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AN INTERVIEW PROTOCOL DESIGN PROJECT USING A VIDEO INTERVIEW PLATFORM

Jennifer Dose
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Abstract

This exercise allows students to develop an interview protocol in which they apply best practices for effective interview techniques including job-related behavioral and situational questions, consideration of what constitutes effective responses, and attention to the candidate perspective on the interview experience (e.g., understanding what to expect, consideration of technology issues, clarification of next steps in the selection process, etc.). Students make these choices in the context of an online video interviewing platform.

INTRODUCTION

Although interviews are among the most popular elements of the hiring process, they are often implemented poorly and hiring managers overestimate their own ability to glean information from candidates. This condition occurs even though best practices exist that increase interview validity as a predictor of job performance. No reduction in the use of interviews seems to be likely due to their perceived usefulness and the opportunities for two-way interaction that they provide. At the same time, advances in technology have made asynchronous screening interviews more feasible, reducing time constraints for both organizations and applicants. Furthermore, in a tight labor market where finding candidates with appropriate skills is challenging, considering how the candidate experiences the selection process is essential. These circumstances only heighten the need for students in a human resource management course to learn how to design and implement selection interviews effectively.

This article describes a class project in which students learn to use a video interviewing application to design an interview protocol using effective practices, determine desired responses, recognize its placement within a broader selection process, and demonstrate consideration for the candidate's perspective within the interview experience. Secondarily, students take on the role of applicant by practicing responding to interview questions and offering a critique of the interview protocol. They also have the opportunity to receive feedback related to their interview performance.

INTERVIEW BEST PRACTICES

Research evidence has been very clear about what characterizes effective interviews. Structured interviews with standardized, job-related, behavioral, and situational questions (Borman, Hanson, & Hedge, 1997; Hough & Oswald, 2000; Levashina, Hartwell, Morgeson, & Campion, 2014; Sackett, & Lievens, 2008), along with visual cues (Motowidlo & Burnett, 1995), are all related to high interview validity as a predictor of job performance. Unfortunately, managers still prefer to conduct unstructured interviews with idiosyncratic questions (Bates, 2016; Graves & Karren, 1996). However, Bates (2016) reports a recent but optimistic trend: the skills gaps and competitive labor market have led to a desire to ask solid job-related questions of a variety of types, including behavioral and situational questions. Although quirky or fad questions still exist, they are more likely to be implemented in a purposeful way with a model in mind for what constitutes a good applicant response.

One challenge for teaching about selection interviews in a human resource management course is that, although students have typically had experience as a candidate responding to interview questions, they may never have encountered interviewing best practices in their own internship or job search experiences. Thus, they need to learn practices that may go against both their own intuition and experience. Structured interviews are particularly rare (Sackett & Lievens, 2008). Almost all students, for example, have received the "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" questions for which the interviewer has not given thought to what a useful answer would be. Furthermore, candidates have often received some coaching on how to respond. Although students must realistically be prepared to answer such questions, it is difficult for them to separate what they need to know as job seekers from best practices to apply as future interview designers.

ONLINE VIDEO INTERVIEW PLATFORMS

Although face-to-face interviews are still the most common (Bates, 2016), use of video is increasing (Zielinski, 2012), particularly as an alternative to phone interviews for screening. Because students are increasingly likely to experience video interviews as applicants, exposure to interview protocol development using one of the common interviewing platforms is valuable.

Several providers of video interviewing platforms exist, including InterviewStream, HireVue, and JobVite (Robb, 2016). The platforms may include applicant tracking, live or on-demand interview capabilities, integration with other systems, and scheduling. They may be priced per interview, per user, or by subscription. Most platforms offer tablet or other mobile device functionality for both candidates and reviewers, but development of the interview protocols typically requires a computer. HireVue (https://www.hirevue.com/) uses artificial intelligence, offering voice and facial micro-expression analyses. Some platforms, such as InterviewStream (https://interviewstream.com/), can be configured for use by a university career center for practice interviews and feedback. Other systems, such as Big Interview (https://biginterview.com/) have been developed with career centers in mind and are not designed for actual selection interviews.

Experts note several advantages of video interviewing, especially for screening and for high-volume positions (Maurer, 2017). These advantages include standardization of questions

(Zielinski, 2012) and access to visual information not present with phone interviews (Douglas, 2016; Zielinski, 2012). By reducing the need for travel and coordination of face-to-face meetings, organizations can reduce their cost-per-hire and time-to-fill (Maurer, 2017). Although a method such as Skype also offers video, a recorded video interview provides greater efficiency since both candidates and hiring managers (and additional stakeholders) are able to use the platform at a time and place of their convenience (Robb, 2016; Zielinski, 2012). The technology allows candidates to be given the option of re-recording answers (Zielinski, 2012). Goldman-Sachs, among others, values the ability to cast a wider net, particularly for college recruiting outside of traditional target schools (Oran, 2016).

However, drawbacks to using video technology must be acknowledged. Issues unique to video interviews include the tendency for users to look at themselves on the screen rather than at the camera (Oran, 2016). Passive candidates may not want a video interview landing in the wrong hands (Zielinski, 2012). Also, there is no chance to ask follow-up questions. However, if the purpose is for screening, a later face-to-face interview can provide that opportunity. Although video interviewing does provide cost savings in travel and staffing, there are costs associated with the interview platform itself.

ENSURING A POSITIVE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

Organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of generating a positive candidate experience as they compete for top talent (Bates, 2016; Bolla, 2015). Students need to learn to view interviewing practices from both the organization's and candidate's point of view and to develop interview protocols accordingly. Since a positive feature of employment interviews is the potential to assess applicant-organization fit (Borman et al., 1997), organizations need to put their best foot forward in using video interviewing protocols, including ease of technology use, helping candidates know what to expect, and anticipating questions when there is no direct interaction. It is easier than ever for candidates to spread the word about a poor experience through social media, or simply decline to proceed further in the selection process.

Video interviews are a double-edged sword in this respect. Although they have the potential to provide a platform for employer branding and can be perceived as being more fair (Douglas, 2016), candidates have been found to have less favorable reactions and this may result in the loss of potential candidates (Chapman, Uggerslev, & Webster, 2003: Melchers, Petrig, & Sauer, 2016). The process can feel less personal and can also come with technology challenges (e.g., browser compatibility, transmission speed). Experts also note unrealized potential in video technology. Introductory video segments provide an opportunity for employer branding, introducing the hiring manager, and providing a realistic preview of both the job and coworkers (Maurer, 2017).

THE PROJECT

Since video interviewing is becoming a popular and growing hiring strategy, it is valuable for human resource management students to gain experience with this technology. Thus, the goals for students in a human resource management class are not only to practice selecting interview questions that are predictive of performance in a particular job, bearing in mind the placement of

the screening interview after receiving a resume/application and before further hurdles, but also to work with the technology and to consider the candidate experience.

This exercise was developed for a face-to-face undergraduate human resource management class. However, since none of the elements of the assignment take place face-to-face, it could easily be adapted for an online course (and would be very appropriate given the nature of the assignment). It would also be relevant for a graduate-level course. Graduate students would perhaps have greater familiarity with various types of jobs and their requirements, but they would benefit from the experience gained with question design and video interview technology.

The learning objectives of the project are as follows: (1) Apply principles for effective interview questions; (2) Create a positive experience for candidates by considering their perspective; (3) Practice using a video interview platform; and (4) Recognize interviews as one element in an overall selection process. Students will use critical thinking skills in both designing and critiquing an interview protocol.

The assignment itself involves several parts: designing the interview protocol on the video interviewing platform, describing the logic for the choices made, responding to the set of interview questions, critiquing the interviewers' choices, and getting feedback on responses to questions. The following description is based on working with InterviewStream technology, but would be applicable to most video interviewing platforms.

Preparation

Prior to beginning the exercise, students should have been assigned readings and had classroom discussions related to job analysis, recruiting, and selection. In particular, students should have encountered the advantages and disadvantages of using interviewing as a selection device, structured interviews, and behavioral/situational questions. Ideally, students would have completed a job analysis and been exposed to O*NET (http://www.onetcenter.org) as a source for information on job tasks and knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAOs).

Part One: Designing the Interview Protocol

Students are directed to choose an entry-level job for which their classmates might apply (and so would be reasonably able to answer interview questions) and to assess the applicability of questions (a) for that job and (b) in that hurdle, i.e., screening, of a selection process. Since students in the course are typically business administration and communications students, jobs such as assistant manager, sales representative, accounts representative, recruiter, human resources assistant, etc., are appropriate. Instructors may choose to provide some scaffolding to the assignment by requiring students to submit the job and/or job description for approval. This reduces the likelihood of interview protocols for jobs such as nurse or teacher for which, although they have interacted with such individuals, responding students do not have the knowledge base necessary to answer relevant interview questions.

Once the job has been selected, students can move to developing questions related to KSAOs and typical job duties. Students may have previously done a job analysis assignment and

can use the resulting job description to develop questions. As an alternative, they can research job requirements on O*NET or other reliable sources. Most video interview platforms allow users to choose from a list of questions or to develop their own. Students should be reminded that even though a question may be listed as an option in the platform for a particular job, this does not mean it is a "good" question.

Although students can learn to use the video interview platform through tutorials within the platform itself, explicit step-by-step instructions from the instructor have several advantages. The instructor can clarify any mismatch between course and platform terminology (e.g., on the InterviewStream platform, an interview protocol is called an "assignment" and answering interview questions as a candidate is called "conduct an interview"). Assignment-specific instructions can also integrate instructor expectations with directions for using the platform. For example, InterviewStream allows the use of a default introduction video that is very general, but students can also be required to record their own introduction video that introduces the job, the expectations for the interview, and sets a welcoming tone for the candidate. Finally, the institution's setup of the platform will also be unique and detailed instructions will allow students to navigate more easily. For example, students may be asked to create interview protocols from a central administrative account, and then respond to assigned protocol questions from their individual account that they must set up themselves. An example assignment instruction sheet is provided in Appendix A.

Students have several choices to make in addition to the specific interview questions. As mentioned, they can provide an introduction video ("intro video" in InterviewStream parlance) and/or an "outro video." They can also choose a background image, used for text interview questions. This image can be generic or job-specific (e.g., people in hard hats, people in front of a computer). Students also choose the time limit for a response and how many retries a candidate may be allowed. Finally, the number of questions and the order of questions are important considerations as well.

Along with their interview protocol, students submit a description and rationale for their choices, including a description of the job, their overall strategy, and what they are looking for (see Appendix B). They should be able to explain why they chose these particular interview questions and what they want in a response. Choices should also recognize that in an actual setting, they would have already received a resume and/or application. A rationale for the number of questions, order, time limit and number of retries should be provided as well. They are also asked to describe what the rest of the selection process following the video interview might include, if they were to design it. Finally, students are asked to reflect on their experience using the platform—what was easy or difficult?

Part Two: Responding To and Evaluating an Interview Protocol

In Part Two, students are randomly assigned an interview protocol other than their own and asked to respond as an applicant (see Appendix C for instructions for Part Two). This gives students practice in answering interview questions, but more importantly for the purposes of this course, it gives them the opportunity to apply their knowledge to evaluate the effectiveness of the interview protocol from the perspective of a candidate. Both the candidate experience and the

effectiveness of the questions posed are important in selection, and this part of the assignment addresses both of these aspects. Students answer the questions and then respond to a brief assessment of the interview protocol. A sample is provided in Appendix D. Students respond regarding the extent to which the questions were applicable to the job, clear, challenging, and allowed them to display their suitability for the job. Students also demonstrate their ability to describe types of interview questions (e.g., situational), and reflect on the candidate experience in terms of knowing in advance what to expect, experiencing a welcoming tone through the intro video, and believing that the retries and time limit are fair.

Following completion of both parts, the instructor completes the assignment rubric (see Appendix E for a sample). Some rubric items related to the interview protocol can be informed by the peer assessment in Part Two, as well as by the actual protocol and response to which the instructor has access. A student's accurate completion of Part Two is also evaluated (e.g., whether they took the interview seriously and accurately and thoughtfully made the assessment).

Although the primary perspective of the course is that of an HR practitioner or hiring manager, students still identify with the role of applicant. As individuals who are currently seeking internships and initial jobs upon graduation, this is not surprising. The InterviewStream application can be set up for "candidates" to complete a self-assessment and for others such as the instructor or career counselor to complete an assessment of them. This assessment includes ratings and/or comments regarding their non-verbal communication (e.g., eye contact, posture, demeanor), verbal communication style, and content. Students appreciate this feedback, though they may not seek it on their own. It can be a required part of the assignment or as an opportunity to earn extra points, if submitted for feedback.

PERFORMANCE OBSERVATIONS AND STUDENT REACTIONS

The assignment was effective in generating several desired outcomes. When designing the protocol, students demonstrated that they had thought about questions beyond the generic "what are your strengths and weaknesses" and focused more on questions with particular relevance to the job. Students also recognized the advantages and limitations of technology, typically giving candidates more than one but not unlimited attempts to answer a question. Students varied in their consideration of the order of questions and of the value of concluding questions such as asking candidates if they had any other questions or whether they had anything to add prior to closing the interview. In both the intro videos and the question responses, students tended to look at themselves (the screen) rather than directly at the camera, so eye contact was not optimal. Students also tended not to recognize the value of having a neutral background when filming, instead displaying college dormitory furnishings complete with drying towels and laundry. Both of these circumstances have been observed in the literature (Douglas, 2016) and by career counselors in general.

Significant advance work with the system and detailed instructions meant that there were almost no technology issues. Students were asked to log on to the platform a week before the project was due to check compatibility with their browser, audio, and video capabilities so that any problems could be addressed . . . and so that there were no problems or excuses surrounding the due date. A few students reported problems when they started an interview protocol and tried to

finish it at a later time, having failed to save it properly. One student experienced a glitch in the platform when she selected a question for her protocol for which the vendor had not produced a video, causing the responder to be unable to continue beyond that question.

Students expressed the helpfulness of "being exposed to the type of interview systems being used" and believed the assignment "gave a realistic impression of what making or taking a video interview would be like." They also stated that "it was helpful to try to put into action the topics we were learning about. It gave me a respect for choosing what questions to ask in the interview." Many students focused on the aspect of practice answering interview questions, with comments such as, "This interview challenged me on the spot to respond to questions" and "It allowed me to sit in the position of the interviewee and experience it at their level along with the feelings they go through."

CONCLUSION

The ubiquity of interviews as a selection device means that effective deployment of this technique is extremely valuable for students. This exercise emphasizes structured, job-related interviews administered in a cost-effective manner using video technology. The ability to combine best practices and emerging technology gives students a competitive advantage in their own job search and the skills to help an employer find and hire the most viable candidates.

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APPENDIX A

Video Interview Assignment

Objectives:

1. Apply principles for effective interview questions
2. Take into consideration the candidate experience
3. Practice using a video interview platform

In Part 1 you will develop a set of interview questions (interview protocol) and provide a rationale for your choices; in Part 2 you will be randomly assigned to answer an interview protocol developed by a fellow student. You will also submit an assessment of this interview protocol.

Part 1. Interview Protocol & Description *(80% of grade)*

You will select a common entry-level job for a college graduate (one that anyone in your class is reasonably qualified to answer questions about), develop a set of interview questions, and develop the **interview protocol** using InterviewStream. This will be a **screening** interview, one based upon which you might ask the top 25% from a group of candidates to go on to the next hurdle in a selection process. Your interview questions should follow best practices for selection (e.g., types of questions) as well as implement InterviewStream effectively. You may use existing questions in InterviewStream or create your own.

- By [DUE DATE] start your interview protocol and get as far as working on your "Intro Video" -- this will make sure that you have no technology issues prior to the final due date. You will need **a computer on campus with a webcam.**
- By [DUE DATE ONE WEEK LATER] Based on the duties and KSAOs, create a set of interview questions for a common job—called "create an assignment" in InterviewStream and complete the Interview Protocol Description form (on Canvas). It is possible to start and then come back to it and edit later. 80% of the grade. **See below for detailed instructions.**
- Note: the timing of this assignment is deliberate. The practice of applying the interview course material should also help you with the next exam.

InterviewStream Detailed Instructions

- Go to [URL for campus InterviewStream site]
- Enter [Email address of InterviewStream administrator account]
- Click on Create New Assignment
  1. The assignment name should be YOUR NAME
  2. The description should be the JOB NAME for which you are developing the interview protocol
  3. Enter the last day of the semester as the due date.
  4. Watch the default Intro video (click on the magnifying glass icon) to see an example.

5. Think about what an applicant might like to know before he or she starts to complete the interview questions. For example, you might welcome them, describe the job and setting they would be working in if hired, and anything you want to suggest about how they answer the questions.
6. Create your own "Intro" video—(click on the camera icon).
7. Keep the default "Outro" video or create your own.
8. For "Select an Assessment Template," keep the selection "InterviewStream Assessment."
9. Select a background image.
10. Click on Next.

- Select questions or create your own
  1. Choose/keep "video" as the response type.
  2. Determine how many "Retries" to permit and the time limit for each question.
  3. You may drag questions to change the order.
  4. When you have selected all your questions, click "Next".
- If you have a message to the candidate answering your interview questions, type it in the box labeled "message to recipients."
- Enter [Instructor Email] in the box that says "Recipient's E-mail(s)."
- Be sure to place a check mark in the two boxes at the bottom of the form before you complete it ("Check to allow students to self-register if they provide the correct Assignment code" and "Check to receive an email for every Student that completes an interview").
- Click the "Create" button when you are ready to submit your interview.
- Complete the Interview Protocol Description.

APPENDIX B

Interview Assignment – Interview Protocol Description

After you have developed your interview protocol on Interview Stream, please answer the following questions. Be thorough in your responses and demonstrate your understanding of good interview practices.

- Describe your experience using this application. What about it was easy or difficult?

- Briefly describe the job for which you chose to create the interview. What attributes were you looking for from a candidate for this position?

- If this was a screening interview, what might the rest of your selection process for this position include? How does this interview play a role in the total process?

- For each question you chose, describe why you selected that question and what would constitute a "good answer" …what will you be looking for in candidate responses?

- How many interview questions did you use? How did you determine the number of questions to ask?

- What logic did you use for the order of questions?

- What was your rationale for the number of retries and time limit that you chose?

- For the interview as a whole, what was your strategy?

- Anything else?

APPENDIX C

Interview Assignment

Part 2. Interview Responses and Assessment (20% of grade)

The primary objective of this assignment is to take the perspective of a member of the HR department or a hiring manager and create an effective interview protocol. In this part of the assignment, you will be practicing answering questions, but also providing an accurate assessment of how well the interview protocol was developed.

You will be directed to answer a particular set of interview questions (the interview protocol developed by another student in the class). Answering interview questions is called "conduct an interview" in InterviewStream. After responding to the interview questions, you will then evaluate the interview protocol that you experienced using the Assessment Form (attached). Please take the interview and your responses seriously. Put yourself in the place of a candidate actually seeking this job.

Since the primary objective of this assignment is designing video interviews, you are not required to request feedback on your interview responses from the Career Center. However, in past years students have found this to be valuable. For 3 points extra credit on the assignment, you may check "request counselor review" and complete the self-assessment at the conclusion of responding to the interview questions (see detailed instructions below).

Detailed Instructions:

- You will receive an email from the InterviewStream account (sent by me) with the link to the interview you are to complete.
- Follow the directions you receive there, including setting up a student account (you will not answer the interview questions on the same account that you used to create your own interview protocol). You may already have a student account if you have already done some practice interviews through the career center or had a previous course assignment; this account is appropriate to use.
- At the end of the interview, complete the self-assessment and check "request counselor review" and someone from the Career and Professional Development Center will give you feedback. (Optional 3 points extra credit)
- Complete the "Interview Assignment – Assessment Form" in which you evaluate the Interview Protocol you received.

APPENDIX D

Interview Assignment – Assessment Form

After you have completed participation in your assigned interview on InterviewStream, please type your answers the following questions using the following scales and provide further comments below. Be thorough and objective in your responses. Bear in mind that the interview would likely be one piece in a larger selection process that could include an application, on-site interview, and other selection devices. Thus, consider the video interview to be one hurdle used to consider who would go further in the selection process.

Interview Questions	Never	Rarely	OK	Sometimes	Always
The questions were applicable to the job for which I was interviewing.					
The questions were clear.					
The interview questions were situational/behavioral.					
The interview questions were challenging.					
The interview questions allowed me to adequately display my suitability for this job.					

	Much too short	A little too short	Just right	A little long	Much too long
How would you describe the length of the interview protocol from the perspective of the applicant?					
How many questions were there?					

Candidate Experience	Yes	No
The interviewer created his or her own introduction video.		
The video sound quality was good.		
The background of the intro video set a professional tone.		
The introduction video had a welcoming and cordial feel.		
The speaker had good eye contact.		
The introduction video was helpful in knowing what to expect.		
The time limit for the questions was sufficient for me to answer.		
The number of retries allowed was fair.		
The interviewer created his or her own "outro" video.		

Please explain the reasons for you answers to the above questions about applicability, clarity, difficulty, question type, length and format. What other comments do you have about the interview and the questions? (Approximately 200-300 words)

InterviewStream Assignment Feedback

Part 1: Interview Protocol (80 points)

Use as selection tool
Appropriate interview questions:

*Relevant and clearly related	2	4	6	8	10
*Use of behavioral/situational questions	2	4	6	8	10
*Appropriate length/number of questions	1	2	3	4	5
*Questions had logical order	1	2	3	4	5

Candidate experience

Intro is welcoming	2	4	6	8	10
Intro is helpful in knowing what to expect: clear, addresses the job candidate is applying for, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Video is professional (sound quality, background, e.g., not your dirty laundry ☺)	1	2	3	4	5
Provides reasonable number of retries and time to answer	1	2	3	4	5

Interview description form

Complete, thoughtfully addresses all questions and provides rationale for choices, addresses rest of selection process	12	14	16	18	20
Writing style (clarity, grammar, proofread, professional, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

Part II: Interview Response (20 points)

Interview: Ensured clear video and sound	1	2	3	4	5
Interview: Took interview seriously	1	2	3	4	5

Assessment form:

*Provided accurate assessment of questions	1	2	3	4	5
*Provided thoughtful, professional responses	1	2	3	4	5

Asked for feedback from Career & Professional Development Center	+3