



LESSON 2

THE EVOLUTION OF INTERVIEWING: FROM GUESSWORK TO SCIENCE

Introduction: A Journey Through Time

The job interview is such a standard part of our professional lives that it's hard to imagine a time without it. However, the way we interview has undergone a dramatic transformation over the last century. What began as a subjective, gut-feeling-based process has evolved into a sophisticated, science-backed discipline. Understanding this evolution is key to appreciating the power of the modern, behavioral-based techniques we will be learning in this course.

The Old Days (1919-1940s): The Era of Intuition

In the early 20th century, hiring was largely a matter of intuition and personal judgment. The first formal intelligence tests, developed by Alfred Binet in 1919, were a step toward a more objective approach, but they were not widely used in the workplace. For the most part, hiring managers relied on their "gut feeling" about a candidate.

This all began to change during World War II. The military was faced with the monumental task of placing millions of soldiers into the right roles quickly and efficiently. This created a pressing need for a more structured and reliable method of assessment. In 1942, military intelligence testers began advocating for the use of a structured set of interview questions, marking the first major shift toward the modern interview.

The Research Revolution (1950s-2000s): The Birth of Behavioral Science

The post-war era saw a boom in psychological research, and for the first time, scientists began to rigorously study the effectiveness of different interview techniques. The results were groundbreaking and conclusive: past behavior is the single best predictor of future success.

This research revealed a startling gap in accuracy between traditional and structured interviews:

Interview Type	Accuracy Rating
Traditional "Gut Feeling" Interview	○ 25%
Structured Behavioral Interview	○ 85%

Researchers like Tom Janz at the University of Calgary perfected the methodology of the behavioral interview, proving that by asking candidates for specific examples of how they have handled past situations, you can gather highly predictive data about their future performance.

Today's Smart Hiring (2025): The Age of Data and a Human-Centric Approach

Today, we are in the midst of another evolution. The principles of behavioral interviewing remain the gold standard, but they are now enhanced by technology and adapted to the expectations of a new generation.

- **The SOAR Method:** The traditional STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) has been updated to the more dynamic SOAR method (Situation, Obstacle, Action, Result), which we will explore in detail later in this course.
- **Technology Enhancement:** Technology is not replacing human judgment, but enhancing it. Video interviews, AI-powered analysis, and gamified assessments are all tools that can help us make more informed and objective decisions.
- **Gen Z Expectations:** The modern workforce, dominated by Gen Z and Millennials, expects a hiring process that is fast, fair, transparent, and interactive. The old, slow, and secretive processes of the past are no longer acceptable.

The results of this modern approach are clear. Companies that use structured behavioral interviews make 3 times better hiring decisions than those that rely on traditional methods. They see significant reductions in turnover, improvements in team performance, and substantial cost savings.

Real-World Impact:



A major hotel chain reduced employee turnover by 45% in the first year after implementing a behavioral interviewing program.



A large restaurant group saved over \$200,000 in a single year by reducing the number of bad hires.



A leading corporate office saw a 35% improvement in team performance after they started hiring for behavioral fit, not just for skills.

Key Takeaway: The history of interviewing is a clear journey from guesswork to science. By embracing the data-driven, behavioral-based techniques of modern recruitment, you can dramatically improve the quality of your hires and the success of your organization.

Visual Element: The Evolution of Interviewing Timeline

1919	First job interview recorded (🎤 Microphone icon)
1950	TV interviews started (📺 TV icon)
1980	Structured HR interviews (💼 Briefcase icon)
2000	Online / video interviews (💻 Computer icon)
2025	AI-driven interviews (🤖 Robot icon)

Knowledge Check

Which of the following statements best describes the primary advantage of a structured behavioral interview over a traditional "gut feeling" interview?

- a) It is faster and requires less preparation.
- b) It is more focused on a candidate's personality and charisma.
- c) It is significantly more accurate at predicting future job performance.
- d) It is preferred by candidates because it is less challenging.

Answer: c) It is significantly more accurate at predicting future job performance.