



BETTER INTERVIEWS.  
BETTER HIRES.



## Bad hires are expensive:

- The U.S. Department of Labor estimates the average cost of a bad hiring decision can equal 30 percent of the individual's first-year potential earnings.<sup>1</sup>
- Bad hires cost some companies as much as \$50,000, according to a 2012 CareerBuilder survey.<sup>2</sup>
- On average, employee turnover costs U.S. businesses an estimated \$300 billion.<sup>2</sup>

## And they're more common than you might think:

- More than 50 percent of managers admit that they have demonstrated poor leadership in hiring the wrong person.<sup>3</sup>
- 69 percent of CareerBuilder survey respondents reported adverse effects from bad hires.<sup>2</sup>

### Sources for statistics:

1 <https://www.linkedin.com/today/post/article/20130716151946-2967511-the-high-costs-of-a-bad-hire-and-how-to-avoid-them>

2 <http://thehiringsite.careerbuilder.com/2012/12/13/cost-of-a-bad-hire/>

3 <http://www.staffingindustry.com/eng/Research-Publications/Daily-News/Norway-Hiring-mistakes-costly-but-kept-secret#sthash.Wvarv5KF.dpuf>





# Want to hire better talent?

People who perform above your expectations -- and succeed with you long term?

Start by improving your interviews!

This practical guide contains proven strategies for interviewing smarter:

- Creating a solid interviewing framework for success
- Improving consistency and reducing bias
- Breaking through a candidate's "interview façade" and accurately predicting job success
- Avoiding legal issues
- Preventing candidate drop out

– and making great hires, every time.



# Be Prepared!



This may be the Boy Scouts' motto, but it's also quite fitting for hiring managers. Inadequate planning can lead to a host of interviewing problems, including biases, inconsistencies and inefficiencies.

The result? Ineffective interviews that ultimately yield -- you guessed it -- bad hires.

To effectively prepare for interviews and improve the quality of your hires:

- Define success. Create a list of critical success factors, including skills, experience, knowledge, core competencies and personal qualities.
- Plan interview questions. Never wing it. Determine ideal and acceptable responses, to increase objectivity and improve accuracy of ratings.
- Ask the right kinds of questions:
  - Factual - to clarify information.
  - Scenario - to see how a candidate will react to typical challenges.





- Stress-inducing - to break through the candidate's "interviewing façade" and evaluate how well he can deal with pressure.
- Behavioral - to learn about past performance and use it as a predictor of future success.
- Be consistent. Ask the same questions of all applicants. Use objective rating scales/forms to evaluate each candidate the same way.
- Hold a post-interview review meeting. Reconvene after interviews are complete to share feedback/ratings and make recommendations.

**We've included lots more information on each of these topics -- so keep reading!**





# Train Your Team

Interviewing styles and effectiveness vary greatly, depending on personality, confidence and amount of formal training. Some interviewers excel at asking questions; some are great ambassadors for your company; some are very detail-oriented and systematically process responses.

But unfortunately, few are strong in all these areas.

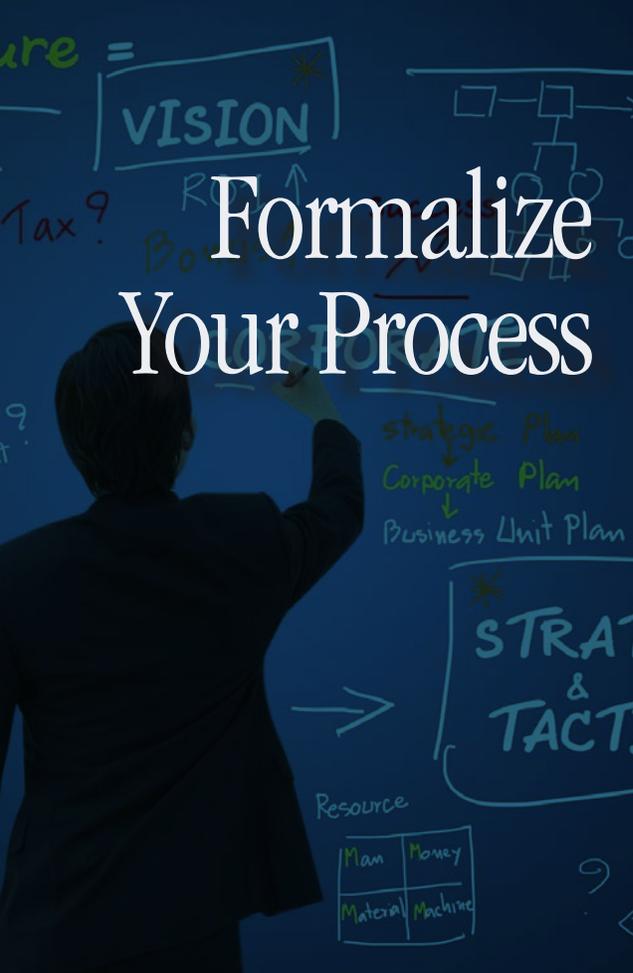
So if you can't personally conduct every interview, train your team -- and give them a formal process for conducting interviews -- to get the best results.

Training should include:

- How to ask interview questions (and avoid discrimination).
- How to document and evaluate responses.
- How to probe for further information.
- How to assess nonverbal cues.

We'll address each of these training areas in just a bit!





# Formalize Your Process

A comprehensive, formal interview process should include:

- Establishing rapport.
  - Put the candidate at ease.
  - Engage in small talk and ask factual questions.
- Asking structured and probing questions.
  - Ask predetermined questions.
  - Ask follow-up questions to clarify responses and probe for details.
- Reviewing information about the job, company and culture.
  - Cover this later in the interview, so your candidate is forced to speak honestly -- instead of telling you what he thinks you want to hear.
- Turning the tables.
  - Give the candidate the opportunity to ask questions.
- Wrapping up.
  - Describe next steps in the process and clarify timetables.
  - Schedule testing, if needed.





We're all human. When we meet people for the first time, we often decide whether or not we like them within minutes -- even seconds!

Sometimes, gut reactions are accurate; but often, they're not. And while interviewers may believe that they're impartial, unconscious biases may impact their attitudes toward candidates -- and ultimately their hiring decisions.

To prevent biases from impacting hiring:

- **Educate interviewers.** Explain the negative effects of bias in the areas of age, sex, race, religion and/or disabilities. Review standards and best practices provided by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).
- **Standardize processes.** Require interviewers to ask the same basic questions of all candidates. Train interviewers to use objective rating scales, so candidates are evaluated similarly.





- **Support evaluations with evidence.** Require interviewers to cite specific candidate statements to back up their evaluations. Train them to support ratings with examples – rather than recording opinions, impressions or hunches.
- **Wait to make judgments.** To minimize the insidious impact of human nature, require interviewers to delay hiring judgments about applicants until after all interviews are complete.
- **Make team hiring decisions.** For all essential positions, require at least two staff members to interview candidates. Once interviews are complete, evaluate each candidate as a group. This will minimize the potential perception-driven bias of any single interviewer.





# Assess Non-Verbal Cues

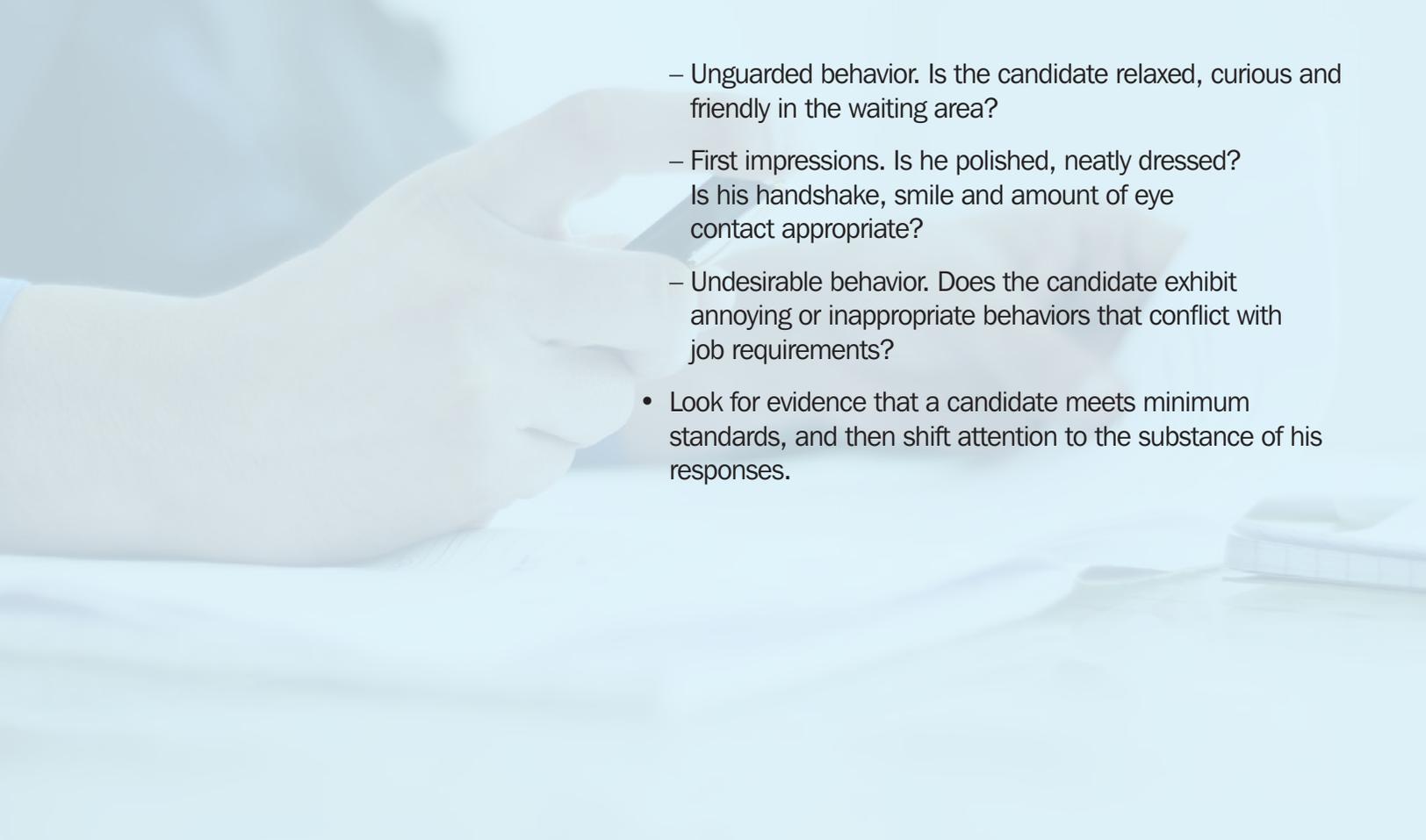
Body language -- eye contact, posture, appearance and gesturing -- tells you a lot about a candidate (maybe even more than what he has to say!). Some studies break communication down this way:

- 55% body language
- 38% intonation
- 7% verbal

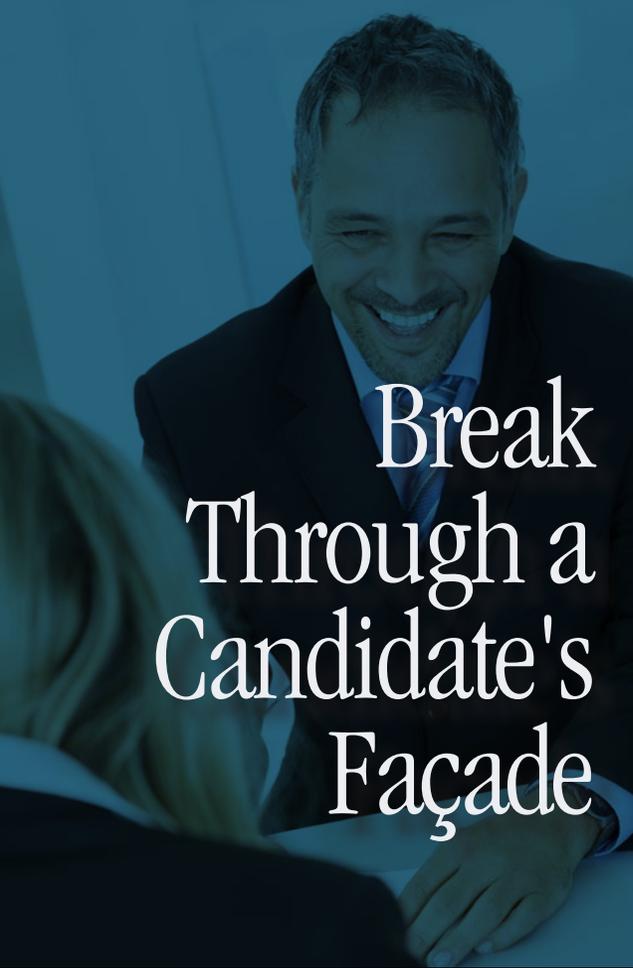
Nonverbal cues contain important information that can help you make the right hiring decision; but they're also easy to manipulate and prone to subjective interviewer bias. To effectively assess body language in the interview:

- Train all interviewers to interpret cues similarly.
- Establish clear standards for nonverbal cues that are appropriate for your culture and employee/customer expectations. Consider:



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- Unguarded behavior. Is the candidate relaxed, curious and friendly in the waiting area?
  - First impressions. Is he polished, neatly dressed? Is his handshake, smile and amount of eye contact appropriate?
  - Undesirable behavior. Does the candidate exhibit annoying or inappropriate behaviors that conflict with job requirements?
  - Look for evidence that a candidate meets minimum standards, and then shift attention to the substance of his responses.





# Break Through a Candidate's Façade

The best answers to common interview questions are available online. They waste time and do little to reveal a candidate's true nature.

To make better quality hires, you need to break through a candidate's "interview facade" by moving beyond typical questions.

## **Behavioral Questions**

These interview questions operate on a simple premise: understanding past behavior is the best way to predict future success. Ask questions like these to look for evidence of the desired behavioral traits for your available job:

- What's the most creative idea you've implemented to solve a problem?
- Describe a time when you tried to persuade another person to do something that he was not very willing to do.
- What is the most difficult project you've worked on -- and how did it help you develop professionally?





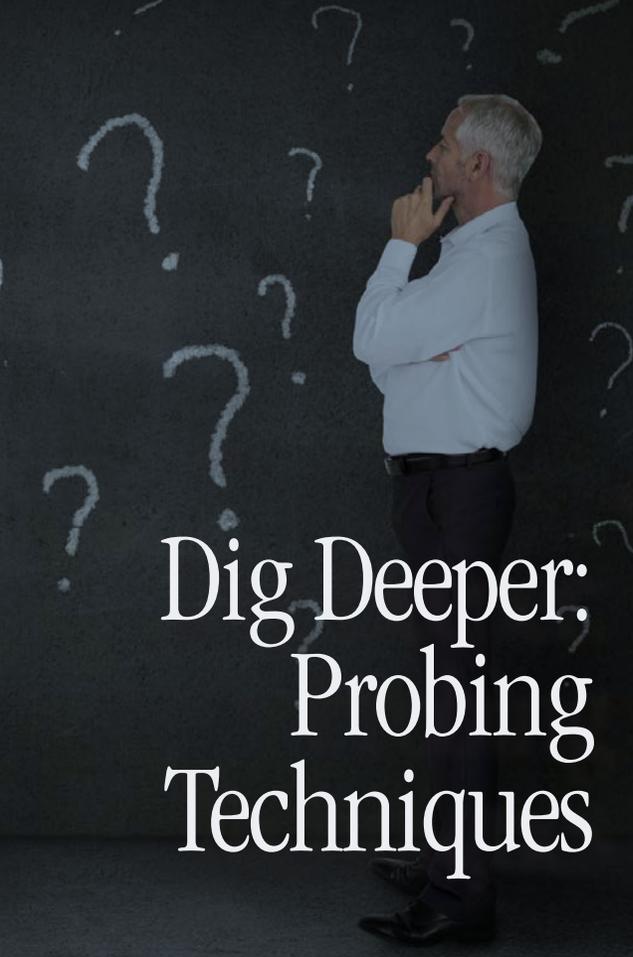
## Unusual Questions

Unusual questions introduce productive tension to the interview and require a candidate to think on his feet. Answers can't be rehearsed, so responses will be more genuine.

- What things do you NOT like to do? (Look for red flags that conflict with key responsibilities of the available job.)
- Tell us the most effective approaches for managing you. (This reveals how well a candidate understands the keys to his own success.)
- Under what circumstances would you be willing to lie to protect your boss? (The correct answer for this one is, of course, "None.")

**Key takeaway?** The more time and effort you invest in planning great questions, the more revealing the answers will be.





# Dig Deeper: Probing Techniques

Interviewees often offer "canned" responses -- the things they think you want to hear -- the first time you ask a question.

Train interviewers to dig deeper and get more complete answers to your questions:

**Active listening.** Take notes to track missing information or phrases that require clarification.

**Restating the question.** Candidate go off on a tangent? Ask the question again, using slightly different language. Emphasize exactly what you need to know.

**Validating an answer's accuracy.** Require the interviewee to back up his initial response by asking who/what/where/when/why follow-up questions.





**Probing for contrary evidence.** If you receive a positive response, ask for reverse information. This technique catches a candidate off guard and makes it impossible to give a "canned" answer. For example:

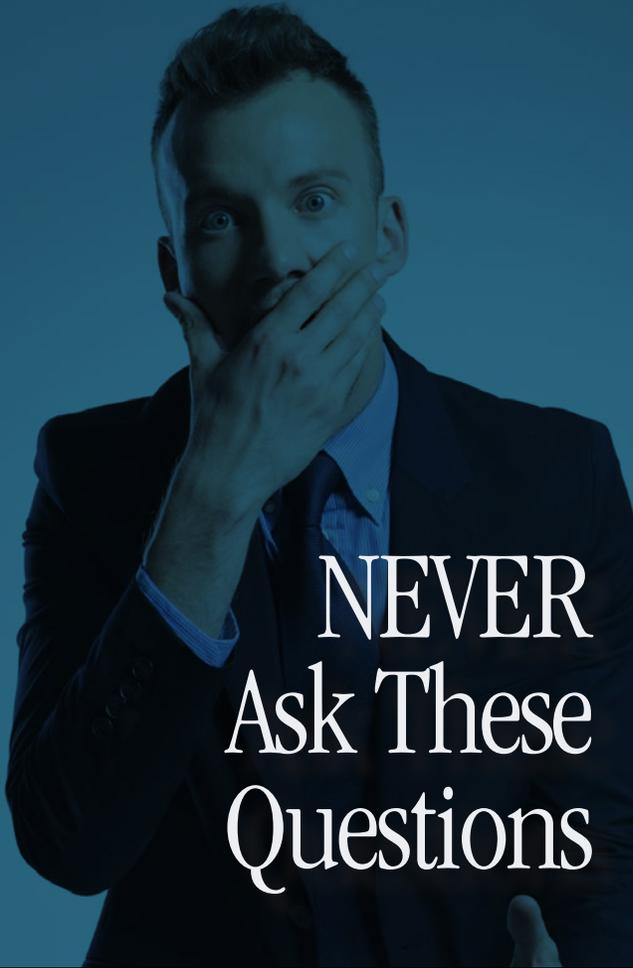
Q: When did your leadership skill produce financial gains for your organization?

A: Last year, my team exceeded its sales goals by five percent.

Q: When did your actions lead to a loss for your organization?

**Staying neutral.** Keep probes impartial and open-ended, to make sure that the way you phrase them doesn't clue candidates in as to what the best response is.





# NEVER Ask These Questions

Improper interview questions can lead to discrimination and wrongful-discharge lawsuits.

Protect your company by asking these legal alternatives to the following illegal questions:

**Root concern:** Legal ability to work

**Illegal:** Are you a U.S. citizen?

**Legal:** Are you authorized to work in the U.S.?

While you can't ask about citizenship, you can ask whether or not the candidate is authorized for work -- and legally able to work for your company.

**Root concern:** Work availability

**Illegal:** What religion are you?

**Legal:** Are you able to work with our required schedule?

To find out whether or not a candidate's religious practices may interfere with his ability to work when you need him to, just ask directly when he's able to work.





**Root concern:** Long-term commitment

**Illegal:** How many years do you plan to work before retiring?

**Also Illegal:** If you get pregnant, will you come back after maternity leave?

**Legal:** What are your long-term career goals?

Ask candidates about their career plans for the future, to gauge long-term commitment level without discriminating.

**Root concern:** Work availability

**Illegal:** Do you have children? How old are they?

**Legal:** Are you able to travel or work overtime on short notice?

If what you really want to know is whether family obligations will interfere with work availability, be direct.





# Prevent Candidate Mutiny

In many industries, job seekers are once again in the driver's seat.

If your screening, interviewing and evaluation processes take too long, or if you fail to make a good impression on interviewees, you could easily lose exceptional candidates to competitors.

Minimize candidate drop-off by:

- **Accelerating interviewing timetables.** Consider combining first and second round interviews into a single event, or streamlining your post-interview decision making. Do whatever you can to shorten your time-to-hire, without sacrificing quality.





- **Making a good first impression.** It's a two-way street: candidates will be sizing up you and your company during the interview! Make a positive first impression by:
  - Creating a welcoming waiting area. The look and feel of your location gives candidates an immediate sense of what it is like to work there, not just interview there. Make sure the area is clean, free of clutter and welcoming.
  - Respect the candidate's time by being on time and prepared for the interview.
  - Supplement the interview with written or online information about the company and position.
  - Allow time for follow-up questions, and listen as much as you talk.
- **Providing clear expectations.** If your interview process is likely to take several weeks, share this information with candidates. Let them know when and how you intend to follow up, and then honor your commitments.



# Final Thoughts

Conducting targeted, consistent interviews is a tall order -- but the strategies in this eBook will help you rise to the challenge.

And if you don't have the time, skills or resources to do these things yourself, your staffing provider is ready to help you:

- **Improve sourcing** - by using more methods and greater resources to attract top talent.
- **Simplify screening** - by handling the time-consuming and technical aspects of screening and interviewing.
- **Control hiring costs** - by leveraging proven recruiting strategies and economies of scale.
- **Identify the best candidates** - by conducting assessment tests, background screening and reference tests.
- **Ensure compliance** - by following non-discriminatory hiring practices.
- **Reduce time-to-hire** - by accelerating the sourcing, interviewing and vetting processes.

A professional staffing firm can find better talent, in less time than most organizations can on their own -- and you only pay a fee if you hire one of their candidates.

How smart is that? Ask your staffing service about their direct placement services. And make better hires. Every time.

