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**HANDBOOK FOR**  
GREAT INTERVIEWS

## Introduction

Conducting a job interview can seem straightforward—read some resumes, invite a few candidates to meet, ask them some questions about their skills. Then determine if they fit the job requirements and extend an offer to the candidate who fits best.

Yet, a quick interview and a gut feeling about whether someone may be the right choice aren't necessarily enough to make high-stakes hiring decisions. And a bad hire can be an expensive error—according to one recent survey, it could cost your organization as much as \$15,000!

When hiring teams don't follow a process to be sure they are getting the same information from all candidates, it can be a risky mistake. After all, how can you know you are picking the best person for the job if you aren't comparing equal information across candidates? Even the best-intentioned interviewers can act in ways that bring bias into the interview process. In fact, research has even shown that some judgments about an individual's skills, knowledge, and abilities are fixed during the initial greeting!

**This is why you need a structured interview...**



## What is a structured interview?

A structured interview is a way for hiring teams to conduct interviews in a systematic, consistent way, and get the information they need to fairly evaluate all candidates. In a structured interview, every candidate is asked the same, predetermined set of questions and judged using the same criteria for performance. It can help you be sure you are getting consistent information from all candidates, assist in reducing or eliminating bias from your hiring process, and help you better predict job performance so you can hire the candidate who has the highest probability of success in the role.

Structured interviews can help increase diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives across all categories of jobs, allowing every candidate an opportunity to present their skills and qualifications equally, and can help businesses avoid biased hiring decisions.

## Why are structured interviews effective?

A structured interview ensures that all candidates are evaluated the same way against the same criteria. It also reduces the possibility of asking illegal interview questions. All questions are determined ahead of time and agreed upon by appropriate individuals in your organization. This streamlines your process and provides you with relatively objective data with which to evaluate and compare responses, even if different people are involved in asking the questions. It's also easy for your staff to prepare for this type of interview, as only one set of questions is needed!

## What is some key research that supports the use of structured interviews?

Researchers Frank Schmidt and John Hunter analyzed 85 years of research to determine how well different hiring techniques predict job performance. They found that a typical unstructured interview had can explain about 14% of a person's performance. However, a structured interview is nearly twice as likely (26%) to predict job performance. Furthermore, structured interviews are predictive even when used for jobs where the responsibilities may not be as structured.

### PRO

#### ✓ Increases fairness

When every candidate is asked the same questions in the same order and evaluated using the same clear criteria, the chances of unconscious bias impacting your hiring process is reduced.

#### ✓ Boosts diversity

People are hardwired to like those who they have something in common with—it's called affinity bias. Although it may be fun to talk about something you have in common with an applicant, you may be overlooking candidates who have all the right skills in favor of those you hit it off with right away because you may share a background or interests.

#### ✓ Avoids the halo effect

Sometimes hiring managers may focus on one or two impressive accomplishments on a candidate's resume. This halo may means that one small detail may outshine other skills needed for the position, leading them to focus on the one glowing accomplishment and dismissing everything else.

#### ✓ Better all-around experience

Schmidt and Hunter found structured interviews provide a better experience for both the candidate and the recruiter—and both hiring managers and applicants perceive this as the most fair interview approach. If a job seeker knows they're being judged on the same questions as every other candidate, they feel like they are being treated fairly and are more at ease.

#### ✓ Relieves interviewer anxiety

When an interviewer has a specific set of questions and a clear way to rate responses, they can alleviate some of the anxiety and uncertainty surrounding decision making.

### CON

#### ○ Lack of flexibility

Because the interviewer must stick to the list of predetermined questions, they can't ask impromptu questions. Although they can prompt for specifics if you aren't getting the information you are seeking, they do lose a bit of flexibility in order to focus on the most important questions.

#### ○ May lack detail

Due to the preset question framework, a structured interview may lack detail. In order to stick to the script, you will likely get the quantitative data you need, but may need to sacrifice detailed follow-up questions to stay on script.

## Structured interviews can help you make better hiring decisions

Use this checklist to help you and your applicants have a seamless and consistent interview experience. Although a successful structured interview will take time and preparation up front, it can dramatically reduce the time it takes to find the best fit for the position and increases your confidence that you chose the best candidate for the role.

### Before the interview

- ✓ **Identify the most important skills** for the position and how those should be evaluated. Select only the competencies that candidates are expected to have upon entry to the job and ask 1–3 questions around each competency. The more complex the position, the more areas of competency you may need to include.
- ✓ **Develop a standard set of questions.** Try asking questions that describe a specific scenario, how they approached that situation, and their take on the final outcome. Be sure to create a mix of situational, observational, and behavioral questions.
- ✓ **Create a rating system.** Determine the most useful way to rate responses, whether that's using a scale ranging from 0 to 5 or another standardized way to quantify how well the applicant answered the question. Whatever system you use, make it simple enough that you can use it during the interview while taking notes.

### During the interview

- ✓ **Establish rapport and explain the interview.** Be sure to provide a brief description of the job and the interview process before you begin asking interview questions.
- ✓ **Provide sufficient time** for responses and don't be afraid to ask for clarification. Allow enough time for a thoughtful answer. Some questions may require an individual to think for a moment in order to provide a strong response. A good way to determine future behavior is to look at the past, so ask your candidate about their specific work contributions and outcomes. Feel free to ask follow-up questions to be sure you are getting a clear answer.
- ✓ **Stick to the script.** It may be hard to resist the urge to ask additional questions, but remember that using a structured interview means that going offscript will not serve the integrity of the interview process in the long run.

### After the interview

- ✓ **Answer questions yourself!** Provide an opportunity for the candidate to ask any of their questions. Give them a timeline for next steps.
- ✓ **Review your notes and score responses.** If multiple reviewers were involved in the interview, conduct your scoring sessions separately and then meet afterwards to determine final ratings.

To make it easier to find the right person for every job, InVista includes a structured interview guide to complement our assessment. Learn more at [invistainsights.com](https://invistainsights.com)