

# Behavioural Event Interviews (BEI)

---

## 1. What is BEI?

BEI is used to gain data which provides the richest source of hypotheses about competencies that predict effective job performances.

The problem with the traditional interviewing probes such as “tell me about your background” is that they do not reveal real motives or abilities. People may also not be aware of their strengths or weaknesses.

The basic principle of the competency approach is that what people think or say about their motives or skills is not credible. Only what they **actually do** in a “**critical incident**” can be believed.

The purpose of the BEI is to find out what **they really do (go beyond what they say)**. In the BEI, we do this by asking people **to describe how they actually behaved in specific incidents**.

## 2. Preparing for the BEI

The BEI requires intensive preparation if it is to produce the desired results. There are at least four key things that need to be done before the BEI.

1. Know who you will be talking to
  - name
  - job title
  - something about the job
2. Arrange quiet place for 1 hour
3. Seek permission to tape record interview  
(Explain it is for your purpose – data interpretation, not for off the record responses)
4. **Memorize** what you will say

### 3. **BEI Outline**

The BEI is a very structured process and for effective results, the structure must be followed. The four key stages are:

#### ***3.1 Introduce and Explain about the BEI interview***

- establish trust
- put the person at ease
- motivate interviewee to participate
- emphasise confidentiality
- tell them who you are, what you are doing and why.
- ask for their views as this makes them feel important
- say everyone is involved and they are not singled out

#### ***3.2 Job Responsibilities***

Questions are directed to what a person does and with whom or his/her current job. Suggested questions are:

1. What is the title of current job?
2. Who do you report to – Position only
3. Who reports to you – Position only
4. What are your major tasks/responsibilities?
5. What do you **actually do**?  
For example – what do you do in a day, week, month
6. Can you focus on specific job behaviours
  - e.g. Supervise call centre clerks

#### **Example:**

Tell me a little more about what you mean by 'supervise'

- Get them to explain jargon
- Listen for possible incidents
- Avoid getting laundry lists by getting the personal priorities

### **3.3 Behavioural Events**

Ask interviewee to describe in detail at least 3 complete critical incidents. It is good to start with a positive event. To get a complete story, you want answers to five questions:

1. What was the situation or events that led to it?
2. Who was involved?
3. What did you think, feel or want to do in the situation? Get the story in sequence. Fill the gaps to get the complete story.
4. Ask question to direct the interviewee into discussing actual situations not concepts. Probe for facts but be short.
5. Probe for thought behind activities  
E.g. How did you reach that conclusion
6. Appreciate positive incidents
7. Avoid abstraction or paraphrase. Do not use leading questions or jump to conclusions. Avoid getting into the interviewee's domain such as :
  - Tell me about a critical incident in which you have to deal with people's problem.
8. Stay with one situation at a time
9. Look for patterns
10. Don't let them run away with the interview or be vague. If they are unable to tell a story, you should use other approaches such as asking for examples of positive behavioural events.

### **3.4 Characteristics needed to do the job**

At this stage, you want to ask about the characteristics needed to do the job.

E.g. the final thing I like to ask you - what characteristics, knowledge or skills are needed to do your job? If you were hiring someone for your job, what would you look for?

The objective is to have the interviewee feel appreciated as well as extract other critical incidents.

## **4. Conclusion / Summary**

The conclusion is a very important stage in the BEI. It is essential to summarise and thank the interviewee. The key things to do at this stage are:

- Thank the interviewee
- Appreciate them for the time
- Summarize the data you have gathered

## **5. Analysing the BEI data**

Once the BEI is completed, there is still much work to be done. There is a need to:

- i. Code interview transcripts using checklists
- ii. Conceptualise competency themes from interview narratives

### **Steps**

The steps to follow in analysing the BEI data are:

- Form the Analysis Team
- Do individual Analysis of Interviews
- Complete the Thematic Analysis and Team Definition of Competencies
- Ensure the Validation steps are carried out