

Getting the right people on the bus

Get the right people on board and they are high-performance and low-maintenance, they fit in well with colleagues, and their skills, experience and attitudes blend in well and augment the team. Get it wrong and they underperform, need close supervision and a lot of training that they never really seem to absorb. They don't seem to really fit in or click with others, nobody seems comfortable and the team doesn't really gel. They are high-maintenance and low-performance and they can have a distracting effect on you and their colleagues.

While many of us as managers would like to do better, the recruitment process is a bit of worry. It looks more art than science. Should we trust our gut instinct or be more methodical? How do we prepare? What are we looking for in people? What questions should we ask to make sure we help the good ones to shine and to identify the unsuitable?

Evidence Based Interviewing and Selection

Experts are now saying that biographical interviews alone are not an effective way of recruitment, with the chance of a successful appointment quoted to be somewhere between 20% and 30%. That's not great when you consider that the cost of recruiting a member of staff can be up to 60% of their first year's salary.

So how can we make the interview process more effective? Evidence Based Interviewing and Selection is proving to be effective and being adopted in organisations, both large and small. Here are some basic tips for making it work within your organisation:

1. Employee **Job Descriptions** must be an integral part of your hiring process. Those that sit unused in a drawer, or worse, filed in the HR office, are a waste of time. Don't automatically use the historical ones – this is your opportunity to change the role to suit your team and meet key organisational objectives. Consider the duties and responsibilities, key internal and external relationships, working conditions, tools and equipment used, knowledge and skills needed. A job description is a great way to attract new employees but remember to be honest too; don't make it out to be a job it's not ...otherwise you'll be filling the vacancy again soon!
2. Next consider the **Person Specification**. Who are the great performers within your team or department? What makes them effective? What behaviours do they display? What skills are missing? What skills are required to fulfil the job description? Use this information to build up a list of behavioural competencies and skills to be used during the interview process. Examples may include: Customer Focus; Team Working; Motivation; Communication; Time Management. Use whatever behaviours are relevant to your organisation. Identify in detail what these competencies mean to your organisation.

3. For example:

Customer Focus:
Delivers agreed service level to clients, and to colleagues within the organisation
Strives to “delight” customers and exceed their expectations
Demonstrates strong knowledge of the member’s environment
Takes ownership of customer enquiries, problems and complaints and responds quickly and effectively

4. Now that we know what behaviours and skills we’re looking for how can we use this information in the Interview Process? Using an Evidence Based Interview as part of your process is widely thought of as the most effective way of interviewing. Based on the competencies required for the role, it uses past performance as a predictor of future performance. Take this “top line” question as an example:

- What’s your greatest achievement at work?

At first glance it’s not perhaps the most telling of interview questions, but delve into the candidate’s answer further and you’ll find some very useful information:

- How did you plan that?
- Explain the steps you went through to achieve this goal?
- How did you prioritise the tasks?
- Who helped you to achieve this goal?
- What role did they play?
- What difficulties did you come across?
- How did you overcome those difficulties?
- What was the outcome?
- What was the impact on your customers?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What skills did you need to achieve this goal?
- Give me an example of how you demonstrated each of these skills?

These questions make it very difficult for candidates to give standard answers or worse lie. Information on customer focus, planning, team working, overcoming difficulties, providing solutions, and achievements can be gained from this one simple top-line question.

You may also want to be more specific and test one particular competency e.g. Customer focus:

- Describe a time when you personally have been responsible for delighting a customer?

What was the background to the situation?

What did you do?

Why did you take steps to delight the customer?

What was the final outcome?

5. The final key stage in the Evidence Based Interviewing process is to rank your candidates using a matrix to ensure a fair and consistent approach which will stand scrutiny. If we take each competency, and identify the evidence we would like to see during the interview process, we can then rank accordingly.

Customer Focus Evidence	Rating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensively understands the customer and their differing needs • Takes personal responsibility for delighting the customer on an on-going basis • Understands the impact of customer satisfaction on the success of the business • Takes a proactive approach in finding new ways of delighting the customer • Takes ownership of customer dissatisfaction and then takes steps to ensure it wont happen again 	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes ownership of customer complaints and dissatisfaction or complaints • Has examples of delighting the customer • Shows some understanding of customers needs and wants 	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows little evidence of delighting the customer • Does not make the link between customer satisfaction and the on-going success of the organisation • Takes no ownership of customer dissatisfaction or complaints 	1

Evidence based interviewing is being adopted by organisations across the UK and the USA, as a more effective way of interviewing. To make it an effective in your organisation remember the following tips:

- Ensure that your competencies fit the culture and objectives of the organisation
- Focus on the attributes and behaviours needed in the job
- Make sure that your questions are planned carefully before the interview
- All candidates should be asked the same questions and scored using a rating system to ensure a fair and consistent approach
- Evaluate the interviewing and selection process on a regular basis.

Written by Helen Macdonald on behalf of the Future Positive Team: October 2008

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