

## The needs of Change in Job Interview: Compassionate Assessment and Interview

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### ABSTRACT

Recruiting the right talent into an organisation has become more challenging because humans have become more complex in terms of their cognitive, affective and behaviour. When it comes to choosing the right candidate, many interview techniques have been used previously but it can only be described as much as flipping a coin. All these limitations in interview techniques contribute to the needs to identify a more holistic way to choose the right candidate. This research is conducted through literature review to build a model that can help to recruit the right candidates at the workplace. From the literature review, a new conceptual framework is developed that focused on the compassionate element during the interview that would take place. This method helps to overcome the impromptu situation when a candidate attends an interview session. The fundamentals of the compassionate assessment and interview include truthfulness (Siddiq), trustworthiness (Amanah), speak the advocacy (Tabligh) and wisdom (Fathanah).

**Keywords:** Interview, recruitment, compassionate, talent management, human resource management, employees.

### INTRODUCTION

Human resource department or specifically the recruitment unit plays an essential role in the productivity of an organisation. This department is the first screening unit to the source, attract, identify and retain talents in the organisation. The competencies of the human resource department contribute to the productivity of the organisation because the quality of the employees is highly influenced by the recruitment of the employees into the organisation.

Before the recruitment process started, the human resource department would need to analyse the skills, knowledge, abilities, attitudes and experience that needs to be filled in the specific position (Swider, Zimmerman, & Barrick, 2015).

In order to identify the skills, recruiters depend on the job description to identify 4 or 5 most important skills needed to be outstanding in this position. For instance, the skills that are needed by someone in sales would include persuasive, negotiation skills, presentation skills, listening skills, problem-solving, creativity and innovation skills.

Turning to knowledge, based on the job requirement and job specifications, recruiters should look at their education level, discipline-specific, organisational knowledge or even specific product knowledge. At the same time, recruiters must be able to identify the specific abilities the candidates must have. For example, a good marketer must be able to bargain and negotiate, can tell a story, able to mix around with people.

During the interview process, recruiters must evaluate the past experience of the candidate. Understanding the nature of work, the critical success factors and the challenges of performing the work are essential to enable the company to choose the right candidate with the right experience. After the interview session, the mapping needs to be done to relate the candidate experience and the necessary experience to perform the task.

Most of the recruiters can capture and obtain sufficient information in terms of their knowledge, skills, abilities and experience (Callaghan, Thompson, 2002; Kam, 2007; Ekwoaba, Ikeije, & Ufoma, 2015). However,

many types of research have shown that the most critical elements for selecting a right candidate are the attitude. It is very difficult to identify the attitude of a candidate in a short interview session (McCarthy et al., 2013; Miles, & Sadler-Smith, 2014; Yaro, 2014; Russell, & Brannan, 2016; Shamim, Cang, Yu, & Li, 2016). Hence, compassionate interview helps to close the gap of the various interview methodologies.

### TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW METHOD

Huffcutt, Culbertson, Goebel, & Toidze (2017) conducted research to look into the evaluation of the ability of cognitive skills during the interview. In the study, Huffcutt et al. (2017) concluded that the conversational job interview is a poor predictor of job performance. Similarly, Hartvigsson, & Ahlgren, (2018) found that candidates can practise or conduct mock sessions among themselves to familiarise themselves with the interview process. As a result, the candidates can perform well during the interview sessions, but they fail to perform at the actual workplace.

There are many techniques used during the interview process. In a classic study, Speas (1979) described common ways of the interview is asking the candidate about their skills and their experience to evaluate for the job suitability. During this process, the interview can be conducted through face to face or some interviews are conducted through non-face to face such as phone interview and Skype Interview (Kiviat, 2009). The questions are either structured, semi-structured or some questions are open-ended (Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, & Firth, 2002). All these formats have been used for decades and are still being trained to the current human resource practitioners. However, the impact of these questions remains effective and there is still a gap for improvement.

### BEHAVIORAL BASED INTERVIEW

After understanding the strengths and the limitations of the traditional interviewing skills, recruiters start to look at the behavioural interview. The behavioural interview technique helps to evaluate candidates' experiences and their behaviour to predict the candidates' behaviour if they have the potential for success in the job they were to be offered.

Altmaier, Smith, O'halloran, & Franken, (1992) has done a comprehensive comparison between

traditional based interview and behavioural based interview. For the traditional interview, it only contributes to 10% of on-the-job behaviour. Hence, a candidate can easily get away with telling the interviewer what he wants to hear, even if he is fudging the truth. However, behavioural interview contributes to 55% predictive indicator of future on-the-job behaviour. The questions are more probing and it is hard to give responses that are untrue to his character.

In addition, Altmaier et al. (1992) added that traditional interviews have more general questions. For example, "Tell me about yourself". However, the behavioural interview provides a more objective set of facts to make an employment decision. When the candidate tells his story, the interviewer will pick certain keywords to try to get a specific behaviour. For instance, in the behavioural interview, the interviewer will probe further for more depth or details. The questions asked may include, "What were you thinking at that point?" "Tell me more about your meeting with that person." "Lead me through your decision process".

The behavioural-based interview can be easily implemented (Pulakos, & Schmitt, 1995). Once you make a list of the sample questions for each required job competency, it will be able to be implemented. Another classical study, Motowidlo et al. (1992) pointed out that behavioral-based interview is considered more valid and reliable than traditional interviewing methods because of the strengths that are able to predict a candidate's potential for success. The researchers mentioned that the behavioural-based interview questions can be well structured and be planned in advance (Motowidlo et al., 1992).

Easdown et al. (2005) mentioned that a more objective rating will be possible, and it can make the whole process more efficient, more consistent and more reliable. In addition, by preparing specific questions in advance, it will allow the recruiter to control the direction of the conversation. Similar to other research findings, the behavioural interview focuses on those specific competencies that are relevant to the job (Oliphant, Hansen, & Oliphant, 2008). As a result, behavioural based interview prevent the interviewer from getting distracted or sidetracked by irrelevant skills or knowledge that the candidate might have.

In a more recent study, Kyllonen et al. (2015) found another strength of the behavioural based

interview on, the fairness, flexibility and the efficiency. In a behavioural based interview, the candidates will be asked the same questions and will be assessed against the same set of job-related competencies. This means that the candidate will also be rated using the same method for an accurate, fair and consistent selection.

In addition, by conducting a behavioural based interview, the interviewer will be more effective and more focused towards the objective. If the interview session includes the other panel members, asking overlapping or repeated questions could be avoided. Hence, efficiency increases. Identically, Tatem, Kokas, Smith, & DiGiovine (2017) confirmed that the strengths of the behavioural based interview work better especially when applying person-centric approach. The interviewer is flexible to change the scenario until the interviewees are not able to predict the type of continuous questions to be asked by them. It gives a better prediction of behaviour when applying behavioural based interview.

Fitzwater (2000) and Hoevermeyer (2017) have clearly written in their books on the right methodology to handle the behavioural interviews. Hansen (2010) shared how the job interviewer applied S-T-A-R approach to answering questions during job interview session. The first S represents the situation, T represents the task or problem, A represents action and R represents the results or the outcome. To evaluate the situation, the candidate needs to describe a scenario in which he or she is needed to accomplish a specific action. The interviewer may need to probe for more details if the original response is vague. In terms of the task, the interviewee should describe the desired outcome of the problem and why it was a challenge in the first place. For action, the candidate needs to describe exactly how he or she responded to the problem. Lastly, the result, the candidate must wrap things up by describing the resolution to the problem and how his or her action played a role in it. Hence, it is clear that S-T-A-R approach can be trained in answering behavioural interview questions. When it is trainable, and if the candidates have conducted the sufficient repeating mock session, they would be able to mask their behaviour.

Behavioural based interview has its own limitations and gaps in improvement. First, the practitioners of behavioural based interview

assume that the candidate is fully prepared to provide all the information needed to make a correct assessment (Stephenson-Famy et al., 2015). According to Harel, Ardit-Vogel & Janz (2003), the candidate might not disclose all information they know about their own behaviour. Unfortunately, behavioural interviewers focus on the candidate's presentation skills and the ability to describe their own behaviour or the intention. The intention sometimes does not reflect the actual behaviour in a situation exactly like how a candidate will react in the new job (O'Connell, & Kung, 2007).

Toldi (2011) found that most managers use behavioural based interviews to exclude candidate that they would not hire not to hire. The researcher conducted a study in a large insurance company in the recruitment process. He concluded that the behavioural interview was used primarily to exclude those that the interviewers didn't like. The interviewer needed to provide evidence to the human resource department that the decision to not hire was justified. All these factors indirectly become the consideration why the compassionate and the more humane technique is needed during an interview session.

### PARADIGM SHIFT: CLOSING THE GAP IN INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

Scanlon, Zupsansky, Sawicki, & Mitchell (2018) conducted research on the frequency and the effectiveness of the interview techniques. From the research, they reported that 75% frequent use structured interviews and 88% of the respondents found effective. There is a total of 73% of respondents who frequently used behavioural interview and 89% found that it is effective. There is a total of respondents frequently use phone screen (57%), interview panel (48%) and case study (32%). However, the effectiveness (in brackets) for phone screen (70%), interview panel (79%) and case study (84%) respectively.

The researchers reported that these interview techniques have difficulties in term of assessing candidates' soft skills, understanding candidates' weaknesses, interview bias, too long of a process and not knowing best questions to ask. All these weaknesses and limitations contribute to the needs of complementary technique to reach the hearts and souls of the

candidates to identify the job suitability of the candidates.

### COMPASSIONATE ASSESSMENT

Human resource practitioners understand the challenges to capture the full information about a candidate as short as a few interviews. As the result, the interview process and the recruitment process become more comprehensive and holistic by applying the compassionate assessment approach.

Compassionate assessment and compassionate interview, focus on relating one experience to that of others in decision making, but eliminate special privileged category to anyone (Ambrin & Leow, 2018). The researchers added, in compassionate management (compassionate assessment and interview) does not focus on the comparison of strength and weaknesses between candidates to choose the best candidates that fit into the workplace. The fundamentals of the compassionate interview are truthfulness (Siddiq), trustworthiness (Amanah), speak the advocacy (Tabligh) and wisdom (Fathanah).

#### Truthfulness and Trustworthiness

The truthfulness (Siddiq) and trustworthiness (Amanah) are the key contributions to compassionate interview. During the recruitment process, a personality test is used to identify 20 personalities traits and one of the personality traits - the lie scale (Ambrin & Leow, 2018). The personality test is conducted through online before the face-to-face interview is conducted. The personality test provides the first sight of the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the candidate.

During the face-face to face interview, the analysis of both verbal (cognitive evaluation) and nonverbal (emotional evaluation) are conducted to evaluate the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the candidate. Leow and Vincent (2013) mentioned that 93% of all face-to-face communication is delivered through nonverbal communication. Hence, observing nonverbal communication during an interview helps to boost the efficiency and accuracy because evaluating truthfulness and trustworthiness require distinguishing truth from deception.

In general, we have to observe that candidate who is not genuine would tend to rehearse their words, not their gestures. They will prepare to avoid showing their anxiety and will try to look relaxed. They try to move as little as possible

and sometimes they try to freeze their upper body.

Compassionate interview observes the cognitive load of the candidate. If a candidate is trying to fabricate information, they would have more mentally loads than recalling back the information. The cognitive load would be displayed through their verbal content, verbal style and body language. In addition, interviewers would observe the emotional fear, especially when more details questions are asked and also the emotional release (the duping delight) at the end of the interview session. The emotional leakage is always the key to observation during the compassionate interview.

For facial expression, the interviewer needs to evaluate the consistency between the human emotion and the verbal expression. For instance, interviewer observes, if there is a genuine smile during happiness; the duration of sadness and anger (duration for the sadness and the anger would not subside in a short time); the element of disgust and contempt, surprise and the fear. In addition, we would observe the microexpression when a question is asked because we understand that humans would mask their faces (after 0.2 seconds) after a question is asked. In addition, the duration for a genuine surprise expression is short and when interviewer found the inconsistency in term of the statement, duration and the leakage of nonverbal cues, further questions need to be asked to evaluate the truthfulness and trustworthiness.

In addition, the interviewer would observe the other nonverbal leak during the interview session. For example, interviewers observe the candidate frequently uses emblems and the emblems can be incomplete or perform awkwardly, it is a sign that deeper and further questions should be asked. To illustrate, a candidate shows a half shrug may indicate deception so may a subtle shrug with no accompanying arm motion, or merely turn up one's palms. All this gesture helps us to understand the truthfulness and trustworthiness in their subconscious mind.

When an emblem gesture appears outside its usual context, this may reveal that the candidate is trying to keep his emotions in check. A candidate who says he is not upset but flashes a shaky "okay" sign is probably not being honest about how angry or stressed he is. Hence, the inconsistency in hand gestures and facial



expression has always become the key to evaluate during the compassionate interview.

When a candidate does not show truthfulness and trustworthiness, the candidate focuses on crafting and maintaining his story through words. He doesn't have an emotional investment in what he is saying, except insofar as it gets him what he wants. Illustrators stem from emotion behind the words – when the emotion isn't there, neither is the gesture.

According to Leow et al. (2015), there are other elements needs to be observed to identify the truth and none trustworthiness include the squelched expression (masking), reliable muscle patterns, an increase of eye blinking rates, asymmetrical expression and the most powerful could be tears.

Besides observing the none truthfulness and none trustworthiness, in a compassionate interview, the interviewer needs to observe when the candidate when he feels comfortable in the interviewer presence. When the candidate feels comfortable, he will tend to mirror the body language with postural cues that you know he's engaged in the conversation. He will learn in what the interviewee does, or angle himself in his chair the same way as the interviewee – movements that “mirror” him – so as to encourage you to continue talking.

For verbal communication, interviewers need to observe the cues of deception that include parroting statement, dodgeball statement, guilt-trip statement, bolstering statement, the response is too long or too short (Leow et al. 2015).

The interviewer needs to observe if the candidate repeats the questions asked before answering the question. This method is known as parroting. The candidate is trying to steal more time to think before answering. It is a cue of deception. Dodgeball technique is used when the candidate answers a question with another question. When this technique is applied, the candidate is trying to get more information about what the interviewer has known.

Another common method how a candidate answers – guilt-trip statement by creating an emotional situation and the interviewer is trapped with the “sentimental” answer. In a compassionate interview, the interviewer needs to clear that candidate to try to “swear” to god or with the good name to quote a statement. It is an obvious way cue of deception. The interviewer must also compassionate enough to

identify answer that is either too long or too short to capture the right statement of the candidate.

### **Speak the Advocacy (Tabligh) and Wisdom (Fathanah)**

In the compassionate assessment, it is important to evaluate the element of speak of advocacy and their wisdom, Speak of advocacy is measured with the principle of the triple filter test of Socrates and the Windom is measured through the ability in solving problems. Besides the wisdom, various skills of problem-solving skills are evaluated.

### **Wisdom (Fathanah)**

#### ***The Ex-Tray Exercise And Critical Thinking***

In compassionate assessment ex-tray assessment is used when evaluating the top management and senior position in the workplace. Ex-tray assessment is conducted by giving a case study that simulates a workplace and job positions in relevant scenarios. The assumed position of the participants in the assessment will be a management role and could even a senior management role. During the assessment, candidates are given background data, relevant information such as an organisational chart, emails, memos, newsletters, quotation, and other relevant documents. The assessment can be conducted through multiple choice questions or written methods depending on the depth of the evaluation and the duration of the assessment. The E-tray is a very powerful assessment tool because through this assessment the following skills are evaluated that includes the managerial ability and taking responsibility, decision making and prioritisation, organisational skills, time management and resource management, computer literacy, interpersonal and communication skills, managing change and organisational issues.

Critical thinking measures the ability to structure a sound, solid argument, to analyse and to synthesise available information and to make an assumption and inference. Hence, critical thinking aims to evaluate candidates' abilities in analysing documents skills, making inferences and evaluating conclusions.

### ***Compassionate Reasoning Evaluation: Logical, Inductive, Diagrammatic, Numerical***

Logical reasoning is a broad category of skills assessment that covers inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning, abstract reasoning,

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diagrammatic reasoning and critical thinking. The main objective of logical reasoning is to evaluate the participants' problem-solving ability. This assessment method is suitable for all levels of the job position. However, it would be more beneficial if the assessment can be applied to a position that needs a high level of problem-solving skill.

Real life arguments are always inductive. Hence, inductive reasoning aims to test the candidate's logical problem-solving. The candidate needs to think logically and methodologically against the clock to spot the patterns in the sequence of graphics. In short, inductive reasoning tests the participants' ability to reach general conclusions based on perceived patterns observed in specific events.

Diagrammatic reasoning is always used as the first screening for the ability of the candidates to think logically and solve common problems in diagrammatic ways. Candidates have to analyse two groups of similar symbols and decide whether a symbol belongs to either group A, group B or neither group based on the grouping rules. It evaluates candidates for high and complex problem-solving ability such as senior management position.

Numerical reasoning involves numbers and calculations, but they are not trying to measure the participants' math ability. Numerical reasoning does not need any formulae or theories. This test measures the ability to correctly interpret numerical information and use it to solve the problem and make a decision. The questions use information based on real-life numerical data we can find in the workplace. The numerical tests only require you to perform the types of analysis with numbers that we are expected to perform at work.

### Reflection Evaluation: Error Checking

During error checking, a candidate needs to identify the statements that have been written correctly, those that have been altered and the nature of the alteration itself. When a candidate is able to work with heart and soul, they would be able to

### Speak the Advocacy (Tabligh)

In this session, the situational experimental study is designed according to the triple filter test of Socrates. In this society, people have hearts without feeling, people speak without thinking, people hear without listening. People now live in a world without compassion. Hence,

it is essential to evaluate the candidate with the Triple Filter Test – Socrates.

In this triple filter test, the candidate is evaluated how they would handle information effectively. The basic philosophy of evaluation on the following

- First – Truth – “Have you made absolutely sure that what you are about to tell is true?”
- Second – Goodness – “Is what you are about to tell is something good?”
- Third – Usefulness – “Is the information useful to others?”

These three philosophy and principle is used as the fundamental to designed situational based questions to assess candidate during a compassionate interview.

With this principle evaluation, we could evaluate the candidate in term of the speak of advocacy – Tabligh.

## Compassionate Interview

After understanding the methodology in the compassionate evaluation, it is essential to understand the philosophy when applying compassionate interview. In the compassionate evaluation, personality, cognitive, affective and values are assessed. The assessment becomes more meaningful when compassionate interview approached is applied. Many interview technique fails to capture that the performance of the candidate could be influenced by their personal issues or personal matter.

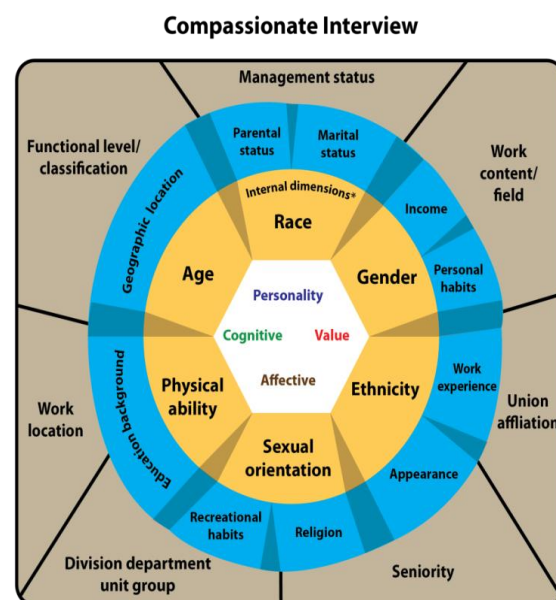


Figure1: Principle of Compassionate Interview

In a compassionate interview, age, physical ability, race, gender, ethnicity and even sexual orientation are taken into consideration because these elements would directly influence their behaviour and performance in the workplace. Hence, the compassionate interview, at least 10% of time must be taken into consideration to evaluate the elements.

In a compassionate interview, we understand what factors influence the candidate performance and productivity. Internal dimensions play at least 50% of the role to contribute to the candidate performance. These factors include the religions, appearance, work experience, personal habits, recreational habits, educational background, geographical location, parental and marital status, income and personal habits. All these factors are detailed out during the compassionate interview.

After evaluating the internal dimension, the external dimensions that linked the candidates to the external stakeholders are taken into consideration. The factors include the seniority in the organisation, division department unit group, work location, functional level and classification, management status, work content and union affiliation.

The most significant and the core competency of compassionate assessment on looking at the integrity of a candidate. In the compassionate assessment, we believe that regardless of how high is your position and status in your work, but if a candidate works without integrity, the candidate could not sustain and excel in their career. Hence, during this stage, the interviewer would ask, “*Do you believe in the creator?*” If a person does not believe there is another superior power who governs us, the candidate tends to do wonders, and they could have the probability to make himself as the decision makers even it is against ethics and human values. Hence, a series of questions focused on evaluating the seed of the candidate – integrity. In short, compassionate assessment strength to evaluate the seeds of a human being.

### CONCLUSION

There are many ways to assess a candidate. However, compassionate assessment and interview follows the basic philosophy of truthfulness (Siddiq), trustworthiness (Amanah), speak the advocacy (Tabligh) and wisdom (Fathanah). The skills, knowledge, attitudes,

values and the most important – the integrity of a person is taken into consideration.

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