A FOUR-STEP LEARNING JOURNEY TO EXCEPTIONAL INTERVIEWING

IT’S SIMPLE
Interviewing job candidates is easy. You ask questions, listen to answers, and then pick your favorite person. Simple, right? Sure, but that kind of interview process is the path of least resistance to filling open positions. There’s a lot more to it, however, if you want to protect and build the reputation of your company, attract top talent and align your talent acquisition process to your business goals. Implementing an interviewing system that accomplishes all these things doesn’t have to be complex, but it does require a commitment from your organization and adherence to a sequential process.

TOO SIMPLE
Some organizations believe if they’ve got a structured interview guide, they’re good to go. In these cases, where the guide and the questions are the be-all and end-all, interviewer training is perceived as unnecessary. All that is needed in this scenario is an ability to read the scripted questions and record the answers. Unfortunately, this also creates inconsistency in the interview process; managers tend to stray from the script, fail to ask clarifying questions, and/or record responses in a haphazard way.

Other organizations cursorily stage a formal training event for interviewers, and then hand them the guides—with the expectation that this additional reinforcement will solve all interviewing ills and help drive real bottom-line results. Years of research demonstrate that skills learned in formal training quickly (in a matter of days) deteriorate. And without some kind of skill reinforcement after training, learners abandon the best practices taught in the formal training event.

The two methods above create a lack of consistency that results in poor candidate experiences, poor quality of hires, and, ultimately, a broken talent acquisition process that impedes the end goal: filling open positions.

We believe that in the best organizations, every single interviewer needs proper training; they must learn the basics of data gathering, how to evaluate that data, and how to manage the candidate experience. Training can be done in a classroom setting or virtually. Would-be interviewers can also gain access to online, self-directed learning. Still, while the value of training is undisputed the real learning takes place in the follow-up.

PATH TO EXCEPTIONAL INTERVIEWING
While formal training is step one in the critical foundation of an interviewing program, additional steps are necessary to create the ideal learning journey for interviewers and
an exceptional interviewing program for your organization. The journey includes skills application (in actual interviews), feedback, and skills refreshment.

**Skills Application**

Interviewers need opportunities to apply their new skills by participating in real-life interviews soon after training. A study conducted by Brookdale Senior Living Solutions in 2013 of 237 hiring managers examined the impact of interviewer experience on interviewing process outcomes. In this study, interviewers who had conducted 11 or more Targeted Selection® behavioral interviews reported significantly better accuracy, efficiency, and overall comfort with the process than interviewers with less experience. Eleven interviews may seem like a lot, but remember that this is a journey, not a race.

**Feedback**

Feedback opportunities, above and beyond those normally included in formal training events, are available in well-designed interviewer learning journeys. One of these is the data integration discussion which allows interviewers the chance to share, evaluate, and reach consensus on data collected. An often overlooked value of this process component is that it provides critical feedback to participants about their interview techniques. When participating interviewers share their respective data on candidates, they quickly learn what good data looks like and sounds like, and they can use peers' data to benchmark their own collection skills.

**Skills Refreshment**

As time passes after training and between interviews, skills deteriorate and the process gets distorted. According to the Science of Training, in just one year's time, trainees lost over 90 percent of what they have learned. Interviewers need to brush up on the process, get some pointers, and practice before conducting subsequent interviews. Ideally, interviewers will have multiple options from which to choose to refresh their skills: in-person practice, expert coaches, virtual practice labs, and online interactive tips. Well-designed online tools can make supporting interviewers easier. Interviewers can focus on specific areas or they can review the whole process. And with an interactive system, interviewers will receive immediate responses to verify their understanding and further strengthen their skills. A little refresher can go a long way toward getting interviewers back on course.

**LEARNING JOURNEYS AND LEARNING PATHWAYS**

The learning journey never ends: successful training is an iterative process. Repeating the steps to exceptional interviewing is the key to improve your interviewers' skills and secure better quality of hires, on an ongoing basis. With this said, the specific learning pathway individuals take may be very different based on individual needs. One person may follow the four-step process sequentially, while another person may complete the steps in a slightly different order, emphasizing different steps. Without question, the continuous process will result in highly skilled interviewers, a streamlined interview process, reduced turnover, and a robust bottom line.