When it comes to job interviews, our motto is that preparation is the key to success. We are confident that if you take the time to jot down points for each of the question, you will have a successful interview. Just think how far ahead of the competition you will be with this book.

INSTRUCTION

Below is the list of common job required competencies. On the following page, review each competency so you understand the dimension that is being assessed. Answer



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each behavioral interview question in point form, in the blank space provided. Ensure you speak to the key “**search for**” points.

20 Most Common Job Required Competencies

Leadership

Ethics

Team Building

Prioritize

Performance Focus

Strategy

Communication

Judgment

Initiative

Decision Making

Interpersonal

Change Implementation

Customer Service

Leadership

Problem Solving

Assertiveness

Decision Making

Creativity

Technical

Goal Setting

Leadership

- Ability to support others to new achievements
- Build group cohesion and commitment to reach common goals
- Recognizing success.



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Please describe a time when you successfully motivated a team to work towards a common goal, such as completing a project or a new initiative. How did you reach the goal with the team and how did you know you were successful?

Search for:

- How did you persuade team members to follow your advice and work together?
- How did you delegate work?
- What communication approaches did you use to help you lead the team?



Team Building or Team Work

- Adding value to the work of others.
- Supporting and helping team succeed.
- Involving group in setting goals. planning and evaluation.
- Creating effective teamwork.

Please describe your experience in working with an individual to help them succeed on a particular project or in their daily assignments?

Search for:

- What was the process you used to assist the individual in going from their current situation to one where they were successful in completing projects/daily assignments?
- What was the outcome?



Performance Focus

- Clarifying individual roles for performance improvement
- Instilling confidence and encouraging initiative through delegation of authority and commitment of resources

Tell us about a time when you had to assist in the performance improvement of a direct report?

Search for:

- What was the process you used to assist in the performance improvement of the individual?
- How was an environment maintained whereby the individual could take risks and learn?
- Did the individual encounter obstacles? How did you help him/her in overcoming them?
- What was the outcome?



Communication

- Ability to promote trust and commitment through enthusiastic verbal, non-verbal and written presentation.
- Ability to listen and understanding.

Please describe a time when you have communicated a new initiative or plan to staff or team members?

Search for:

- What was the process you took to communicate the to staff or team members?
- What forms of communication did you use when communicating the message?
- How did you ensure that the message you gave was understood both clearly and accurately?
- Did you receive feedback from your staff?
- How did you handle feedback?



Initiative

- Ability to act and make decisions without the help or advice of other people.

Please tell us about a time when you launched a successful program or initiative?

Search for:

- What were the steps you took in the process of launching this initiative?
- How did you ensure that employees understood the issues involved in the initiative?
- How did you gain the cooperation of others, with respect to promoting this initiative in the workplace?
- Did you encounter any obstacles? How were they overcome?



Interpersonal

- Ability to empathize with the client's point of view and to convey respect for and understanding of their situation and concerns.

Tell us about a time when you were able to convey respect and understanding of a client's concern?

Search for:

- What was your approach to dealing with the client?
- How did you ensure your understanding of the client's concerns?
- What was the outcome of the situation?



Customer Service

- Anticipate and actively investigate client needs, seek opportunities to assist clients for their benefit.
- Actively understand and solve client problems in a timely manner, and follows up to ensure that due resolution.

Tell us about how you have maintained a client focus in your experiences as a manager, perhaps in dealing with new clients or maintaining a good relationship with existing ones?

Search for:

- What steps do you normally take when dealing with a new client?
- How do you prioritize your client interaction?
- How do you ensure that follow-up, when necessary, occurs with the client?



Problem Solving

- Encouraging change and improvement by seeking solutions, thinking from different perspectives.

Please give us an example of when you have come up with a creative solution to a problem or issue?

Search for:

- How did you decide that the solution you used was the best for the situation?
- What risk was involved?



Decision Making

- Process of making choices or reaching conclusions, especially on important business matters.

Tell us about a time when you have had to consider a wide variety of departments or stakeholders when making a decision?

Search for:

- How did you determine who you needed to consider when making the decision?
- What did you have to take into account when making the decision? Why?
- How did the decision you made affect other areas?



Technical

- Ability to access, analyze, and deliver knowledge and understanding by applying technologies and processes.

Tell us about a time when your technical knowledge helped you to deliver better service?

Search for:

- What technologies and processes did you apply?
- How did you go about accessing the required technical resources?
- What process did you use to convey knowledge and understanding?



Ethics

- Encouraging ethical conduct and analysis and judgment.

Describe a situation in which you demonstrated a strong ethical stance at work, despite pressure to do otherwise?

Search for:

- What were the risks involved in taking the strong stance that you did?
- How did you overcome the pressure to change or weaken your stance?
- How did the position you took affect the relationships that you have with the others involved?



Prioritize

- Thinking ahead and actively integrating multiple priorities.

Give us an example a time when it was necessary that you manage multiple priorities while maintaining focus on the overall strategic goals?

Search for:

- What process do you use to determine the priorities?
- How did the priorities support (or not) the strategic goals?
- How did you consider/incorporate other priorities?



Strategy

- Ability to balance strategic and long-term planning with day-to-day requirements.

Tell us about a time when it was necessary for you to re-evaluate the day-to-day tasks in order to support the long-term strategic objectives of the department or company?

Search for:

- How was it recognized that a re-evaluation of the day-to-day operations was required?
- What process was used to ensure that the long-term strategic objectives were supported by the day-to-day operations?
- Were obstacles encountered?
- How were the obstacles overcome?



Judgment

- Approaching issues with clear problem analysis and alternative solutions
- Forming sound conclusions that can be implemented.

Give us an example of a time when you applied good judgment in coming up with a solution to a complex problem or issue?

Search for:

- Describe the problem. What made it complex?
- What was the process you used to identify the issue, analyze it and determine appropriate solutions?
- How did you weigh the alternative solutions?
- How was the solution implemented?



Decision Making

- Process of making choices or reaching conclusions, especially on important business matters.

Tell us about a time when you persisted in making and implementing a decision and measured achievements?

Search for:

- How did you attain effective time management with regard to implementing and measuring the value of the decision?
- How was the decision implemented?
- What obstacles did you face? How were they overcome?



Change Implementation

- Find common ground among differing areas and to build reason for change.

Tell us about a time when you introduced a new procedure that changed an existing fundamental process?

Search for:

- How did you determine the value of the new procedure?
- What steps did you take to communicate the change?
- How did you build support for the change?
- How did you deal with criticism to changes/improvements?



Leadership

- Lead an internal and external view and balance multiple needs and perspectives to move forward.

Tell us about a time when you assessed internal and external factors in order to initiate a change?

Search for:

- How did you assess the external environment?
- How did assessing the external environment assist you in initiating change?
- What process did you use to evaluate the needs?



Assertiveness

- Engaging in continuous assessment and improvement of processes
- Taking risks in promoting new ideas and approaches

Tell us about a time when you took a risk to introduce a new idea or approach?

Search for:

- What kind of risk did you take to introduce the new idea or approach?
- Was there resistance to your idea? If so, how did you deal with it?
- How did your assertiveness benefit the outcome?



Creativity

- Encourage the development of understanding and learning.
- Assists others to improve and develop.

Give an example of how you have created a learning environment in your department?

Search for:

- How did you encourage the creativity of others?
- What did you do to facilitate the creativity process for others?



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Goal Setting

- Anticipate and plan for future requirements and to evaluate new methods for meeting them.

Tell us about a time when you were involved in planning for the future requirements of the department or company?

Search for:

- How were the future requirements identified and examined?
- What process was used to examine the future requirements and potential solutions to meeting them?