

INTERVIEWING/SELECTION

3. Question

As you move into the main body of the interview, one of the issues that faces the interviewer is the choice of interview style. Although there are many variants on a theme, there are basically four styles, as follows:

Empathetic An empathetic interview is usually designed to be a friendly chat. **A lot of time is spent putting the applicant at ease and asking questions in a warm and friendly manner and lots of encouraging smiles and nods** as the applicant talks.

Pros: Relaxes the applicant and might open up areas of discussion not easy to reveal otherwise.

Cons: Can make more difficult questions and probing harder in the attempt to maintain empathy.

Inquisitive An inquisitive interview is usually **a fairly relentless questioning format** that appears to be probing most of the time. Follow-up or supplementary questions are asked to try to understand deeper motivations.

Pros: Can reveal hidden information that an applicant has carefully chosen to exclude from their résumé.

Cons: Can put applicants quickly on the defensive if not used carefully.

Straight sequential A straight sequential interview simply **seeks to ask questions in order**, the way they were designed to be asked and quite quickly, noting the responses gained and then moving on.

Pros: Keeps the pace of the interview going, and can cover a lot more ground than other styles if this is important.

Cons: Might miss the opportunity to probe interesting answers that arise from applicant responses, and allow the interview to meander.

Situational A situational interview **seeks to set up a number of situations or scenarios that reflect real issues and circumstances** that will apply to the job for which they are being interviewed (“How would you go about handling this situation?”). This is also often called “behavioral-event” interviewing because it is looking at how people say they will probably behave in a particular event/situation.

Pros: Can be very revealing of real skill and knowledge because the applicant is expected to apply their experience without necessarily knowing what a good answer will be.

Cons: Situational interviewing needs preparation and careful design, and can take more time.

Sample - Do Not Copy

INTERVIEWING/SELECTION - Question

Ultimately, whatever style you choose to adopt in asking your questions, make sure these questions allow the applicant to talk at least two to three times more than you do. This generally means asking more OPEN rather than CLOSED questions:

Open questions:

- What ...
- Tell me how ...
- Describe ...
- Explain ...
- Why ...

Closed questions:

- Do you ...
- Were you ...
- Can you confirm ...
- Could it be that ...

As these examples show, closed questions tend to lead to one- or two-word answers, or to yes or no answers that only confirm or deny a statement made by the interviewer. This puts no onus on the interviewee to offer any new information or to go much beyond what they have presented on their résumé. An open question, however, can have multiple answers and usually involves at least two to three sentences to deal with it.

Although we have already suggested that interviews always need to be done legally, it is worth reiterating that care needs to be taken, particularly as you ask more descriptive and explanatory open questions. This is because you might find yourself asking an applicant to describe something personal or relatively irrelevant to their ability to do the job in question. For example, "Can you describe your behavior at a party?" might be intended to probe for social skills and levels of confidence in groups, but it can also be interpreted as a highly personal question that has little bearing on a job as a software programmer! Every question, therefore, needs to be pertinent to the role to be filled and should obviously avoid any kind of bias, discrimination, or prejudice.

