

Behavior-Based Interviewing

Selecting the Right Person for the Job

Terry L. Fitzwater

A Crisp Fifty-Minute™ Series Book

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Learning Objectives For:

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEWING

The objectives for *Behavior-Based Interviewing* are listed below. They have been developed to guide the user to the core issues covered in this book.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS BOOK ARE TO HELP THE USER:

- 1) Develop objective job criteria
- 2) Learn a technique for developing objective, open-ended interview questions
- 3) Conduct an objective interview that extracts in-depth information from the applicant
- 4) Analyze interview results and rate applicants against objective criteria
- 5) Follow up the interview process with rejection and offer letters

ASSESSING PROGRESS

A Crisp Series **assessment** is available for this book. The 25-item, multiple-choice and true/false questionnaire allows the reader to evaluate his or her comprehension of the subject matter.

To download the assessment and answer key, go to www.axzopress.com and search on the book title.

Assessments should not be used in any employee selection process

Preface

Behavior-Based Interviewing is your guide to an interviewing methodology that will ensure consistency in the measurable areas of approach, research, design of questions, and ultimately a final hire or no-hire decision. The process allows interviewing by anyone, without the organization second-guessing what is stated in the interview. All you need to do is follow the process.

If you find yourself at the other end of the hiring process—as the job candidate—be sure to read the companion book to this one, *Preparing for the Behavior-Based Interview*. You may also want to use that book if you are in the position to mentor or coach those who are involved in a job search. Good luck, and “happy hiring!”



Terry L. Fitzwater

About the Author

Terry L. Fitzwater is a principal with Fitzwater Leadership Consulting with his principle office in California. He has authored three books in the Manager’s Pocket Guide Series: *Preventing Sexual Harassment*, *Documenting Employee Performance*, and *Employee Relations*. He is also the author of a companion book to this one, *Preparing for the Behavior-Based Interview*. He is a frequent speaker and university instructor, and instructs on-site business classes in performance management, employee relations, and other topics.

He holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration and a master’s degree in human resources and organization development. You can contact him at 916-791-0692 or by email at tfitzh2o@quiknet.com.

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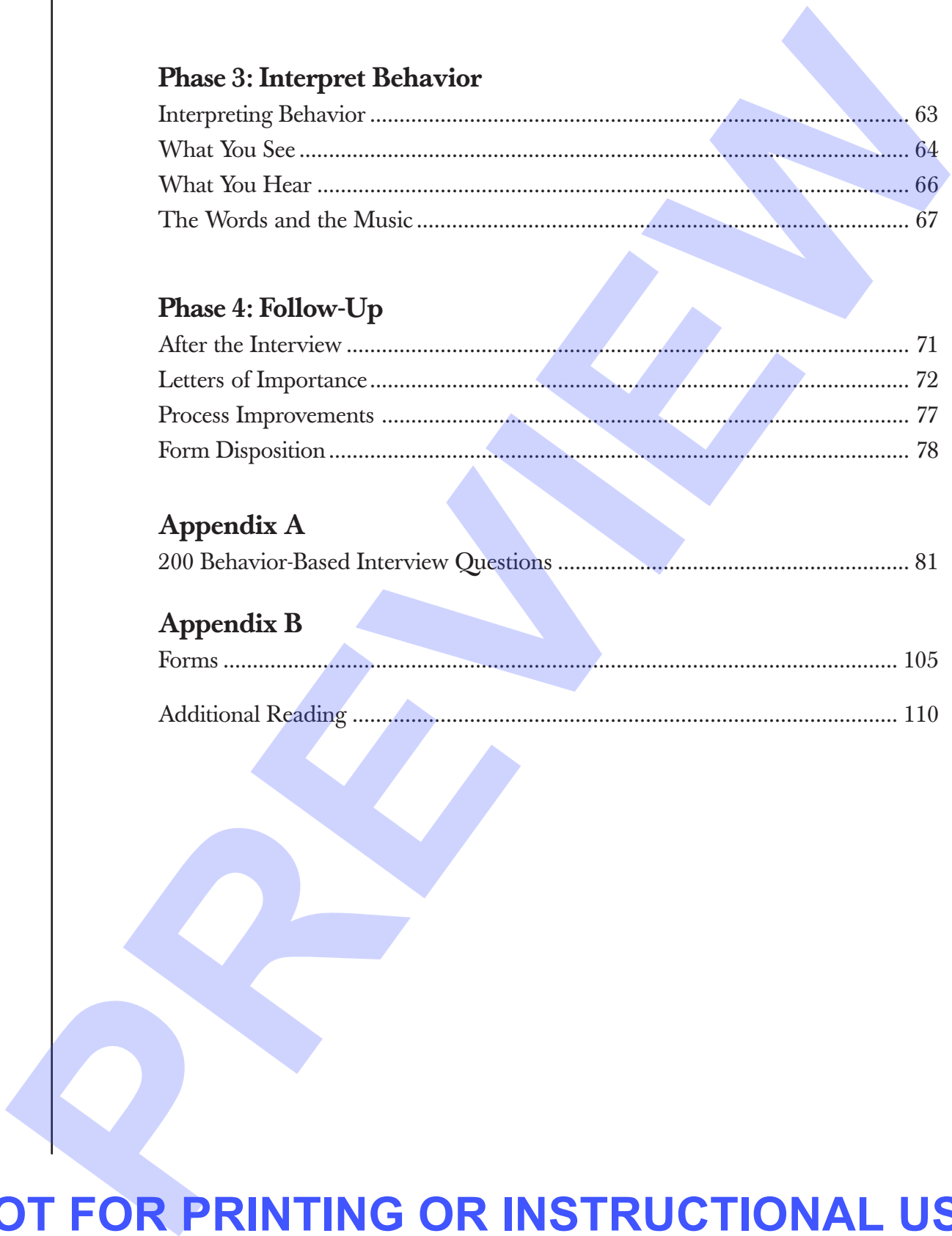
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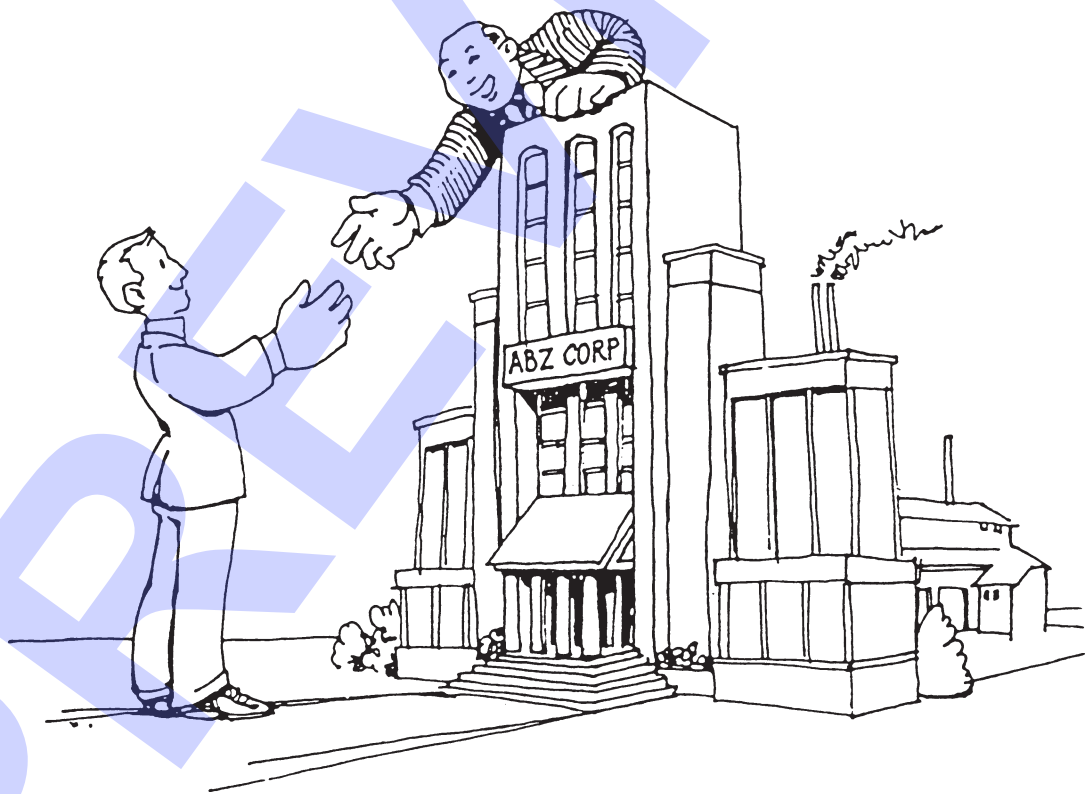
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INTRODUCTION



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PREVIEW

Introduction

When you think of selecting the right person for an open position, often your first inclination is to focus on the external hire—this is a natural leap considering that is where most organizations historically spend most of their time and energy. But in today’s environment of empowerment and frequent organizational change, this focus must change. Selecting the right person for the right job is also something you will need to do for internal decisions such as promotions, forming teams and special task forces, and making other assignments.

Given the current pace of technological advances, it is not enough to hire a person based solely on what you *think* they can do. Behavioral, objective, fact-based selection criteria must be developed to increase your chance of placing the right person in the right job at the right time. The development of practical, specific, well-defined behavioral criteria will assist the manager and/or interviewer in determining if the person can deliver the expected results, as well as help you justify your placement decision legally, if necessary.

It has been said that the best predictor of future behavior (and success) is past successful behavior. In the employee selection process, that premise changes the focus. Now, an interview should not concentrate on what a prospective employee can do for you in the *future*, but rather on what has made that person successful *in the past*—and how can you best use those traits to deliver the future.

Past success is a predictor of future success

The Realities of Interviewing

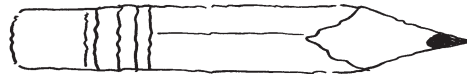
“70% felt the interviewees feel that the interview process is a strong indicator of how the company operates.”

HR Magazine, March 1998

The selection process of any organization will send one of two messages to an applicant. One is a message of encouragement; one is a message of nonchalance or disregard for the candidate. A recent survey by *HR Magazine* supports the need for trained interviewers and professionalism. The survey results revealed:

- 39% of the respondents said their number one frustration was that interviewers were “not prepared and not focused during the interview.”
- 38% of respondents were frustrated by a “lack of feedback on the status of their candidacy.”
- 27% said they did not receive written position descriptions or that descriptions differed from one interviewer to another within the same company.

These responses send a clear message to any organization retooling or developing a behavior-based selection process. *Be attentive to the applicant*—it can be the difference between getting the candidate you want and losing a talented person to the competition.



SELF-ASSESSMENT: BEING ATTENTIVE TO THE APPLICANT

Consider these questions.

How often have you...

Sent the wrong message by leaving someone in the waiting room well past the scheduled interview time?

Kept the applicant waiting during the course of a day-long interview process?

Kept a candidate waiting because you returned to your office late?

Glanced at your watch or answered the telephone while conducting an interview?

Allowed your interview to be interrupted by someone tapping on your door?

While some will read this and think the above to be absurd behavior, the study by *HR Magazine* suggests it still exists to a large extent. The message sent by the respondents to this survey is clear—anyone involved in the interviewing process must be attentive and prepared, for not only is the company evaluating the candidate—the candidate is evaluating the company.

The Legalties of Interviewing

Lack of preparation is an accident waiting to happen and one no organization can afford. Interviewers must do whatever they can to eliminate the subjective nature of the interview process. Basing decisions on “gut” feel or giving in to biases—such as those against tattoos, long hair, rings in the nose—only add to the possibility of potentially expensive lawsuits, allegations of discriminatory practices, and ineffective selection decisions. It is imperative to develop objective criteria that every person is measured against equally.

An EEOC Perspective

How you conduct the interview is important. John Montoya, a former deputy director of the EEOC has stated that poor interview practices will prompt the agency to look very closely at an organization’s recruitment practices. He sites four areas that bring EEOC scrutiny:

1. TESTING

Any test that is used whether written tests or tests for agility or performance should be validated. The agency will demand proof of validation.

2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

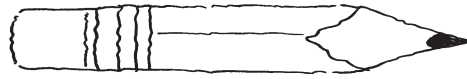
Complaints of disparate treatment are common in hiring cases and an employer must take steps to ensure all applicants are treated equally. *To prevent the impression of bias, you must ask all applicants the same set of prepared questions.*

3. INTERVIEW PANELS

The commission will look at the *make-up* of each panel in terms of race, sex, age, national origin, and disability.

4. INTERVIEW NOTES

Interviewers should avoid a tendency to write down *extraneous notes* about the way a person looks, dresses, grooms, or acts as opposed to notes specific to the job and the behaviors to be successful in the job.



EXERCISE: RATE YOUR INTERVIEWING FAIRNESS

How would you rate your skills and the hiring practices of your company against Mr. Montoya's list?

5=excellent

3=good

1=needs improvement

	Self	Company
Testing	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
Interview questions	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
Interview panels	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1
Interview notes	5 4 3 2 1	5 4 3 2 1

Write down what particular behaviors you think are deficient in any of the areas above. As you go through the book, think about ways you can improve in these areas.

The Behavior-Based Interview Process

This book provides a four-phase process to defining a consistent approach to interviewing and making hiring decisions.

PHASE 1: Gather Information

PHASE 2: Conduct the Interview

PHASE 3: Interpret Behavior

PHASE 4: Follow-Up

Each phase includes specific tasks for you to perform that lead to the final, ideal outcome: getting the right person in the right job at the right time. Following these steps will help determine whether the candidate possesses the skills, knowledge, and experience to perform the position. Along the way you will learn:

- The importance of research
- How to develop and write position descriptions and job-specific criteria
- The legalities of interviewing
- What to do after the interview
- Some additional effective interviewing tips and techniques

You will also learn how to prepare for the interview objectively—that is, establish an entire process dealing with measurable, objective, fact-based criteria—criteria that is *not* subjectively biased by your own personal preferences, opinions, and judgments.

The Four-Phase Selection Model

You can use this form as a checklist as you complete each task.

Phase 1: Gather Information

- Review position descriptions
- Review performance appraisals
- Discuss with those who have knowledge of the position (Knowledge Givers)
- Develop job-related success criteria
- Review requisition form
- Review and compare the applicant's background and other credentials versus job-related criteria

Phase 2: Conduct the Interview

- Develop interview questions
- Script the interview
- Set the interview parameters with the candidate
- Ask open-ended questions
- Probe the answers for detail and clarification
- Gather job-related information from interview
- Observe and document job-related behavioral data

Phase 3: Interpret Behavior

- Analyze and interpret notes
- Evaluate behaviors against criteria
- Evaluate behaviors against a norm
- Assign a rating
- Make a decision

Phase 4: Follow-Up

- Post interview follow-up
- Offer/reject letter