

## Appendix H

### Common Interview Mistakes

There are several common interviewing mistakes that undermine an interview's usefulness. These are explained below since knowledge of the mistakes is the first step toward avoiding them:

**Lack of Updated Job Description/ Knowledge of Job Duties:** Interviewers who don't precisely know what a job entails and what sort of candidate is best suited for it usually make their decisions based on incorrect stereotypes about what a good applicant is. Accurate job information translates into better selection interviews. Thus, it becomes especially important to have a clear, defined and updated job description for each position that is being interviewed for.

**Snap Judgments:** One of the most common interviewing errors is that interviewers tend to jump to conclusions or make snap judgments about candidates during the first few minutes of the interview, or even before the interview begins based on test scores or the resume submitted.

**Negative emphasis:** This involves rejection of a candidate based on a small amount of negative information and is a tendency to focus on information, which will automatically disqualify a candidate, causing the interviewer to overlook her/his strengths. It has been found that interviewers, who previously recorded unfavorable references about candidates, tend to give the candidates less credit for past successes and hold them more personally responsible for past failures after the interview.

**Feelings/ Mind set:** If an interviewer likes a candidate, she/he may attach positive attributes to the candidate that don't actually exist. Thus, interviewers could be influenced in their candidate selections by their background, attitudes, motives, values, aspirations and biases.

**Stereotyping:** This refers to forming an opinion about how people of a given gender, religion, race, appearance, or other characteristic think, act, respond, or would perform the job - without any evidence that this is the case.

**Halo/ Horn effect:** The "halo" effect occurs when an interviewer allows one strong positive point about the candidate to overshadow or have an effect on everything else. For instance, knowing someone went to a particular university might be looked upon favorably. Everything the applicant says during the interview is seen in this light. ("Well, she left out an important part of the answer to that question, but, she must know it, she went to XYZ University). The "horn" effect is just the opposite - allowing one weak point to influence everything else.

**Candidate-order or Contrast error:** Strong(er) candidates who interview after weak(er) ones may appear more qualified than they are because of the contrast between the two. This means that the order in which the interviewers meet with candidates often affects how they rate them. Thus, an "average" candidate who is interviewed after several "unfavorable" candidates is evaluated much more favorably than she/he might otherwise have been, since in contrast to the "unfavorable" candidates, the average one appeared much better than she/he actually was. Note taking during the interview and a reasonable period of time between interviews may alleviate this.

**Influence of nonverbal behavior:** Interviewers are also influenced by the applicant's nonverbal behavior. Several studies have shown that applicants who demonstrate greater amounts of eye contact, smiling and other similar nonverbal behaviors are rated higher. One implication is that an

otherwise inferior candidate who is trained to 'act right' in an interview will often be appraised more highly than will a more competent candidate without the right nonverbal interviewing skills.

**Telegraphing:** Some interviewers inadvertently help the candidate respond correctly to their questions by *telegraphing* the expected answer. This can translate into sending subtle cues (like a smile) regarding what answer is being sought. An even more obvious example might be **asking leading questions** that lead the applicant to the answer you are looking for like: "This job calls for handling a lot of stress. You can do that, can't you?"

**Too much/ Too little talking:** Too much or too little guidance on the interviewer's part is another common mistake. Some interviewers let the candidate dominate the interview to the point where too few substantive questions are pursued. At the other extreme, some interviewers stifle the candidate by not giving the person sufficient time to respond to questions.

**Poor (Inadequate/ Inconsistent) record-keeping:** Unless you carefully document the interview, valuable material will slip through the cracks. Also avoid recording inappropriate information (i.e. anything not related to the job) or statements based on your own inferences.

**References/ Acknowledgements:**

- [http://www.uta.edu/policy/forms/employment/Interview\\_Errors.pdf](http://www.uta.edu/policy/forms/employment/Interview_Errors.pdf)
- Human Resources Management- 7<sup>th</sup> Edition- by Gary Dessler