



Five Common Amateur Interviewer Mistakes

1. Failure to define requirements

Most amateur interviewers don't take the time to carefully define the requirements for successfully performing a job. They don't consider the full set of knowledge, skills, and abilities that underlie successful performance and instead, focus on a small number of vaguely defined personal traits. They might look for candidates that are "savvy", "go getters", "quick on their feet", or "tough-minded". These traits, if operationally defined in terms of actual behaviors, could potentially serve as a partial set of requirements. However, without defining the work behaviors that reflect these qualities, it is difficult for an interviewer to properly explore or evaluate them in an interview.

2. Failure to structure an interview plan

Amateur interviewers don't take the time to plan their interview strategy. An interview strategy should include what questions will they ask, how much time they will devote to different requirements, and what they are looking for in an ideal response to each question. The strategy should also include information the interviewer wants to share with the candidate and proper time for the candidate to ask questions. Amateur interviewers often feel that they need only spend a short time with a candidate in a casual conversation to determine a candidate's qualifications. They rely on their "gut feel" rather than a systematic interview strategy.

3. Failure to take notes

Amateur interviewers rarely take notes. They don't feel that they are necessary. They often make up their mind early in the interview and don't see the value in recording responses or they rely on memory to rate the candidate sometime after the interview. Unfortunately, there is a good probability that they will not be able to fully reconstruct the candidate's responses from memory. It is better to record just the critical elements of a candidate's response so that you have a shorthand record of the circumstances, primary actions and results described. Notes provide a trigger for full recall so that information can be shared with other interviewers and responses properly evaluated. They also show that the interviewer is taking an active interest in what the candidate is saying.

4. Failure to avoid common rating errors

Human judgment is prone to be biased. Our judgments are colored by certain beliefs, assumptions, and expectations about the world around us. Research has demonstrated that four types of common rating errors tend to occur across amateur interviewers:

- Halo - This error occurs when an interviewer allows him/herself to be so impressed with a competency or quality of a candidate that it affects judgments of the candidate's other qualities or competencies.
- Severity/Leniency - This error occurs when an interviewer tends to be too strict or too easy in their ratings.
- Central Tendency - This error occurs when an interviewer fails to make distinctions among different competencies and tends to rate competencies or qualities using the middle of the rating scale.
- Contrast - This error occurs when an interviewer compares a candidate's responses to other candidates rather than the requirements of the job. Unfortunately, the "best of the bunch" still may not meet the requirements of the job.

5. Succumbing to pressure to hire

The longer an important position is vacant, the greater the pressure to hire someone quickly. In such circumstances, standards are likely to be lowered if quality candidates have not been found. This is a mistake since the cost of a bad hire will be much greater than the productivity loss from the vacant position. It is better to focus on recruitment of better candidates than make a hasty and ill informed hiring decision.

All Rights Reserved copyright 2004 Navient Corporation
www.NavientCorp.com