



# INTRODUCTION

The interview is the most frequently employed tool for selecting personnel; almost every organization uses them. Because recruiters consider interviews are more reliable for hiring decisions, they place more confidence in the interview than any other means of selection.

Over the years, many authors have tried to explain the popularity of the interview.<sup>1</sup> First of all, most managers and other decision makers think that by the end of an interview, they can evaluate candidates' characteristics and abilities and know whether they meet the job requirements. A large number of managers are further convinced that the interview is the best way to evaluate a candidate, even though

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1. Dipboye (1992); Taylor and O'Driscoll (1995).

they recognize the virtues of more objective tools such as tests. They think it essential to meet candidates face to face to make a judgment on their qualifications. Besides, managers and employers usually like conducting interviews, especially meeting the candidate in person. In any event, candidates see the interview as an opportunity to demonstrate their qualifications. Whatever the reason, the interview has clearly become standard in the organization and it is taken for granted that there can be no selection without an interview.

In contrast to other methods of evaluation, the interview is not only used to evaluate. It can be a way of recruiting candidates, pointing out the organization's strengths, or the first step in socializing future employees. It may also be that the interview is used to control the selection process. It is true that the interview's flexibility gives managers the opportunity to establish and consolidate their influence over the choice of future employees, whereas more objective, even mechanical methods, such as psychometric tests, reduce this influence.

*Purpose and contents of this book.* Since the selection interview is the employers' preferred tool for choosing their staff, it is crucial to maximize its effectiveness by using tested techniques and preparing interviewers appropriately. This book presents the most recent knowledge and techniques in the field of the selection interview. It is a practical guide that recognizes the many constraints in the organizational world. Rather than proposing a single approach, a recipe that applies to every situation, this guide instead offers various ways of conducting an interview, each with their advantages and limitations, so that the appropriate interview for each situation can be chosen intelligently. Of course, this versatility requires more judgment and effort on the part of interviewers, therefore more time. However, all we need to convince us that such an investment is required is to think of the consequences of one bad hiring decision that could be disastrous for the organization and its entire staff.<sup>2</sup>

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2. See Petterson (2000), Chapter 1.

The selection interview consists of a conversation with a candidate to obtain information on his or her ability to carry out the duties involved in a given job. Interviews can be used at different stages of the selection process.

- a) *At the beginning of the process:* A brief **pre-selection** interview may be held to ensure that the person is sufficiently qualified to be a candidate for the position. Sometimes this interview is also used to attract the candidates who seem most appropriate.
- b) *During the process:* One or more **in-depth** interviews are usually conducted to precisely evaluate the candidate's knowledge, skills and other qualities in relation to the job requirements.
- c) *At the end of the process:* The **hiring** interview is often the last step. It is useful for offering the job to the best candidate and for discussing the arrangements for bringing him or her into the organization.

The knowledge and techniques presented here primarily relate to the in-depth interview. Drawing on numerous research studies, we first outline the advantages of the structured interview over the traditional interview too often favoured by organizations. We follow with detailed explanations of what has to be done at each of the six steps that make up the structured interview process: 1) conducting a job analysis, 2) determining the selection criteria and the rules for making decisions, 3) creating the interview guide, 4) conducting the interview, 5) evaluating the candidates, and 6) making the hiring decision.