

Behaviour-based recruitment

A guide for employers

The problem

In our 2015 Youth Survey, **nearly 60% of young people** told us that their lack of experience had been a barrier to them applying for a role, the biggest barrier mentioned by respondents.

One reason for this is that many employers ask applicants for previous experience for entry-level roles, which by definition should not require any. As result, many employers are filtering out candidates without experience to save time on shortlisting at the cost of being able to identify the best young talent.

How behaviour-based recruitment can help employers

Behaviour-based recruitment is a model for assessing candidates' suitability for a role **based on the behaviours, attitudes and aspirations** they display during all stages of the recruitment process, rather than focusing on their previous work experience.

This enables recruiters to spot candidates with the potential to excel in a job role even when they have no previous direct experience and helps employers to identify people with the **attitudes and values that are the best cultural fit** for their company, which is not necessarily drawn out by discussing previous employment.

Reframing the focus of interview questions as well as using other types of assessments such as **situational judgement tests, group assessments and interactive sessions** all allow candidates to demonstrate how they would behave in real-life situations and interact with colleagues and clients.

Key things to consider:

- For entry level roles, what steps does your current recruitment process involve? Are candidates without previous experience automatically screened out, or ranked below other candidates with experience?
- What key behaviours, attitudes and motivations would your ideal candidates display?
- What recruitment format would best draw out these behaviours?
- What feedback are you providing to help them learn from the experience?

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1. Identify roles where behaviour-based recruitment would help you to identify young talent

In order to attract the best young talent, first you need identify which roles in your structure are suitable entry points for young people at the first stage in their career. Whether this is through structured traineeship and apprenticeship programmes or other entry level roles, the criteria for these jobs should not include previous experience or minimum qualifications that do not relate to the role.

Once you have identified which of your roles are suitable for young people, you can then consider how behaviour-based assessments can be used to identify the best candidates.

2. Identify the key behaviours, attitudes and motivations your ideal candidate would display

What are your company's key values that all your employees should represent? These can be drawn from the aims outlined in your mission statement or the core values outlined in your corporate strategy, or be aimed specifically at identifying exemplary behaviour in young people. Each of these values can be linked to a specific behaviour that recruiters look out for during testing. You can also develop a scoring system against your values to ensure that assessment is consistent and methodical.

3. Choose assessment formats designed to draw out evidence of these behaviours

Behaviour-based interviewing

One of the simplest ways you can draw out these qualities in your recruitment process is to adapt your existing interview questions to move the focus away from previous experience to towards demonstrating behaviours. For example, **Barclays** have adapted their apprenticeship interview questions to focus less on work experience and more on life and extra-curricular experiences.

Assessment Centres

Assessment centres are a collection of tests, usually over the course of a day, which are designed to draw out a number of contrasting key behaviours from candidates. They typically include a range of both group and individual exercises which allow recruiters to observe how well candidates work in a team, their communication and leadership skills and specific functional skills including verbal and numerical reasoning.

For example, **Ricoh** has developed an assessment day that judges individuals on their attitude and aptitude above all else. The agenda consists of an overview of the business and how the role candidates are applying for fits into the department. Recruiters then conduct five assessments linked to the company's core values. At the end of the session the assessors review their findings and provide a rounded opinion of each candidate for the recruiting manager to make the best decision for their team.

Technical assessments

As part of their apprentice assessment process, **Jaguar Land Rover** and their recruitment partner **Manpower** include a dexterity assessment to see how good young people are at physical problem solving using different parts, which relates closely to the kind of tasks Apprentices would be undertaking on a day to day basis. **Ricoh** also include a technical assessment for all roles, both practical and IT for back office.

Situational Judgement Tests

A situational judgement test (SJT) is a type of multiple choice test that invites candidates to select the action they would be most likely to take when presented with a range of scenarios and challenges, such as interacting with a difficult customer, working on a difficult team task or having to prioritise a busy workload. SJTs make candidates reveal the values and beliefs that underlie their behaviour in order to show how suitable they might be for a particular role.

Many companies conduct these tests online through a partner testing company, and because test scores can be calculated instantly they are a quick and effective way to shortlist suitable candidates. **Barclays** use video-based SJTs to make scenarios as real as possible, drawing a more genuine response and therefore the candidate's response as genuine as possible.

Work clubs

Another way to observe candidates' behaviour is to arrange 'work club' insight days for young people to learn more about working in your business and the kinds of roles available. Last year, **ASDA** held 200 work clubs round the UK to help upskill young people, and through this initiative they also managed to identify young people with high potential who were then supported into roles at **ASDA** with the support of the Prince's Trust.

4. Supporting young people during and after the interview

Young people will perform at their best if they are given some guidance on recruitment processes, which they will have had less exposure to than more experienced candidates. This includes what to expect on the day, what kind of assessments they will face and practicalities around travel and dress code. You can also help to put candidates at ease by beginning with an informal chat and giving them a tour of the office.

For example, **Ricoh** get their existing apprentices to host recruitment days to support candidates. After the assessment, you can help candidates learn how to improve for future assessments by giving open, honest and constructive feedback. Don't wait for them to ask – in our 2015 Youth Survey, nearly a third of young people told us they hadn't received feedback for an interview, with some not knowing how to ask.

Case study

[Read more about how Ricoh's assessment centres help to identify young talent](#)

Where to go next?

- Use CIPD's sample interview questions to help draw out behaviour and attitude. You can find them at the bottom of the [Behaviour-based recruitment page on Future Proof](#).