

# ARE YOU ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS?

WHAT YOU ASK POTENTIAL HIRES CAN SET THE STAGE FOR YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL — OR UNSUCCESSFUL — EMPLOYMENT.

BY CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK | CONTRIBUTOR



**I THINK** everyone will agree the interview process is one of the more uncomfortable things we do as owners or managers. When I first started interviewing, I would ask candidates to tell me about themselves and why they were looking for a change. I would manipulate most of the time during the interview selling the job and the company. I've learned I was doing almost everything wrong when interviewing. Let's hear how Mike Haley, ATI team leader and instructor, teaches shop owners to make better hiring decisions.

I also have been on the other side of the desk and have seen managers conduct poor interviews. One in particular comes to mind. I remember this manager walking into the office and sitting down across from me. He did not have my application, resume or any prepared questions on a notepad to ask me. This manager did not ask anything about my history or experiences. He jumped right in to what I believe was the only thing he wanted to know. He asked me, "What is leadership and how should you lead people?"

I answered his question giving him the Webster's dictionary version

of what leadership is and then listed several ways in which one could lead. He sat across from me with a smile and nodding as if to say this guy gets it!

As I watched his approval, it became very apparent this manager was only going to ask me if I knew how to lead and manage people. He never asked me to give him examples of when I managed or led people and what the results were. There is a big difference between the two approaches.

## Preparing for the Interview

Preparing for the interview is just as important as the interview itself. Before you interview anyone, no matter the position, you need to decide what competencies and traits are important to you and your company. You are building a team and culture in your business, which requires everyone to display and use competencies you deem important.

What are competencies? A competency is a defined level of expertise that is an essential fundamental to a particular job. This expertise, along with pooled knowledge, is what allows an organization to have an advantage over its competition. So what does this mean for interviewing? We need a candidate



**“WHO SHOULD BE DOING MOST OF THE TALKING IN AN INTERVIEW? ANSWER: THE APPLICANT SHOULD TALK 80 PERCENT OF THE TIME AND THE INTERVIEWER 20 PERCENT.”**

CHRIS “CHUBBY” FREDERICK [COMPANY IN BRACKETS]

who brings job-related experience and also shows behavioral competencies.

I believe most owners and managers are comfortable asking questions about job competencies such as, “What type of alignment equipment have you used?” I would like to spend more time on behavioral interviewing. Most owners do not take the time to write out what behavioral competencies are important. I have developed a list of behavioral competencies owners should ensure their employees have: customer service, judgment and decision making, teamwork, quality of work standards, work ethic and motivation, reliability, problem solving and analysis, planning and organization, communication, honesty and integrity, stress tolerance and adaptability.

**Ask Behavioral Questions**

After selecting the behavioral competencies you want in your employees, you need to write open-ended questions for those competencies. By reviewing a candidate’s application, resume and any other personality profile surveys, you can begin to create your interview questions. By looking at the applicant’s positions held and work history, you can create questions that allow them to tell you how they have performed in the past. Typically how a person performs in the past is exactly how they will perform in the future.

Once a day and time is agreed upon for an interview, you should write out each question you want to ask to explore a behavioral competency. I write my questions on my interview sheet, which numbers my questions and has plenty of room for me to write notes on how the candidate answers the questions. Whenever possible, I have a manager or co-owner share in the interview process. This gives me another perspective on the candidate and a buy-in from the team that we are doing due diligence in hiring the best candidate.

Behavioral questions ask the candidate about an experience they have had in the past and the outcome of that experience. The more we know about how a candidate handles situations, the better



we can assess how they will handle situations in our business. How many times have you hired someone and then said to yourself, “I wish I had known how they were going to act under those circumstances before I hired them.”

**Ask for a Real Story**

Let’s say you want to ask a question that gives you insight into how the candidate communicates. You could say, “Tell me about a time when you had difficulty getting a customer to understand. How did you overcome it?” While the candidate is telling the story, you are taking notes and deciding whether these are good behaviors and whether the candidate is not meeting or just meeting the minimum expectations of customers and fellow employees. As an example of trying to find out how a technician solves problems, you could ask, “Describe a time when you were stuck on a diagnosis. What steps did you take and what were the results?”

A reliability question to ask a potential manager could be, “Tell me about a time a great producer was consistently absent or late for work. How did you handle it?” A planning and organizing question could be, “How do you handle doing 10 things at a time?” Remember to keep asking for a lot of

detail and examples. If the story ends how you or the candidate would consider not favorable, ask the candidate how they would do it differently.

To get the best responses, you need to give specific instructions before the interview begins. Explain that you have written out questions and you want the candidate to take their time and give a lot of detail when responding. You are going to be taking notes and so there might be an awkward pause while you are continuing to write. I know when I first started interviewing, I hated the awkward silence and felt it was my responsibility to fill that void. In the perfect interview, the candidate should talk 80 percent of the time and the interviewer should talk 20 percent of the time.

If you would like to receive my behavioral question sheet, simply go to [www.ationlinetraining.com/2013-10](http://www.ationlinetraining.com/2013-10).



Chris “Chubby” Frederick is the CEO and founder of the Automotive Training Institute. ATI’s 108 associates train and coach more than 1,150 shop owners every week across North America to drive profits and dreams home to their families. Our associates love helping shop owners who have had the same struggle as many of them have had, and who are looking for the same answers – and in some cases looking for a lifeline. This month’s article was written with the help of Mike Haley, ATI Team Leader and Instructor.

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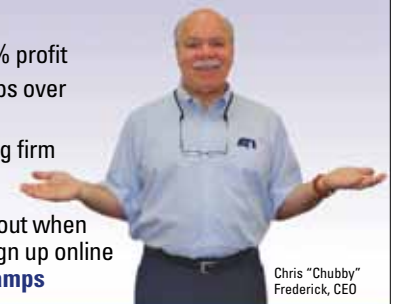
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