

MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Management without theatre.

PEOPLE

THE STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: SAME QUESTIONS, SAME SCALE

How the 1998 validity figures were revised in 2022, what fell and by how much, Campion's fifteen components, a study in which random answers felt informative, how much structure research interviews use, and an interview guide.



0.42

the revised validity of the structured interview for job performance: lower than the 0.51 of 1998, and now the highest of all the selection methods reviewed.

SACKETT ET AL., 2022

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NO. 65 · PEOPLE

In this issue

Almost nobody is hired without an interview, and most interviews are conversations. This issue looks at the alternative: the same job-related questions for every candidate, scored against a scale written in advance.

In 1998 Schmidt and Hunter put the validity of the structured interview at 0.51, level with tests of mental ability. In 2022 Sackett and colleagues corrected the corrections behind such figures: 0.42, now the highest, while the unstructured interview fell to 0.19. Campion's fifteen components show what structure means. A study with random answers shows why a free conversation feels better than it predicts, and a guide shows how to build an interview.

Stiven Janaqi EDITOR · STIVEN CATALYST

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HOW TO READ THIS ISSUE

Figure

Every figure has its source and year at the foot of its page.

Our reading

Where the editors interpret rather than the research, it says so.

Practice

The steps and the card are proposals to try, not research results.

COVER STORY

A smaller number, still first

In 1998 Frank Schmidt and John Hunter summed up 85 years of research on hiring. The structured interview predicted job performance as well as a test of general mental ability: 0.51. In 2022 Paul Sackett and colleagues went back over the evidence. The structured interview fell to 0.42, and came out on top.

0.28

observed in the studies
behind the 1998 figure

0.37

corrected for unreliable
performance ratings

0.51

also corrected for range
restriction, the step Sackett
et al. dropped

That correction assumes the people studied were selected on the method, so their scores vary less than applicants'. Many studies tested employees never hired on that interview; correcting them anyway inflated the figures. The authors kept 0.37, added a newer meta-analysis (0.45) and arrived at 0.42.

“Our field's selection procedures are still valid, just not as valid as we thought they were.”

OUR READING

The revision did not change the advice. It changed the size of the promise: a good interview helps you choose, it does not see through people.

Sources: Frank L. Schmidt & John E. Hunter, *Psychological Bulletin* 124(2), 1998; Michael A. McDaniel, Deborah L. Whetzel, Frank L. Schmidt & Steven D. Maurer, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 79(4), 1994 (via Sackett et al., 2022); Paul R. Sackett, Charlene Zhang, Christopher M. Berry & Filip Lievens, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 107(11), 2022

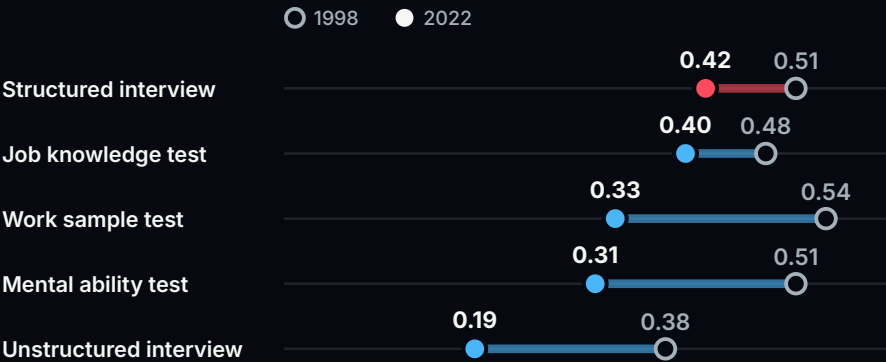
Validity: the correlation between a method's score and later job performance (0 none, 1 perfect). The steps are as Sackett et al. describe the 1998 source, McDaniel et al. (1994). The quote is theirs.

THE NUMBERS

What fell, and by how much

Sackett and colleagues set their estimates next to those of 1998. Most methods that ranked high then still do, but 0.10 to 0.20 lower. The unstructured interview was halved.

VALIDITY FOR JOB PERFORMANCE, 1998 AND 2022 ESTIMATES



The four strongest in 2022 all measure the job itself. The structured interview also varies most between studies: in about one setting in ten it falls below 0.18.

OUR READING

On average the method is at the top. Whether your interview is depends on how it is built.

Sources: Paul R. Sackett, Charlene Zhang, Christopher M. Berry & Filip Lievens, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 107(11), 2022; Frank L. Schmidt & John E. Hunter, *Psychological Bulletin* 124(2), 1998

Mean estimates from the comparison table in Sackett et al. (2022). The four strongest include biodata (0.38), not shown. 0.18: lower end of the 80% credibility interval.

THE MODEL

Fifteen ways to add structure

Structure is not one thing. In 1997 Michael Campion, David Palmer and James Campion defined it as any enhancement that makes an interview more standard, or helps the interviewer decide what to ask and how to judge the answers. They listed fifteen components in two groups.

Content

Questions from a job analysis

The same questions for everyone

Limited prompting and follow-up

Better types of questions

More questions, a longer interview

Control of other information

Candidate's questions at the end

Evaluation

A rating for each answer

Anchored rating scales

Detailed notes

Several interviewers

The same interviewers for all

No discussion between interviews

Interviewer training

Combining scores by formula

The two question types studied most both predict performance: situational questions (“what would you do if...”) tend to measure job knowledge, past-behaviour questions (“tell me about a time...”) experience.

OUR READING

Each component moves a decision out of the mood of the moment and into the guide.

Sources: Michael A. Campion, David K. Palmer & James E. Campion, *Personnel Psychology* 50(3), 1997 (via Levashina et al., 2014); Julia Levashina, Christopher J. Hartwell, Frederick P. Morgeson & Michael A. Campion, *Personnel Psychology* 67(1), 2014

Labels shortened. In 2014 Levashina and colleagues had 30 selection experts sort the fifteen; 14 fell into Campion's groups. They propose three more: limiting small talk, telling candidates what is assessed, recording interviews.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Confident on random answers

Jason Dana, Robyn Dawes and Nathaniel Peterson asked 76 students to predict another student's grades for a semester. They were given the earlier grade average; they also held a 20-minute unstructured interview. In one condition, the student interviewed secretly answered at random after the break.

HOW WELL PREDICTIONS MATCHED THE GRADES (CORRELATION), STUDY 1



Those who had heard random answers said they had learned as much as the others. In a third study, 96 of 169 students (57%) said they would rather have a random interview than none.

OUR READING

An interview always feels informative. The feeling is not evidence; the score against the job is.

Source: Jason Dana, Robyn Dawes & Nathaniel Peterson, *Judgment and Decision Making* 8(5), 2013

Students predicting grades, not managers hiring, and the interviews were unstructured. The study shows how an interview can feel useful and still lower accuracy, not how much it does so at work.

HOW IT IS MEASURED

Count the parts, score each answer

Levashina and colleagues counted the components in 104 interviews described in research from 1997 to 2010. On average they used six of the fifteen. Some were almost always there, others almost never.

SHARE OF 104 INTERVIEWS IN RESEARCH, 1997–2010, USING EACH COMPONENT

The same questions for everyone



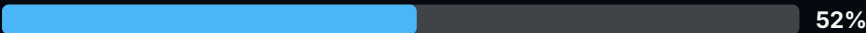
Questions from a job analysis



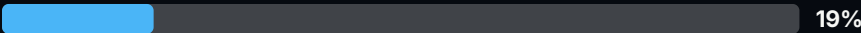
Anchored rating scales



Interviewer training



Detailed notes



No discussion between interviews



Anchors pay. Across 19 studies of past-behaviour interviews, Taylor and Small (2002) found a validity of 0.35 with anchored scales and 0.26 without, and slightly closer agreement between interviewers (0.77 against 0.73).

Sources: Julia Levashina, Christopher J. Hartwell, Frederick P. Morgeson & Michael A. Campion, *Personnel Psychology* 67(1), 2014; Paul J. Taylor & Bruce Small, *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 75(3), 2002 (via Levashina et al., 2014)

Counts from the content analysis by Levashina et al. (2014), of interviews described in research, not a survey of employers. Taylor and Small's figures are uncorrected, as Levashina et al. report them.

[More in the essay](#)

Leading people without losing the person

TOOL OF THE ISSUE

The structured interview guide

One guide per role, used for every candidate. Write the questions and the anchors before the first interview, score each answer on its own, and only then talk with the other interviewers.

- 01 Role and what it needs** four to six things the job needs, from those who do it
- 02 Questions** per need, one "tell me about a time" and one "what would you do"; same order for all
- 03 Anchors** what a 1, 3 and 5 answer sounds like, written in advance
- 04 Follow-up** planned and neutral, the same for every candidate
- 05 Notes and score** what was said, not impressions; score 1–5 after each answer
- 06 Independent scoring** each interviewer scores alone; discuss only when all scores are in

Sources: Michael A. Campion, David K. Palmer & James E. Campion, *Personnel Psychology* 50(3), 1997 (via Levashina et al., 2014); Julia Levashina, Christopher J. Hartwell, Frederick P. Morgeson & Michael A. Campion, *Personnel Psychology* 67(1), 2014; Google re:Work, 2026

A practice proposed by the editors, after Campion et al.'s components and Levashina et al.'s advice to probe only with planned, neutral follow-ups. Google's re:Work guide describes rubrics with examples of poor, borderline, solid and outstanding answers.

Open the tool: **ATS CV**

stivencatalyst.com/tools/ats-cv/

SOURCES AND METHOD

Every figure has a source.

The figures in this issue come from the sources below. The year shows how recent each one is.

The validity and utility of selection methods in personnel psychology: Practical and theoretical implications of 85 years of research findings

Frank L. Schmidt & John E. Hunter,
Psychological Bulletin 124(2), 1998
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.124.2.262>

The validity of employment interviews: A comprehensive review and meta-analysis

Michael A. McDaniel, Deborah L. Whetzel,
Frank L. Schmidt & Steven D. Maurer, Journal
of Applied Psychology 79(4), 1994 · via
Sackett et al., 2022
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.79.4.599>

Revisiting meta-analytic estimates of validity in personnel selection: Addressing systematic overcorrection for restriction of range

Paul R. Sackett, Charlene Zhang, Christopher
M. Berry & Filip Lievens, Journal of Applied
Psychology 107(11), 2022
<https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000994>

A review of structure in the selection interview

Michael A. Campion, David K. Palmer & James
E. Campion, Personnel Psychology 50(3),
1997 · via Levashina et al., 2014
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1997.tb00709.x>

The structured employment interview: Narrative and quantitative review of the research literature

Julia Levashina, Christopher J. Hartwell,
Frederick P. Morgeson & Michael A. Campion,
Personnel Psychology 67(1), 2014
<https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12052>

Belief in the unstructured interview: The persistence of an illusion

Jason Dana, Robyn Dawes & Nathaniel
Peterson, Judgment and Decision Making
8(5), 2013
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S1930297500003612>

Asking applicants what they would do versus what they did do: A meta-analytic comparison of situational and past behaviour

A guide to structured interviewing for better hiring practices

Google re:Work, 2026

EDITORIAL METHOD

Each figure was checked for its year, its publisher and what exactly it measures. Where the publisher's page could not be opened, the figure was checked against independent summaries and is marked “via”. The editors' interpretation is marked “Our reading”. Figures that could not be confirmed are not in the issue.



MANAGEMENT REVIEW

Management without theatre.

Every issue, one management question, checked against the best research.

ALL ISSUES

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