



LESSON 2

HOLISTIC INTERVIEWING: ASSESSING THE WHOLE PERSON

Introduction: Beyond Skills and Experience

In today's collaborative and fast-paced work environment, a candidate's personality, their values, and their ability to work well with others are just as important as their skills and experience. Holistic interviewing is an approach that goes beyond the traditional assessment of a candidate's qualifications and seeks to evaluate the "whole person." It is about understanding their motivations, their values, their work style, and their potential for growth.

The Three Pillars of a Holistic Assessment

A holistic interview is built on three pillars:

1. Can they do the job? (Skills & Experience)

This is the traditional focus of the interview, and it is still a critical component. You need to assess whether the candidate has the necessary technical skills and relevant experience to perform the job successfully. The behavioral and achievement-oriented techniques we have discussed are the best way to assess this.

2. Will they love the job? (Motivation & Engagement)

A skilled and experienced candidate who is not motivated or engaged will not be a top performer. You need to understand what drives the candidate and whether the role and your company are a good fit for their personal and professional goals.

- **Questions to Assess Motivation:**
 - “What are you looking for in your next role?”
 - “What aspects of this job are most exciting to you?”
 - “What are your long-term career goals, and how does this role fit into that plan?”

3. Can we work with them? (Cultural Fit & Teamwork)

A candidate can be skilled and motivated, but if they don’t work well with your team or fit your company culture, they will not be successful. You need to assess their interpersonal skills, their communication style, and their values.

- **Questions to Assess Cultural Fit:**
 - “Describe the work environment where you have been most successful and why.”
 - “Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a colleague. How did you handle it?”
 - “What are the three most important values you look for in an employer?”

The Power of the Team Interview

One of the most effective ways to assess cultural fit is to involve the team in the interview process. A team interview is an interview where the candidate meets with a group of their potential peers. This provides a number of benefits:

- **A More Accurate Assessment:** The team can often get a better sense of a candidate’s personality and work style than a hiring manager can.
- **Increased Buy-In:** When the team is involved in the hiring decision, they are more likely to be invested in the new hire’s success.
- **A Better Candidate Experience:** It gives the candidate a realistic preview of the team they would be working with.

ACTIVITY: THE THREE PILLARS AUDIT

Time needed: 30 minutes

What You'll Do

Review a past hiring decision using the three-pillar framework. Identify what you missed and how to improve your next interview.

The Three Pillars Framework

Every interview should assess:

Pillar 1: Skills - Can they do the job? _____

Pillar 2: Motivation - Will they do the job? _____

Pillar 3: Cultural Fit - Will they thrive here? _____

The problem: Most interviewers focus 80% on skills and rush the other two pillars.

Instructions

Step 1: Choose a Hire to Review (5 minutes)

Think of the last person you hired OR interviewed. Write down:

- Their name (or "Candidate A" for privacy):
- Position:
- When you hired them:
- Are they still with you? Yes / No
- If no, why did they leave?

No hiring experience yet? Use someone who interviewed YOU for a job, or create a scenario using a friend's recent job interview.

Step 2: Audit Each Pillar (15 minutes)

Download the audit worksheet and complete:

PILLAR 1: SKILLS

What questions did you ask to test their skills?

- Question 1: _____
- Question 2: _____

What evidence did they provide? (Certifications, portfolio, test results, specific examples)

Score this pillar: Strong / Okay / Weak

PILLAR 2: MOTIVATION

What questions did you ask about their motivation?

- Question 1: _____
- Question 2: _____

Examples of motivation questions:

- "Why do you want THIS job, not just any job?" _____
- "What gets you excited about coming to work?" _____
- "Tell me about a time you went above and beyond" _____
- "What would make you leave this role?" _____

Did you ask ANY motivation questions? Yes / No

Score this pillar: Strong / Okay / Weak

PILLAR 3: CULTURAL FIT

What questions did you ask about culture and values?

- Question 1: _____
- Question 2: _____

Examples of culture questions:

- "Describe your ideal work environment" _____
- "How do you handle feedback?" _____
- "Tell me about your best team experience" _____
- "What type of manager brings out your best work?" _____

Did you explain YOUR company culture? Yes / No

Score this pillar: Strong / Okay / Weak

Step 3: Identify the Gaps (5 minutes)

Answer honestly:

- Which pillar did you spend the MOST time on during the interview?
- Which pillar did you skip or rush?
- Looking back, did any issues with this hire relate to a pillar you didn't assess well?
Example: "They had the skills but no motivation - they left after 3 months"

What would you do differently? Write 3 specific questions you should have asked:

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____

Step 4: Plan Your Next Interview (5 minutes)

Create a balanced question list for your next interview:

Skills (3 questions):

- ① _____
- ② _____
- ③ _____

Motivation (2 questions):

- ① _____
- ② _____

Cultural Fit (2 questions):

- ① _____
- ② _____

Self-Check

- ✓ Did you assess all three pillars equally?
- ✓ Have you created better questions for next time?
- ✓ Can you identify what you missed?
- ✓ Are your new questions specific, not generic?

Common Mistakes

- ✗ Asking "Why do you want to work here?" (Too generic)
- ✓ "What specifically about our hotel's guest service approach appeals to you?"
- ✗ Only asking skills questions
- ✓ Balance all three pillars
- ✗ Assuming motivation from resume
- ✓ Ask direct motivation questions

Common Mistakes

- Completed audit worksheet (all three pillars)
- Gap analysis (what you missed)
- New question list for next interview