

Applying Virtual Interviewing Technology to the Candidate Recruitment and Screening Process

Introduction

The dynamics of our free market economy frequently create situations whereby a large number of individuals must compete for a limited number of desirable openings or positions that are available within an organization or institution. Examples of such situations include securing employment in the public or private sector, gaining admission to a college or university, or gaining acceptance into a professional or social organization. In all such situations, the organization seeking to fill the position or opening must employ one or more evaluation methods in order to select the most qualified candidate. It is generally accepted that the evaluation methods used for this selection process must be as objective and comprehensive as possible. It is also generally recognized that, in most cases, such methods should be both time and cost efficient.



Many organizations utilize a personal interview as the principal or primary candidate evaluation method. Personal interviews may take many forms, but typically consist of a meeting between one or more interviewers and the candidate. The meeting may take place in a "face to face" mode, with the interviewer and candidate physically present in the same location, or be mediated by an electronic device, such as the telephone or a videoconferencing device. During the interview, the interviewer poses a series of questions or prompts which are intended to elicit an immediate response from the

candidate. The immediacy of the personal interview compels the candidate to provide an appropriate response in a timely manner. The sense of "pressure" perceived by the candidate is generally recognized to be a key factor in the effectiveness of the personal interview as an evaluation method.

The candidate's responses typically provide factual information regarding his/her suitability for the position. In addition, while observing the candidate's response to the question, the interviewer may gain important insights regarding the candidate's character and personality traits. These insights are gained by observing the candidate's eye movements, facial expressions, body positions, gestures, and other non-verbal cues. It is generally agreed that the information regarding the candidate's character and personality traits, obtained by observing the candidate's non-verbal responses, may be just as important to the selection process as the candidate's verbal responses. This is particularly true when the candidate's character and personality traits are considered to be germane to the candidate's suitability for the position.

Drawbacks of Traditional Interviewing Methods

It is clear why many organizations utilize the personal interview as the principal or primary candidate evaluation method. However, the personal interview, as it is currently practiced, has a number of inherent drawbacks and flaws that seriously limit its value and utility to organizations performing evaluation and selection of candidates.

First, the personal interview requires one or more interviewers to personally participate in every interview that is conducted as part of the candidate evaluation and selection process. This means that the personal interview, as a selection method, places substantial time demands upon the interviewers of the organization.

Second, the personal interview typically does not provide a convenient or practical method to record, store, and retrieve a permanent audio-visual record of the interactions that take place during the interview. This means that the details of the interview, including the candidate's responses to specific questions, both verbal and non-verbal, reside only in the personal memory of the individual who conducted the interview. Such personal memories are subject to degradation over time, as well as complete loss if the individual subsequently becomes unavailable to the organization.

Third, in the absence of a permanent record, there is no practical means to perform an

objective evaluation of two or more candidates by comparing the actual candidates' responses to the same, or similar, questions. Currently, such comparisons can only be performed, in an imaginary sense, by calling upon the personal memory of the individual who conducted the interview. This method of comparison can hardly be considered either reliable or objective.

Fourth, in the absence of a permanent record, only those individuals present at the interview are afforded the opportunity to evaluate the candidate's verbal and non-verbal responses. These individuals may not have the proper skills or training needed to perform the evaluation, or may be conducting the interview under adverse personal or professional circumstances. This may result in the candidate receiving an incomplete, inappropriate, or subjective evaluation.

Finally, it is recognized that during a personal interview, the interviewer may behave, or may be perceived to behave, in an inappropriate or undesirable manner. Such behaviors, or the perception thereof, may occur spontaneously during the course of the interview, and therefore cannot be anticipated or prevented. Again, as no permanent record of the interview is recorded, the organization conducting the interview may therefore be exposed to a variety of legal issues arising as a result of conducting personal interviews as they are currently practiced.





Advantages of Virtual Electronic Interviewing

Conducting candidate screening interviews via an automated electronic system addresses all of the drawbacks described above, and thus offers many advantages over the traditional "one-on-one" candidate screening methods. Three major advantages of the electronic interviewing and screening method are described below.

First and foremost, the virtual electronic interview (VEI) method offers a tremendous savings of time and effort to the hiring organization. The hiring authority needs to participate in the interview only once -- when the electronic interview is created. Once the VEI has been created, it can be presented to an unlimited number of candidates, anywhere in the world, without further participation on the part of the hiring authority. Furthermore, the decision to view the results of the interview, either in whole or in part, is entirely up to the discretion of the hiring authority.



Second, the results of the screening interview, which are automatically captured, stored, and organized by the electronic interviewing system, can be accessed and reviewed by anyone within the hiring organization. This means that the candidate screening task, which is traditionally concentrated within a small number of individuals (those performing the actual interview) can now be distributed among the entire resource pool of the enterprise. The availability of a permanent audio/visual record of the entire interview

provides the organization with an unprecedented level of control over the entire candidate screening and evaluation process.

Third, the virtual electronic interview process ensures that each participating candidate will be presented with identical interview content, thus ensuring that the interview process is fair and objective for every candidate, regardless of the circumstances of the interview. And, should any questions arise regarding the fairness or objectivity of the interview, a permanent audio/visual record is available for review.

It's clear that the virtual electronic interview method offers a number of advantages over the traditional methods employed for candidate interviewing and screening. The virtual electronic interviewing solution offered by Contexxa Corporation is described in detail below.

Interview Connect System Overview

The Interview Connect virtual interview system consists of a suite of web-based, enterprise-enabled software modules which allow the organization to create, present, capture, review, and compare virtual electronic interviews (or VEIs). These modules all store and retrieve data from a centrally hosted relational database.

Interview Builder Module

The Interview Builder module provides the complete set of tools required to build, preview, and distribute electronic personal interviews. VEIs are built from a collection of streaming media files and text-based questions which are stored in the central Interview Connect system database. Any authorized Interview Connect user can access these files to build a sequence of interview questions which are custom-tailored to the specific requirements of the interview. The module provides the individual creating the interview with the ability to include any available media file in the VEI and to specify the order in which the media files and text based questions will be presented to the candidate undergoing the VEI.

Interview Presentation Module

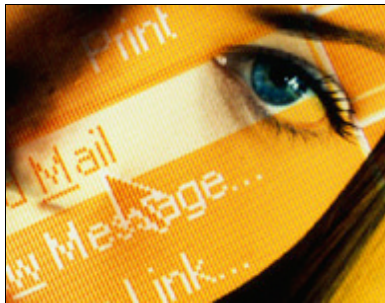
The Presentation Module of the system presents the interview questions to the candidate and provides a means for electronically capturing, encoding, and storing the candidate's responses. In order to closely

reproduce the experience of a "live" personal interview, Interview Connect presents the questions in a manner such that the candidate experiences psychological "pressure" to respond to the questions in a timely and succinct manner. This is achieved by displaying the each interview question and starting the subsequent audio/video capture process automatically. Thus, the candidate must undergo the interview just as he or she would when facing a "live" interviewer, without the ability to stop, pause, or repeat an interview question.

When the candidate has completed the virtual interview, the system automatically organizes the media files representing the electronically encoded candidate responses and transmits the files to a relational database hosted at a centralized data storage facility. This data can be hosted at the customer's data center, or at a facility managed by Contexxa. These files can then be accessed by any authorized Interview Connect user.

Interview Evaluation Module

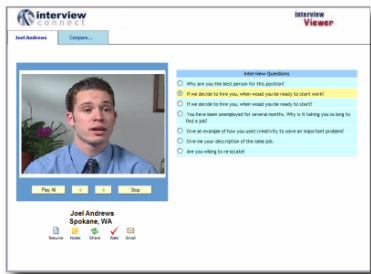
Once the media and data files representing the candidate's responses have been received and stored, the Evaluation Module of Interview Connect allows members of the organization to review these files in a variety of ways. Media files representing the candidate's responses may be played, repeated, paused, or closed at will. The text responses can be reviewed, evaluated, and scored. Selected segments of an interview, or the entire interview, can be shared among interested parties to facilitate





the decision making process.

The Evaluation Module provides complete flexibility to the user when reviewing the candidate's responses. Interviews may be viewed in their entirety or in selected segments. The responses may be viewed in conjunction with the questions that elicited them, or without. Review of the responses may be interrupted at any time to make notes, to record a qualitative or quantitative evaluation, or to review other data associated with the candidate. The system also provides a method to share any or all of an individual candidate's responses with others in the organization via electronic mail. Additionally, Interview Connect provides users with the ability to perform a simultaneously juxtaposed "side by side" comparison of two or more candidates by opening two or more candidate evaluation windows and/or screen regions in a concurrent manner.



Conclusion

Contexxa Corporation's Interview Connect virtual interview system may be used in any screening or selection activity that is intended to reduce a large pool of potentially qualified individuals to a smaller group, using the evaluation of personal interviews with the individuals as a principal or primary basis for selection. The greatest return on investment may be realized when Interview Connect is used as a tool for efficiently screening a large number of candidates who have applied for a

position, or for multiple positions, within the organization.

Contexxa's Interview Connect solution can deliver an unprecedented saving of time and effort to the interviewing organization, while concurrently offering a significant increase in the overall quality of the candidate screening and evaluation process. The organization also benefits from the enhanced flexibility that is provided by Interview Connect. For these reasons, Contexxa Corporation recommends that any organization involved in the effort of conducting candidate screening interviews on a volume basis consider implementing our Interview Connect solution.