

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

An interview is a formal interaction between a candidate for a job and his or her prospective employer to exchange their ideas, views, and options and to understand each other better.

An interview has two main purposes:

- (i) To find if the candidate has the right attitude and fits the requirement and company culture.
- (ii) To find the best candidate to fill a vacancy.

An interviewer looks for:

- (i) Who you are as a person
- (ii) Your attitude
- (iii) Your capacity to take work pressure
- (iv) Your skills
- (v) Your ability to interact with people

Stages in Job Interview

Before you appear for your first job interview, it is advisable to know the various stages through which your suitability for the job is assessed. These stages may include the following stages/steps of screening:

- (i) Screening of application
- (ii) Group Discussion (GD)
- (iii) Appraisal of Curriculum Vitae (CV)
- (iv) Competency test/technical know-how
- (v) Medical Test
- (vi) Aptitude Test
- (vii) Negotiations

What does an interviewer look for?

- Who you are as a person
- Your knowledge
- Your skills
- Your attitude
- Your ability to interact with people
- Your capacity to take work pressure

From the perspective of the candidate, he or she will try to find whether the role and the salary package offered are suitable to him or her.

One important point that you should be aware of is the fact that the process of applying for a job and getting selected takes time and you should be prepared for it well in advance. The process of planning for a new job should start well before time. If you are planning for a change of job in, say, December, you should start planning sometime in early July; if there is a recession, you should start planning even earlier. Therefore, planning is extremely critical. When you are planning to hit the job market, take some time to prepare yourself. Even if you are seeking placement through college campus interviews, you should start working well in advance (Exhibit 17.2).

The timing of an interview or the start of a selection process may have a big impact on your career. Avoid entering a selection process when there are signs of a recession setting in or when the economy is doing poorly. In such situations, remember that you run the risk of not being offered the right compensation.

EXHIBIT 17.2**Situations when you appear for interviews**

A job interview is not the only situation in the business world when you would be appearing for an interview. There could be other reasons why you may need to attend an interview. While a job interview is implied when we use the term 'interview', the following are some other types of interviews conducted by organizations:

- **Assessment interview**—An interview that is conducted to assess the potential of a supplier or creditworthiness of a loan applicant is known as an assessment interview. It could be held for internal as well as external customers.
- **Exit interview**—An interview conducted by the HR team or a senior executive with an employee leaving the organization is called an exit interview. The purpose is to understand why the employee has resigned.
- **Selection interview**—An interview conducted to select a particular candidate from a number

of candidates with similar profiles is called a selection interview. It is conducted by companies to select people for various assignments, work responsibilities, etc.

- **Promotion interview**—An interview held to select an employee from a group of employees for promotion is called a promotion interview. Some companies hold an interview to select employees for all promotions, whereas some other companies conduct an interview only for selecting employees for managerial roles or for similar, responsible positions.

Interviews could also be conducted to hear and resolve the grievances of a large group of employees.

Therefore, when we use the word 'interview', we should be aware that it also implies interviews other than those conducted by organizations to select candidates for jobs.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Interviews could be conducted in three stages. The first could be a screening interview, the second a personal interview, and the third an HR interview. All these interviews have one single common purpose: to know more about you as a person and whether you would be suitable for the organization. The various types of interviews are as follows:

- **Structured interview**—Structured interview is a method of interviewing by which a standard set of questions is posed to each candidate. This method is generally used either for recruitment of freshers or during screening. It is never used to interview lateral candidates.
- **Group interview**—Group interview is a method of interviewing by which a group of candidates are called and interviewed in parallel. The way they interact among themselves is also evaluated. For example, during the recruitment of software engineers, the candidates are asked to write a piece of a software code and simultaneously questions are posed to them.
- **Open-ended interview**—An open-ended interview is an unstructured form of interview in which a candidate is allowed to talk freely. The interviewer tries to judge the personality and skill sets of the candidate. The information obtained in this process is suitable to decide about the candidate. Sometimes, candidates have the habit of going off track, to speak about issues unrelated to their work experience. The interviewer will have a copy of the candidate's résumé and will frame questions based on his or her résumé and the work that he or she has done. Sometimes the interviewer gets very friendly with the candidate to check how he or she behaves or responds to questions. As a candidate, you should think for a moment before you respond to the interviewer.
- **Stress interview**—The objective during a stress interview is to unnerve the candidate by asking questions that will make him or her feel uneasy. The interviewer will put you through much stress, try to disturb you by interrupting you often, or be critical or rough with you.

These are the four most common types of interviews. However, these days, many companies have introduced concepts such as *situational* and *behavioural interviews*. These interviews are not conducted separately, but may be clubbed with any one of the four methods of interviewing.

Situational interviews are ones in which candidates are placed in 'real-time' situations at work and their responses are evaluated. For example, you will be given a memo and asked to correct it. Or, if you are being interviewed for the job of a copy writer, you will be given an advertisement copy and asked to correct it. Although this method is time-consuming, it is an effective tool in gauging a candidate's capability. In a new environment, the candidate's ability to perform to the best of his or her capabilities is tested.

Behavioural interviews are ones in which the interviewer asks how the candidate behaved in a particular situation in the past. The basic idea behind this type of interview is that past behaviour of the candidate is an indicator for how he or she is likely to respond in similar circumstances in the future. For example, the interviewer may ask you, 'Tell me one situation in office when you had a conflict and how you dealt with it.' Similar questions could be asked about your life, values, beliefs, and attitudes—for example, 'If you are given ₹1000, how would you spend it?' If you are being interviewed for a sales job, you might be asked to assume that you are a salesperson and try to sell a pen or a tie (to the interviewer).

As a candidate, when you face a question about how you handled a situation at office, you should answer it in the following manner:

- Describe the situation.
- Say what you did.
- Narrate your learning experience from the situation.

Exhibit 17.3 lists some behavioural and hypothetical interview questions.

Behavioural interviews can consist of questions from various situations in your life. Questions could be asked about your communication ability, customer orientation, technology skills, learning, motivation, ability to work in teams, cross-cultural sensitivity, and so on.

If you are being interviewed for some other types of jobs, such as that of a copy editor, software engineer, or data entry operator, you will be asked to produce a sample piece of work. For example, a software engineer might be given a programme written in JAVA or C++ and would be expected to correct it, and a data entry operator might be asked to enter some data accurately.

EXHIBIT 17.3

Behavioural and hypothetical interview questions

Behavioural Questions

The following are some of the behavioural questions:

- Describe a situation when a goal was set, but you were not given any direction to handle the same. How did you cope up?
- Tell us a situation when you had to sell an important idea to your managers.
- Tell us a situation when you used your analytical ability to your benefit.
- Give us an example of an important goal you had to set and tell us about your progress in reaching that goal.
- Give an example of a situation when you had to take a quick decision and you did not have time to consult your seniors or managers.
- How did you cope with a situation when a work was given to you with incomplete information?
- Give an example of a situation when you could not get your point across to your teammates.
- How do you make yourself more efficient organizer?
- Tell us about a situation when you had issues with your colleague or your customer.
- Describe a situation when you were stressed out. How did you cope with the situation?
- Describe a situation in which others among your colleagues depended on you.
- Describe the most recent teamwork that you were a part of and how did you contribute.
- Describe the worst colleague that you have met till now.

- Describe a situation when you felt miserable and hopeless working with a person and you felt like abandoning it.
- Any situation which you can think off, in which you do not personally accept, but had to say a 'yes' because of your manager.
- Tell us a situation when you had to go into the minute details of the situation.
- Tell us about a situation when you had a short deadline in which you had to handle a very complex task.

You must practice these questions. Approaching these questions require a standard process. First, describe the situation, and then efforts made by you, and finally inform them about the outcome. However, one thing that you need to keep in mind is thinking of the right situation, which would be appropriate.

Most Common Hypothetical Interview Questions

The following are the most common hypothetical interview questions:

- Your colleague calls you and starts shouting at you about the food served in the cafeteria. What will you do? (You are the member of the canteen committee)
- Your manager has asked you to cook up some data to showcase something favourable to the management. What will you do?
- You hear your colleague abusing another colleague. What will you do?
- Your customer gives you a bribe to pass his loan. He is not eligible. What will you do?

(Contd)