

Behavioral Interviews

(More than a Gut Feeling)

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE

The Traditional Interview




Tell me a little about yourself.
What is your greatest strength?
What is your greatest weakness?
Where do you want to be in 5 years?

Downhill from here...

If you could be any animal
which would you be?
Who are your role models?



The Behavioral Interview

- Also known as “competency-based interviews or targeted selection”
- Based on the assumption that **past performance is the best indicator of future performance** 
- Asks probing questions about specific critical incidents in the candidate’s past that demonstrate behaviors necessary for job success
- Focuses on job, not personality

Poor odds with high stakes

- Most Hiring Managers make their selection decision within the first **3** minutes of the interview.
- More than **75%** of turnover can be traced back to poor interviewing and hiring practices.

Source: Harvard Study



Definition

Competencies are underlying characteristics that lead to superior performance. They include qualities, skills, attributes and traits that help people become successful. **They are behaviors that outstanding performers exhibit more often than typical performers at a higher level of complexity.**

Types of Competencies:

Technical: Specialized knowledge
(easily tested and measured)

Behavioral

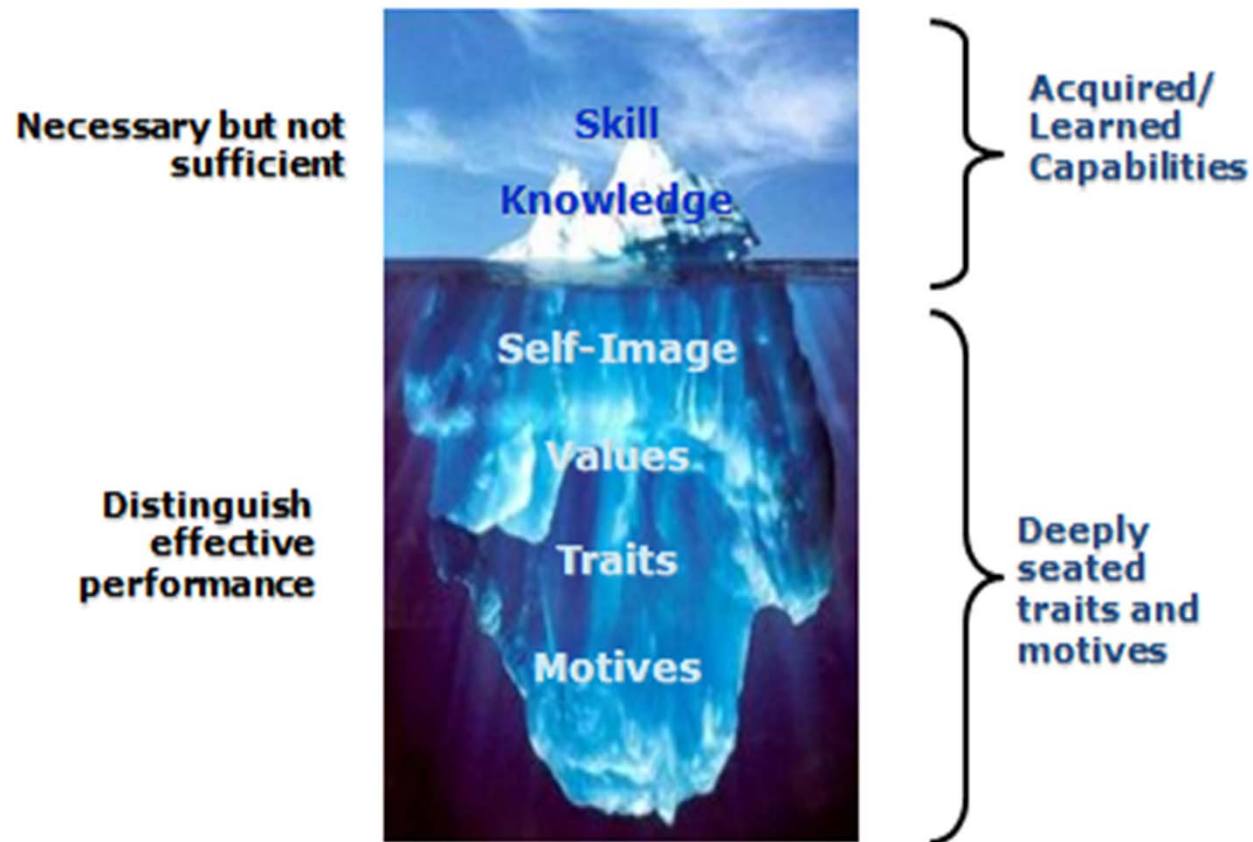
Deep-seated qualities (i.e. leadership, interpersonal understanding etc.)

They are not the “what” but rather the “how”.

Hard to measure but could be developed.



THE ICEBERG MODEL



Behavioral vs. Traditional



- Improves your chances of selecting the right candidate **2 to 5** times over the traditional process
- Accurate, cost effective, and defensible
- Has a validity (predictive ability) rate of 70% (traditional interviews = 19% validity)
- Objective, so it helps eliminate unintentional biases.

Source: Society for Human Resources Study



Behavioral Interviewing

- A thorough, planned systematic way to gather and evaluate information about what candidates have done in the past to show how they would handle future situations.
- Asks probing questions about specific critical incidents in the candidate's past that demonstrate behaviors necessary for job success.
- Focuses on job, not personality.



Behavioral theory

- A behavior exhibited in one circumstance will be exhibited in other circumstances as well.
- The more recent the past behavior, the more likely it is to be repeated.
- The more often the behavior was demonstrated over time, the higher the probability it will be repeated in the future.



Traditional	Behavioral
What are your goals?	What is your primary goal and what did you do to achieve it last year?
What is your primary strength on the job?	Describe a time when your number-one strength got results on the job?
To what extent are your work motivated?	Describe a project that reflects on your work motivation.



Percentage of Interview Time vs. Type of Question*

	Traditional Interview	Behavioral Interview
Credentials & Technical	15	4
Experience	32	40
Opinions/Situations	48	23
Behavioral	5	33

It is recommended that at least 30 – 40 percent of the information gathered in an interview be focused on behaviors to provide the foundation for gaining the highest accuracy in predicting the best candidate for the job.

*Source: *The Talent Edge*, by David Cohen.





Behavioral Interviewing

is about figuring out if there a match between the behaviors required for success in the role and the candidate's previous behaviors.



Create a behavioral profile

- Create a profile of behaviors that allow a person to be successful in that job
- Ask top performers:
 - How they learn new things
 - How they detect and solve problems
 - How they make decisions
 - How they communicate
 - What motivates them personally
 - How they solve conflict
 - How they organize their work



Glossary of behaviors



Administrative skill

Analytical skill

Business acumen

Coaching

Communication

Creativity

Customer service

Decision making

Delegation

Initiative

Interpersonal skills

Leadership

Listening skills

Negotiation skills

People development

Problem solving

Process improvement

Quality orientation

Resourceful

Risk taking

Strategic thinking

Teamwork

Technical skills

Time management



Project Manager behaviors

- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Resourceful
- Teamwork
- Time management



Develop Questions

- Develop questions that will elicit information about a candidate having exhibited those behaviors in the past.
- Use open-ended questions.
 - Tell me about a time when...
 - Give me an example of...
 - Describe for me...
 - How did you handle a situation where...
 - What did you do when...



STAR Method

S

T Situation or Task

A

Action

R

Result



Situation / Task

It explains the background or context of the event/situation and what role the candidate played under a certain situation or task.

What is the event/situation about?

What was your Role/function (Position, title)?

What was the task you were assigned?



Actions

It details what the candidate did or said in response to the SITUATION / TASK. This is the “meat” of the candidate’s response as it tells us about the candidate’s behavior.

What were the major milestones, key actions or “bullets” to describe the steps the candidate took.



Results

It details the outcome achieved/ reached as a result of the candidate's actions under a given situation or task.

What was the outcome?

Were they successful?



Probing

Ask the formal question: “Tell us about a conflict you had with a colleague or manager.”

Probe:

How did the conflict arise?

What were your views and their views?

How did the situation resolve?

Looking back, do you wish you had handled it differently?

What did you learn from this situation?



Probing

Formal question: “Tell me about a time when you were under a great deal of pressure to deliver on time.”

Probe:

What did you do to get the work done on time?

What were the possible consequences you were concerned about?

What was the outcome?

If you were faced with a similar situation in the future, would you deal with it the same way or differently?

Why?



Probing

For top performers, it is very satisfying to be able to describe the background and context of an accomplishment.

For someone wishing to present him- or herself as something he or she is not, tell a story with specific details makes it remarkable difficult to mask motivations and attitudes or to hide real behaviors.

Less chance that candidates are “making up” answers.



Positive	Negative
Demonstrates a positive approach towards the problem	Perceives challenges as problems
Considers the wider need of the situation	Attempts unsuccessfully to deal with the situation alone
Recognizes own limitations	Used inappropriate strategies
Is able to compromise	
Is willing to seek help when necessary	
Uses effective strategies	



Scoring Behavioral Questions



0	No evidence	No evidence reported.
1	Poor	Little evidence of positive indicators. Mostly negative indicators, many decisive.
2	Areas for concern	Limited number of positive indicators. Some negative indicators one or more decisive.
3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory display of positive indicators. Some negative indicator but none decisive.
4	Good to excellent	Strong display of positive indicators.



In conclusion...

- It is essential to get the right person in the right position.
- Beware of immediate impressions.
- Have more than one interview.
- Have more than one interviewer.
- Put more emphasis on behavior.
- Put less emphasis on experience and current skills.
- Hire for basic intelligence/talents/attitudes.
- Even though a behavioral interview takes more time, you will save in the long-term...



Sources



Society for Human Resources, SHRM, www.SHRM.org

David Cohen, *The Talent Edge: A Behavioral Approach to Hiring, Developing and Keeping Top Performers*, Wiley, 12/27/11.

Tom Foster, *Hiring Talent: Decoding Levels of Work in the Behavioral Interview*, Foster Learning Corporation, 3/7/13.

