

INTERVIEWING

A Common Scenario

You've seen it. It is your new employee's fifth or sixth day of employment:

- He is your hire
- You know it is not going to work out
- Perhaps your staff even knew before you did

No, it isn't a matter of race or color or gender or protected status. Your company values different backgrounds and experience, and your employees appreciate the value of such diversity. But there it is, as plain as the egg on your face.

Your new hire stands out like a poppy in a field of cabbages, and the cabbages are not pleased.

To make matters worse, your new employee, fresh from Poppyville, has left a good job to share in your company's opportunity, and will soon find himself an emotional outcast in your organization. He just doesn't fit in, and the cabbage-making vehicles of counseling, discipline, and performance review represent a time-consuming prospect. Ethically, you would prefer not to just let him go, and you wonder where the interview process went wrong?

What were the subtle cues that everyone missed, but now are painfully evident to even the least attuned employee? How could you have structured the process differently?

Unfortunately, this scenario is all too common in the workplace, and it can result in bruised egos, upset lives, and lost productivity. The good news is that it is usually avoidable.

In a typical structured interview, an employer struggles to make distinctions based on an individual's ability to perform a job, but often forgets to include value-centered questions that get to the heart of the matter. The employer fails to conduct an interview that goes beyond a simple "past performance is the best indicator of future performance" model and combine it with a value-centered focus.

Value-Centered Focus

An understanding of this value-centered focus can be developed by looking at the word 'relationship'.

Relationship? Yes — relationship. Second only to our families and close friends, we spend more time with the people we work with than anyone else in our lives.

If a company wants to find employees that it wants to keep, and give them a reason to stay, it makes sense to look at what makes a relationship worth keeping.

Let's take the word **'relationship'** outside of the work context for a moment. Imagine two people, — let's call them Jane and Pat, — coming together in a business meeting, liking each other, and deciding to form a friendship.

Let's pretend that each party has a preconceived idea of what a 'friendship' is.

Jane's idea of friendship is two individuals talking in the hallway several times a week and meeting for lunch every Wednesday, and Pat's idea of friendship is having a cup of coffee together before or after the twice-monthly business meeting. If neither party successfully communicates these expectations to the other, how long do you think this budding friendship will last? Not very long is the obvious answer.

But what if Jane and Pat decided to enter into the friendship consciously? What if each agreed to create an imaginary entity separate from themselves called 'friendship'. What if they agreed to define this friendship by agreeing on the behaviors and values that make it up? What if they agreed that friendship means lunch on Wednesdays, being able to call each other with problems, working toward clear communication, behaving predictably in certain circumstances, telling the truth, and admitting mistakes?

However unlikely this scenario, it's not hard to see that it would get the friendship off on much firmer footing than the previous scenario. This discussion has direct parallels to the workplace. The difference is that in an employment situation, the interviewee is usually an unwitting accomplice in this effort.

It is almost certain that the employer must do the work for both itself and the interviewee.

The Employer-Employee Work Relationship

Let's assume for a moment that you, the employer, want to enter into an employer-employee work relationship consciously. To do so, you must recognize that you have needs and expectations that relate to contribution, belonging, and achievement. You have needs regarding what needs to be done, how it needs to be done, and how people interact in the workplace. A potential employee has needs and expectations regarding security, belonging, recognition, and reward.

An effective interview process asks questions that focus not only on raw job performance, but also on the ability of the person and the position to satisfy both the employer's and the interviewee's needs. Failure to determine whether an interviewee's needs and expectations from the work environment match the organization's ability to deliver can result in an unhappy marriage.

If a company fails to find out whether it can meet these employee needs and expectations, low performance and/or turnover is the likely result.

Interview Process Questions

An effective interview process includes simple questions that begin to elicit needs and values. Questions that take you down this path include:

“**Two years from now**, assuming that we agree that this is the right position for you, how will you know you’ve been successful on the job?”

“In your last position, how did you know that you were **doing a good job?**”

“Describe for me a **typical day** in your current position, and what your most important priorities are and why.”

“What is it about our job that **appeals to you?**”

Effective interviewing doesn’t stop there, however. It’s one thing to have a potential employee tell you that he or she wants opportunity. It is another to define and explore just what ‘opportunity’ means to the individual. It is another to structure your questions so that you rapidly get the answers you need with unembellished candor, while putting the candidate and yourself at ease.

How do you do it? That is what **Interview Bootcamp™** is all about.

