

**Session Objectives:**

- Types of interviews
- Planning the interview
- Conducting the interview
- The ethics of interviewing

**Types of Interviews**

**Employment interview:** This type of interview determines the suitability or otherwise of an applicant for the job. During the course of interview, the interviewer tries to assess the knowledge and soft skills of the applicant.

**Example:** In an interview to select a marketing trainee for a cellular network company, the panel of interviewers try to ascertain the candidate's command over marketing concepts, his communication skills, his personality traits and willingness to travel to determine his suitability for the job.

**Performance appraisal interviews:** These interviews involve an on-the-job evaluation of an employee's performance. The employee and his superior together assess the performance of the employee toward achieving predetermined goals. In this type of interview, areas in which the employee requires to improve are identified and new goals are set based upon the past performance and future potential of the employee.

**Counseling interviews:** The aim of these interviews is to help the employees to overcome their problems. Varied problems such as family problems, drugs, alcoholism, etc. are discussed with a view to solving them. It is vital that the respondent be open in communicating his problems. At the same time, the interviewer should be tolerant. By and large, such interviews involve discussions relating to numerous emotional and personal issues.

**Example:** Doctors and social workers hold counseling interviews for drug addicts and alcoholics at rehabilitation centers to counsel them to give up drugs and alcohol.

**Disciplinary interviews:** Disciplinary interviews become necessary when personnel issues relating to indiscipline come to the fore. These may include issues such as damage to property, frequent absenteeism from the workplace, nonperformance of duty, lack of regard for superiors etc. The main objective behind calling these meetings is to reprimand the employee and warn him/her of dire consequences if he/she doesn't improve.

**Example:** A traffic inspector may hold a disciplinary interview of a traffic violator in order to instill into him some discipline and to make him realize the importance of traffic rules.

**Persuasive interviews:** These interviews are held with the objective of selling an idea or a product or service. Persuasive interviews require excellent communication skills, since the interviewer is required to sell the idea or concept in addition to obtaining the opinion of the respondent.

**Example:** Direct selling agents involved in the business of selling rely on their persuasive skills to achieve insurance and credit card sales. The

meetings they have with prospective customer to persuade them to purchase the products are forms of persuasive interviews.

### Planning the interview

Proper planning before conducting an interview is vital to make the interview a success. There are six aspects that have to be kept in mind while planning an interview. These are:

**State the purpose:** Interviews may serve different communication purposes. Clarity of purpose, both for the interviewer and the respondent, is essential. The interviewer should be clear about his requirements and should tailor the questions accordingly. Similarly, the respondent too should be clear about his goals. By having a clarity of purpose, both the interviewer as well as the respondent, can avoid sending conflicting signals to the other party.

**Get information about the other party:** Before appearing for an interview, the candidate should gather sufficient information about the job, the company, the field etc. Doing such homework before an interview reflects one's interest in the company. The candidate may also provide details about himself in the resume and application submitted to the company. This helps interviewers to become familiar with details about the candidate and makes it easier for them to ask relevant questions during the interview.

**Decide the structure:** The structure of the interview is normally dependent upon the type of response that is expected from the respondent. If the interviewer wants to adhere strictly to a particular area, he asks "close ended" questions say, the area of specialization of the candidate. These are aimed to judge the candidate's abilities. While answering close ended questions, the respondent will have to give precise answers. Close ended questions leave no scope for the respondent to volunteer additional information. Such questions are normally asked when there is a time constraint or when only specific skills need to be tested. Open ended questions, on the other hand, provide a lot of scope for the respondent to provide additional information as well as gives him a chance to air his views.

**Example:** Close ended question: What are the different products developed by our company?

**Open ended question:** What do you know about our company?

**Consider possible questions:** After deciding the format of the interview, specific questions can be prepared accordingly. These questions may fall under one of the following categories: factual and opinion questions, primary and secondary questions and direct and indirect questions. Factual questions aim at ascertaining facts whereas opinion questions solicit opinion. Primary questions relate to new topics or new areas in a topic and secondary questions focus on related questions to the topic that has already been discussed. Direct questions are often of great help in getting the appropriate response. However, problem arises when the respondents are unable or unwilling to give any reply. Under such situations, indirect questions may be asked. This could elicit a response. Apart from these types of questions, there are also other types like hypothetical and leading questions. Hypothetical questions are in the nature of 'what if' questions that seek the respondent's solution to a particular situation. Leading questions are those which solicit a particular answer.

**Examples:**

**Factual question:** What is the GDP of India?

**Opinion question:** What do you think about the growth rate of the Indian economy?

**Primary question:** What do you know about Oracle 9i?

**Secondary question:** What are table views?

**Direct question:** Are you satisfied with this business plan?

**Indirect question:** What changes would you like to suggest to this business plan?

**Hypothetical question:** If you are the CEO of Enron at this juncture how will you handle the crisis?

**Leading question:** You will repay the loans in a week's time, won't you?

**Plan the physical setting:** The physical setting has a profound impact on the conduct of the interview. The setting should be such that there are no or only minimal disturbances and both the interviewer and the respondent are alert to each other's verbal and non verbal cues. The setting also reflects the extent to which the interview is formal. An interview that is conducted face-to-face without the presence of any barriers between the interviewer and the respondent is more informal. This is in contrast to an across-the-table interview setting, wherein the interviewer assumes greater authority.

**Anticipate problems:** After finalizing the format and questions, it is always advisable to revise the whole list once again. By doing so, it may be possible to detect hidden loopholes in the plan for interview and to devise strategies to counter these loopholes. There could be certain imbalances in the types of questions asked. Some questions may not be able to extract an appropriate response.

## Conducting the Interview

There are three phases of conducting an interview. These are: opening, body and close.

**The opening:** The purpose of the opening session is to put the respondent at ease. The candidate should start feeling comfortable to last the full course of the interview. In the opening session, the interviewer normally begins with a greeting followed by a few general queries. This has the effect of making the respondent relax. After this stage, the respondent is made aware of what is going to follow in the later stages of the interview.

### Example:

**Interviewer:** Hello, Good morning.

**Respondent:** Good morning sir/ madam.

**Interviewer:** Tell us something about yourself.

**Respondent:** Tells about academic background, family background etc.

**Body:** The interview process will be successful only if both the interviewer and the respondent handle their roles properly.

- **The interviewer's role:** The interviewer should ensure that the discussion remains within the agenda set for the interview. At the same time he should extract useful and related

information from the interviewee. The interviewer should be alert to both verbal and nonverbal cues of the respondent. This will enable him to form an opinion about the candidate's behavior and attitude. The interviewer should also ensure that the time allotted to each item is strictly adhered to. This will enable the interviewer to evaluate the candidate against all the aspects listed on the agenda. Sometimes, when the interviewer fails to obtain a satisfactory response from the respondent, he may have to ask some probing questions.

- **The respondent's role:** The respondent should answer the questions clearly and accurately. The reasons for a respondent's failure to give a clear and accurate answer to the question posed by the interviewer could either be his/her inability to understand the question or evasiveness on the part of the respondent. If the respondent feels that the interviewer is wrongly interpreting his responses, he should politely clear the misunderstanding of the interviewer so that the interview's purpose is achieved. The respondent should answer the questions honestly and should emphasize on positive aspects.

**The close:** The restating of the conclusions of the interview by the interviewer indicates that the interview is coming to an end. The respondent can take a cue from this and ask queries if he has any. The interviewer and the respondent can also exchange pleasantries before parting.

### The ethics of interviewing

An interview is likely to become the basis for an ongoing relationship in the future. Hence, it is essential that certain ethical guidelines are followed, both by the interviewer as well as the respondent.

#### Guidelines for the interviewer

- **Don't make unrealistic promises:** When there is an uncertainty involved in the outcome, it is wise to avoid making any commitment. Making tall promises which cannot be fulfilled later, will reflect poorly on the individual. The interviewer should therefore not indulge in such practices.  
**Example:** The interviewer promises the candidate a pay package which is likely to be disapproved by the board.
- **Don't reveal confidential information:** Personal information provided by the candidate during the interview should be kept confidential. Similarly, the interviewer shouldn't reveal confidential information about the company at the time of interview.  
**Example:** Any personal problems revealed by the respondent during the interview should be kept confidential.
- **Don't ask illegal questions:** The interviewer should be careful not to ask any questions that are not directly related to the job. These include questions on age, sex, marital status, nationality, race, color, etc.
- **Don't be controlling or overbearing:** The interviewer must allow the respondent to answer the questions put to him on his own. The interviewer should not try to impose his views on the respondent.  
**Example:** In a performance appraisal interview, allow the respondent to state his/her reasons for a decline in performance, instead of forcing him/her to accept his/her flaws.
- **Don't be overly friendly:** Though it is desirable that the respondent should feel at ease, there is however no need to overdo the same. The risk lies in the fact that in an air of informality, a

casual attitude may creep in.

### **Guidelines for the respondent**

**Don't be dishonest:** In any type of interview, it is always advisable to be honest and not to attempt to mislead the interviewer. This helps the respondent in the building a good image and creates a favorable impression of him on the interviewer.

**Don't waste the interviewer's time:** Clarify the purpose of interview, do your homework and come well prepared for the interview. This helps in focusing on the issues and also prevents wastage of time.

### **Summary**

Business interviews are of various types such as employment, performance appraisal, counselling, disciplinary, and persuasive interviews. A good deal of planning goes into making an interview a successful one.

Three stages are involved in conducting an interview, the opening, body, and the close. Ethical practices need to be followed by both the interviewer as well as the respondent during interviews.