

## Interview guide

# BEST PRACTICES



### Those involved in interviewing top talent have a significant role in any company's growth.

Being able to find this top talent timeously and in the most efficient way is vital to ensure business continuity with minimal disruption to daily operations.

This article is centred around the importance of creating a structured interview process that, if in place, will assist your company in focusing your recruitment efforts on the most appropriate talent. And will help you gather the most relevant information from each interview you conduct.

An interview guide is a document that enables a company to structure how candidate interviews are conducted. It guides interviewers in knowing what to ask about and in what order. It ensures a candidate experience that is the same for all applicants in your recruitment processes.

The content of the interview guide will differ depending on the role you are recruiting for, the interview method you decide to use, and your company-specific requirements.

Interview guides aim to ensure interviews are **FAIR, THOUGHTFUL, AND TARGETED.**



### **FAIR:**

A good interview guide eliminates interviewer bias and should include only appropriate, legal questions.



### **THOUGHTFUL:**

Interview guides require preparation and planning with key team members. A well thought out interview guide contains questions that can provide more insight into a candidate than traditional questions.



### **TARGETED:**

Interview guides should be different for different positions. Create your interview guide specifically for positions within your company.



Time and effort are required to set up an effective interview guide. However, the **BENEFITS** outweigh the effort required.

## These benefits include:



### A STRUCTURED PROCESS

When all interviewers follow the same steps in the same order, this creates structure. In addition, this reduces the chances of people forgetting to ask candidates specific questions or give them specific information.



### CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Using an interview guide ensures that all candidates have the same experience. Of course, not all interviewers are the same, so there will always be a difference, but at least the process and questions are the same for everyone.



### EQUAL ASSESSMENT

When you use the same interview method and ask the same questions to every candidate, you can also use the same scoring to assess them. This reduces the risk of bias in the interview process.



## Steps to creating the content of an effective interview guide



1 Determine which position or positions you need an interview guide for.



2 It is often helpful to meet with employees that occupy the same position as they can provide valuable insights into the work environment, soft skills necessary and culture related to the position. You can incorporate relevant questions into your interview guide using this information.



3 Identify the skills or competencies required for a role. In doing so, review the job description or meet with department managers to identify key skills, competencies, and qualifications required for the position.



4 Choose which types of questions will help you learn the most about a candidate. Questions should be designed to show how the candidate has displayed the required skills in specific situations during their career. Responses to such questions can provide enhanced glimpses into applicants' actual experiences. Generally, your interview guide will include a mix of question types. These can include:

**Closed questions:** Closed questions require a simple word or phrase answer, such as *"Where did you go to university?"*

**Open-ended questions:** Open-ended questions require more thought-out, explanatory answers. For example, an interviewer may ask, *"How did you get into payroll?"*

**Opinion questions:** Opinion questions ask interviewees to provide their opinion or preference. For instance, you may ask, *"What payroll software do you find the most effective?"*

**Behavioural questions:** Behavioural questions ask for specific examples of a demonstrated skill. For example, *"Can you tell me about a time you had to solve a complex problem quickly?"*

**Case questions:** Case questions pose a scenario to candidates and ask how they might address it. For example, you could ask, *"If your department only achieved 50% of its sales goals for the quarter, how would you manage it?"*

## TOP TIP 1:

Avoid multi-part questions that ask multiple questions in one. Instead, pose a single question at a time so that interviewees can focus on one question. Then, ask follow-up questions to allow the candidate to clarify or expand their answers.

## TOP TIP 2:

When formulating the open-ended, behavioural, opinion and case questions, apply the STAR method. This method offers a structured way to retrieve information from the candidate. STAR stands for:

**Situation:** Ask the candidate to describe the situation that they were in.

**Task:** What goal was the candidate working towards?

**Action:** Ask the candidate to describe in detail what actions they took to make the best of the situation and complete their task.

**Result:** Ask the candidate to describe the outcome of the action and what they learned. Using the STAR method to test for key competencies or skills needed for the job is highly recommended. Asking all candidates the same question allows you to easily compare how much experience they have in these key competencies.



Put your interview guide in a logical order. It usually makes sense to start with easier verification and closed questions before moving on to open-ended questions.



Share your interview guide with those who conduct or take part in interviews. This may include Hiring managers, recruiters, HR Staff, Heads of departments. Their input can be invaluable.



Now that you have created the interview guide questions, ideally, they should form part of a well-structured selection process. Besides being an excellent way to ensure interviewers treat all applicants the same way, interview guides are also an excellent tool to create structure supporting the candidate experience of your overall recruitment process. **Below are some of the key elements to consider including in your interview guide:**



## 1 INVITATION AND BRIEF

Make sure all candidates who make it to the interview stage receive the same invitation, including a brief on what to expect in the interview. Details such as who makes up the panel, how long the interview will last, whether or not they need to prepare something beforehand, what documents they need to bring, etc.



## 2 WELCOME

Provide all candidates with the same welcome. For example, giving them insight into the company and its structure, the reason for the position becoming available, information about the team the role forms part of etc. Anything you wish to communicate can be noted here.



## 3 QUESTIONS

We have dealt with this section above, but as a reminder, structured target questions provide the interviewer with a uniform method of recording information and standardising the rating of the candidate's qualifications rating. It also enables the interviewer to compare applicants accurately and make the best decision based on data.



## 4 CANDIDATE QUESTIONS

Your interview guide should include a section that allows candidate questions. Usually, towards the end of the interview, the interviewer asks the applicant if they have any questions about the job, the company, and or the team. The kind of questions people ask can tell you a lot about their interest in working for your company.



## 5 CLOSING

Before saying goodbye to a candidate, there are a few things you should do, namely:

- Thank them for their time.
- Advise them of the next steps in your process
- Let them know when you will let them know if they made it to the next stage of the selection process,
- Let them know whom they can contact and how if they have any questions.



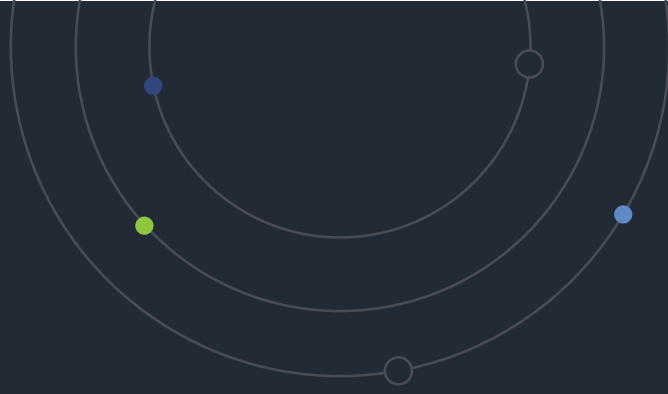
## 6 SCORING

Once the interview is over and the candidate is gone or has left the online meeting, the panel should convene to rate the candidate against the predefined questions asked. The interviewers should score right away or as soon as possible after the interview while the candidate's answers are still fresh in their memory. These scores can be collated for all candidates who have applied for the same role to provide a data-driven hiring decision.



Finding top talent is hard at the best of times. Structured interview techniques and methods make this responsibility a little easier and provide for a more efficient process, providing you with a defined roadmap and scoring system to ensure you make the best hire possible.

**Happy Recruiting!**



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