

# **Selection Perfection Job Interview Guide**



**By Patrick Healey**

**[excerpted from  
The Employee Attraction™ Workbook]**

**EmployeeAttraction.com**

Copyright © 2008 by Patrick Healey



### **Interviewing—be prepared with the right questions**

All this preparation gets you ready for the main event—the interviews. I made that plural, because I firmly believe that hiring is far too critical an endeavor to handle in one or even two interviews. I use a three-interview process (which I detail on Page 166) though not many applicants make it to that stage.

During the initial interview, most employers instinctively know to use a few ice breaker questions at first to make you both comfortable. These can be about any neutral topic, though they might as well inform you about the applicant in some way. Asking about how long someone has lived in the area can give you an idea of their stability, as would finding out if they have family in the area. You might also inquire how they like living there, and see if there's any unrest or wanderlust ready to disrupt their career. If they are new to the area, put on your Visitor's Bureau hat and talk up the great points and resources of your area—and watch how they respond. Do they seem enthusiastic and in agreement with your rosy picture? Or do they seem hesitant to become a cheerleader for your town? These

could be subtle indicators of how committed they are to remaining in your area for very long.

Next you would explain the job being offered, as well as some background on your agency. This is a great time to start using your workplace branding, so the applicant will begin to realize you are not like the others...you are an **Employer of First Choice™**. You don't need to hammer it home yet—wait and see if you're interested before you go all out with your own sales pitch.

Now you're ready to segue into more substantive questions. Here's where it goes south for most business owners. An employer who has not been trained in behavioral interview techniques will typically spend way too much time on skills assessment, trying to find someone who has already held a position exactly like the one he has open. Technical skills can always be learned. Instead, **you need to focus on the two most critical attributes of great team members: coachability and emotional intelligence.** If you're surprised, I'm not. Most employers never consider these critical traits, which leads to the biggest hiring blunders.

So what exactly is behavioral interviewing, anyway? **Behavioral interviewing is a thorough, planned, systematic way to gather and evaluate information about what candidates have done in the past to show how they would handle future situations.** The premise is that most people will repeat behaviors in similar situations. You need to think a bit like a psychologist and a bit like a detective to formulate the kinds of questions that will elicit detailed, relevant answers. Then you follow up by probing even deeper into a topic until you reach the core truth you are seeking. What this does is disrupt pat answers that applicants are used to giving to common questions. It alerts them that you are taking the selection process seriously and that you are intent on hiring a well-qualified candidate. That alone has a way of causing the weak ones to wilt right in front of your eyes, which is a great time saver. It's a skill that definitely takes practice to master, but the results will revolutionize your hiring.

Here's how behavioral interviewing works. **For each question, candidates are asked to:**

- describe a situation
- talk about what action they took
- explain the results of that action

For example, you might ask: Think of an occasion when you were part of a team that was short-handed with an important deadline to meet. How did you handle it? This is designed to reveal how well someone works under pressure and in concert with others. It might also reveal leadership qualities, if the person took charge of the situation and got the job done. Or perhaps you want to know something about their values. In that case you might ask: Can you think of a time when a boss or co-worker asked you to do something that didn't feel right to you, perhaps cutting some corners? What was it and how did you respond?

**Here are some more sample behavioral questions:**

- Give me an example of a situation where you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. How did you handle that situation? When did you bring your office manager or agent into the process? Tell me what happened.
- Describe a project that required a high amount of energy over an extended period of time. What did you do to keep your enthusiasm up?
- Tell me about a time when someone told you that you

made an error. How did you react and what did you say in your defense?

- I'd like to hear about a project where you had to gather information from many different sources then compile it all into some other form.
- Give me an example of when you disagreed with your boss—and you were sure you were right. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with? How do you handle working with someone who may hold very different values from your own?
- Do you like finding better ways to do things? Can you describe an instance in your career when you suggested a better way to do something? Has an employer ever implemented your ideas? What was the result? If your ideas were rejected, how did you respond?
- Have you been given opportunities to work in a mostly self-directed manner? How did you like it? What were the results?
- How can you tell when you are feeling stressed? How do you typically handle those times? Is that effective for you?
- Tell me about a time when you asked for feedback on your skills from your manager or a co-worker and then used their input to improve your work.



- Do you feel you have talents or abilities that are untapped or that have been under-utilized? If so, what are they and how would you like to use them?

### Here's the secret sauce

A key factor in eliciting the kind of information that will really help you make a good decision, is **informing the candidate that you want specific answers, including names, dates, time frames, outcomes, and so on.** Also **state that you do plan on verifying her examples.** Admittedly, this can sound more like an interrogation than a job interview, but it does have the effect of separating authentically experienced applicants from those who are just posing. Often it's difficult to check on any of their specific stories—but just *believing that I will* has the effect of eliminating the fairy tales.

You can soften the request by explaining that you have a great agency, offer exceptional pay and benefits, already have an excellent team, and you need to be sure the next person you hire will measure up to the high standards you've already set. Anyone who really does have the kind of background you're looking for won't mind the extra scrutiny. In fact, it will let him or her know that you put a lot of care into your team and your business, that you aren't the kind of boss who just phones it in from the 19th hole.

Do tell the candidate that you'll honor their requests about not contacting some of the people they name, but that even their current employer will have to be called if you advance to the offer stage. The best time to explain all this is when you have them sign a **Hold Harmless Agreement** (Page 156). This allows you to access their job history. I make a point of letting them know I will absolutely be checking their references and job history. I find that when I do that, it cuts down on most of the fabrications.

### Additional kinds of questions you might ask

I'm putting a lot of emphasis on understanding what kinds of questions to ask, and until you are experienced at these techniques, it's easy to over-focus on your questions so much that you miss the replies! **Remember: the ASNWERS are what matter!** Here are some non-standard interview questions, designed to bring out the real person behind the well-mannered job candidate. You probably wouldn't use them all with one person. They intentionally shift from fun, easy questions to ones that probe more deeply. Some of them could

be used as ice breakers.

## Asking them tells the applicant that you are already interested in him or her as a person—not just as a skill set to plug into an opening.

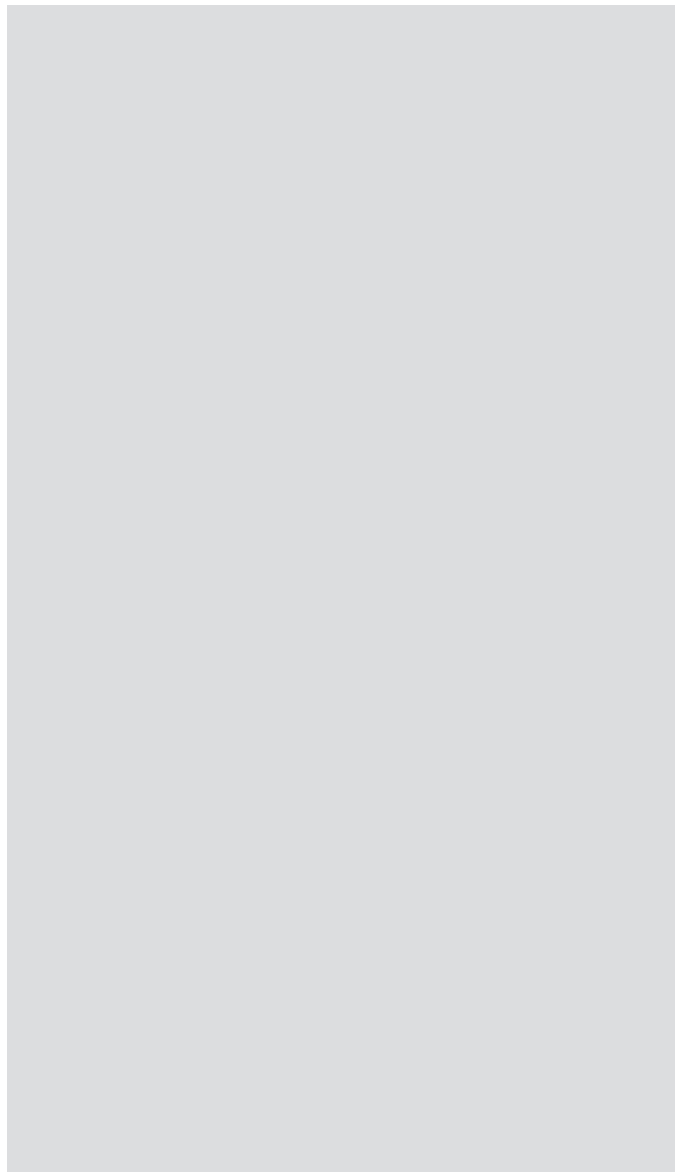
- What makes you laugh? Late night show of choice?
- If money is not a barrier, where would you like to vacation?
- Pet person? What kind?
- Are you inherently a morning person or a night owl?
- Have you made good friends at other jobs?



- What would your friends say is your best quality?
- What did you hate about high school?
- Ever play team sports? Which ones? Did you like it? Why or why not?
- Looking back over your whole life, which teacher inspired you the most? Why?
- What's the toughest challenge you've had to face in your life? What did you learn from it?
- Name a book or movie that inspired you. Why?
- Describe your idea of a Boss From Hell.
- Name some aspect of an ideal job that would really ring your chimes.
- Why do you want to work? What intrigues you about the insurance business?
- What kinds of rewards or incentives motivate you the most?
- What did you like least about your current or previous position?
- How would you like to make a difference in the world?

## Asking Better Questions

What questions are you now realizing you need to ask? Make note of them here.



Review your Personal Brand statement (Page 60) and your Workplace Brand (Page 70) and come up with ways to reveal that during the interview. Or perhaps you take the applicant on a tour of the office and point out your celebration wall (Page 109) or a Big Vision statement (Page 133) as evidence of your brand. Words alone can come across as just so much talk—especially if the job seeker happens to be a visual or kinesthetic learner. For those people, seeing a scrapbook or the team blog or other tangible examples of your office culture will make a big difference.

For applicants who impress you and who you plan to pursue, **think about something you can give them to take home and examine further**. Consider some of these: a brochure; an agency newsletter; a print-out of several key pages from your team's blog or website. Or better yet, create a special **Hot Prospect Packet** that you keep on hand for these occasions. It could contain all of the above, as well as material aimed specifically at the hiring situation, such as: The Top Ten Reasons Why You Should Join Our Team. Doing this will shout to her that you are, indeed, a different sort of employer—plus it keeps your job opportunity close at hand and on her mind.



## Selling the job and your agency

As the interview progresses, you will begin to form an opinion about the candidate. The more excited you are, the more you'll want to weave in information that will promote your opening and yourself as a boss. Communicating the position you need to fill in an appealing yet accurate manner, is as important as any sales call you might make. Think of it as a Features and Benefits List. Remember to help candidates understand the team dynamics at your agency. Let them know as best you can how things flow in your office. Also give examples of fun things you've done together away from the office.

## Hold Harmless Agreement

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING THIS APPLICATION. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS STATEMENT, PLEASE ASK THEM BEFORE SIGNING.

I certify that all answers or statements I have made on this application or on my resume or other supplementary materials are true and correct without omissions. I acknowledge that any omission, false statement or misrepresentation on this application or supplementary materials will be cause for refusal to hire or for immediate dismissal from employment at any time during the period of my employment, regardless of when or how discovered.

I understand that nothing contained in this employment application or in the granting of an interview is intended to create a contract between (business name) and myself for either initial or continued employment, or the providing of any benefit. I understand and agree that if I am offered and accept a position, my employment may be terminated, with or without notice, during the established trial service period or at anytime thereafter, at the discretion of either (business name) or myself. I also agree to conform to all existing and future rules, regulations and policies of (business name) and I understand that (business name) reserves the right to change wages, hours and working conditions as deemed necessary.

I understand that, should employment be extended to me, I may be subject to the satisfactory results of any job-related pre-employment examination required by (business name), including a blood and/or urine test to detect drug usage, and by my signature indicate my consent to such testing.

I further acknowledge and understand that no representative of (business name) has any authority to enter into any employment agreement for any specified period of time, or to assure me of any future position, benefits or terms and conditions of employment, except as may be specifically set out in a current written agreement.

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the above statements and hereby grant permission to confirm the information supplied on this application and authorize any of the persons or organizations referenced in this application to provide (business name) complete information and records concerning any of the subjects covered by the application.

I hereby authorize my past employers to release information to (business name) regarding my employment. I give my permission for representatives of (business name) to check references with any and all work-related contacts, including those listed on my employment application, those provided specifically by me, and any other contacts that may surface during the course of the hiring process. I understand that these references will be confidential and I will not have access to them. I indemnify and release (business name) and all providers of information from any liability as a result of furnishing and receiving this information. This release of information covers my employment record in general, including information on the following: dates of employment; position(s) held; the quality and quantity of my work; my attendance habits (excluding workers' compensations, pregnancy, disability and protected absences); my relationship with co-workers and supervisors; my attitude toward my work; reason for leaving and eligibility for rehire; strong and weak points; whether I have had outbursts of temper, threatened, provoked fights with or assaulted others, engaged in hostile or violent behavior; have a criminal record or any traits that would present security or safety issues for others; and other relevant information regarding my performance, skills, ability, and suitability for employment sought.

---

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT

---

DATE

# WORKSHEET

## Interview Guide

POSITION

INTERVIEWER

APPLICANT NAME

DATE

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

JOB REQUIREMENTS

QUANTIFIABLE EXPERIENCE

### Instructions for the following pages:

1. Determine three questions for each category. For example: Tell me about a time when your manager asked you to lead a project team , but you disagreed with your manager on how to do it.
2. Note what they say about the situation.
3. Ask them what action they took.
4. Ask them what results they got from the action taken.
5. Determine if you were satisfied with the responses.

## PERFORMANCE SKILLS: COACHABILITY

### TOP PERFORMANCE REQUIRED:

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

## PERFORMANCE SKILLS: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

### TOP PERFORMANCE REQUIRED:

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

## TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

### TOP PERFORMANCE REQUIRED:

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

## APPLICANT MOTIVATIONS

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**WHAT MOTIVATES THIS APPLICANT?**

**IS THIS POSITION THE RIGHT FIT FOR THIS PERSON?**

**TOP PERFORMANCE REQUIRED:**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER: SITUATION**

**ANSWER: ACTION TAKEN**

**SATISFIED/  
DISSATISFIED?**

**ANSWER: RESULTS**

## OTHER PREPARED QUESTIONS

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER:**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER:**

**QUESTION:**

**ANSWER:**

# RATING SHEET

POSITION

APPLICANT NAME

**Rate each competency on a scale of 1 to 5 by circling the rating.**

1 = No evidence of any competency.

2 = Minimal evidence of competency; weak examples.

3 = Average evidence of competency; one good example.

4 = Above average competency; provided 2 or more examples.

5 = Superior evidence of competency; gave several complete and specific examples.

**COACHABILITY**

1

2

3

4

5

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

1

2

3

4

5

**TECHNICAL SKILLS**

1

2

3

4

5

**APPLICANT MOTIVATIONS**

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5

1

2

3

4

5