

Sales Techniques

Why Traditional Interviews are Less Effective Today



Interviews are changing

Businesses want more from their sales hires than ever before, with cultural fits and psychological profiles becoming increasingly important. Candidates know what to expect from a traditional interview and when asked a standard question they give the standard answers. Running through a CV and discussing prior experiences don't reveal the subtle but essential details that can make each hire an excellent one.

So, what are companies doing to combat this?



WHY THIS GUIDE?

As candidates need to be looked into beyond their CVs and standard questions, businesses are changing their interview approach. Having recognised the importance of understanding the drives of their salespeople and what makes an exemplary employee, they have turned to a new array of techniques.

This guide will explore some of these methods and how to approach them as a candidate.

WHAT IS THIS?

Psychometric Testing

WHAT IS THIS?

Psychometric tests are aimed at evidencing behaviour, understanding people's drives and discovering their dynamics. The tests themselves can include both written and spoken tests as well as tasks that are specific to the job itself. Tests can be tailored to match individual job roles or to highlight certain behaviours and they can be performed remotely or done on the day of the interview.

WHY DO IT?

Questionnaires, tasks and activities are used throughout psychometric testing to establish whether a candidate has the correct personality, talents and mentality. They can be used to identify the traits and workings of a person in much more detail than would typically be revealed at the interview stage. Seemingly innocent questions are loaded with meaning and can be tailored for specific roles, age groups and behaviours. The tests result in an overview of an individual which can be used to form a different insight into their capability. Rather than a determining factor though, they are used to pinpoint areas for further exploration.

HOW TO THRIVE:

As these tests are aimed at determining your behaviours and how proficient you are at job related tasks, it is important to be focused. While designed to discover your true self, there is preparation that can be done for these tests. Establish what tests, activities or questions you are likely to face and practice them thoroughly.

It is important to analyse each question and consider the angles before answering. Clients have been known to set candidates up with false questions and are looking for an honest answer where others would go along with it and feign knowledge.

→ "Most tests can identify inconsistencies, so adopting a persona is unlikely to work, but preparation and focus can help."

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Roleplaying

WHAT IS IT?

A role-play is essentially a simulation of a working environment or other scenario. Designed to mimic the pressure of a situation and take a candidate out of their comfort zone. They can take place as part of a group or on a one-to-one basis.

WHY DO IT?

By imitating a situation, either amicable or not, and monitoring the resulting behaviours of an interviewee, companies can learn a lot. Similar to psychometric tests, this can display the behaviours and confidence of a candidate in much more detail than the conventional approach. A professional could tick all the boxes in the categories of experience and qualifications, but if they are unable to perform on the spot and freeze under pressure, they will likely be unsuitable for the demands of a sales role.

HOW TO THRIVE:

For a candidate, these exercises should be seen as a positive and utilised as such. They represent an opportunity to move away from CVs and display an adaptable, confident nature.

People who respond to these potentially uncomfortable moments by taking it in their stride and reacting to the scenarios as if they were real are often successful.

As the role-plays could cover anything from basic selling techniques to company specific details, being prepared in both areas is worthwhile. That said, any stumbles don't need to be the end of an interview, providing you maintain control and professionalism. It's also important to stay in character, to whatever degree is outlined, and react to objections or queries as if it is real work.



INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

On the job shadowing

WHAT IS IT?

During shadowing as part of the interview process, a candidate will be invited into the place of work and spend a day with an existing employee, more often than not in a similar role to the one applied for. It often occurs towards the end of the interview process, and people who are invited to spend a day or even a few hours shadowing are usually close to a job offer.

WHY DO IT?

For employers, a shadowing day can result in priceless insights. By inviting a potential hire into a workplace, their performance on a working day can be looked at and scrutinised. The cultural fit, or at least the first impression of it, can be telling and if a potential

employee cannot remain engaged on a single day they will not be considered further. By experiencing a typical day on the job, candidates can also be certain that the move is the right one for them. Job shadowing can essentially remove the doubt from both sides.

HOW TO THRIVE:

If invited to a job shadow or similar on-the-job interview you are usually being seriously considered for the role, but your actions on the day will be decisive. As outlined above, treat the day as an opportunity to scout out your possible employers and reassure them about your abilities. Ask questions about the company and industry, seek tips like you already have the job and take notes throughout the day.

While you're not on payroll yet, remember that you're actually not just a shadow. Show intuition and don't be afraid to get involved in meetings. By being active during the process, you will not only make a good, lasting impression but also make it clear that you want the job.

If you discover the job isn't for you, then thank the company for the opportunity but let your stance be known during the follow-up debrief.

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

Assessment days

WHAT IS IT?

For companies, assessment days are seen as an excellent chance to bring in a large number of talent who are usually on a similar footing then see who best fits their ethos. Common activities consist of psychometric tests and role plays, but also include a range of other exercises and interviews. Due to the nature of these days, they tend to be used for campaign recruitment, multiple hire positions and graduate roles.

WHY DO IT?

Due to the typical demographic of assessment days being graduates or lower level positions with little experience, clients don't tend to have relevant past roles to go off. Due to this, they use assessment days to learn more about applicants' traits, measure competency and see who can adapt seamlessly.

→ "They also want to see how candidates react to circumstances which are similar to the role, particularly those that can be uncomfortable without suitable preparation or mentality."

It is an opportunity for a business to scrutinise a lot of talent in a controlled environment and aim for objective based assessment not subject based opinion.



HOW TO THRIVE:

Each exercise should be tailored to bring out certain attributes, desirable or not, and the recruiting company will be watching for these. Such attributes include, strategic thinking, communications and decision making, but even the final results of any exercises can also be examined. Each assessment day has its own set of criteria, but it's not about always having the right answer, the focus is on behaviours and characteristics.

Ensure your abilities are displayed overtly and are easily identifiable. Make it clear when you are listening or leading and emphasise your actions without going overboard. Showing enthusiasm goes a long way, but being standoffish with the other attendees and seeing them as competition will count against you. Be polite throughout and seek feedback at the end of today. Even if it's negative, it will help you shape your approach to future interviews.

Social media background check

WHAT IS IT?

Essentially, a social media check involves searching for a candidate's name or other details on popular social networks and search engines. If any suspect material is found, it can count against a candidate or even rule them out. Whether it occurs prior to or after an interview, a social media background check can be a decisive part of a job application.

WHY DO IT?

A simple web search can provide a wealth of information about the personal and professional life of a candidate. For employers, even a brief glance at social media profiles can provide a fresh, interesting insight into a candidate. The amount of data tied to a name, phone number and email address should no longer be a surprise. Black marks include profane images, sensitive or provocative views and explicit materials, but even criticising a current or former employer can display a negative attitude. Whether or not any of the above is found, the process can give hints into characteristics and details that may not be revealed by a guarded applicant at the interview stage.

HOW TO THRIVE:

More and more clients are doing these checks, so you need to consider what image you portray on social media - you never know who could be looking.

While there are ways and means of deleting potentially controversial content or to make accounts private, it's better to use social media responsibly than have to tidy up after yourself.

→ "In general, approach social media with your professional life in mind. Opinion and personality are ok, but consider the possible repercussions of anything you choose to post."

Laws protect candidates from overzealous scrutiny, as only public material can be legally viewed, but your personal life and CV can be legitimately reviewed in this manner. Clients will cross reference your listed experiences, universities and previous roles, via online searches and look for gaps in your story. They will also note positive traits throughout your communications, such as creativity, with an eye on cultural fit. Be aware that social media is an extension of yourself and therefore relevant to potential employers.

Conclusion...



At Genesis, we advise our clients to use all of the above as they can be used to gather further insights than traditional but limited interview techniques. Clients can make more successful,

lasting hires by embracing these techniques rather than probing prepared CVs and the safety blanket they provide for candidates. For as long as these techniques benefit recruiting business, they will continue to be used and as such, candidates need to face up to them. The best talent will be prepared and see any of the above techniques as a chance to show their complete set of skills.

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Genesis Associates (UK) Ltd

Freedom House
Church St
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 1AS
United Kingdom

T. +44(0)1625 446060

F. +44(0)1625 446099

recruitment@genesisassociates.co.uk

VAT Reg: 912 6557 24

Company reg: 5464762