



# Power Booster

DuPage Association of Volunteer Administration

## Behavior-Based Interviewing

Excerpts from *Behavior-Based Interviewing* by Terry L Fitzwater, ISBN 1-56052-583-5

There is a tremendous amount of specialized information in books and on the internet about effective interviewing. But, how do we, as volunteer coordinators, find the tips and techniques that are best suited to our time-crunched situations? One way is to review our basic interview process, develop appropriate position descriptions and job criteria and then apply a behavior-based interviewing process.

### What we are trying to do in an interview?

- to screen and select the right people to fill our current positions
- to recognize skills that could help our organizations grow and perhaps create new positions
- to ensure that we represent and market our organization well
- to ensure that we follow our HR policies
- to start the recognition process from the initial contact with a volunteer

### How do we do all that in a time efficient manner?

- first check with your HR and follow their guidelines and forms; don't re-invent the wheel
- prescreen to interview only the most suitable applicants. Use your website, application form, phone, email, etc to identify your requirements so unsuitable candidates do not even apply. Then review the application forms you received and screen again. Use volunteer help to schedule your interviews.
- Script the interview to ensure that each person is asked the same questions, that you keep focused and on topic, that you cover all the required material and that the process is timely. If an applicant's response needs further questions ensure that they are job-related and take notes.

Terry Fitzwater's book is based on the premise that "it is not enough to hire a person based solely on what you *think* they can do. Behavioral, objective, fact-based selection criteria must be developed to increase your chance of placing the right person in the right job at the right time." He identifies four phases:

Phase 1: Gather Information - In this phase you compare the applicant's background and skills to your previously developed job-related criteria and position descriptions. Use your scripted questions to elicit the facts about the applicant's education, jobs and skills and to provide you with measurable responses to compare to your criteria.

Phase 2: Conduct the Interview - Fitzwater identifies 5 steps in the interview: *Introductions, Interviewer Asks Questions and records responses and behavior, Applicant Asks Questions, Close the Interview* and lastly *Administrate* (when the interviewer reviews notes and makes a decision.)

Phase 3: Interpret Behavior - Although this is somewhat subjective you can focus on measurable criteria such as body language, eye contact, posture, facial expressions, dress and grooming. If you are interviewing for a customer service position you may have developed criteria such as the ability to communicate effectively, to relate to strangers, to make eye contact, etc. If you observe behavior that doesn't match your criteria then this may not be the right person. Similarly, as you listen to the applicant, focus on presentation, vocabulary usage, inflection, intonation, clarity of thought, etc. Deficiencies in these areas may indicate this isn't the right person for your position.

Phase 4: Follow Up - In this phase you may be checking references, obtaining background checks and ensuring that you are following your HR policies such as maintaining confidentiality. This final stage includes the decision to accept the applicant or not, to communicate with the applicant and then to maintain the appropriate files.

***"It is said that the best predictor of future behavior (and success) is past successful behavior."***

Terry L. Fitzwater

