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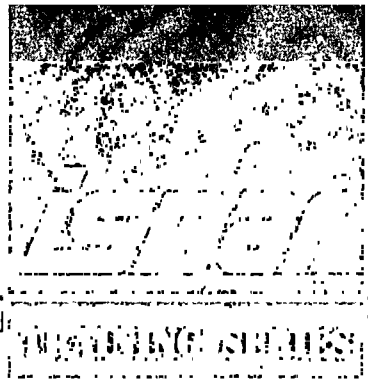
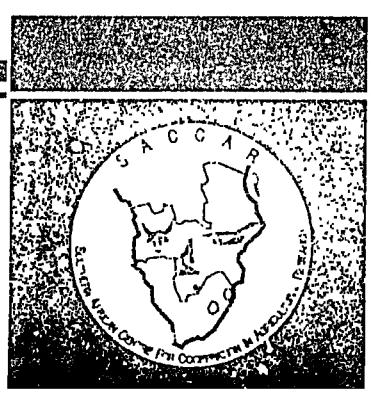


Human Resource Management No. 4

Recruitment and Selection

Paul Marcotte



ISNAR TRAINING SERIES — *Human Resource Management No. 4*

Recruitment and Selection

Paul Marcotte

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Author:

Paul Marcotte
Training Coordinator
ISNAR

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CABI Descriptors:

Agricultural Research; Management; Managers; Personnel Management; Research Workers; Scientists

AGROVOC Descriptors:

Research; Management; Managers; Scientists

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

Paul Marcotte*

Recruitment and selection is the process by which organizations obtain employees with the right skills, training, and motivation and by which individuals obtain positions that fulfill their personal needs and aspirations. Basically, the *recruitment* process entails identifying potential applicants and ascertaining how well they fit organizational needs. *Selection*, on the other hand, is a process of prediction, or making an informed estimate on the potential for an applicant's success on the job.

Conceptually, there is a logical sequence of activities involved in acquiring employees, and these are position description, person specification, person profile, recruitment strategy, interview planning, interviews, and analysis of data and decision. These are illustrated in Figure 1, the recruitment/selection model. This paper briefly defines and describes each of these activities and identifies the tools or procedures required to accomplish them efficiently and effectively.

Position Description

In order to write a clear statement of what roles a person must play and what tasks and functions they are to perform in a job, it is necessary to conduct a *job analysis*. A job analysis is the process by which a job is dissected into component parts, which are then studied to identify the nature of the work. This requires looking at the tasks performed by incumbents, defining functions, and collecting information about the tasks and functions.

Task and function, according to job analysis literature, are defined as follows:

Task "a discrete organized unit of work, with a definite beginning and end, performed by an individual to accomplish the goals of a job."

Function "a broad subdivision of a job composed of a group of tasks that are somewhat related because of the nature of the work or the behavior involved." (Gael 1983: 9-10) [There are two types]:

1. supervisory work (organizing, planning, directing, developing)

2. direct work (maintaining, repairing, operating)

In studying the component parts of a job, it is also necessary to identify critical incidents encountered by incumbents.

To accomplish this it is necessary to do the following (O'Hare and Associates 1988):

- Identify what led up to the incidents.
- Determine staff behavior that was effective (or ineffective).
- Identify the consequences of critical behavior.
- Determine if the consequences were within the control of the staff member.
- Calculate the frequency of tasks.
- Identify the importance of tasks.

The synthesis of the critical incidents of the incumbent and the well-defined job elements (i.e., tasks and functions) provide information for writing a clear statement on expected performance: the job or position description.

The elements that should be included in a job (position) description are as follows (Egan 1988a: 116-117):

1. the mission or purpose of the job in broad terms

2. a list of specific responsibilities

*This paper summarizes material from a variety of sources (see bibliography). Any errors are the responsibility of the author, not of the original source listed.

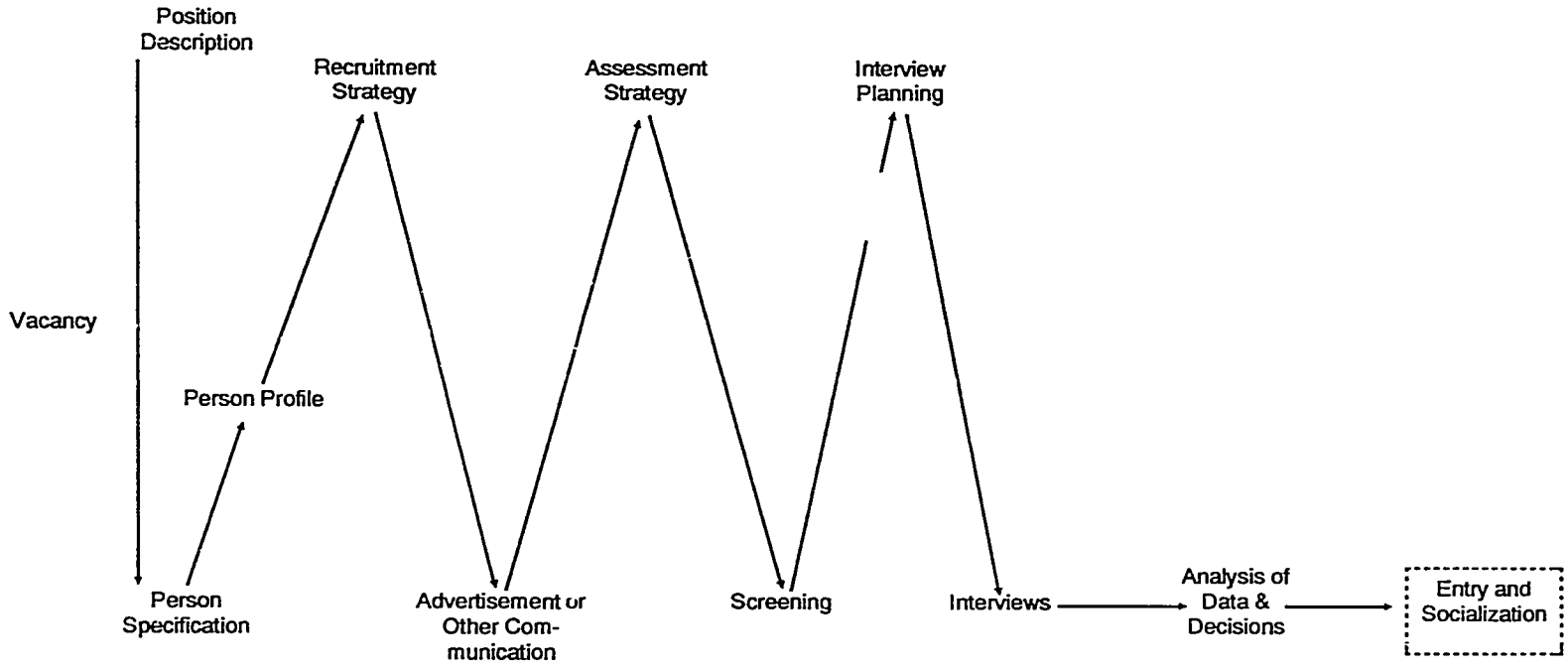

Figure 1. Recruitment and selection

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3. reservations of authority (such as committing the organization's funds or completing contractual arrangements with outside organizations)

4. a description of working relationships with other positions

5. specific objective measures or standards for the work

6. the assets, contacts, and specialized experience the individual brings to the job and is expected to maintain and develop (These represent the individual's "personal" investment in the organization.)

7. the salary range of the position and the way in which both individual and organizational accomplishments will be judged in determining salary decisions

8. a statement of personal liability in the event of individual or organizational failure, including the effect on salary, employment, and probable future allocation of human and physical resources

A job description form that identifies the main element of a job description and briefly describes the context of each element is attached for general information (appendix 1).

Person Specification

In addition to the elements outlined above in the job description, there may be other skills or characteristics required for the successful completion of a job. These may be the type of "personal" investments (such as assets, contacts or specialized experiences) outlined in number 6 above, or they may be "personal" characteristics or behavior such as assertiveness.

A form for identifying the person specifications of knowledge, skill, work experience, and people skills versus the job content/unit fit is attached (appendix 2).

Person Profile

In addition to the job analysis and person specification, there may be factors required to assure a proper team mix or organizational culture. A process to establish this "person profile" includes the following steps. The generic person specification should be reviewed to identify any unique personal characteristics, such as knowledge, skills, or social characteristics, that may be required. Next, significant others, i.e., other staff members on the team or unit, should be consulted to determine if they need or desire particular types of people for their units. The staffing mix should then be reviewed for demographics, skills, etc.

Based on this review, likely changes in roles or people over the next few years should be considered. Having identified the likely changes, there should be reflection on the unit culture, and efforts should be made to identify the type of person who is likely to fit in – and either maintain or add to the culture. Finally, based on this needs profile, priority requirements for hiring should be determined.

Recruitment Strategy

Once the position has been analysed and the desired characteristics are agreed upon, the recruitment strategy must be defined (see appendix 4). Initially the labor market must be analysed, which, according to economists, entails recognizing labor market boundaries, identifying available skills, assessing the organization's attractiveness and visibility, and being aware of the economic conditions of the labor market (Sayles and Strauss 1981: 172).

Once this has been accomplished, there are a variety of sources of recruits that may be considered. These include advertising, employment agencies, educational institutions, professional organizations, the military, labor unions, field trips or field recruiting, walk-ins, write-ins, intercompany transfers, employee referrals, and computer matching services (Cascio and Awad 1981: 21).

Regardless of the source of recruitment, the advertisement must contain essentials about the job. Typically, an adequate advertisement includes a statement about the mission of the organization, the outcome expected, the working role for the individual, the responsibilities of the job, prospects or career potential, and salary information.

Once a position has been advertised, an additional effort should be made to identify people who know potential candidates, or who know others who may know candidates or where to look for candidates.

Finally, it should be determined how much time should be invested in looking for recruits and where would be most likely to yield the fastest and best results, given the time and resources allocated to the process.

Assessment Strategy

As stated earlier, the selection process is basically one of prediction, with the objective being to find the best person for a given position. The assessment strategy entails creating and using instruments, tools, or processes to effectively assess the candidates against the person profile requirements for the position.

While it is understood that 100 percent prediction is impossible, the careful preparation and choice of selection instruments will enhance the prediction possibilities. These selection strategies include application forms, tests, interviews, reference checks, and possibly probationary periods for a more extended look at the candidate.

The application form is a traditional device for collecting information on (1) demographics – age, sex, education, and training, (2) work experience – previous positions, responsibilities, and tenure, 3) professional activities, such as society membership and publications, and (4) personal information, such as aspirations, interests, and special skills.

These forms may be used for a number of purposes. They indicate the applicant's ability to write, organize information and thoughts, and provide an expression of personality. The sequence of work experience and the acquisition of skills may also indicate the development or lack of a career path. While the application form also provides information about references, these may have limited value because applicants normally only provide favorable references; however, they do provide confirmation about previous experiences.

The interview is the most widely used selection device. While it is considered to be an excellent means of assessing applicants in that it provides a sample of the applicant's behavior, motivation, and interpersonal skills, it also is generally the most unreliable and invalid selection device.

Some negative aspects of interviewing are listed below:

- Interviewers have stereotypes of what they consider to be a good employee.
- Interviewers tend to accept or reject applicants early in the interview process.
- Negative information tends to have a greater impact than positive information.
- The interviewer's judgments are influenced by previous interviewees as well by the applicant.
- Interviewers have difficulty in correctly assessing personality traits.
- The interviewee's appearance can influence the interviewer.
- Interviews can be discriminatory.

Some of the positive aspects of interviewing are as follows (Arnold and Feldman 1986: 439-440):

- The interview provides the organization with the opportunity to give information to the applicant.
- The organization can sell itself if the applicant is outstanding.
- The interview can be used to project a positive image of the organization.
- The interview can be a source of additional information about the applicant.
- The interview can provide information on how the individual will fit into the organizational culture.

There are a variety of tests to assess the candidate. Formal testing can be categorized by type, such as performance, intelligence, aptitude, and personality. Generally, performance tests demonstrate the applicant's ability to accomplish a task. Intelligence tests measure native intelligence with the assumption that more intelligent people can learn tasks more quickly and efficiently. Aptitude tests measure learning ability, and personality tests measure willingness to learn and maintain a high level of performance.

There are several assumptions underlying testing procedures. These include the following (Sayles and Strauss 1981/:182):

1. There are significant differences in the extent to which individuals possess certain characteristics.
2. There is a direct and important relationship between these characteristics and the ability of individuals to accomplish certain goals.
3. These characteristics can be accurately measured and the relationship between test results and job performance can be evaluated.

There are also several issues in testing that organizations must consider – the reliability of the test instrument, statistical inference, causality versus correlation, and cost.

Interview Planning/Interviews

In addition to the strengths and weaknesses of interviewing as a process (as identified earlier in the section on assessment strategy), interviews must be planned so that the best information possible can be gathered (see appendices 7 and 8).

In order to accomplish this, the objectives of the interview should be clearly defined. The first step is to identify and evaluate the candidate in terms of the match between organizational requirements and the individual's capabilities. The second objective is to provide information about the job to candidates so that they can realistically make a decision about the position. The third objective is to communicate what the organization stands for. Finally, the candidate should be persuaded that this decision is a correct one. It should be recognized that there are potential problems or weaknesses in interviewing. Planning for and structuring the interview should help to overcome these weaknesses. The following table suggests ways the interview process can be strengthened.

Table 1. Suggestions for Improving the Interview

1. Use a structured interview format.
2. Provide a complete job description to interviewers.
3. Use trained interviewers.
   Give applicants a chance to talk.
   Avoid stressful interviews.
   Avoid questions that are discriminatory.
4. Use multiple interviewers.
5. Avoid quotas.
6. Keep structured written records.
7. Use the interview as only one aspect of an overall selection system.

SOURCE: Arnold and Feldman (1986: 441).

There are several forms attached in the appendices which should be considered for interview planning and interviewing guidelines. While these will assist the process by helping select the best candidiate for the position, the next step, socialization, is of equal importance. This is the process by which people are transformed into effective, participating members of the organization. This is the topic of the next paper.

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Appendix 1
JOB DESCRIPTION FORM

1. IDENTIFY JOB CONTEXT
   Current title.
   Department and division in which job is situated.
   The contribution the position makes to the overall mission of the division and department.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES
   Describe responsibilities or desired outcomes of the job clearly, quantifying wherever possible, and record the means by which the responsibilities are to be accomplished.

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3. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

List the working relationships with supervisors, clients, colleagues, subordinates, and people of other departments that effect the successful accomplishment of the desired outcomes of the job.

4. RESOURCES

List the resources to be used: people, equipment, money.

5. SUPERVISION

Specify the line of supervision, the criteria and procedures by which accomplishments are evaluated, and the sources and frequency of feedback.

6. WIDER CONTEXT

In addition to working relationships, list any steering commitees, advisory groups, professional groups, or contacts outside the organization with which the incumbent is expected to interact.

7. PHYSICAL CONDITIONS
Where is the work performed? What are the work hours? Does the job require stamina or accuracy? Does it entail travel? Are there any accident or health risks or stress factors?

8. REWARDS
State grade, salary range, and benefits applicable.

9. CAREER
State the career prospects, including promotion, lateral transfer, and relocation – the career potential of the position.

JOB DESCRIPTION FORM

- IDENTIFY JOB CONTEXT
- PURPOSE/DUTIES
- RESOURCES
- WORKING RELATIONSHIPS
- WIDER CONTEXT
- PHYSICAL CONDITIONS
- REWARDS
- SUPERVISION AND AUTHORITY
- CAREER

Appendix 2
PERSON SPECIFICATION

JOB CONTENT/ UNIT FIT	KNOWLEDGE	SKILL	WORK EXPERIENCE	PEOPLE SKILLS

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Appendix 3
PERSON PROFILE

- REVIEW PERSON SPECIFICATION (GENERIC)

- CONSULT SIGNIFICANT OTHER/S

- REVIEW STAFFING MIX IN THIS POSITION, IF ANY

- CONSIDER LIKELY CHANGES IN ROLE/PEOPLE OVER NEXT FEW YEARS

- REFLECT ON UNIT CULTURE AND TYPE OF PERSON
  WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO FIT

- DETERMINE PRIORITY REQUIREMENTS (THIS TIME AROUND)

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Appendix 4
RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

- ANALYZE THE LABOR MARKET
- CONSIDER/IDENTIFY POSSIBLE SOURCES
- IDENTIFY SOURCES TO BE TAPPED
- CONSIDER IMAGE TO BE PROJECTED IN COMMUNICATING AND/OR ADVERTISING
- IDENTIFY OTHERS (INTERNALLY/EXTERNALLY) WHO SAY THAT THEY
  - KNOW POTENTIAL CANDIDATES
  - KNOW PEOPLE WHO KNOW POTENTIAL CANDIDATES
  - KNOW WHERE TO LOOK
- DETERMINE WHERE YOUR INVESTMENT OF TIME AND OTHER RESOURCES IS MOST LIKELY TO REAP THE FASTEST/BEST RESULTS
- PLAN RECRUITMENT COMPAIGN

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Appendix 5
Assessment Strategy

- PERSON
- PROFILE
- REQUIREMENTS
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

MOST EFFECTIVELY ASSESSABLE THROUGH

- APPLICATION FORM
- INSTRUMENTS
- TESTS
- ASSESSMENT CENTER
- INTERVIEWING
- REFERENCE CHECKS
- PROBATIONARY PERIOD

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Appendix 6
OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERVIEW

1. TO IDENTIFY/EVALUATE

2. TO PROVIDE

3. TO PROJECT

4. TO PERSUADE

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Appendix 7
Interview Planning and Review Form

ITEM TO BE ASSESSED	QUESTION(S)/ SITUATION(S)	ASSESSMENT OF RESPONSE	EFFECTIVENESS OF QUESTIONS/ SITUATIONS	CHANGES/ IMPROVEMENTS FOR NEXT TIME

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Appendix 8
10 + 1 INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

1. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT TO KNOW AT THE END OF INTERVIEW.

2. FRAME QUESTIONS/SITUATIONS DURING PREPARATION TO ELICIT WHAT YOU NEED TO ASSESS.

3. SAFEGUARD AGAINST BIASES.

4. MODULATED TONE OF VOICE.

5. USE LISTENING, PROBING, EMPATHY, FEEDBACK, AND CHALLENGING.

6. TAP INTO FEELINGS AND CONTENT.

7. USE HYPOTHETICAL SITUATIONS AND ROLE PLAYING.

8. CHANGE STRATEGY TO RESPOND TO CANDIDATE.

9. USE SILENCE TO FACILITATE DISCLOSURE.

10. TEST 'PERSONALITY RANGE.'

10 + 1 COMPARE CANDIDATE'S DISCLOSURES WITH HIS/HER SELF-PERCEPTION.

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Appendix 9
O'Hara and Associates
OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The open-ended questions below are arranged in categories to facilitate selection in preparation of an interview structure. Each question is indicated as being useful for initiating exploration of a candidate's intellectual, motivational, personality, and/or knowledge suitability.

I Intellectual factor

M Motivational factor

P Personality factor

K Aptitude or knowledge factor

	Possible Use			
	I	M	P	K
Work Experience				
What changes have you ever made in your approach to others in order to become better accepted in your work setting?			X	
What kind of people do you like to work with?		X	X	
What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with? Why?		X	X	
Do you prefer working alone or in groups?		X	X	
In your last job, what would you say were the main drawbacks to pursuing that kind of a job as a career?		X		X
Starting with your last job, what would you tell me about any of your achievements that were recognized by your superiors?	X			X
Can you give me an example or two of your ability to manage or supervise others?			X	X
What are some things you would like to avoid in a job? Why?		X		
In your previous job, what kind of pressures did you encounter?			X	
What would you say is the most important thing you are looking for in an employer?		X	X	
How do you feel about travel? On the average how many nights a week would you be willing to be away from home?		X		
What were some of the things about your last job that you found difficult to do?	X	X	X	X
What are some of the problems that you encounter in doing your job? Which one frustrates you the most? What do you usually do about it?		X	X	
How do you feel about the progress you have made with your present company?		X		
In what ways do you feel your present job has developed you to take on even greater responsibilities?	X		X	X
What would you say was the most, or least, promising job you ever had? Why do you feel that way?		X		
What do you feel has been your greatest frustration or disappointment on your present job and why do you feel this way?		X		
What are some of the reasons that are prompting you to consider leaving your present job?		X		
What are some things you particularly liked about your last job?		X		
Most jobs have pluses and minuses – what were some of the minuses in your last job?		X		
Do you consider your progress on the job to be representative of your ability? Why?	X	X		X

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	I	M	P	K
What are some of the things about which you and your supervisor might occasionally disagree?			X	
How do you feel about the way you or others in the department were managed by your supervisor?			X	
In what ways has your supervisor helped you to further develop your capabilities?				X
What are some of the things your boss did that you particularly liked or disliked? Why did you feel that way?		X	X	
How do you feel your boss rated your work performance? What were some of the things he/she indicated you could improve upon?	X		X	X
Reactions to the Job and company				
What do you see in this job that makes it appealing to you that you do not have in your present (last) job?		X		
How do you evaluate our company as a place to build your future?		X		
I know you don't have a good perspective of this job yet – not being in it – but from your present vantage point, what would you say there is about the job that is particularly appealing to you?		X	X	X
What would you say might not be highly desirable?		X	X	X
What is it that your are looking for in a company?		X		
Goals and Ambitions				
Where do you see yourself going from here? You may not have any particular goal at this time, but if you did, what might you be thinking about?		X		
What is your long-term career objective? What do you feel you need to develop yourself in to be ready for such a spot?	X	X	X	X
What is it you have going for you that might make you successful in such a job?	X		X	X
What are some things you would want to avoid in future jobs? Why?		X	X	X
Do you have any particular salary goals or targets? (If he/she describes some, ask how he/she arrived at them.) What makes you feel you will be able to earn that kind of income in ____ years?	X	X	X	X
What kinds of job or career objectives do you have?		X		
Who or what in your life would you say influenced you most with regard to your career objectives?		X	X	X
Can you pinpoint any specific things in your past experiences that affected your present career objectives?		X	X	X
Leisure-Time Activities				
What do you enjoy doing in your off hours?		X		
What do you like to avoid getting involved in during your off hours?		X	X	
Are there any talents you possess that are used during your leisure time that you have not been able to apply in a work situation?	X	X	X	X

Appendix 10
O'Hara and Associates
INTERVIEWER EVALUATON CHECKS

- Did I enter the interviews adequately informed about the position and the characteristics of the person we are looking for to fill it?
- Had I drawn up a format to help me focus my data gathering during the interview?
- Had I agreed on the evaluation critieria with the other interviewers in this selection process?
- How well did I do in the following areas:

Establishing Rapport

- Putting the candidates at their ease?
- Privacy?
- Squared? Open? Leaning forward? Eye contact? Relaxed?
- Getting the candidates to start talking?
- Listening rather than talking?
- Playing down unfavorable information?
- Avoiding disagreements?
- Giving pats on the back?
- Injecting humor?

Gathering and Giving Information

- Using my prepared structure to direct and control the interviews?
- One clear question at a time?
- Conveying empathy towards the candidates? (Feeling as well as content)

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- Allow thinking time for responses?
- Use of silence?
- Observe and interpret nonverbal signals.
- Double-edged questions?
- Noting my hypotheses to probe? (Never ask a question without a clear purpose in mind.)
- Use of two-step probe?
  (Using open-ended questions/comments and following with a specific probe.)
- Using hypothetical situations to probe? (Clarify ground rules and context.)
- Using role play to probe?
- Playing devil's advocate?
- Seeing image or reality?
- Controlling the process by not allowing the candidates to avoid or drift from issues I want to explore?
- Providing the candidate with sufficient opportunity to probe me about the position and the institution to ensure the selection process was mutual and realistic?
- Controlling the time to ensure that I acquired sufficient data on all the areas specified in my prepared format?
- Record keeping?

Minimizing Bias from

- Early impressions?
- Negative information?
- Shared attitudes/values?
- My idealized picture?
- What impression of the organization did the candidates receive from their interaction with me in the interview?
- How confident am I that I have learned what I wanted to know about the candidates in order to make an informed and realistic decision about the suitability of each one for the position?

Appendix 11
O'Hara and Associates
INTERVIEW REPORT

Interview Criteria

1.

2.

3.

4.

Quality of Interview

(Sufficient time, rapport, openness of candidate, level of confidence in data acquired, level of comfort with assessment made against the respective criteria?)

FIRST CRITERION
Assessment of responses to probes into the area of first criterion.

SECOND CRITERION
Assessment of responses to probes into the area of second criterion.

THIRD CRITERION
Assessment of responses to probes into the area of third criterion.

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FOURTH CRITERION

Assessment of responses to probes into the area of fourth criterion.

Other data acquired/assessments made.

Overall suitability and recommendations.

In favor of hiring.

Against hiring.

Other.

Rating against other candidates (if any).