The Phone Interview

Evaluating Candidates from a Distance

Gates Richards, M.Ed.
Special Programs Manager
NOLS Wilderness Medicine Institute
National Outdoor Leadership School

- Founded in 1965.
- Leadership, teamwork, outdoor skills, expeditioning.
- 3000 students per year.
- 150,000 program days.
Wilderness Medicine Institute

- First course in 1990.
- Teach WFA, WFR, WEMT and advanced courses.
- 15,000 students/yr.
- 19 countries.
- 4 languages.
WMI Hiring Process

Wilderness Medicine Instructors Needed

- Email application (~150/yr)
- Phone interview (~75/yr)
- Instructor Training Course (~22/yr)
- Ready for hire (~95%)
What about you?

• Who conducts interviews?
• Single interviewer or part of a committee?
• In person?
• By phone?
• Part of a longer hiring/training process?
Interview Foundation

• Have a job specific interview.
• List the job requirements.
• List the important skills.
• List the qualities of successful employees.
Your turn!

• Pick one job.
• List 3 job requirements.
• List 3 skills.
• List 3 qualities of prized employees.
Critique

• Consider what can be assessed in an interview and what can’t.

• What will be covered during training?

• Let’s write some questions!
The Basics

• Types of questions:
  – Skills
  – Knowledge
  – Personality/Match
  – Policy
The Basics

• Styles of questions:
  – Closed, fixed response
  – Give an example
  – Hypothetical situation
  – Prioritizing
  – Critique: self or job
Bad Examples

• What strengths will you bring to this job?
• How would you handle a difficult student?
• When given an important assignment, how do you approach it?
• What have you done to exceed expectations at a previous job?
Good Examples

• Tell me about the most frustrating person you have worked with. How did you handle it?

• Tell me about the most difficult medical decision you’ve had to make in a remote setting.
Your turn!

• In small groups, take a few minutes for everyone to write an interview question.
• Share and critique.
• Be ready to share your favorite question with the group.

20:00
What are you struggling to assess?

- Skills?
- Risk assessment?
- Customer service?
- Something else?
Structural Tips

• Critical questions first.
• Avoid “stock” questions.
• All questions should have a purpose.
• Consider flow—structured or random?
• Set a time limit.
• Consider a scoring system.
• Strive for consistency.
Action Steps

• Write 3 qualities of an employee you consider a model in his/her position.
• Pick one interview from your workplace to go home and critique.
• Replace or rewrite 3 questions from that interview.