



Techniques for Conducting Behavioral Interviews

- Attempt to put the applicant at ease – The initial step in any good job interview is to help the applicant feel comfortable in what is usually a stressful setting. Engaging in a few minutes of “small talk” usually breaks the ice. Since many applicants have never participated in a behavioral interview, it is helpful to provide a brief explanation of the process at the beginning of the interview.
- Give applicants reassurance if they have trouble recalling specific examples – Some applicants will have a difficult time thinking of specific examples in response to certain questions. Encourage them to take some time to think about the questions. Remind applicants with little work experience that examples from their college experience or their personal life are appropriate. If an applicant appears to be stuck on a particular question, offer to ask the next question and come back to this question later in the interview. Often, examples that come up in later questions trigger an example from an earlier one.
- Keep the applicant focused on the specifics – Some applicants have a tendency to speak in generalities. Watch for phrases like, “I always,” “I usually,” and “I never.” Respond by asking for specifics, by redirecting the applicant with phrases like, “We’re looking for a specific situation,” or “Can you give a specific example of that?”
- Keep the applicant focused on what he or she did – Some applicants tend to use the word “we” even when talking about something done individually. Since it is very important to clearly understand precisely what the applicant did, it may be necessary to politely keep reminding the applicant that you are only interested in what he or she did. Offering an explanation of why the applicant needs to use the word “I” usually helps.
- Focus the applicants on facts rather than opinions – Some applicants couch their answers in the context of what they believe rather than what they did. If the applicant makes statements such as “Clients are always my top priority,” you should respond by asking them to provide a concrete example.
- Keep the applicant focused on past behaviors – Even if you ask for a specific example, some applicants may respond as if they were asked a hypothetical question. Simply remind the applicant that you need specific examples from the past.