

The Three Biggest Interview Mistakes Hiring Managers and Interviewers Make

**Risk,
Reward
and
Research
in Hiring:**
the

**3 BIGGEST
MISTAKES
HIRING MANAGERS
MAKE**

SUZIE PRICE

Executive Summary:

The three biggest interview mistakes are:

- #1 - Making Assumptions & Letting Bias Get in the Way.
- #2 - Over Focusing on What You Can See, Background and Experience.
- #3 - Getting (and Accepting) Rehearsed Answers from Candidates.

The Solution for these mistakes is to **Focus on F.I.T.:**

- **F**ixate on What the Job Needs
- **I**ntangibles Matter
- **T**alk Less

See nine “must use” interview questions on pages 12 and 13.

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They say that people are your most important asset. I disagree. The truth is that the **RIGHT** people are your most important asset.

The challenge, then, is in figuring out just who the right people are.

I struggled with this for the first time about 20 years ago when I was promoted to my first real management job....

I was proud that I’d been promoted and I was worried about proving myself.

One of my new responsibilities was to manage our wellness facility – with two nurses and a part-time doctor who provided counseling and care for 1,200 employees.

The Doctor, Dr. Pleasant, had been with us for many, many years. He was wise, kind, patient and caring, like a great pastor or counselor, and he was also funny and entertaining - knowing exactly how to lighten everyone’s mood.

He counseled and advised folks through everything from health issues, family problems, career moves and sensitive employee situations.

He played a major role in creating the family atmosphere that was so important to our culture. So, when the Doctor announced his retirement, there was a never-ending stream of well-wishers at his door. **Every** department gave him going away gifts, cards and parties.

My first job as a new manager was to find the “perfect” replacement for Dr. Pleasant.

I felt a mix of eagerness and..... panic! I worried that finding the perfect replacement for Dr. Pleasant was an impossible task!

I had to remind myself that I’m bright and capable, that I have taken leadership development courses, and read many management-training books. **Certainly I can find and hire a great replacement!** I can! How hard can it be to hire someone, right?

As if I weren’t already nervous enough about hiring the perfect replacement, I felt added pressure “to hurry up,” because every day someone new would stop me in the hallway to ask me about my progress.

And so I did what most hiring managers do – I learned what I could about the job, I re-read the job description, created a job ad and placed it. Within a few days I had hundreds of resumes to review.

In one of my first interviews, I was thrilled to meet Dr. Hurt. We had such a great conversation! He was friendly, talkative and asked lots of good questions. He said all the right things. He seemed so interested in the company... When I called his references, they all gave him glowing reviews. And his background check came back clear.

I did it!

Well, you know it’s gonna be a bad day when – your artificial flower dies, you get a nasty paper cut from a get-well card and you overhear newly hired Dr. Hurt arguing with one of the Vice Presidents.

I had already started to worry about Dr. Hurt earlier when he asked me how often the employee’s **annual check-ups** were.

Even though Dr. Hurt had the right background and had said all the right things in the interview, he was not a great fit for the job.

We wanted him to be like Mother Teresa, but he was more like Judge Judy. We wanted care and compassion, and he was...well, like...most doctors!

Did he have the background to do the job and was he willing to do it? Yes!

Was his style, attitude, ability and competence a match to the things that represented superior performance in our job? **Ab-so-lutely NOT!**

I had to fire him.

Now we did end up hiring someone who worked out beautifully, but **not** before I learned a hard lesson.

I had hired for background, and eventually I had to fire for attitude. Bottom Line: While he was a good person - for our position he was a dud, NOT a winner.

Have you ever hired a dud? Someone who seemed capable in the interview and then, on the job, they failed?

Since that time, I've been immersed in every aspect of the hiring process. From interviewing hundreds of candidates, to teaching hundreds of people how to interview to get the job they want.

And since 2004, I've been certified in a patented hiring benchmark process that helps companies hire superior performers, and I've debriefed over eight hundred candidate assessments. I've taught at least five hundred hiring managers how to interview, and my book *How to Hire Superior Performers* was published in 2014.

I've created this mini-book for you because I want to teach you how to confidently and accurately assess who's a superior performer and who's not, so that you can have the high performing team you've always wanted. That way you can always dodge the duds, and pick the winners!

So let's review what we're going to talk about today:

- I want to start by helping you avoid the top three mistakes all interviewers make.
- Next, we'll look at interview questions that are GUARANTEED to help you reveal the REAL work ethic of every candidate.
- Then I'll share with you the one thing you can start doing right away that will greatly improve your ability to hire superior performers.

In a Careerbuilder study – nearly 7 in 10 businesses reported that their business had been negatively affected by a bad hire. And that study estimated that each bad hire was said to have cost between \$25,000 to \$50,000 each.

Studies show that the cost to replace employees is anywhere from 1 ½ times to 8 times a person's salary. So, if we use the lowest multiplier – 1 ½ times, and apply that to our part-time salary for Dr. Hurt – 20 years ago, my mis-hire of Dr. Hurt cost my company about \$75,000. Ouch!

Does that seem high? Let's see if we can list what's considered in the costs of making a mis-hire, you tell me...

Losses You Incur When You Have Turnover:

- The productivity of the departing team member usually declines dramatically before s/he leaves.
- Your daily productivity takes a hit as you try to manage, motivate and lead low performing employees to higher performance while you manage the firing process.
- Once the person is gone, the open position is not productive for a period of time – and so you incur the loss of productivity during the time the position is vacant.
- The entire team's productivity takes a hit as everyone works to fill in the gaps.
- If the position involved customer interaction and relationships, you can end up losing customers and/or sales.
- Once you hire someone new – there is always a learning curve – and so, you incur productivity losses until the new person gets up to speed.
- In addition to the productivity and customer costs - you will now have real hard costs related to filling the positions. Such as: placing advertisements, recruiting, using hiring assessments, running background checks and more.
- Here is another subtle, but potentially devastating loss: that is the cost to your career and future advancement. When you have high turnover and losses of productivity your ability to manage and lead well could come into question.

Cost of Turnover - Example

Employees on Team	25
Annual Turnover	2 people
Calculate: (1.5) x (Average Salary) = Cost of Turnover <u>Per Person</u>	\$75,000
Annual Cost of Turnover =	\$150,000

Your Turn...

Employees on Team	_____
Annual Turnover	___people
Calculate: (1.5) x (Average Salary) = Cost of Turnover <u>Per Person</u>	\$_____
Annual Cost of Turnover =	\$_____

Someone said hiring professionals is expensive – try hiring amateurs!

Now let's look at the top three mistakes interviewers make...

I'm going to introduce the first mistake almost all interviewers make by explaining an exercise I do when [teaching interviewers](#).

I ask participants to take two post-it notes and write two statements about themselves, one that's true and one that's not true. Next, participants share their statements with one another, to see if they can each guess which statement is true and which is false.

Here's an example of two statements about myself:

1. In college I worked part time for a psychologist.
2. In college I worked part time for a congressman.

Which one is true and which one is false? (Number 2 is true, but people often assume number 1 is correct because of all the psychometric assessments I use.)

When we do this exercise participants always share that someone times they were able to guess correctly, and often times, they were fooled.

Why does this happen? How does this mirror what can happen in an interview?

This exercise demonstrates two important things:

1. People can say whatever they want to say
2. We make assumptions – based on what we see and based on our own biases.

The nearest to perfection people ever get is when they're creating their resume!

Sometimes Candidate's lie (or stretch the truth or tell you what they think you want to hear...) AND we often want to buy into whatever they're telling us because we just want to hire someone and get on with our day.

The first biggest mistake interviewers make is:

Making Assumptions & Letting Bias Get in the Way.

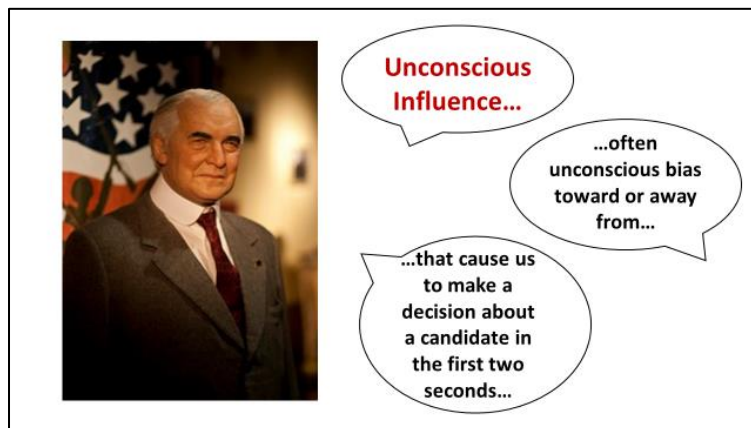
Assumptions and bias are often unconscious. We don't even know we have a bias toward or away from things like: degree programs, personality styles, job titles, past job experience and more.

This is particularly harmful when interviewing as it could cause you to make decisions on candidates with false insight.

Have you heard of The Warren Harding Error? Harding was the 29th President of the United States who was elected in 1921, and is often remembered as the worst President. They say he was elected because he looked so “Presidential.” While in real life: he drank, chased women, played a lot of poker and implemented little helpful legislation. He died in 1923 amid much controversy.

Business Guru Malcolm Gladwell in his books, “The Tipping Point” and “Blink: The Power of Thinking without Thinking” calls this “Unconscious Influence.”

Unconscious Influence is our personal, and often unconscious bias towards stereotypes that causes us to make a decision about someone in the first two seconds. We take a thin-slice of information and make a decision based on that information. (More about The Warren Harding Error, [here](#).)



Gladwell shared this about Unconscious Influence and the Warren Harding Error, **“They didn’t dig below the surface. The way he looked carried so many powerful connotations that it stopped the normal process of thinking, dead in its tracks.”**

How do we make sure we don’t make the Warren Harding Error? How do we overcome the problem of Unconscious Influence, assessment and bias?

SOLUTION FOR INTERVIEW MISTAKE #1: *Fixate on What the Job Needs.*

Fixate means to make fixed, stationary, or unchanging; to focus one's gaze on. And there is one tool that can help you focus on the job when interviewing: a Performance Dashboard for the Job.

A Performance Dashboard is a tool that helps you think about and fixate on the top priorities and expectations that **MUST** be met for superior performance on the job. It answers the question, “If this does not happen, this job and the person in this job, will fail.”

An example of a **Performance Dashboard** (the top three priorities*) for a **Construction Superintendent** would be:

- #1 - Projects are completed on time.
- #2 - Lead and direct the team.
- #3 - Safety standards are met and exceeded.

Here’s another example of a **Performance Dashboard** for a **Senior CustomerService** position:

- #1 - Customer satisfaction provided at required levels.
- #2 - Is a product expert and masters new releases.
- #3 - Ensures that all orders are completed and handled according to protocol.
- #4 - Trains and mentors new customer service reps to success.

*Specific measurements for each priority should be developed for each person in the role. (See more examples and a video on the process I use to create Performance Dashboards here: <http://tinyurl.com/perfdashboard>)

Once you have a Performance Dashboard – you can begin determining what skills and background are needed for success. Our patented and virtual [Superior Performance Assessment Process](#) helps you create a hiring Benchmark and provides interview questions. I also provide a “Do It Yourself” Superior Performance Hiring Worksheet in my book, “[How to Hire Superior Performers.](#)”

A Performance Dashboard helps you overcome “Unconscious Influence” and bias, by ensuring that all interviewers and leaders:

1. Stay fixated on the job.
2. Understand and agree on what’s most important for success in the role.
3. Be objective, specific and rigorous on the hard and soft skills needed.
4. Clarify what new hires must focus on for success.

Bottom Line: Bias, assumptions and Unconscious Influence can be one of the biggest mistakes because we are often unaware of our own bias. Fixate on what the job needs with a Performance Dashboard so that the problem of personal bias is fixed!

Now, let’s discuss the 2nd Biggest Mistake interviewers make.

I’ll start by asking you to think back to a time when you hired someone, or worked with someone, who did not do their job well. They were a drain on the team, on productivity and frustrating to work with. What were they doing that made them come to mind? What in general was going wrong?

When I ask a group of people to share their answers, I hear things like:

- “bad attitude”
- “always late...”
- “out of step with our culture”
- “couldn’t get along with people”
- “disorganized and scattered”
- “could not handle the stress”
- “wouldn’t follow directions, policies or procedures”
- “not willing to learn new things”
- “inflexible”

Did you notice that all of these reasons are related to how a person communicates, interacts, works and makes decisions, and are NOT related to skill or knowledge?

Georgia’s Labor Commissioner Mark Butler completed a study of why people don’t work out. They determined at 69% of the time, the reasons were related to personal skills, not hard skills or knowledge.

The second biggest mistakes interviewers make is:

Over Focusing on What You Can See, Background and Experience.

Have you ever hired someone who looked good and sounded good in the interview, but didn’t work out? If so, you might have, without meaning to, made this mistake.

In one Society of Human Resource Management study they reviewed 100,000 new hires that “washed out” of their job in the first 18 months. They discovered that 90% of those who did not make it, were let go because of these reasons:

- They were unable to manage their emotions.
- They couldn’t accept feedback.
- They were not motivated or not a fit for the job and/or company culture.

Note that lack of experience and background is NOT one of the reasons for firing 90% of the time!

SOLUTION FOR INTERVIEW MISTAKE #2: *Intangibles Matter.*

Intangibles are all of the main reasons why someone does not work out – like attitude, ability to handle stress, follow directions, manage their time, get along with others and their decision making ability. Personal Skills. Motivation.

Have you been looking for these things in interviews? Most interviewers do not because they do not know how to look for them.

Here’s how:

1. Review the Performance Dashboard (previously discussed).
2. Select the intangible skills that most help meet the priorities from the Performance Dashboard. (See three job’s sample Personal Skill lists, [here](#).)
3. Use Competency, Behavior-Based Interview questions to match the intangible skills determined in Step 2.

Competency Behavior-Based interview questions are situational questions related to specific skills. Interviewees are asked to describe in detail how they handled situations by sharing past behaviors and actions. (More about this here: [Three Steps to the Best Interview Questions & Predicting the Future](#))

Competency Behavior-Based interview can be one of the best predictors of future performance. If a candidate can specifically describe in detail examples of situations where they performance that skill we, chances are very good they can perform well in that area on the job.

“Lip Service Lies, Past Behaviors Don’t.”

Nine Sample Interview Questions for Three Intangible Skills Important for Success:

- 1) Personal Accountability: This skill is found in most top performers in most jobs. Someone with strong Personal Accountability will: Be responsible for the consequences of actions and decisions; embrace all decisions; will not shift focus or blame elsewhere. **Bottom Line:** An employee who has strong personal accountability skills NEVER blames others for their problems.
 - Tell me about a time when it was necessary to admit to others that you had made a mistake. How did you handle it?
 - What is the worst business decision you ever made? What made it the worst? Would knowing what you do now have helped you to avoid making that decision?

- 2) Time Management: This skill is found in most top performers in most jobs. Someone with strong Time Management skills will: Prioritize and complete tasks; deliver desired outcomes within allotted timeframes; independently pursue business objectives in an organized and efficient manner, even without direct supervision; minimize disruptions and time wasters.
- Give me a specific example of a project that you were responsible for organizing from beginning to end. How did you go about it? How did you deal with changes that arose? How did you ensure that the project stayed on track? What was the outcome? What did you learn from this experience?
 - Do you consider yourself a good time manager? Share with me the planning system you use and show me how you use it.
- 3) Motivation: Do they have the energy and interest to do the job? Will they match what is rewarded on the job? Will they match the culture? Use these questions:
- What jobs have you enjoyed the most? Why? Please share specific examples of what you enjoyed.
 - What jobs have you enjoyed the least? Why? Please share specific examples of what you disliked.
 - Give specific examples of past environments you worked best in.
 - Give specific examples of past environments that did not work well for you.
 - What kind of responsibilities would you like to avoid in your next job? Why?

To avoid the second biggest interview mistake, over focusing on background and experience, you must acknowledge that intangibles skills, like attitude, motivation and personal skills are important and you need to focus on this more in interviews.

You must get away from the idea that “anyone can be trained to do any job” and that “with enough training and if they try hard enough they can excel” – these ideas simply are not true!

People bring who they are to the job – and who they are is not only their background and experience, but their natural style, strengths and motivators.

We reviewed the two biggest interviewer mistakes: Assumptions and Bias and Over focusing on Background and Experience.

The third biggest mistakes interviewers make is:

Getting (and Accepting) Rehearsed Answers from Candidates.

In an interview you want to figure out if they will do the job, if they will love the job and if you can tolerate working with that person.

If you ask vague, open-ended interview questions like these, you will get rehearsed, and possibly, made-up answers:

- What are your greatest strengths?
- Why should we hire you?
- Are you more of a hunter or a gatherer?
- How honest are you?
- How would your last manager describe you?
- Why are you interested in our company?

What you ask and how you conduct the interview can help you avoid the mistake of getting rehearsed answers from candidates.

Think about your most recent interview. Recall the open position you were filling, the candidate, the types of questions you asked, what was shared and the length of the interview. Now, estimate for me how much time you talked versus how much time the candidate talked.

- A) **80%** of the time you talked and **20%** of the time the candidate talked
- B) **60%** of the time you talked and **40%** of the time the candidate talked
- C) **50%** of the time you talked and **50%** of the time the candidate talked
- D) **25%** of the time you talked and **75%** of the time the candidate talked

What was the ratio for that most recent interview?

Can you guess what the ideal ratio would be? The correct answer is D - **25%** of the time the interviewer talks and **75%** of the time the candidate talks. This is a big shift for most interviewers.

SOLUTION FOR INTERVIEW MISTAKE #3: *Talk Less.*

Why do some people talk so much during an interview? Some of the reasons could be because they get excited or that they're experts on the company and want to show their knowledge, or maybe they haven't planned for the interview very well. I have found that if an interviewer really likes the candidate, they talk even more!

But here's the problem, if you don't let the candidate talk you never get beneath the surface, the candidate just shares rehearsed canned answers.

Your objective is to hire someone who can be a superior performer. If you do all or most of the talking, you are making a decision based on what you shared, not what s/he actually said.

Use this link to print this sign as reminder. <http://tinyurl.com/topmistake>

Put this sign in your interview preparation folder so you see it every time you start an interview.



If you are willing to talk less you will also need to get comfortable with silence.

What do you tend to do when you are in an interview and the candidate gets quiet? Some people rush in to fill the void, trying to make sure there are no uncomfortable moments.

I want you to learn to leverage the power of silence. If you stop yourself from rushing in with chatter, and just be quiet the candidate will eventually fill in the pauses. And that's when you start getting more unrehearsed answers.

In addition to talking less, learning to leverage silence, there's another way to get less rehearsed answers and that is to practice your facial expressions. The ideal expression I want you to master is: The Pleasant, But Response Neutral face.

Let me explain.

The idea is for your candidates to feel welcome, but at the same time make sure they are not molding their answers around what they think you want to hear. During the interview you do not want to cheer them or jeer them. Putting on "The Pleasant, But Response Neutral" face is the key.

Let's discuss the three most typical expressions people make, so you can master the "face" that will ensure that you are not cheering nor jeering your candidates.

First, I want you to put on the "I'm Happy, I Love You," and the "This is Great" face. *(You should be smiling, grinning and nodding.)*

Now, I want you to put on the "I'm Mad, Tough and I'm Going to Intimidate You" face. *(You should be snarling, frowning and furrowing your eyebrows.)*

Lastly, take a few seconds to take a deep breath. Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth. One more time, breathe in and out. Relax. Think of something pleasant and nice, like the smell of morning coffee, a pretty flower or water flowing in a fountain.

This time I want you to put on the "Pleasant, But Response Neutral" face. You're not frowning, not smiling, you're not cold and you're not warm---you are pleasant. THIS is the "Response Neutral Interview Face!"

This face is easier for some and harder for others, depending on your natural communication style. Extroverts can be overly expressive and may share too much approval or disapproval to a candidate's answers. Introverts might be thinking so much before they speak, that they can look unhappy or uncaring. Know what your tendency is and adapt temporarily for "The Response Neutral Interview Face."

Bottom Line: Talk less, listen more.

If you have a [solid hiring process](#) that you follow, you know what you're looking for, you use competency, behavior-based interview questions and you press for specific examples and listen – you will be avoiding the three biggest interview mistakes. You will be on your way toward hiring superior performers.

Focus on F.I.T.

Fixate on What the Job Needs

Intangibles Matter

Talk Less

Ideas without action are worthless. And I don't want your time learning these tips to have been a waste.

If you get busy and forget all about Focusing on F.I.T., you might end up hiring a dud. And, I know you don't want that, and I don't want that for you! Dodging the duds and picking winner is crucial to success in all businesses.

And, I want you to be able to take this information and USE it to transform how you manage the hiring process, so you're able to build the team of winners you've always wanted.

If you're really serious about moving forward and solving the problem of low performance and turnover, if you've ever hired someone like Dr. Hurt, we need to talk.

For anyone who's been reading this and thought – I want know more about how to help with your hiring process and tools, I am offering a complimentary consultation. We would review your goals, my services and determine if we are a match for each other. It's complimentary and there's no obligation.

To schedule a call you can use my [contact form](#) or call and email me directly:
Suzie Price, 770-578-6976, suzie@pricelessprofessional.com

Don't let your interview process and bad hires make every day a long day – Focus on Fit!

For more resources on the hiring process, check out:

- Hiring Assessment – [PPD's Superior Performance Assessment Process](#)
- Book - [How to Hire Superior Performers](#)
- Podcasts - [Hiring and Interviewing Related Podcasts](#)
- Blog - [Blog Archives](#)