

## Ready to Recruit? Get it right!

### What is Competency Based Interviewing? How to Develop a robust recruitment process.

A successful sales team is the beating heart of any flourishing business and it is essential that the recruitment of new sales members is carefully planned and delivered. Recent research indicated that the cost of recruiting and training a sales professional in the first year was up to 3.75 times their basic salary cost. However, it's not just your bottom line that will be affected, combine this with the impact on your customers, your brand, other team members and most importantly lost revenue opportunities and it becomes a hugely costly mistake.

Of course, intuition is important when making the decision to hire but it's a travesty that over half of hiring decisions are taken on the basis of something that can be no better explained than 'gut feeling'! In this short overview we detail some basic steps to give your business the best opportunity to make the right hiring decisions and help lessen the temptation to recruit on nothing more than instinct.

#### **Dispelling the Myth - Competency Based Interviewing: A definition**

Competency Based Interviewing is the most effective form of interviewing as it focuses on gathering evidence of required skills, experience and personal qualities; these are known collectively as competencies. The aim is to obtain information about candidates past behaviour, or experience, so that you can effectively 'score' one candidate against another. It will take around three hours of planning to construct a CBI but you will immediately see that your interviews have greater structure and purpose.

In essence a Competency Based Interview is a long and rather grand term for an interview with questions based on past behaviour rather than a candidate's own predicted future behaviour, i.e. "give me an example of..." rather than "what would you do if....".

## How to Plan

To begin the planning you must first make a list of the competencies required to succeed in your vacancy. They should relate directly to the essential criteria/ competencies required to be successful in the role. Examples that we use to hire Senior Recruitment Consultants are as follows: Meeting Goals, Sales Planning, Leadership in Adversity, Positive Mental Attitude, Communication, Perseverance, Ethics/Values, Goals/Ambitions. In truth this probably is two or three too many competencies as the meeting typically takes two hours but hopefully this will give you some ‘food for thought’.

Once you’ve gathered and agreed the list give each competency a score out of five. From one (the lowest score, or did not provide evidence of any description for this competency) to five (the highest, or gave highly satisfactory evidence of high levels of this skill/experience/quality)

Then for each mark detail the evidence required to score that particular mark. For example:

Leadership in Adversity

- 1 – Gave no evidence of leading in difficult situations
- 2 – Demonstrated some leadership qualities in a difficult situation
- 3 – Adequately led in a difficult situation
- 4 – Kept a level head in a difficult situation and demonstrated practical solutions to the problem
- 5 – Competently and effectively led the team during a difficult situation creatively solved issues and kept the team together with a level head.

## How to Execute a Competency Based Interview

To gather the information required to score a candidate against this competency you now need questions to tease out the previous scenario, or event that demonstrated these behaviours/qualities. You then need a list of questions, or themes, that 'ladder' from the answers.

A laddering technique probes into the detail allowing you to gather more evidence. I appreciate that this may appear daunting at first but the more use this 'laddering' technique the more it will flow naturally. Going back to the 'Leadership in Adversity' scenario example questions could be as follows:

Tell us about a crisis or unplanned event that happened and the response of your team?  
What specifically was the situation?  
What made this incident a real crisis?  
What were your first thoughts?  
What specifically were you able to do to contribute to resolving the event?  
How did you co-ordinate the team?  
What was the mood of the team?  
Were there any difficult team members in this situation and how did you handle them?  
Who were you communicating to?  
How did you go about it?  
What was the outcome?  
Were you happy with the outcome?  
In hindsight would you have handled the situation differently?

## The Outcome and Benefits

From the answers given you can then 'score' each candidate effectively against the competency. Build up this questioning process for all of the required competencies and you now have an incredibly effective interviewing tool against which you can benchmark and select.

As scoring a candidate against competencies still involves some degree of objectivity we recommend that two interviewers sit in on each CBI and each 'scores' independently. Then the scores can be consolidated in a post interview 'wash up' or simply added together and halved. Now divide the total by the total possible score and you now have a percentage on which to benchmark candidates and make decisions.

Added benefits to developing a competency interviewing structure for your business are:

- You can effectively communicate your hiring reasoning within your organisation,
- The technique often teases out development areas
- It makes it easier to communicate constructive feedback for unsuccessful candidates
- You have on record the data behind your hiring decisions (for future reference for reviews, etc.)

For further information on competency interview including interview questions visit: [http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk/how\\_to\\_cbi.php](http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk/how_to_cbi.php)

## **Increase Your Chances of Getting Recruitment Right from 14% to 75%**

When speaking to our clients the theme seems to be that there is a shimmer of light at the end of the tunnel and many employers are now recruiting for positions they placed on hold during the latter part of 2008 and early 2009. On the rocky road back to recovery it is now more important than ever to equip yourself with every possible means to develop a robust recruitment process.

Competency based interviewing is just one step that we at Aaron Wallis advise to incorporate into your recruitment process. In well referenced research (Hunter, J.E., Hunter, R.F. (1984), "Validity and utility of alternative predictors of job performance", Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 96 pp.72-98) occupational psychologist John Hunter stated that by incorporating third party referencing, competency interviewing, psychometrics and formal skills testing you can increase 'likelihood of successful on the job performance' from 14% to 75%.

Aaron Wallis therefore provides formal candidate skills testing, psychometrics and competency interviewing as part of their standard recruitment service.

We're so convinced that our recruitment process will enable your business to get it right that we'll back up our service with an unprecedented **12 months rebate** scheme. And, if you appoint us as your exclusive recruitment partner, our consultants will also conduct a competency interview alongside you enabling you to listen, observe body language, probe and fully focus on the interview in hand.

**If you are interested in learning more about our unique recruitment service call 01908 764280 or visit [www.aaronwallis.co.uk](http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk).**