



## Hire better in 30 minutes

by learning how to conduct a behavioral interview

### 1. Conduct behavioral interviews to hire better

**INEXPERIENCED interviewers** accidentally hire people who look like them or act like them in some way. By asking hypothetical or philosophical questions as the basis of their meetings, they allow candidates to reply in vague terms with little evidence basis against which to evaluate their results.

Example: "What is your educational philosophy, how do you think teachers should be evaluated and mentored, and how do you know it's time to fire someone?" Those are hypothetical questions that yield inaccurate results according to statistics about hiring.

**GOOD interviewers** come prepared with "behavioral" interview questions that focus on past behaviors that a candidate has demonstrated in competencies required by the job description for which the candidate is being recruited.

Example: So if you're hiring an early childhood director, you would ask about times that each candidate had demonstrated the five main responsibilities of an early childhood director, for example. The way to reframe the questions above might be, "Tell me about the educational philosophy you implemented at your current school, how are you currently evaluating and mentoring teachers, and how did you fire the last person you fired?"

**GREAT interviewers** come with those questions as well as a predetermined list of "good" and "bad" answers to each category of questions. For this reason, behavioral interviews are the favored interviews of companies like Google, which have mastered the use of data.

Example: "At our school, good answers to teamwork questions reflect what we believe about teamwork. We believe in consensus, we believe in quick decision making, we believe in transparency above politeness, and we believe in predictable communication."

## 2. Prepare for your next interview -- quickly and easily

Now that you get the basic idea, prepare accordingly.

**Step 1. Consider your particular interests.** This part is easy for most people. Consider specific experiences you've had with the school in the last two to three years. Consider how the experience was handled and how you would have wanted it handled. For example, perhaps you had a great experience where a head of school handled a sensitive issue with particular finesse. If you are running an interview day, make sure that each person involved in interviewing is covering a different area (perhaps two per area) so you don't duplicate effort excessively and so that your coverage is comprehensive.

**Step 2. Consider the job description.** Read the job description online. Typically a job description lists three to five main responsibilities as well as three to five qualifications or character traits the school is seeking in this role. Consider where your experiences intersect best with the job description. Perhaps some of the experiences you considered in Step 1 are not relevant to the particular position for which you're hiring right now. Maybe it's an Admissions Director problem and not a Middle School Principal problem. In that case, keep it in reserve for a future search.

**Step 3. Consider the six basic types of behavioral questions.** Categories of behavioral questions tend to fall into the acronym **IMPACT**:

- I -- Individual contribution or achievement
- M -- Management of others
- P -- Persuasion or influence of others
- A -- Analysis and use of data
- C -- Challenge, pressure, or failure
- T -- Teamwork

You want a mix of these types of questions to ensure you're hiring someone with each of these skills to the best extent possible. For example, "Tell me about a time when you worked with a challenging person" or "Tell me about a time when you failed" or "Tell me about a time when you used data to change the direction of an organization."

**Step 4. Arrive at the meeting with three or more behavioral questions.** The best behavioral questions start with: "Tell me about a time when" and end in the scenario you outlined above. For example, "Tell me about a time when you had to support a teacher in a difficult situation with a middle-school parent."

**Step 5. Make sure you write down your "good" and "bad" answer components before you arrive.** In order to avoid hiring someone because they're like you, pre-judge the qualities you consider good or bad before you meet the candidate. For example, "In order to evaluate an early childhood

director's relationship with parents, I'd want to see him indicate that he communicates regularly via multiple media, that he visits classrooms at least once per month each, and that he stands in carpool line every day. Bad responses would include that she waits for parents to contact her or that she waits in her office for people to arrive."

**Step 6. Process your thoughts and submit your written feedback to the search committee.** The best behavioral interviews provide the best written feedback. For example, "I was concerned about how Jonathan said he had dealt with a fundraising matter. When he said he had conflicted with a major donor, he seemed to lack communication skills as they pertain to major supporters. I'd want to see him given coaching during his first year as our development director."

**Thank you!** We hope you will find this guide useful. If you have questions, please contact us as soon as possible at the information just below. We really wish you good luck in your search and hope to be of service as we are able. Please reach out any time.

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