Workforce effectiveness (interview technique)

Interview technique An interview is geared towards extracting information from the interviewee. Therefore, it can be structured, semi structured or in depth (Britten 1995). In a structured interview, the questions are pre-prepared and the interviewer stays within that format. This is helpful in ensuring that the relevant facts are extracted from the interviewee, such as duration of previous employment, or the specific job responsibilities, etc. However, a semi structured format allows the interviewer a more flexible structure through the use of open ended questions which define the areas that need to be explored, such as the nature of duties at the previous job, etc. Patton (1987) has recommended that such questions should be neutral and clear to the employee, they must be open ended and demonstrate sensitivity to the subject of the interview.

The cognitive interview techniques aims to improve communication during an interview, through enhancing recall of past events and the context in which they occurred. This method also allows an interviewer to assess when confabulation is used, i. e, stating something that is not strictly true. Memon et al (1997) have examined the application of the cognitive technique in the context of police work where interviewing witnesses was concerned and found it efficacious in enhancing accurate recall of past events. Lindberg et al (2003) have compared three different investigative techniques used with young children. The first of these was a step wise interview process, in which questions became progressively more difficult. The second method employed a play situation and interviewed the children by asking them questions as they played. The last method was a modified structured interview in which the interviewers were provided an information packet that highlighted the importance of the research and included instructions on how

to build rapport with the children together with guidelines on specific kinds of questions that could be asked. The last method was found to be the best.

In view of the above, it appears that the method of semi structured interview may be the best in gaining a picture of the candidates for the Executive assistant position and their abilities. While a set of prior questions can be prepared before hand, some questions can be open ended, allowing the candidate to expand on any aspect that the interview wishes to know more about. The interview will include questions about the candidate's academic qualifications and the grades that were earned. A set of questions on job history can be prepared as follows:

1. How would you rate your skills at MS Word, Excel and Office on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being an expert?

2. What was the nature of your duties with your previous employer?

3. Why did you choose to leave the firm?

4. How independently are you able to perform your tasks? Rate your level on a scale of 1 to 5

5. How do you prioritize your tasks?

6. How will you handle an irate client on the phone who insists on speaking to your boss when he is busy?

7. Describe your experience with multi tasking.

8. How do you normally handle a crisis?

9. How long have you been an Executive Secretary?

10. What do you know about this firm?

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