

HR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A PILOT STUDY

Exploring the most effective interview approach for internal job positions at Children's Aid Society of Toronto



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Children’s Aid Society of Toronto (CAST) prides itself with being an “equal opportunity employer, committed to the principles of fairness and equity” (Human Resources Manual, 2010, p.2-4). To maintain these high standards of equitability, the Human Resource Department (HR) at CAST continuously considers best practices within the hiring process in order to recruit, retain, and promote the best employees in a culturally diverse context. The aim of the present pilot study is to explore alternative methods to administering the interview questions during a standard job competition.

In winter 2012, a search of the literature revealed a complete absence of empirical research that could speak to evidence-informed strategies on the most effective interview approaches for candidates within job competitions. A grey literature search was conducted and, similarly, revealed no findings to guide practice. In an attempt to compensate for the gap in the literature on the topic of effective interview approaches, HR experts across different Ontario child welfare agencies were consulted regarding their practices. Based on these consultations, it was established that the following three interview approaches have been utilized:

- (a) Providing a written copy of the interview questions to the candidate just **BEFORE** the interview in an effort to reduce the candidate’s anxiety and minimize the verbal communication differences between the candidate and hiring panel;
- (b) Providing a written copy of the interview questions to the candidate **DURING** the interview. Typically, this option was not a general practice within the hiring process, but only provided to candidates as an accommodation;
- (c) **VERBAL QUESTIONING ONLY** without written questions before or during the interview is the most common interviewing method used by Ontario child welfare agencies.

With no standardized interviewing approach within the empirical research or hiring practices within child welfare in Ontario, the Child Welfare Institute (CWI) collaborated with CAST HR to design an exploratory pilot study. The study aim was ***to examine the effectiveness of alternative methods to administer the interview questions during standard internal job competitions within the organization to identify best practice strategies.*** The emerging research questions were:

- (a) How do employees perceive alternative interviewing techniques in comparison to the usual method?**
- (b) Is there a difference in the performance of employees during an interview as a function of varying interviewing technique?**



Due to the exploratory nature of this study, no specific hypotheses regarding the findings were made. However, it was anticipated that adding a visual component (i.e. questions in writing) to the traditional interviewing technique, which involves verbal questioning by the hiring panel, would enhance the overall interview experience as well as further address the needs of the majority of employees.

2.0 RESEARCH METHODS

2.1 SAMPLE

The sample was employees interviewing for internal job competitions between August 2013 and April 2014. The only inclusion criteria for participants were: 1) having an ‘*internal employee*’ status and 2) consenting to participate in the research. The type of position that the employees interviewed for had no impact on their study participation. Employees participated in the study only once; ergo, employee data were collected only once, even if the employee interviewed for multiple job competitions during the study period. Study data were collected for a total of 114 employees, but two participants had to be excluded due to minimal completion of study tools. The resulting final sample size was 112 participants.

2.2 PROCEDURES

Each job competition was randomly assigned to one of the three study groups prior to interviewing potential candidates. The random assignment was done at the job competition level rather than at the individual level to ensure an equal and fair process for all employees competing for a specific job. Therefore, all employees in a specific job competition had their interview questions administered in the same manner. The three study conditions were:

(a) **GROUP A:** employees were provided a written copy of the interview questions **10 MINUTES PRIOR** to the interview. At the interview, the written questions were **TAKEN AWAY** and the interview questions were administered orally by the interviewing panel.

(b) **GROUP B:** employees were provided a written copy of the interview questions **DURING** the actual interview (but not prior). The interview questions were also administered orally by the interviewing panel.

(c) **GROUP C:** employees were provided **NO WRITTEN COPY** of the interview questions at any point. The interview questions were administered orally by the interviewing panel. Group C was essentially the control group as it utilized the usual or typical interviewing technique used at CAST to date.

Table 1. Randomized study conditions

| | # | % |
|----------------|------------|-------------|
| Group A | 45 | 40% |
| Group B | 30 | 27% |
| Group C | 37 | 33% |
| Total | 112 | 100% |

The study utilized a mixed methods research design. Participants completed research tools before their interviews (“*pre-test*”) and after their interviews (“*post-test*”). All pre-test and post-test surveys were collected by the HR Administrative Coordinators, placed in a sealed envelope, and transferred to CWI for data analysis. A description of the data collected and tools used is presented next.

2.3 MEASURES

✚ **Comfortableness with interview questions.** The *Comfortableness Survey* was modified from the *Learning Channels Inventory*, a 15-question tool to assess one's learning preference. The *Learning Channels Inventory* asks users to score each item on a three-point scale, where 1=*Seldom*; 2=*Sometimes*; and 3=*Often*. Three clusters of five questions are then scored and add up to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic preference scores. The highest score of the three indicates one's dominant learning style. The *Learning Channels Inventory* is a non-standardized tool, which means that its reliability and validity have not been established by academic research.

The *Comfortableness Survey* used in the present study has been modified from the *Learning Channels Inventory* in the following ways: nine statements pertaining to visual and auditory preferences were reworded to ask about interview question-administration. Participants were asked to rate each of the nine statements on a four-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*. The statements were scored from 1 to 4, where higher numbers indicated greater agreement. The *Comfortableness Survey* was provided to participants at pre-test and post-test. Unfortunately, examining the psychometric properties of the survey revealed very poor validity, indicating that the survey was not measuring the intended constructs of auditory and visual preferences. Therefore, the utility of the *Comfortableness Survey* had to be limited to descriptive purposes only and no comparisons or inferences based on the survey could be made.

✚ **Demographic information.** At post-test, participants were asked to indicate *Yes* or *No* on three demographic questions: (a) *Is English your primary language?* (b) *Do you self-identify as an employee with a disability?* (c) *Do you self-identify as an employee who is aboriginal or a member of a racialized group?* Participants who identified English as not their primary language, as employees with a disability, and/or as racialized employees were asked to elaborate on the challenges they experienced with how the interview questions were administered from their individual perspectives.

✚ **Interviewee's experience.** At post-test participants were asked whether the interview method they experienced was helpful to them with the interview process. Specifically, participants in Group A were asked, *did having the written questions 10-minutes prior to the interview help you with the interview process?*; participants in Group B were asked, *did having the written questions presented during the interview help you with the interview process?*; and participants in Group C were asked, *did having the hiring panel verbally tell you the interview questions during the interview help you with the interview process?* Then participants in all groups were asked to explain their *Yes* or *No* answers.

✚ **Interviewee recommendations.** Participants in all groups at post-test were asked: *If you had a preference on how the interview questions were administered by the hiring panel, how would you rank the following methods?* Where 1=*fair method*, 2=*good method*, and 3=*excellent method*. Participants were asked to rank: (a) **PRIOR METHOD** – written interview questions provided 10 minutes prior and asked orally during the interview; (b) **DURING METHOD** – written interview questions provided during

the interview and asked orally; and (c) **USUAL METHOD** – interview questions are administered orally as per usual practice. Participants were asked to explain their ranking.

✚ **Interviewee’s performance.** The *Competition Grid Score* is a non-standardized HR tool already used during job competitions at CAST. The tool is normally used by the hiring panel to assess interviewees on multiple dimensions which are assigned a value and added to create an interview score. The *Competition Grid Scores* were extracted from the hiring panel’s assessment by CAST’s HR Manager. To ensure confidentiality of employee’s interview performance, the *Competition Grid Scores* were de-identified prior to sending the data to CWI.

2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

All quantitative data was analyzed using the Statistical Package of Social Software (SPSS), version 20 and all qualitative responses were analyzed in Microsoft Word. See Table 2 for an analysis plan.

Table 2. Data analysis plan

| Report Sections | Measures and Analysis | |
|---|---|---|
| | Quantitative | Qualitative |
| Demographics | Number of staff in different job competitions | |
| | Number of staff who identified: - English as not their first language - Having a disability - Belonging to a racialized/aboriginal group | Thematic analysis of the challenges employees experienced |
| | Staff’s comfortableness with interview question administration | |
| RESEARCH QUESTION 1: How do employees perceive alternative interviewing techniques in comparison to the usual method? | - Number of staff who identified their interviewing method as helpful - Comparison of between-group differences using chi-square | Thematic analysis of the helpfulness of the interview method participants experienced |
| | - Number of staff who preferred each interview method - Comparison of between-group differences using chi-square | Thematic analysis of preferred/recommended interview method |
| RESEARCH QUESTION 2: Is there a difference in the performance of employees during an interview as a function of varying interviewing technique? | A comparison of the three study conditions on their interview performance (<i>Competition Grid Scores</i>) using ANOVA | |



3.0 RESULTS

3.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

This section describes the sample of employees who participated in the study.

3.1.1 JOB COMPETITIONS

The 112 employees participating in this study interviewed for a total of 27 different job positions. The number of employees interviewing within each job position ranged from one to 16. As mentioned previously,

Table 3. Collapsed job category by group

| Job Category | Group A | Group B | Group C | Total |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Protection | 13 | 18 | 15 | 46 |
| Non-Protection Service | 10 | 9 | 16 | 35 |
| Management/Supervisory | 3 | 0 | 3 | 6 |
| Administrative | 19 | 3 | 3 | 25 |
| Total | 45 | 30 | 37 | 112 |

random assignment to each of the research conditions (Group A, Group B, or Group C) occurred at the job competition level rather than individual level to ensure equal treatment of all interviewees within a job competition. As there were a low number of interviewees in several job competitions, these were collapsed into four broader categories. As evident in Table 3, the representation of job competitions across all study conditions was uneven, even when collapsed into broader categories.

3.1.2 LANGUAGE

Of the 111 employees who provided data on this question, 102 (92%) noted English was their primary language. Table 4 portrays the provided responses using frequencies and percentages. Three employees in each of the three study conditions (n=9; 8%) identified that English was not their primary language. These

Table 4. English as a primary language

| | Group A | | Group B | | Group C | | Total | |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| No | 3 | 7% | 3 | 10% | 3 | 8% | 9 | 8% |
| Yes | 41 | 93% | 27 | 90% | 34 | 92% | 102 | 92% |
| Total | 44 | 100% | 30 | 100% | 37 | 100% | 111 | 100% |

three employees per group encompass a slightly different proportion due to the variable group size, with Group B having the highest proportion (10%) where English was not their primary language.

INTERVIEWING CHALLENGES RELATED TO NOT HAVING ENGLISH AS A PRIMARY LANGUAGE

Employees who answered *No* to whether English was their first language were asked to elaborate on the challenges they have experienced with how the interview questions have been administered for an internal position at CAS-Toronto. Five of the nine provided data: two participants indicated occasional challenges in understanding the verbal question/context. One participant indicated that the challenge was thinking of words to describe what the verbal question was asking her about. Two participants indicated no challenges.

3.1.3 ABILITY

All 112 participants specified whether they identify as employees with a disability. Group B had the highest number and percentage of employees with a disability (n=3, 10%).

Table 5. Employees with a disability

| | Group A | | Group B | | Group C | | Total | |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Yes | 1 | 2% | 3 | 10% | 1 | 3% | 5 | 5% |
| No | 44 | 98% | 27 | 90% | 36 | 97% | 107 | 95% |
| Total | 45 | 100% | 30 | 100% | 37 | 100% | 112 | 100% |

INTERVIEWING CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH HAVING A DISABILITY

All five of the employees who identified as having a disability provided a response when asked to elaborate on the challenges they experienced with how the interview questions were administered. These responses suggest that having an additional method of interview questions administration that is not oral may be beneficial for this group.

- 1: "Time restraints for the written work section."
- 2: "Anxiety-time pressure and mind goes blank sometimes from oral questions. Being able to complete in advance would be best."
- 3: "I'm a visual learner-just hearing the questions I miss things."
- 4: "I have anxiety and it is hard to do the interview."
- 5: "Head injury – challenges processing information + memory."

Two additional participants provided a response, although they did not identify as employees with a disability: one participant suggested having chairs with no arms to benefit people who are a different shape, size, or ability than those for whom the chair was designed; another participant suggested that stuffy/dusty rooms are an asthma trigger.

3.1.4 RACE

Of the 112 participants, nearly a third (n=32, 29%) identified as members of an aboriginal or racialized group (see Table 6). Group C had the highest number and proportion (n=13, 35%) of employees who identified as members of an aboriginal or racialized group.

Table 6. Employees who identified as racialized

| | Group A | | Group B | | Group C | | Total | |
|--------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Yes | 12 | 27% | 7 | 23% | 13 | 35% | 32 | 29% |
| No | 33 | 73% | 23 | 77% | 24 | 65% | 80 | 71% |
| Total | 45 | 100% | 30 | 100% | 37 | 100% | 112 | 100% |

INTERVIEWING CHALLENGES RELATED TO BEING ABORIGINAL OR RACIALIZED

Of the 32 employees who answered Yes, four provided responses that outlined their challenges:

- 1: "I often feel that I cannot share my own experiences as being in a racialized group as this can be seen like a privilege and may be oppressive in itself."
- 2: "There were not a lot of culture specific questions, I think they should include one's experience with their own cultural group during the interview."
- 3: "Performance anxiety."
- 4: "There has been an occasion when I was not the successful candidate and those that were successful were always Caucasian females. This occurred for several interviews that I had gone to in the past."

3.1.5 COMFORTABLENESS

As mentioned previously in the report, a test of psychometric properties revealed that the *Comfortableness Survey* has scored very low on validity and is not a reliable measure of learning styles or comfortableness as a whole. Therefore, only participants' responses on individual questions at pre-test were summarized in Table 7 for descriptive purposes while responses on the post-test were not reported to prevent inaccurate conclusions. The Questions with over 80% agreement or disagreement were highlighted in yellow.

Table 7. Comfortableness Survey responses at pre-test

| Questions | Strongly Agree | Agree | Total Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|-------------|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. I can prepare for an interview best if I have the written questions in advance to practice my responses (N=111) | 72% | 22% | 94% | 5% | 1% | 6% |
| 2. I prefer to follow written questions during the interview rather than oral ones (N=112) | 36% | 39% | 75% | 23% | 2% | 25% |
| 3. I enjoy the interview process by having someone explain the questions to me verbally (N=112) | 20% | 67% | 87% | 12% | 1% | 13% |
| 4. I feel more comfortable when I see the interview questions as they are asked to me (N=112) | 47% | 39% | 86% | 13% | 1% | 14% |
| 5. I prefer to listen to the interview questions rather than reading them on the paper in front of me (N=112) | 7% | 24% | 31% | 60% | 9% | 69% |
| 6. I do not feel comfortable having the interview questions read to me (N=110) | 2% | 17% | 19% | 64% | 17% | 81% |
| 7. As I listen to the interviewer say the questions, it is hard to respond (N=112) | 5% | 29% | 34% | 61% | 5% | 66% |
| 8. When asked to answer an interview question, I simply see the question in my mind (N=111) | 5% | 36% | 41% | 53% | 6% | 59% |
| 9. When I read the interview questions, I say every word to myself (N=111) | 17% | 53% | 70% | 24% | 6% | 30% |

As seen in Table 7, there were four questions which yielded over 80% agreement or disagreement among study participants. This high rate of consensus suggests that most internal CAST employees feel comfortable with having interview questions administered verbally (Q3 & Q6), but can see themselves benefiting additionally from a visual copy of the questions both before the interview (Q1) and during the interview (Q4).

3.2 EMPLOYEES' PREFERRED METHOD OF INTERVIEW

The preferred method of interview question administration was assessed through a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions.

3.2.1 PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE OF GROUPS A, B, AND C

Participants were asked whether the interview method they experienced was helpful to them with the interview process. Of the 109 participants who provided an answer, only 10 (9%) answered *No*, where three were from Group A, three from Group B, and four from Group C. Participants in all group were asked to explain their *Yes* or *No* answers. The responses are summarized in Tables 9, 10, and 11.

Table 8. Helpfulness of interview method

| | Group A | | Group B | | Group C | | Total | |
|--------------|---------|------|---------|------|---------|------|-------|------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Yes | 40 | 93% | 26 | 90% | 33 | 89% | 99 | 91% |
| No | 3 | 7% | 3 | 10% | 4 | 11% | 10 | 9% |
| Total | 43 | 100% | 29 | 100% | 37 | 100% | 109 | 100% |

Table 9. Themes & quotes of Group A

| Participants who Said No (n=3) | Participants who Said Yes (n=40) |
|---|--|
| <p>☞ Participants felt 10 minutes was insufficient to go through all the questions and make notes, which made them feel nervous/rushed (e.g. <i>"Some of the questions required more than 10 minutes to recall and write down. Also it made me feel rushed to recall all case file details."</i>)</p> | <p>☞ Participants appreciated the opportunity to prepare, organize thoughts, and write notes (e.g. <i>"The written interview questions prepared me and made the interview process go smooth."</i>; <i>"jotted down answers and referred to them in the interview."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Participants noted that it helped them generate ideas, remain focused during the interview, and provide more thoughtful and complete responses, which helped the interview flow smoothly (e.g. <i>"Could gather thoughts beforehand and shape answers to provide the fullest extent of my knowledge and experience."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Participants experienced reduced anxiety and less stress as they were not walking into the unknown (e.g. <i>"Reduces stress and anxiety about the context and what I can expect."</i>)</p> <p>☞ A few participants mentioned that they were happy with this method as they are visual learners (e.g. <i>"I enjoy having a moment to compose myself and be able to visualize the question while I answer."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Two participants mentioned it actually increased their anxiety (e.g. <i>"Not sure, felt relief to see them -could organize info better but increased anxiety somewhat."</i>) and one expressed that there wasn't enough time to <i>"absorb or focus on ten questions"</i>.</p> |



Table 10. Themes & quotes of Group B


| Participants who Said No (n=3) | Participants who Said Yes (n=26) |
|---|---|
| <p>☞ Participants said that having the questions in front of them while listening to the questions at the same time was distracting as it divided their attention (e.g. <i>"I found that I was reading the interview questions over as they were being read to me and it often took time for me to process them both. Found it easier just to listen and write notes."</i>)</p>  | <p>☞ Participants particularly appreciated being able to refer to the written question when it had multiple parts (e.g. <i>"Given there were several parts to each question I could break it down and reread as I was answering."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Some participants felt it helped to increase their focus/organization (e.g. <i>"I was able to revisit question/refocus if needed"</i>) and reduce their stress level (e.g. <i>"For some reason it allowed me to relax more, I was able to glance ahead and collect my thoughts."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Two participants expressed feeling distracted in addition to the beneficial elements (e.g. <i>"In some ways it helped me ensure I answered all the questions as it was sequential question asking. At times I felt the paper distracted me from giving eye contact and made less of personable experience."</i>)</p> |

Table 11. Themes & quotes of Group C

| Participants who Said No (n=4) | Participants who Said Yes (n=33) |
|--|--|
| <p>☞ Two participants indicated having to write the questions down to be able to answer all the parts.</p> <p>☞ One participant indicated that <i>"I had to think of my answers in the best and honest way possible no one can help you with that."</i></p> <p>☞ One participant felt the question was irrelevant as there was nothing different about the interview method.</p> | <p>☞ Six participants indicated that having the hiring panel verbally tell them the interview questions was the only way for them to find out what the question was (e.g. <i>"That was the only way I would be able to know what the questions were. If I had questions I would still like them to read because it would give me time to sort out in my head."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Participants appreciated the panel being able to clarify and repeat the questions (e.g. <i>"The panel was able to explain exactly what the required with rewording the question for me to understand."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Participants felt that asking questions verbally contributed to the flow of the conversation (e.g. <i>"I work well responding spontaneously, rather than from having questions in advance which would lead me to have a more scripted response"</i>) and helped with processing the information (e.g. <i>"rather than focusing on written words, I am able to process the question + start thinking about the answer."</i>)</p> <p>☞ Some participants indicated that they were most comfortable with listening to questions (e.g. <i>"I am more comfortable hearing and focusing on questions one by one"</i>), but would like a written copy as well (e.g. <i>"Having a verbal is beneficial so I can better understand the question. I would also prefer to have a written copy of the questions."</i>)</p> |

3.2.2 PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS – QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

As mentioned previously, participants in all groups were asked, *if you have a preference on how the interview questions were administered by the hiring panel, how would you rank the following methods?* Unfortunately, the question was misinterpreted by approximately one-fifth of the participants (n=22); Instead of ranking the three interview methods from 1 to 3 where 3 is best, these participants either ranked from 1 to 3 where 1 is best or placed a symbol (e.g. ✓) besides their preferred method. Due to the qualitative section following this question, the participants who misinterpreted the question were easily identified. Therefore, it was decided that the researcher would use her own judgment to determine the one preferred method of interview based on the information available. For participants where there was doubt regarding their one preferred method, the response was coded as missing. Nevertheless, this introduced a bias into the study.

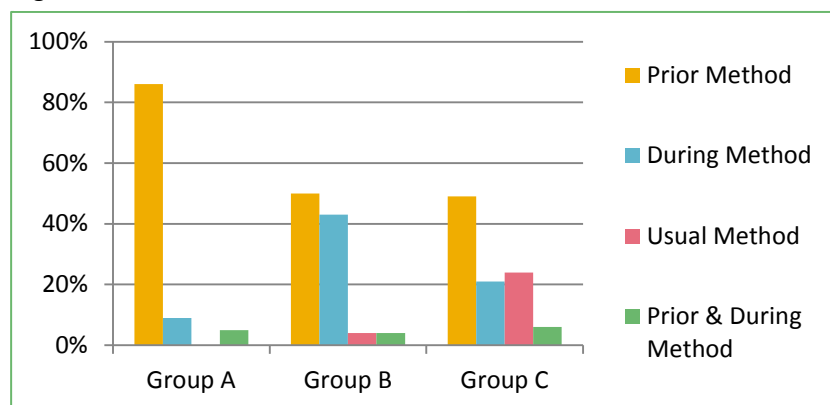
The **PREFERRED METHOD OF INTERVIEW** variable was created for 104 participants (93% of the sample). The remaining 8 participants either didn't respond to the question or their preferences could not have been clearly determined. As seen in Table 12 and Figure 1, each group was more likely to prefer the interview method it just experienced when compared to the preferences of other groups. For example, although the **USUAL METHOD** was the least preferred method overall (preferred by n=9, 9% of the sample), participants in Group C (who experienced the **USUAL METHOD** during their interview) were more likely than participants in any other group to prefer this method. This is true for the remaining two preferred methods. Nevertheless, the **PRIOR METHOD** was the preferred method across all groups (preferred by n=67, 64% of the sample). These group differences were statistically significant as demonstrated by Chi-square analysis ($X^2 = 28.00$) where the probability of these results obtained by chance is less than 1% ($p < .001$).

Table 12. Preferred method * Group crosstab

| | Prior Method | | During Method | | Usual Method | | Prior & During Method | | Total | |
|--------------|--------------|-----|---------------|-----|--------------|-----|-----------------------|----|-------|------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Group A | 37 | 86% | 4 | 9% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 5% | 43 | 100% |
| Group B | 14 | 50% | 12 | 43% | 1 | 4% | 1 | 4% | 28 | 100% |
| Group C | 16 | 49% | 7 | 21% | 8 | 24% | 2 | 6% | 33 | 100% |
| Total | 67 | 64% | 23 | 22% | 9 | 9% | 5 | 5% | 104 | 100% |

$\chi^2 (6, N = 104) = 28.000, p < .001.$

Figure 1. Preferred method of interview



It should be noted that preference for **PRIOR AND DURING METHOD** combined would likely be higher if participants realized they can indicate preference for more than one method.

3.2.3 PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATIONS – QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Participants were asked to provide their top three reasons for their previous ranking of the interview methods. Participants were also asked to provide recommendations for how the interview questions should be administered. The responses provided by the participants were analysed, grouped by theme, and summarized in Table 13.

Table 13. Preferences & recommendations

| | Prior Method | During Method | Usual Method |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Top reasons for PREFERRING each interviewing method</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; background-color: #FFD700; padding: 5px; margin-top: 20px; font-style: italic;"> “Feel it grounds the interview with nerves and expectations managed before walking into the interview.” </div> | <p>1. Helped to organize thoughts/prepare (n=61)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better understanding of the questions - Insight into what the expectations are <p>2. Less anxiety/stress (n=49)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Calmer and more confident - Not put on the spot <p>3. Improved the answers provided by interviewees (n=27)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focused and on track during the interview - More detail and less repetition in the answers <p>4. Meets diverse learning needs (n=13)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More fair process - Gets at true knowledge - More ways to take in a question | <p>1. Referring to the question during the interview is helpful (n=20)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prevents the need for interviewers to repeat - Helps to answer all parts of longer question - Allows to plan the answer/organize thoughts <p>2. Written question caters to visual learners and those who process better by reading (n=19)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Question is clearer - Interviewee can choose whether to follow along/take notes - Hearing and seeing is best <div style="border: 1px solid orange; background-color: #FFD700; padding: 5px; margin-top: 20px; font-style: italic;"> “I like to prepare ahead of time, or have the chance to think about my answers during the interview.” </div> | <p>1. Familiar and comfortable method (n=8)</p> <p>2. Spontaneous and “on feet” answers are better/easier/necessary for this line of work (n=8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not rehearsed and more sincere answers - Better understanding of what interviewee brings to the job <p>3. Interview is more like a conversation (n=2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less anxiety - More insight into interviewee <div style="border: 1px solid orange; background-color: #FFD700; padding: 5px; margin-top: 20px; font-style: italic;"> “I prepare more thoroughly without knowing what will be asked.” </div> |

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p>Top reasons for NOT PREFERRING each interviewing method</p> | <p>1. Questions in advance is stressful/anxiety provoking (n=12)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Over-thinking - Stuck on questions one cannot answer <p>2. Questions in advance leads to memorizing answers (n=6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Worker frazzled trying to remember written responses - Workers are not their true selves - Answers demonstrate memory instead of critical thinking - Less natural - Not effective method to judge how one will react in a situation <p><i>"I see having the questions prior as cheating/less natural."</i></p> | <p>1. Seeing questions during the interview is distracting (n=9)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflicting stimuli - Reading ahead <p><i>"If given during the interview I would get distracted by reading ahead and thinking about those answers."</i></p> | <p>1. Going in cold isn't helpful (n=6)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oral questioning is confusing - Being too anxious impacts one's ability to effectively answer - Classic method needs improvement <p><i>"Want best answers from people, what they know, not what they can produce off the top of their head."</i></p> |
| <p>Top Recommendations (n=76)</p> | <p>1. [Continue to] provide questions before interview (n=30)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer more time than 10 minutes <p>2. Provide question before and during the interview (n=12)</p> <p>3. More clarity in question structure and more relevance in question content (n=8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questions about work experience/case scenarios - Less wordy/fewer parts to the questions <p>4. [Continue to] provide questions during the interview (n=7)</p> <p><i>"Giving the written interview question prior to makes people more confident, organized, and speeds up the interview process. "</i></p> <p><i>"Ask each person what they are comfortable with."</i></p> <p><i>"Rather than saying there are 10 questions with several sub-questions, identifying the actual number of questions being asked."</i></p> | | |

3.3 EMPLOYEES’ PERFORMANCE SCORES

One of the objectives of this evaluation was to assess whether there was a difference in the performance of interviewees as a function of varying interviewing techniques. Therefore, the *Competition Grid Scores* of interviewees in Group A, Group B, and Group C were compared. It should be noted that to ensure the highest degree of confidentiality, the *Competition Grid Scores* were completely de-identified by HR Manager prior to sending the data to CWI. As there was no link between the *Competition Grid Scores* to the individual participants, the demographic variability (i.e. identification with a disability, racialized group, etc.) could not have been controlled for in the analysis.

An Analysis of Variances (ANOVA) test was used to detect between-group differences in *Competition Grid Scores*. *Competition Grid Scores* were provided for 98 participants and are summarized in Table 14.

There was no significance difference between the groups detected by the ANOVA ($p=.31$). Please be advised that clinical significance may be noted before statistical significance is established.

Table 14. *Competition Grid Scores by Group*

| | N | Mean | SD | Min | Max |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----|-----|
| Group A | 31 | 66.45 | 15.00 | 38 | 98 |
| Group B | 30 | 61.18 | 17.44 | 17 | 91 |
| Group C | 37 | 66.77 | 16.48 | 36 | 100 |
| Total | 98 | 64.94 | 16.36 | | |

4.0 SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

4.1 STRENGTHS & LIMITATIONS

The main strength of the study is its attempt to expand knowledge in a previously unexplored area. Although this study is exploratory, preliminary, and has its limitations, it is an important first effort in creating interviewing conditions that are more equitable, inclusive, and conducive to the needs of the interviewees. The main limitation of this study is in the uneven distribution of the job competitions across the study groups. This situation impacted the study’s ability to compare the performance of participations in each job competition as a function of their group participation. It should be noted that this limitation was created out of a necessity to ensure that employees within a job competition are treated fairly by being assigned to the same study condition. This limitation was somewhat mitigated by statistical methods that allowed controlling for variability in group size.

Another limitation is the non-standardized tools used in this study. Specifically, the *Comfortableness Survey* had low validity and reliability in this study. This limitation partially stems from the lack of research of best practices during interviews; therefore there were no tools with established psychometric properties that were identified for the purpose of this research. This limitation was mitigated by significantly limiting the analyses done with the tool and the inferences derived from it.

Yet another limitation was the confusing nature of one of the questions (see pg. 13), which required the interpretive intervention of the researcher, thus introducing a bias into the study. Finally, the small group sizes and the limited variability in the sample (internal applicants within CAST) are limitations that take away from our ability to generalize findings to all interviewees.

4.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Table 15 provides a summary of the main findings in this study:

Table 15. Summary of findings

| Research Questions | Main Findings |
|--|---|
| <p>Q1. How do employees perceive alternative interviewing techniques in comparison to the usual method?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The comments of participants who identified as having a disability suggest that an interview method that is not oral only would be preferred. ✓ The majority of participants found the methods used during their particular interview helpful. ✓ Each Group was more likely to prefer (rank highest) the interview method it just experienced when compared to the preferences of other groups. ✓ The majority of participants in all groups gave the highest ranking to the <i>Prior Method</i> (utilized in Group A) <li style="background-color: #fff9c4;">✓ 91% of the sample indicated preference for <i>Prior Method</i>, <i>During Method</i>, or a combination. ✓ The <i>usual method</i> was the least preferred method overall (preferred by n=9, 9% of the sample). ✓ The top two recommendations of participants were to provide interview questions <u>before the interview</u> and to provide questions <u>before and during the interview</u>. |
| <p>Q2. Is there a difference in the performance of employees during an interview as a function of varying interviewing technique?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ No significance difference ($p=.31$) was found between Group A, Group B, and Group C in the performance of employees on their interviews (as assessed by the Competition Grid Score). |



4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the interview panel continuing to ask interview questions verbally the following is recommended:

- (a) For all competitions, provide candidates with a copy of all the interview questions 15 minutes prior to the start of the interview.
 - i. It is up to the candidates to decide if they wish to read the questions in advance or not, it will not be factored into the scoring in any way;
 - ii. Candidates will be advised not to copy, capture an image of, or share the content of the interview questions with anyone other than the interview panel.

- (b) Allow the candidates to bring the list of questions, and any notes they have made, into the interview.
 - i. If interviews are being conducted over the phone or by video conferencing the candidate should be emailed the questions 15 minutes in advance of the interview;
 - ii. Provide instructions to panel member to suggest to candidates that they cover up the questions and only reveal the specific question being asked at the moment to avoid distraction;
 - iii. Panel members must collect the interview questions and any notes written by the candidates at the end of the interview.

NOTE: Although this pilot study only sampled internal competitions and the results cannot be generalized to other external competitions the recommendations will be applied to all interviews, both internal and external.

Other recommendations unrelated to the issue being studied in the pilot but that were raised by study participants are:

- (a) Have different types/sizes of chairs available to accommodate the different sizes, shapes, and abilities of candidates (e.g. have chairs with no arms available);
- (b) Streamline the interview questions to minimize overly wordy and/or overly multiple-parted questions;
- (c) Ensure there are anti-oppression/anti-racism and/or diversity and inclusion questions on all interview grids;
- (d) Advise interview panel members to turn on fan if the interview room feels hot and/or stuffy.