

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING— Avoiding the “Bad Fit”

“I never ask about jobs on their resumes. I try to understand their values, what is most important to them and whether they will fit here.”—Mattel CEO Bob Eckert’s statement about his approach to assessing senior management candidates that illustrates the importance of what is often referred to as behavioral interviewing.

SELECTION TOOLS	MEAN PREDICTIVE VALUE
Structured Behavioral Interview	.70
Cognitive Ability Testing	.53
Traditional Board Interview	.37
Assessment Centers	.36
Reference Check	.26
Traditional One-on-One Interview	.20

Source: Center for Creative Leadership. Data reflects predictive value that the proper use of each method/tool has regarding a candidate’s fit and assimilation into a new cultural environment.

Behavioral interviewing is a technique that attempts to get behind the resume. It focuses less on what someone has done, and spends more time understanding the motivations, considerations and decisions that impact their actions. Asking questions that start with words like “How” and “Why” will help you learn a great deal about an individual. The answers require reflection, thought and description to truly evaluate and explain one’s successes and failures. It also demands that the interviewer listen more and talk less.

Behavioral interviews can provide you with a strong indication of a person’s inherent qualities. These attributes are most critical to a successful cultural fit between an

organization and an individual. Few positions at senior levels are terminated because of lack of competence. It is almost always a “bad fit” that results in termination or separation. As Harvard professor David H. Maister wrote *“Professional success requires more than talent. Skills you can teach—attitudes and character are inherent.”*