Meetings, Selection & Appraisal Interviews

People Skills for Managers

Samuel A. Malone

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MEETINGS, SELECTION & APPRAISAL INTERVIEWS
PEOPLE SKILLS FOR MANAGERS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The People Skills for Managers series of books are aimed at managers who want to acquire the vital people skills needed for success in a management career. This book covers the skills of meetings, selection and appraisal interviews. Each chapter starts with questions to prime the mind for learning and includes a summary and ends with five practical things you can do to improve your skills in the specific areas covered. Acronyms, inspirational quotations, illustrations and diagrams are sprinkled throughout the text to further enhance and consolidate the learning process.

Managers spend a good deal of their time either organizing meetings or running or attending them. They therefore, need to know how an effective meeting is organised, controlled and run. Before the meeting you should plan and prepare and circulate an agenda. At the meeting, start promptly, finish on time, and during the meeting encourage participation. After the meeting you should write up the minutes and circulate action plans. Some of the pitfalls of running a meeting include: allowing interruptions, tolerating talkative people to dominate proceedings, and allowing people to stray off the point. The chairman should ensure that the rules of the meeting are adhered to and give participants an equal chance of contributing. A good meeting will have clear objectives and stick to an agreed agenda. The main role of participants at a meeting is to come prepared, obey the rules and make a worthwhile contribution.

A selection interview is held to assess the suitability of a candidate for a particular job. In addition to interviewing it may involve IQ, aptitude and psychometric testing. Before the interview it's important to prepare thoroughly, and to prepare a checklist of questions to ask. During the interview you should put the candidate at ease, and let the candidate do most of the talking. When closing the interview inform the candidate when they will hear from you. After the interview select the best candidate and make a verbal offer by phone and then confirm it in writing.

Performance appraisal is part of a manager's job and is used to evaluate an employee with the aim of improving job performance and employee potential. It can also be used to improve job satisfaction, career planning, management succession, manpower planning, and as a basis for deciding levels of pay. The performance appraisal process should be continuous rather than just once a year. Managers need a variety of skills for the appraisal interview, including communication, counselling, empathy, conflict resolution and problem solving.

After reading this book you will be able to:

- Run effective meetings
- Know the duties of a chairperson
- Run effective selection interviews
- Know the errors of judgement that can arise in selection interviewing
- Conduct an appraisal interview
- Use the performance potential model

Samuel A Malone   August 2018

1 MEETINGS

How can I organise an effective meeting?
What are the pitfalls to avoid?
What are the duties of a chairperson?
What are the types of meetings?
What are the three elements of a meeting?

1.1 TYPES OF MEETINGS
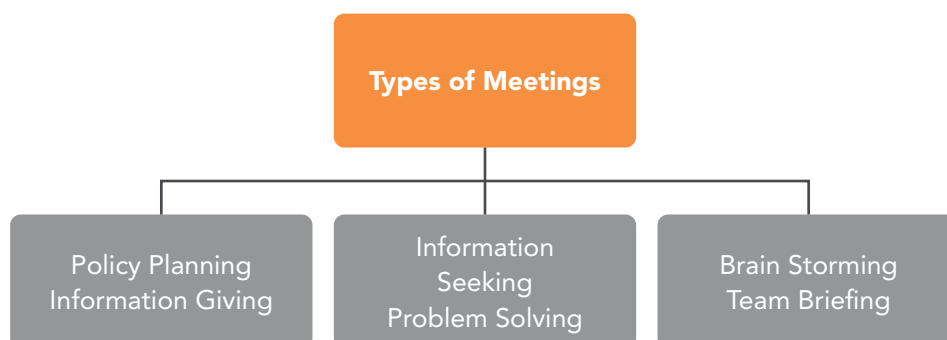
Fig. 1.1. Types of Meetings

♦ **Policy planning.** To develop policy and initiate planning with management. A policy is a set of ideas or a plan of what to do in certain circumstances that have been agreed by senior management in an organisation. Policies are implemented and monitored by middle and lower management.

♦ **Information giving.** If the meeting is just for providing information, then this could be done more effectively and efficiently, by communicating in writing. It is widely accepted that meetings are great time wasters if not controlled and managed tightly.

♦ **Information seeking.** This is where a manager asks a group of people for their views and opinions. The chairman should give everyone present, especially the diffident and hesitant ones, an equal opportunity to speak. The chairman will summarise the views of those present.

- **Problem solving and decision making.** Put forward proposals for consideration and discussion. The meeting may be requested to solve problems and make suggestions regarding appropriate decisions. There should be follow-up action to ensure that the decisions are actually taken and implemented and the outcomes expected achieved.

- **Brain storming.** The purpose of this meeting is to generate and encourage as many ideas as possible to solve a particular problem. The best and most feasible alternatives are discussed and considered, and the most effective solution determined. Cost benefit analysis may be used to identify the best and most cost-effective ideas.

- **Team briefing.** The team leader usually does the team briefing. This could take the form of information giving and receiving and general discussion. Information relayed from higher management and material of specific relevance to the team may be discussed. Team members may raise issues or discuss and debate proposals.

1.2   PURPOSE OF MEETINGS

To Promulgate Information

Information From Diverse Groups

Testing the Waters

To Socialise and Get to Know Staff
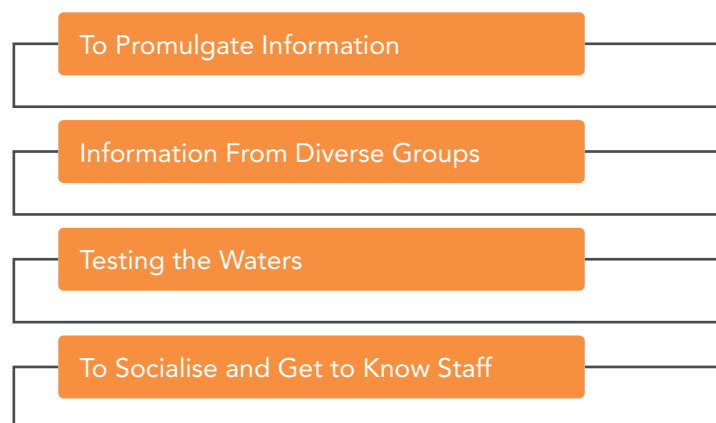
Fig. 1.2. Purpose of meetings

- When managers want to announce something to a large group of people. A general meeting is an efficient and effective way of promulgating and disseminating information to a large audience.

- When managers lack expertise and need to get advice and information from a diverse source of people from different departments with different skills, knowledge and viewpoints. When there's a need to pool ideas, knowledge and expertise.

- When some proposed decision affects participants, when implementation is important, and the manager wants to test the waters and gauge their reaction in advance of making the decision. This will ensure that the decision is widely accepted. When the decision is complex and needs the expert input of others. When managers want to empower participants through consultation or getting them involved in the decision-making process.

◆ To socialise and get to know as many staff as possible. This may be a bonding exercise as staff are given the opportunity of meeting each other in person and exchanging viewpoints and expertise.

1.3   THREE ELEMENTS OF MEETINGS

These can be categorised under task, maintenance and process.
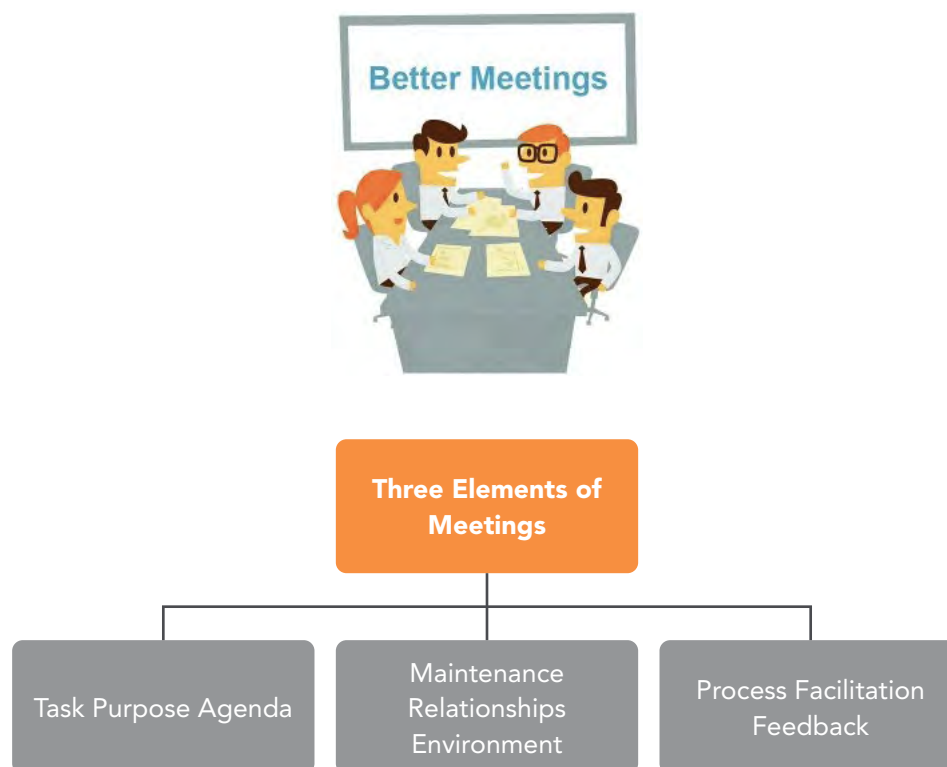
Fig. 1.3. Three Elements of Meetings

TASK

Doing the task element right means the administration part of the meeting is done effectively and efficiently. This should take up about 85 per cent of the time allowed. Administration includes the following:

◆ The purpose of the meeting should be clearly stated.
◆ Setting an agenda with time allocations for each item.
◆ Gathering and summarising information during the meeting.
◆ Analysing data and drawing conclusions.
◆ Making decisions based on facts rather than hearsay or opinion.
◆ Sharing views and opinions so that all feel involved and motivated.
◆ Follow-up to ensure that agreed actions have been satisfactorily carried out.

MAINTENANCE

The benefits of effective maintenance are improved relationships and a better environment in which to hold the meeting. This should take up about 10 per cent of the time allowed. Ineffective maintenance may hinder the task. Most maintenance takes place at the start and end of meetings.

♦ Relationships. Focus on ideas not personalities. Acknowledge your own feelings, and the feelings of others.
♦ Individual comfort or how people feel. The room should be suitable for its purpose, well-ventilated and lit, and comfortable chairs with tables should be provided. Everybody should be able to see everybody else. There should be adequate breaks for refreshments, bonding, and to allow people attend to their personal needs.

PROCESS

The benefits of an effective process are greater participation and shorter meetings. This should take up about 5 per cent of the time allowed.

♦ Reflect on how the meeting is going and take corrective action as needed to get it back on track.
♦ Facilitation skills to encourage listening, discussion and debate.
♦ Feedback describing rather than judging what is happening.
♦ Controlling and coordinating proceedings and making decisions.
♦ Drawing shy people in so that everybody gets an equal chance to contribute to the meeting.

1.4 ORGANISING EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

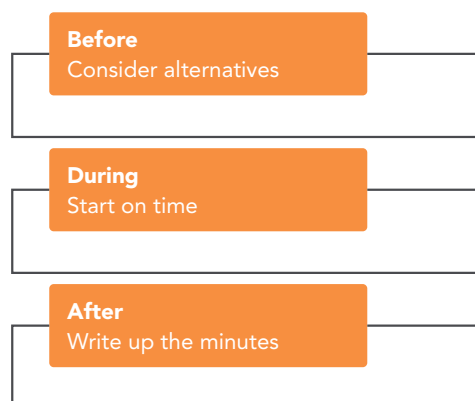This will be categorised under three headings: before, during and after.

Before
Consider alternatives

During
Start on time

After
Write up the minutes

Fig. 1.4. Organising effective meetings

BEFORE THE MEETING

♦ **Consider alternatives** to a meeting such as video conferencing, phone calls, e-mail, or one-to-one discussions. If these were viable options they would be less costly than holding a meeting. Only hold meetings that are relevant and absolutely necessary.

♦ **Purpose of meeting.** The purpose of the meeting should be agreed with the participants. Meetings should only be called when there is a sufficient volume of business to be done. Consider the desired outcomes, and again if the meeting is really necessary, or could the outcomes be achieved by other means? What do you want to achieve? What do you need to discuss? What decisions will need to be taken? How long should the meeting be?

♦ **Plan the meeting.** Visualise in advance what you feel the meeting should be like and the outcome you expect. Research the potential participants so that you know your audience and anticipate their attitudes and the positions they will take. Consider the people that are likely to make a meaningful contribution. Only people who need to be at the meeting should be invited. Mind maps are a good technique to use for planning meetings.

♦ **Adequate notice.** Proper notice must be given to every person entitled to attend the meeting. Decide the date, time and place, and pick a location that is convenient for the participants to attend. Only invite those who are essential for the business of the meeting. These might be people affected by the problem or those who can contribute to the discussion, experts on the subject, people who are good at implementing things, or people who are good at problem solving, or generating ideas. Sometimes it might be a good idea to invite an objective outsider for an impartial view on matters arising during the meeting.

♦ **Prepare an agenda.** The agenda should be complete, specific and designed towards achieving the desired outcomes. The purpose of the meeting should be written clearly at the top of the agenda. Create a time frame for each item on the agenda, and keep it focused on a few key issues rather than have numerous items. An agenda allows the chairman to limit discussion to relevant subjects and control the way time is spent. The agenda should be circulated along with supporting documentation to potential participants before the meeting.

♦ **Include only relevant items on the agenda.** The fewer the better. Prioritise items in relation to their importance. Decide who will lead the discussion. Allocate time for each item on the agenda and have a contingency plan to deal with situations that might go wrong. Provide background information as appropriate for items on the agenda.

♦ **Book the room and prepare the necessary paperwork.** Consider the layout appropriate for the meeting. Organise comfortable chairs, table space for participants to work on, and good lighting. You may need a personal computer and a flipchart

and stand, or other equipment such as an overhead projector if you consider visuals necessary. Make sure there are no obstacles in the view line of participants.

♦ **Organise coffee breaks.** If you anticipate the meeting is going to be long, schedule breaks of 15 minutes every two hours. The time span of attention is about 20 minutes and certainly not more than an hour. Nobody can concentrate on business issues for very long. Hence the need for frequent breaks and a well-ventilated room.

> *"The real process of making decisions, of gathering support, of developing opinions, happens before the meeting or after."*
>
> – Terrence Deal

DURING THE MEETING

♦ Start on time. Show by example that you practise good time management. A quorum must be present at the start of the meeting and during the entire meeting to validate decisions made. This is the minimum number of people that need to be present at a meeting to lawfully transact business. Where an organisation has no rule a majority of those invited must be present. If a quorum is not present, the meeting should be adjourned.

♦ The function of a chairman is to tell participants the purpose of the meeting and set out the ground rules. Voting is usually by show of hands, or where secrecy is needed, by ballot. The chairman should demonstrate objectivity, personal control and efficiency at all times by making sure the meeting is run properly and in accordance with the rules.

♦ Encourage open debate by inviting contributions from the floor. In particular the chairman should get the introverts and diffident participants to talk by contributing ideas and expressing opinions. He should ask questions to explore and clarify issues, and generally keep the debate on focus.

♦ The chairman should reach decisions and periodically summarise what has been agreed. People will try to test limits, upstage others, divert attention, entertain with wisecracks, manipulate and monopolise proceedings, and waste time by getting off the point. It is the chairman's job to stay on target and be firm but fair with people who try to dominate proceedings. He should stay calm, patient, focused, emotionally neutral, and protect people from personal abuse. He should promote goodwill and a friendly atmosphere by respecting people's time, contributions, feelings, beliefs and opinions.

◆ Take minutes. These should include the names of those who attended, key points of the meeting, decisions made and action required. It should include the name of the person who makes a motion, the person who seconded it, and whether it is carried or defeated. Minutes are a history of the proceedings, and decisions made at a meeting. They record what's decided rather than what's said and are not a verbatim record of the proceedings. The mind map technique is very useful for taking preliminary minutes in key point form for completion after the meeting.

◆ When the business on the agenda has been done the chair declares the meeting closed.

AFTER THE MEETING

◆ The chairman will write up and fine-tune the minutes and this should be done as soon after the meeting as possible while things are still fresh in the chairman's mind. These will be presented at the next meeting for approval by the chair.

◆ The chairman will reflect on and review the effectiveness of the meeting and learn from the experience. This will ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated subsequent meetings.

◆ The chairman will circulate action minutes showing who is responsible for taking action, what action needs to be taken and when it should be done by.

◆ The chairman will follow up to ensure that everything gets done according to plan and on time.

1.5   AVOID MEETING PITFALLS

One of the biggest time wasters in the workplace is the endless stream of meetings many of them unnecessary. They often degenerate into mere talking shops and achieve nothing but waste time. A significant part of a manager's working day is now spent at meetings. There are staff meetings, budget meetings, work-in-progress meetings, appraisal meetings, disciplinary meetings and many others. Make sure your meetings are necessary and productive by avoiding the following pitfalls.

Group conformity

Chair doesn't control meeting

Problem solving approach not pursued

Goals of meeting unclear

Appropriate people not present

Venue unsuitable

Poor time management

Fig. 1.5. Meeting pitfalls

♦ Group conformity. Meetings may become insular and fail to take the broader view. The chairman dominates the meeting with own personal agenda. The chair manipulates the meeting and deals in personalities rather than issues. Where the boss is the chairman, participants tell the boss what the boss wants to hear rather than the uncomfortable truth.

♦ The chair fails to control the meeting. Discussion becomes unfocused, and people constantly wander off the topic without being brought back on target by the chairman. The roles of participants at the meeting are not clear. Talkative people are allowed to dominate and monopolise the meeting. The simplest way to deal with this problem is to limit the speaking time for each person and stick rigidly to it. There is inadequate interaction and exploration of ideas between participants. People interrupt without listening to each other. People are called out from the meeting to attend to urgent tasks, and participants are allowed to take urgent telephone calls. Mobiles should be switched off before people enter the meeting room and calls should not be allowed except in the most urgent of circumstances.

♦ Decisions are made based on hearsay and assumptions rather than facts. A systematic problem-solving approach, establishing the facts and considering alternatives, leading to solutions is not engaged in.

♦ The goals for the meeting are vague, and so there is little monitoring of progress, and no emphasis on achieving outcomes or results. Meetings should not be vehicles for expressing participants egos.

♦ The appropriate people are not present, or there are too many people present. Robert Sutton, a professor of organisational behaviour at Stanford University, looked at the research on group size and concluded that the most productive meetings contain

only five to eight people. He concludes that there is a tipping point beyond which the quality of the conversation begins to erode. People who should have been invited but left out of a meeting will feel annoyed. They will have little commitment to any decisions made at the meeting and may be offended to the point of working against the decision.

◆ The room or venue is not suitable. It is too large or too small, poorly ventilated, with inadequate heat and light, and arranged like a classroom. Some people's line of sight is blocked.

◆ Poor time management. The meeting doesn't start or finish on time. The chairman waits for latecomers to come before he starts the meeting showing a total disregard for the value of another person's time. The agenda is too long, and items are not prioritised or limited to a time slot. The minutes are incomplete or biased. There is not enough time for everyone to participate in the meeting and meaningful debate is replaced by shallow comments.

"Meetings are a symptom of bad organisation. The fewer meetings the better."

– Peter F. Drucker

1.6 PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF A GOOD CHAIRMAN

These can be recalled by the acronym **DISCARD**:

D	• Dignity
I	• Impartiality
S	• Stoicism
C	• Courtesy
A	• Awareness
R	• Respect
D	• Decisiveness

Fig. 1.6. Attributes of a Good Chairman Model (**DISCARD**)

♦ **D**ignity. A good chairman will uphold the position with order and decorum by demonstrating and demanding respect for the office at all times. He should act like a role model displaying and maintaining the ideal role of a chairman.

♦ **I**mpartiality. A good chairman will be firm but fair and should be above politics, personal animosities, and group intrigues, when conducting the meeting. He will lose the trust and respect of participants if he is seen to have favourites or shows personal animosity to some participants.

♦ **S**toicism. A good chairman will be cool and calm under pressure, always in control and never lose his temper. Talkative people will try to dominate proceedings and others may continually repeat themselves or get off the point testing the patience of the chair. Controversial matters will engender heated debate. All of these can annoy and irritate. The chairman must exercise self-control, and not only control the meeting, but also cut short the inappropriate behaviour of participants.

♦ **C**ourtesy. A good chairman maintains harmony and achieves results by being even-tempered, mannerly, impartial and friendly. This will help the meeting do its business smoothly and pleasantly and achieve the desired outcomes.

♦ **A**wareness. The chairman must be able to sense the feeling and atmosphere of the meeting to pick an appropriate time to call a vote. He must know when to cut short pointless repetition of arguments that are illogical, tiresome, unproductive, and time-consuming.

♦ **R**espect. The chairman should show respect for the opinions and views of participants. Diplomacy and tact needs to be exercised when curtailing a debate. Few speakers welcome an interruption and may feel they have lost face in front of their colleagues.

♦ **D**ecisiveness. The chairman should exercise problem solving and decision-making skills. The chairman should analyse the thinking leading to any decision, and once satisfied that the decision is correct should stick to it. Decisions made should be applied uniformly to all participants.

1.7   ESSENTIALS OF A GOOD MEETING

These can be summarised and recalled by the acronym **CASTS:**

Essentials of a Good Meeting CASTS				
Clear Objectives	Appropriate Venue	Start/End on Time	Timetable	Summary

Fig. 1.7. Essentials of a Good Meeting Model (CASTS)

- **C**lear objectives.
- **A**ppropriate venue.
- **S**tart promptly and end on time.
- **T**imetable (written agenda) should be distributed in advance. The chairman should stick to the agenda and stay on track.
- **S**ummary. A summary of the meeting should be sent to participants immediately afterwards. There should be follow up action to ensure that proposed actions have been taken.

ADVANTAGES OF MEETINGS

- Communicates with many people at the same time and achieve consensus.
- Face to face interaction so that you get to know people on a personal basis and develop relationships.
- Better decisions because of the synergy effect – the shared skill, knowledge, experience and expertise of the participants.
- Problem solving. More heads are better than one leading to more ideas, better problem solving and decision-making.

> **"The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances. If there is any reaction, both are transformed."**
>
> **– Carl Jung**

DISADVANTAGES OF MEETINGS

- Meetings are time consuming, and there is the opportunity cost of time. Meetings naturally require more time to consider everybody's point of view and arrive at a decision, than the time it would take one person to do so. This means that people at the meeting could have used their time more productively doing something else. In addition, sometimes meetings are used as a tactical device to slow down or postpone decision-making when managers don't want to do anything. They give the false impression of action even though nothing is actually being done.
- They are a platform for talkative people who just like the sound of their own voice, are on an ego trip, and waste time. Some meetings are out of control with participants talking at cross-purposes and at tangents.
- Some meetings have no real purpose, and the reason for them is not carefully thought through. Meetings are now so prevalent in business that they are a routine part of

work life, and often called for trivial reasons. Thus, meetings may be inefficient, unproductive, and inconclusive.

♦ Personality conflicts and fatuous point scoring may hinder the ability of the meeting to come to good decisions. In addition, the participants at the meeting may lack the training, experience, and overall competence to make worthwhile contributions and good decisions.

> "Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything."
>
> – John Kenneth Galbraith

ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS

Preparation

Feedback

Maintain good IPR

Build on Contributions

Active Participation

Stick to Agenda

Fig. 1.8. Role of participants

♦ Come prepared. Just like the chairman, participants should do their homework before attending the meeting, and consider what their goals are, and what they are going to say and achieve at the meeting.

♦ Ask for and give feedback and be prepared to accept constructive criticism.

♦ Maintain good interpersonal relationships by raising difficult subjects diplomatically. Seek different views and look for evidence to support those views.

♦ Constructively build on each other's contributions rather than negatively shooting down other's opinions and viewpoints.

♦ Actively participate in the business of the meeting by being heard, and making their viewpoints known.

♦ Stick to the agenda and the rules and the goals of the meeting.

> **"The length of a meeting rises with the square of the number of people present."**
>
> **– Eileen Shanahan**

1.8 SUMMARY

Before the meeting you should plan, prepare and circulate an agenda. Meetings are useful when a manager wants to make something widely known. The three elements of a meeting are task, maintenance and process. During the meeting start promptly, finish on time, and in-between encourage debate. After the meeting, write up the minutes and circulate action plans. Some of the pitfalls of meetings include, allowing interruptions, tolerating talkative people to dominate proceedings, and allowing people to get off the point. The chairman should ensure that the rules of the meeting are adhered to and give participants an equal chance of contributing to the proceedings.

An effective meeting will have clear objectives and adhere to the agenda. The main advantage of a meeting is it facilitates face to face communication and better decisions. The main drawbacks are that they may be inefficient, unproductive and inconclusive. The main role of participants at a meeting is to come prepared, obey the rules and make a contribution.

1.9   FIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR MEETING SKILLS

1. If it's your first time chairing a meeting attend a course on meeting skills. Before you decide on having a meeting consider if alternatives such as phone calls or emails might do the job just as well. Decide on the purpose, prepare an agenda, and give participants adequate notice. Choose an appropriate venue, and only invite those people who need to be there. Consider limiting the number of people at the meeting in order to create more meaningful discussions.

2. Always start promptly and finish on time. Make sure the procedural rules of the meeting are observed. Encourage open debate by inviting contributions from all those present. Prioritise items on the agenda and stick to the time allocated for each item. Frequently summarise in writing decisions agreed during the meeting.

3. After the meeting fine-tune the minutes and circulate the action minutes. Reflect and review how the meeting went, and learn from your mistakes, so that you improve the next time. Follow up to ensure that the actions agreed have been done.

4. Avoid the common pitfalls of meetings such as allowing interruptions, letting talkative people dominate proceedings, and wander off the topic, and leaving the meeting continue beyond the planned time. Make sure the appropriate people are invited and present at the meeting.

5. Know about the significance of the three elements of a meeting – task, maintenance and process. Even though the maintenance only takes 10 per cent of the time if handled badly it may hinder the task. Similarly, the process taking up only 5 per cent of the time, if done badly will have a very significant effect on the outcome of the meeting.

2 SELECTION INTERVIEW

How can I organise an effective selection interview?
What are the disadvantages of a selection interview?
How do errors of judgement arise?
What are the approaches adopted when interviewing?
What are the skills of good interviewing?

DEFINITION

A selection interview is held to assess candidates for a vacant job and to pick the best person for it. The candidate also assesses the company to see that it meets his job and career aspirations. In an interview information is exchanged between the candidate and the interviewers. The selection process may also involve testing such as IQ, aptitude, and psychometric. IQ tests verbal, abstract and numerical reasoning. Aptitude tests gauge numerical ability, reading, writing and verbal reasoning. Psychometric tests ascertain personality characteristics. Other tests may include:

- **Situational.** Testing candidates in simulated work situations to see how they would handle a particular task or situation. This may involve dealing with relevant correspondence or completing company forms in an assessment centre. The objective is to ascertain how closely your behaviours match up with the requirements of the job.
- **Technical.** Testing candidates' technical knowledge. For example, in engineering, financial or computing. If the candidate has a relevant professional qualification it's assumed that this requirement is met.
- **Graphology.** Graphology is the study of the shape, size and style of a person's handwriting. It includes closure of letters, position of words and slope of lines, to predict personality characteristics such as attention to detail, persistence, intelligence, and so on. Graphology is widely used in France but is treated with suspicion in most other European countries. Its scientific validity has not been established. However, it is useful as a complementary technique to be used in conjunction with other selection methods.

2.1 CONDUCTING EFFECTIVE INTERVIEWS

It's important that the selection is performed thoroughly and accurately and that the right person with the right competencies is picked for the vacant position, as this will save

the company future rehiring and retraining costs. It costs money to advertise, review job applicants, interview them, and check references. Then there is the cost of induction normally lasting up to 6 months. All of these costs can be wasted if the new employee does not stay with the company or proves to be unsatisfactory. Conducting effective interviews will be considered under four headings: before, during, closing, and after.
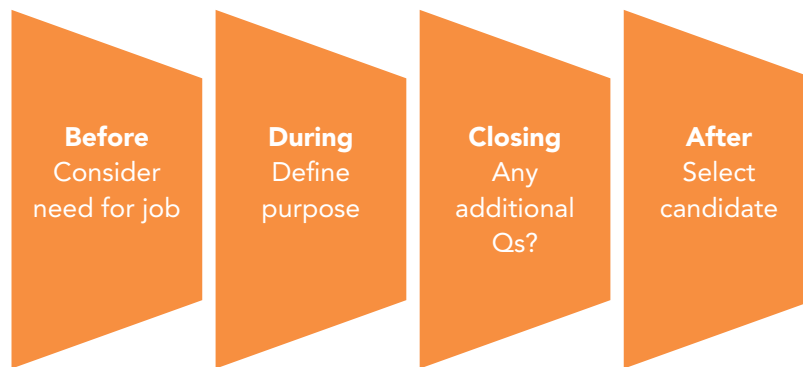
Before
Consider need for job

During
Define purpose

Closing
Any additional Qs?

After
Select candidate

Fig. 2.1. Conducting effective interviews

BEFORE

◆ Make sure there is an absolute need for the position. Could the job be eliminated or divided up between other jobs? Ideally a job analysis will have been done defining the job's duties and responsibilities and the key success factors identified.

◆ Allow one hour for each selection interview. If there is more than one interviewer, they should meet in advance to agree roles, common standards, principles, approaches, and evaluation criteria.

◆ Study the candidate's CV and look for gaps and inconsistencies in the information provided for probing during the interview. Study the job specification for the key responsibilities; the person specification for the type of person needed for the job; and the job description for the knowledge, skills, experience and attributions required. A well-written job description gives the necessary information to see what criteria are needed to do the work.

◆ Study the candidate's application form to see how they match up to the job requirements. Then prepare a short list eliminating those who do not meet the basic job criteria.

◆ Prepare a checklist of standard questions on key issues to ask the candidates. These should be the same for each candidate, so that consistency is maintained, comparisons can be made, and valid conclusions can be drawn.

◆ Develop an evaluation sheet to assess each candidate against agreed criteria. Some of the areas included are education, job experience, characteristics (appearance,

personality, interpersonal relationship and communication skills), technical skills and management experience.

♦ It's important that the manager identifies the attitudes and values important to the company, and that tie in with its culture. These include leadership, communication, and interpersonal relationship skills, problem solving, commitment, loyalty, integrity, creativity, and teamwork. These can be used to assess the suitability of the candidate for the company.

> "Plenty of men do good work for a spurt and with immediate promotion in mind, but for promotion you want a man in whom good work has become a habit."
>
> – Henry L. Doherty

DURING

- Define the purpose of the interview and work from notes prepared in advance. Each interviewer should be working with the same agenda in mind.

- Put candidates at ease. Open the interview with polite small talk and look for something you have in common to break the ice. Quickly establish a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere to build up rapport, relax and encourage the applicant to talk. Use positive body language, such as smiling, and encouraging head nods, to help the conversation along. Privacy is vital, so take steps to ensure that interruptions such as phone calls and unexpected callers will not happen. Follow the planned structure throughout the interview. For example, ask questions in the proper sequence.

- Avoid multiple, closed, and leading questions. Multiple questions should be avoided as they create information overload and confuse the listener. Use open questions to encourage the candidate to open up and speak in some detail about their background. They are more effective with people of higher intelligence. Use closed questions when seeking specific information to establish the facts. Don't be afraid to use silence as appropriate to prompt the candidate to elaborate. Use "about" questions, "hypothetical" questions and "reflective" questions. Use the information on the CV and application form as prompts for questions to ask.

- Remember the acronym **MANIA** standing for **M**otivation, **A**cquired qualification and experience, **N**atural aptitudes, **I**nterpersonal relationships, and **A**djustment or disposition. This will remind you of the essential topics to cover during the selection interview such as motivation, qualifications, aptitudes, and experience. Appearance, oral communication, and self-presentation skills, can be assessed at an interview. In addition, a person's attitudes, personality and work ethic, can be gauged. Assess whether or not the candidate has the right personality and attitude to fit in with the culture of the company and the rest of the team.

- The body language of a candidate is just as important as what they say. Observe to see that it matches the words spoken. A mismatch may suggest that the candidate is not totally honest and is trying to hide something. Eye contact, voice inflexion, sincerity, enthusiasm and confidence should be noticed when determining suitability. While most people can tell you what you want to hear, few can hide the non-verbal cues that may belie the words spoken.

- Stick to the 30/70 rule. This says that the interviewer should speak 30 per cent of the time, and the candidate 70 per cent of the time. After all, it is the views of the candidate that you want to hear rather than the sound of your own voice! Listen for the meaning behind the words. If you don't understand something ask the candidate to clarify the issue to your satisfaction.

- If the candidate pauses don't rush in with another question. This is the natural instinctual thing to do but should be avoided. Give the candidate plenty of time to reflect and think through issues and respond, before you ask another question.

♦ Springbett (1958) found that interviewers make their decisions during the first few minutes of the interview. "The appearance of the applicant and the application form provide information in the first two or three minutes of the interview which decisively affects the final outcome in 85 per cent of the cases."

♦ Past performance is still the best indicator of future performance. Find out what the candidate has accomplished in the past, and the skills and behaviour he has demonstrated in previous jobs. Pay particular attention to how the candidate got on with former supervisors or managers and why he left the previous employment. The ability to get on with other people is a vital skillset for any job.

CLOSING

♦ Ask the candidate have they any additional questions, or would they like to add something that they didn't get a chance to say.

♦ Inform them when they will hear from you and stick to your word.

♦ Thank them sincerely for coming to the interview.

♦ Stand up and shake their hand and thank them again for attending the interview.

AFTER

♦ Review notes. Prepare a report as soon as possible after the interview to evaluate the candidate and make a recommendation. The interview should have provided the manager with the information needed to find the candidate with the best fit between qualifications, experience, and the job requirements, and the candidate's own goals, interests, and aspirations.

♦ Records should be kept giving the reason why the other candidates were unsuitable, and held for six months, as they may be needed to protect the company against charges of discrimination or unfair treatment.

♦ Select the candidate with the competencies that meet the needs of the job and the organisation. Make a verbal offer by phone and then confirm it in writing.

♦ Check out references. This is essential as some candidates may lie about their qualifications and experience. Former employers may provide information over the phone but are unlikely to give information in writing for reasons of confidentiality. Employers have become fearful of potential litigation against them for libel by former employees, and so they are extremely careful what they put in writing. Check out qualifications of the candidate chosen with the relevant colleges and professional institutes.

♦ Write promptly to all candidates and tell the unsuccessful ones why they have not been successful in this instance and wish them luck in their future careers.

"In order that people may be happy in their work, these three things are needed: They must be fit for it. They must not do too much of it. And they must have a sense of success in it."
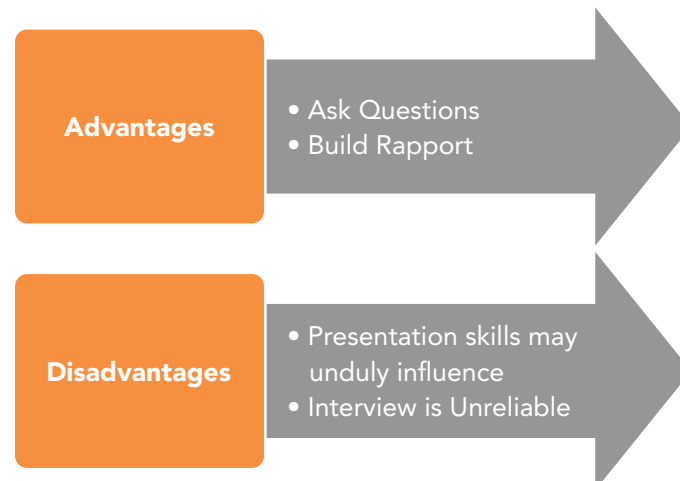
– John Ruskin.

Advantages
- Ask Questions
- Build Rapport

Disadvantages
- Presentation skills may unduly influence
- Interview is Unreliable

Fig. 2.2. Advantages & Disadvantages of interview

ADVANTAGES OF INTERVIEW

♦ Enables you to ask questions and compare competencies with job requirements. There is no substitute for seeing the candidate in person. A face to face encounter is preferred to determine the suitability of the candidate, and their preferences for the type of experience they want.

♦ Provides an opportunity to build rapport with the candidate. The interviewer can explore the candidate's attitudes, beliefs, values, opinions, views and reactions to see that they are congruent with the culture of the company.

♦ Gives you the opportunity to describe the job, the organisation and the psychological contract. The employer can use the occasion to create a positive image for the company.

♦ Provides the candidate with an opportunity to ask questions about the job and the company, and to find out about the terms of employment. The candidate should make sure that the job meets his needs and career aspirations.

DISADVANTAGES OF INTERVIEWS

Despite its disadvantages and its unscientific nature, the selection interview remains popular. It is likely to remain so because of the innate human desire to meet and see people in person.

♦ The interviewee's presentation skills may unduly influence the outcome. The candidate may be all style but no substance and in reality, may be lazy and incapable of sustained hard work.

♦ The interview is unreliable as a selection method. It's limited solely to those skills that can be observed at interview. It's difficult to measure the same things for different candidates and to measure on-the-job competencies and predict on-the-job performance and behaviour. It's almost impossible to know whether or not candidates are telling lies.

♦ Relies on interviewer's judgement, intuition and skill rather than scientific criteria. Different interviewers will have different opinions and judgements about the candidate's suitability for the job. There is subjective bias involved. "Gut feeling" may replace objective judgement based on the candidate's strengths and competencies and may result in hiring mistakes.

♦ The interviewer may lack the skills of interviewing although this can be remedied by appropriate training.

> "In a hierarchy every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence. Work is accomplished by those employees who have not yet reached their level of incompetence. Competence, like truth, beauty and contact lenses, is in the eye of the beholder."
>
> – Dr. Laurence J. Peter

2.2 ERRORS DURING INTERVIEWS

Psychologists have discovered the following causes for errors of judgement in interviews (see also Bias in relation to Performance Appraisal in Chapter 5):

Errors of Judgement					
Halo Effect	Horn Effect	Contagious Bias	Stereotyping	Rating Scales	Primacy Effect

Fig. 2.3. Errors of Judgement During Interviews

- ♦ *Halo effect.* When you like, admire, or respect a person, you are normally going to be very well disposed towards them. In standard psychological tests, if the person doing the testing likes the person being tested they are likely to give them higher scores than otherwise. Another tester might give different scores. In a selection interview, a manager might be influenced by a person who is well dressed, pleasant, attractive, self-confident and enthusiastic, and also mark them up on traits such as honesty, loyalty, courtesy and efficiency even though there is no link between the first set of traits and the second. In examinations candidates with good handwriting may get higher marks than those with bad handwriting even when examiners are told to disregard the handwriting and concentrate on the content.

- ♦ The *horn effect* is the opposite of the halo effect. The presence in an individual of one bad trait, like selfishness, can lower people's opinion of all his other good traits, and he may be seen as less honest or intelligent than he really is. In an interview you should not allow the "halo" or "horn" effect to bias your selection. This is easier said than done!

- ♦ *Contagious bias.* This is where the interviewer's bias influences candidate's replies through the use of leading questions. It's important that the interviewer is impartial and objective and avoids the use of such questions. Leading questions try to direct and control the discussion in line with the interviewer's biases and may produce

misleading answers. Detectives and barristers sometimes use leading questions to manipulate a suspect in confessing to a crime.

♦ *Stereotyping.* Stereotypes are collections of prejudices. If they are not discriminatory, or negatively used, they can be a useful and quick way of categorising and understanding people. They are convenient, as we do not need to assess each individual case; we just assume that they conform to the stereotype. We may consider people with a lower-class accent to be common and vulgar, and all men to be macho and all women to be emotional and indecisive. We may believe that women are intellectually inferior to men. We may believe the saying that you can't teach old dogs new tricks. We may perceive all Americans as loud, Scots-people as mean and Blacks as lazy. We may believe that all red-haired people are fiery. Stereotypes can become self-fulfilling prophecies as when we act towards red haired people in a provocative way. Like any category scheme stereotyping can be dangerous and blind us to individual differences, and so as managers we should be aware of how we label people. Our view of people may be based as much on our own ignorance, biases and prejudices as on the person's actual behaviour and personality. Our judgement about a person may say as much about ourselves as the other person. In a selection interview, managers should be aware of the human tendency to stereotype and try to avoid it if they are inclined to do it themselves. Stereotyping can lead to accusations of sexual, gender and racial discrimination.

♦ *Rating scales.* Rating scales tend to be subjective and unreliable. Different managers using the same rating scales are liable to come up with different results. When rating scales are used for selection interviews there is a tendency for managers to rate candidates as average. For example, if a 1-5 scale is used, five being the best and one the worst, managers will rate a majority of candidates at three.

♦ *Primacy effect.* The primacy effect is a well-known memory law which states that you remember better what you do first rather than what came subsequently. Interviews have been shown to be subject to the primacy effect and to the contrast effect. If an intelligent-sounding candidate impresses the manager, they are likely to underestimate the next one interviewed. The effect also works in reverse. When a poor performing candidate is followed by someone above average, the interviewer will think the second candidate is much better than they really are. As a manager, be aware of these potential sources of bias and allow for them when making your assessment.

2.3   APPROACHES TO SELECTION INTERVIEWS

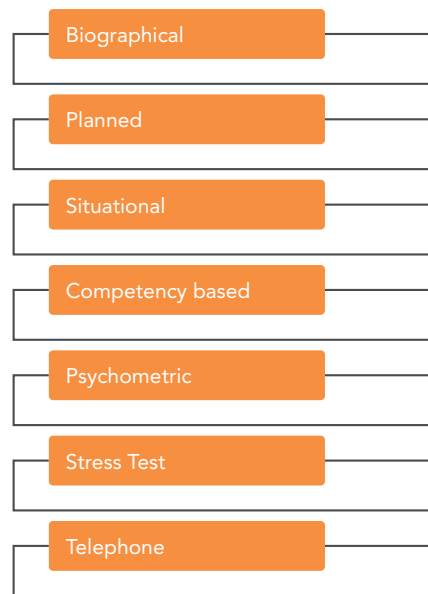| Biographical |
|---|
| Planned |
| Situational |
| Competency based |
| Psychometric |
| Stress Test |
| Telephone |

Fig. 2.4. Approaches to Selection Interviews

♦ **Biographical.** This is the traditional organised and systematic approach to selection interviewing using the CV as the basis to ask questions. It's better to start with the most recent experience and work backwards.

♦ **Planned.** Using assessment headings as in the acronym MANIA previously covered in this chapter. This ensures that the main important criteria such as motivation, aptitudes, qualifications and interpersonal relationship skills are covered during the interview.

♦ **Situational.** These are tests to gauge the practical experience of the candidate to perform the job offered using hypothetical but typical work-based situations and may test creativity and personal values. Situational tests may be based on critical incidents which happened within the company.

♦ **Competency based.** They are the key success factors needed to do a good job as defined by job analysis. The candidate should show evidence of past use of skills, capabilities and aptitudes pertinent to the job on offer. Questions should be structured around these competencies seeking real life applications of the skills required. The acronym **STAR** can be used to cover the points: **S**ituation or **T**ask demanding certain skills and abilities, **A**ctions taken to resolve the situation, **R**esults whether satisfactory or not, and if not, how can we learn from the experience?

♦ **Psychometric.** These are standard psychological tests used for large numbers of candidates and may be used to screen candidates for interview. Those with unsuitable personality characteristics are eliminated.

♦ **Stress tests.** Tests might be used to determine if the candidate has the right personality needed for a stressful job such as an air traffic controller.

♦ **Telephone.** Telephone interviews can be used for preliminary screening of candidates. They are no substitute for meeting the candidate in person and should only be used to eliminate unsuitable applicants.

> "When you hire people, who are smarter than you are,
> you prove you are smarter than they are."
>
> – Richard Grant

2.4 INTERVIEWING SKILLS

The following are essential interviewing skills:

Fig. 2.5 Interviewing Skills

♦ **Rapport.** Putting the candidate at their ease by the appropriate use of body language such as smiling and encouraging words and nods. This may be a natural or acquired ability.

♦ **Listening.** Using reflective listening. Encouraging the candidate to talk and summarising periodically what has been said. Generally, the candidate should be allowed to do most of the talking rather than the interviewer.

♦ **Control.** Using closed questions when necessary to focus on specifics and establish the facts.

♦ **Note-taking.** Take notes discreetly. For example, to put marks on the evaluation sheet. It is best practice to write up the notes afterwards when information is fresh in your mind.

ASKING QUESTIONS AT INTERVIEWS

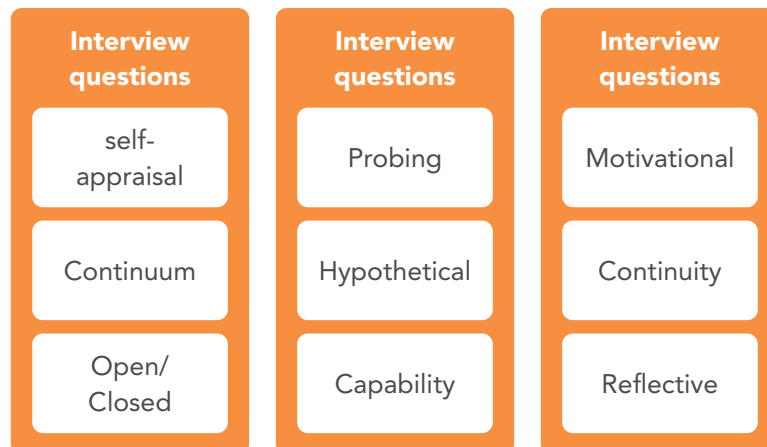| Interview questions	Interview questions	Interview questions
self-appraisal	Probing	Motivational
Continuum	Hypothetical	Continuity
Open/Closed	Capability	Reflective

Fig. 2.6. Interview questions

Avoid multiply, leading, stressful and illegal questions. The following are the types and variety of questions you can use at interviews:

♦ **Self-appraisal questions.** Questions to ascertain how they think other people perceive them. Compare this with actual feedback from their manager or supervisor.

◆ **Continuum.** This tries to see how candidates respond to something on a continuum from low to high. For example, finding out to what degree they love or hate information technology.

◆ **Open questions** are used to encourage the candidate to talk and explore issues and build on themes. A "yes" or a "no" answer can't answer them.

◆ **Probing** is used to probe issues further by getting additional information from the candidate on specific issues.

◆ **Closed questions** are used to focus in on particular issues, get specific information and establish the facts.

◆ **Hypothetical.** This tries to ascertain how candidates would respond to particular work situations that may arise. They are useful to see how a candidate would address a potential work-based problem or scenario.

◆ **Capability.** These seek to find out the skills, competencies, experience and knowledge of the candidate.

◆ **Motivational** questions are used to find out what motivates people at work.

◆ **Continuity.** These are used to keep the conversation going by exploring issues and seeking elaboration.

◆ **Reflective.** These are play back questions to check that the interviewer's understanding is correct and in harmony with the candidate's understanding.

◆ Newton et al (1999) reports that **behavioural questions** produce behavioural reports, or stories. The interviewer asks the applicant to think of and describe actions they took in particular situations. These questions require the applicant to describe past actions and prevent the applicant from offering theoretical answers, feelings, or opinions. This helps the interviewer truly understand whether or not the applicant is a good candidate for the position.

COMMON MISTAKES OF INTERVIEWING

These can be recalled by the acronym **SCRIPT:**

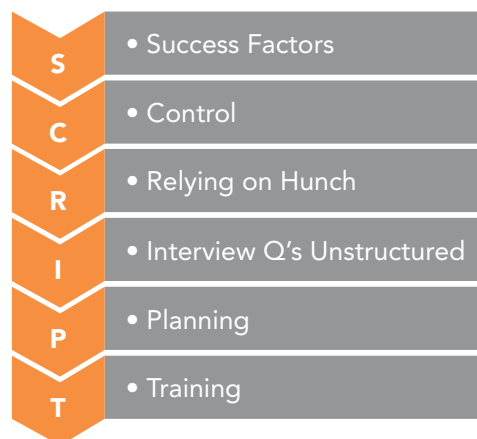| S	• Success Factors
C	• Control
R	• Relying on Hunch
I	• Interview Q's Unstructured
P	• Planning
T	• Training

Fig. 2.7. Common Mistakes During Interview

♦ **S**uccess factors. The interviewer fails to identify the key success factors needed for the job. It is important to know what it takes to do a job satisfactorily.

♦ **C**ontrol. The interviewer surrenders control of the interview to the candidate by not using the appropriate mix of open and closed questions.

♦ **R**elying on hunch and gut feeling rather than objective judgement. The interviewer allows subjectivity, prejudice and bias to dominate his approach to the interview.

♦ **I**nterview questions are not planned. A structured interview is the best. There is a lack of follow up using probing questions to establish the facts during the interview.

♦ **P**lanning. The interviewer fails to prepare adequately. The candidates' CV and application form are not thoroughly assessed beforehand. An analysis of job function and necessary personality skill profile is not done.

♦ **T**raining. Poor interviewing techniques. The interviewer has undertaken no formal training in interviewing skills.

2.5   SUMMARY

A selection interview is held to assess the suitability of a candidate for a particular job. In addition, it may involve IQ, aptitude and psychometric testing. Before the interview it's important to prepare thoroughly and to draw up a checklist of questions to ask. Study the CV, application form, job description, and job and person specification. During the interview put the candidate at ease and let him do most of the talking. When closing the interview inform the candidate when they will hear from you. After the interview select the best candidate and make a verbal offer by phone, and then confirm it in writing. As a matter of courtesy, you should inform the unsuccessful candidates of the outcome as soon as possible.

There are advantages and disadvantages to selection interviewing. A face to face encounter enables both parties to exchange information, get to know each other, and build up rapport. Interviews lack validity in predicting on-the-job performance. The main approaches to interviewing are biographical, situational and psychometric. The skills of interviewing include asking questions, listening, building rapport and maintaining control of the interview. Common mistakes of interviewing include talking too much, not identifying the key success factors needed for the job and relying on hunch rather than objective judgement.

2.6   FIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR INTERVIEWING SKILLS

1. Attend a course on interviewing skills. Even if you are an experienced interviewer it is surprising how much you will learn on such a course. You will practise good interviewing technique and get feedback on your performance. Some of your bad habits will be brought to your attention.
2. Before the interview study the CV and analyse for gaps and inconsistencies. Use these as part of your checklist of questions. Compare the CV with the job description and job and person specification. Eliminate those candidates who do not match the basic requirements for the job. Then prepare a shortlist of people to be called for interview.
3. During the interview put the candidate at ease. Use positive body language such as smiling and encouraging nods. Use a mixture of mostly open, and less frequently, closed questions. Stick to the 30/70 rule, i.e. you should spend 30 per cent of the time talking while the candidate should spend 70 per cent.
4. After the interview review your notes and select the best candidate. Make a verbal offer by phone, and then confirm this in writing. Check out that references and qualifications are genuine. Write to the unsuccessful candidates as soon as possible.
5. Avoid the common mistakes of interviewing, such as failing to plan, not identifying the key success factors needed for the job, relying on hunch rather than objective judgement, and not preparing a checklist of interview questions in advance.

3 PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

What is performance appraisal?
How is an appraisal interview conducted?
How can I diagnose work performance problems?
What is the performance potential model?
What are the sources of bias in performance appraisal?

DEFINITION

Performance appraisal is where a manager examines and discusses an employee's recent successes and failures at work, so that an assessment can be made of that person's suitability for a particular job, or for promotion or training. In addition, employees may appraise themselves. Managers may be appraised under a management by objectives scheme. Some organisations have introduced 360-degree feedback. Here the appraisal is done by those who are in daily contact with the person being appraised such as other managers, employees, peers, customers and suppliers.

3.1 PURPOSE OF APPRAISAL

The purpose of appraisal is to:

Fig. 3.1. Purpose of Performance Appraisal

◆ Set future performance goals in line with organisational and team goals. Goals should be SMART i.e. specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and time bound and should be challenging, or stretch the employee beyond their present comfort level. Setting objectives and reviewing success or failure to achieve these is a great means of managerial feedback and control.

◆ Encourage staff to accept responsibility for their performance and seek a commitment to lifelong learning and continuous improvement. It may agree a personal development plan to meet career goals and training and development needs.

◆ Encourage those who have performed well to continue to do so in the future. Identify areas of unsatisfactory performance for improvement. Employees who get performance feedback are in a better position to improve their job performance substantially and contribute to organisational effectiveness and productivity.

◆ Recognise and reward superior performance. Employees may find the interview particularly stressful if it is used to determine whether or not they receive their next promotion, increment or bonus payment. Any increases in pay as a result of the appraisal should come as close in time to the review as possible. In addition, it increases employee commitment and job satisfaction and improves the climate of the organisation by improved communication.

◆ Let employees know where they stand about their future prospects within the company. This relieves anxiety and uncertainty and sustains motivation and commitment. In this regard it facilitates succession planning to fill future key managerial posts. It also identifies people who are ready for promotion, secondment or further training.

◆ It helps managers make decisions such as promotions, demotions, transfers, terminations, and remuneration and rewards. Remember a company cannot dismiss an employee without just cause and without due process. It may be breaking the law if it does so. Decisions on demotion or dismissal should be supported by a trend of unacceptable appraisals of poor performance.

3.2   APPRAISAL INTERVIEW

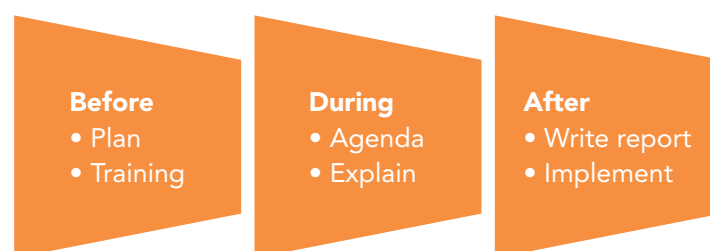The appraisal interview can be divided into three stages: before, during and after.

Before
• Plan
• Training

During
• Agenda
• Explain

After
• Write report
• Implement

Fig. 3.2. Appraisal Interview

BEFORE

♦ The manager should plan and prepare thoroughly. Do this 2 weeks in advance to allow time to reflect on the issues that are likely to come up at the interview. Get all necessary information including previous appraisals, job descriptions, self-appraisals and personal development plans. The job description will contain a list of responsibilities associated with the position. The manager should review this list and consider the objectives of the job and the key result areas. Check the company policy on appraisals, and note the topics for discussion, and think of questions to ask at the interview. The manager should have kept a diary of critical incidents of employee performance during the year to serve as a basis for appraisal ratings rather than relying on fallible memory. Critical incidents will give the manager a fair idea of how the employee copes with unusual events and emergency situations.

♦ The manager should have a short preliminary meeting to alert the employee to prepare for the interview. Preparing for an appraisal will help the employee focus on the key issues and examine their performance objectively. Remind them to do a self-appraisal, and an assessment of their strengths and weaknesses before the appraisal interview. This can be used as a basis for comparison. Get them to draw up a list of issues that they want to discuss and review their job description and the performance objectives set by the manager at the previous interview. Ask them to identify barriers or constraints they encountered when doing their work during the year and consider changes that could be made to help them reach their targets and improve their performance.

♦ The manager may need training to develop skills in goal setting, coaching, counselling, performance appraisal, report writing, observation, data gathering and record keeping. Similarly, the employee may need training in doing a self-appraisal, setting objectives, keeping records, identifying their training needs, drawing up a personal development plan and communicating effectively.

♦ Give adequate notice of the appraisal interview with the time and place specified. The notice should include the agenda of the meeting. This will give both parties adequate time to prepare for the appraisal interview.

DURING

♦ Make sure the agenda is on display and begin promptly. Create an appropriate non-threatening climate for the interview. Encourage transparency and put the employee at ease. Use positive body language and establish rapport by smiling and using motivational phrases like "thank you" and "well done."

♦ Explain the nature of the interview. Use the employee's self-appraisal as the basis for discussion. Encourage dialogue by using open-ended questions to explore feelings,

concerns, attitudes and opinions. The manager needs to break down barriers of fear, anxiety, suspicion and defensiveness. Intersperse the interview with closed questions as appropriate when you feel you need to establish the facts and control the discussion. Invite feedback and comments. Identify factors outside the employee's control that may have affected performance and that you would have been unaware of. Ask the employee for suggestions on how the job might be improved. Check the action plan for the last appraisal interview to see if the proposed actions have been done. If not, find out why. Providing feedback, paraphrasing what the employee says, and reflecting back their feelings and emotions are all vital behaviours that the manager should adopt during the course of the appraisal interview.

♦ Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the employee. Praise good performance and accomplishments over the past year. Point out areas where improvement is needed and agree an improvement plan. Provide the resources such as coaching, mentoring or additional experience if help is needed to improve and agree a training and development plan. Develop in the employee a positive attitude towards the job and the company.

♦ Jointly set goals. These should be realistic and achievable, stretching and challenging. Concentrate on desired job behaviours, skills and competencies rather than personality characteristics. Employees should be allowed go to an appeals process if they disagree with the appraisal. This is a safeguard against the possibility of discrimination.

> "Recognising that effective appraisal depends more on sound interpersonal dealings than formal policies or administrative systems and form-filling is critical if appraisal is to become a positive and helpful feature of working life."
>
> – George, 1986

AFTER

♦ Write up a report on the performance appraisal interview while the information is fresh in your mind.

♦ Implement the agreed improvement and training plan and follow up with the appraisee to ensure that it is done.

♦ Keep copies of everything with documentation of a standard to satisfy legal scrutiny. Failure to conduct appraisals in an objective way, such as failing to keep adequate records, may result in legal action being taken by the employee.

♦ Watch for improvement during the year, by keeping in touch with the employee and providing feedback as appropriate. Monitor the improvement plan to see that targets are being achieved on time.

♦ Keep your word. Always maintain confidentiality.

3.3   DIAGNOSING PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS

Good job performance is determined by a number of factors such as motivation, aptitude, skill and persistence. The following will help you diagnose performance problems. They can be recalled by the acronym **MASTER:**

Fig. 3.2. Diagnosing Performance Model (Master)

♦ **M**otivation. Even if the employee has the knowledge, aptitude, competencies, skills and understanding to do the job he may not be motivated to do so. Without motivation nothing gets done. A limited amount of motivation may result in inferior output. Superior performers are always highly motivated. The biggest motivator is probably an inherent interest in the job, although employees may be motivated by a variety of things. As a manager you should find out what motivates employees and take appropriate action to support or create the desired motivators.

♦ **A**ptitude. This is the employee's natural ability to perform the job. Each of us has our own unique strengths and weaknesses determining our capability to do a job. Poor aptitude may mean that the employee may never do the job satisfactorily. There may be a mismatch between the employee and the job requirements – the proverbial square peg in a round hole. Maybe the employee should be in a different job more suited to their competencies and abilities? Managers are often reluctant to admit they made a mistake during the selection interview process.

◆ **S**kill. Skills can be learned up to the limits imposed by aptitudes. The employee may not have the skills, knowledge or experience necessary to do the job effectively. A skill deficit can be improved by coaching, training and appropriate experience. A knowledge and attitude deficit can be addressed through mentoring and educational programmes. Experience can be enhanced through job rotation, assignments, job rotation, and special projects. As a manager it's your duty to address any skill deficit that can be rectified by training.

◆ **T**ask. The employee must understand the nature of the job and the expectations of the manager. Expectations should be clearly communicated. The best way of testing an employee's understanding of the job is to ask insightful questions. Evaluate the level of job understanding by the quality of the answers.

◆ **E**xternal factors. Performance can be affected by factors outside the control of the employee. Poor organisational structures, systems and procedures may hinder performance as well as uncooperative colleagues and managers. Managers should listen to the concerns of employees and identify those factors outside their control impeding progress. Then provide the supports and resources that the employee needs to do the job. In addition, has the employee the proper authority to make the decisions necessary to be effective? If these factors impeding progress are allowed to continue the employee's morale and motivation will be reduced.

◆ **R**esolute. We need energy and persistence to get a job done. Employees may be good at starting a project but lack the persistence to satisfactorily see it through and finish it. Lack of persistence and procrastination may be caused by boredom, fear of failure or to a lack of skills. As a manager it is your job to diagnose the problem and solve it.

3.4   CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD APPRAISAL SYSTEMS

These will help you design a good performance appraisal system.
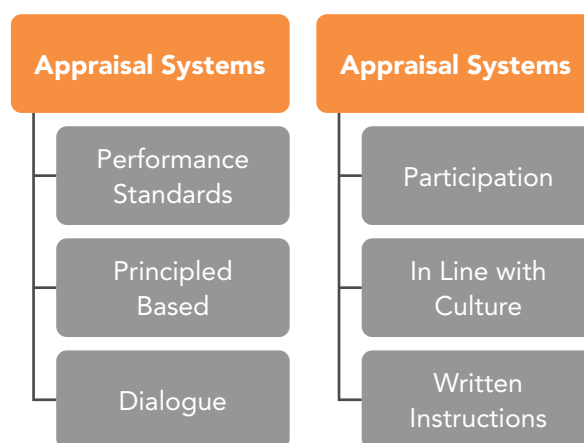

Fig. 3.3. Appraisal Systems

◆ Minimum job performance standards should be clearly specified. This will help the company deliver a better service to customers. Employees should be told how their individual jobs contribute to the overall performance of the company. There should be a basic assumption that employees want to do a good job and are trustworthy, interested and competent. This operates on the self-fulfilling prophecy principle i.e. employees will perform on-the-job in line with the manager's expectations.

◆ Should be based on principles rather than rules. Principles allow flexibility and choice. Rules create rigidity, lack of initiative, bureaucracy, and clock watching. Line management should drive the system with the support of the HR function. If the system operates the other way around it will not have the commitment of line managers.

◆ It should be designed to create dialogue rather than generate records for planning purposes and allow for continuous feedback during the year rather than a once-off evaluation. Continuous feedback facilitates continuous improvement and learning. Ideally discussion of training and development issues should be kept separate from assessment, promotion and remuneration.

◆ Employees should be involved in the design and administration of the appraisal system. It makes sound psychological sense to give them a feeling of ownership over the design and administration of the system. They will have important insights into what is practical. If a system is imposed on them there is a danger that they will just go through the motions and the exercise will not produce results of any real value. Likewise, it should have the support of trade unions and professional associations where these are a feature of the company. Similarly, these should have been consulted during the design stage for their views and inputs.

◆ It should be tailor made to match the employees with the culture of the organisation. Thus, if an organisation is team based the appraisal should not be based on individual performance. The appraisal should be easy to operate with the minimum of paperwork. Bought in, generic performance appraisal systems are mostly unsuitable. However, some may be customised to meet the particular needs of the company.

◆ There should be written instructions on how to conduct an appraisal. Managers should be formally trained in performance appraisal. Different personnel should carry out the appraisal interview and any disciplinary proceedings. The results of the appraisal should be kept confidential. Employees should have the right of appeal if they consider the appraisal unfair.

> "Employee reviews should be performed on a frequent and ongoing basis. The actual time period may vary in different organisations and with different aims but a typical frequency would be monthly or quarterly."
>
> – Boice & Kleiner 1997

3.5   PROBLEMS WITH APPRAISAL

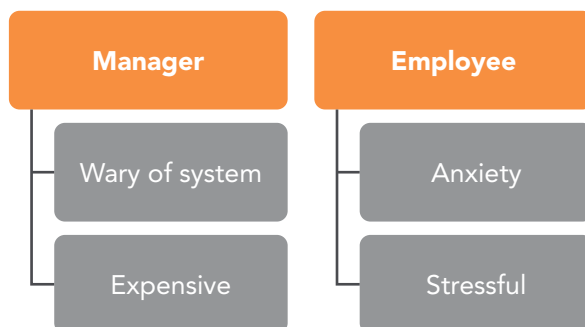The problems with appraisal are considered from the manager's and employee's perspective.

Manager	Employee
Wary of system	Anxiety
Expensive	Stressful

Fig. 3.4. Problems with appraisal interview

MANAGER'S PERSPECTIVE

♦ Managers may be wary of the appraisal system because under employment law they could be subject to grievance procedures, charges of discrimination or even brought to litigation. The system should therefore be seen to be fair and equitable,

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and the manager will need to keep comprehensive records for reference in the event of things being disputed.

♦ The performance appraisal system may be expensive and time consuming to manage, as the paperwork can be complex, and it may turn into an unpopular annual ritual. Busy managers may not treat the exercise with the respect and priority it deserves.

♦ Most managers find it hard to give negative feedback as they find giving bad news to employees difficult, awkward and unpleasant. They are also reluctant to create bad feelings and relationships with people they have ongoing contact with. Busy managers often lack the time and resources to do the performance appraisal process justice.

♦ A once a year appraisal can be ineffective as it may be used to blame and shame rather than improve performance. It would be better if employees were kept informed on their performance during the year. This means that corrective action can be taken on an ongoing basis to put things right. The longer a problem is allowed to continue the more difficult it is to take corrective action. Frequent reviews allow for clarification and revision of objectives and will prevent shock, disappointments and surprises happening on the day of the interview. Thus, the fear and trepidation of the appraisal from the employee's perspective will be minimised.

♦ Measurement of performance may be judgemental, problematic and inaccurate. Many managers don't have sufficient ongoing opportunities to observe the on-the-job performance of employees and may find it difficult to distinguish the contribution of individual employees from that of the group.

♦ Many companies use rating forms to appraise employees. These rating forms are subjective. Two people rating the same employee are likely to give a different rating proving just how subjective they are. In addition, managers may lack skills in rating systems. Some organisations have introduced assessment/development centres to make the process as objective as possible and to identify future senior managers.

> "Effective staff appraisal isn't simply a matter of 'going through the motions,' holding ritualistic interviews and mechanically completing forms, before returning to the 'more important' task of getting on with the day-to-day management of the team. On the contrary, appraisal is a tool for managers to use to help them manage effectively."
>
> – Moon 1993.

EMPLOYEES PERSPECTIVE

♦ Employees fear appraisal and often feel anxious, threatened and uncomfortable during the interview. Similarly, many managers do not find it enjoyable or particularly productive event. Most managers would prefer to be doing something else.

◆ The interview may be perceived as very stressful and formal where promotion, pay and the bonus system is linked to the performance appraisal process.

◆ Employees may be told they are performing well without any commensurate rewards. This may be seen as patronising and so may discount the appraisal process. Their perspective is that improved performance and exemplary commitment should be rewarded.

◆ The appraisal may not assess team-oriented behaviours essential for the modern organisation. Depending on the culture of the company appraisal systems are often designed around individual performance rather than team performance.

◆ The focus on objectives may disregard non-quantifiable factors such as initiative, creativity, loyalty, commitment, collaboration, friendliness, and the ability to deal effectively with colleagues and customers.

◆ A lack of trust between the manager and the employee. If there is a poor working relationship between the manager and the employee then trust, mutual respect and a shared sense of commitment to each other will be absent. This will create a lack of credibility and the impartiality of the process will be brought into question. It is difficult for a manager to give a fair appraisal to an employee that they don't like.

◆ Employees feel that managers may manipulate the appraisal process for political purposes and their own ends. Managers may deflate ratings to get rid of a difficult employee. On the other hand, they may inflate ratings to gain the promotion of a troublesome employee to get them out of their department.

> "Another key to ensuring the effective use of a performance appraisal scheme is keeping and maintaining accurate records of employee's performance. Carefully maintained, they establish patterns in an employee's behaviour that may be difficult to spot by typical incident-by-incident supervision."
>
> – Crane, 1991

3.6   PERFORMANCE POTENTIAL MODEL

As a senior manager you may have line managers reporting to you. This model will help you to categorise and identify managers with potential or otherwise for promotion. Management succession is a very important aspect of human resource planning. It is an area often neglected in practice particularly in smaller organisations. This matrix divides managers with future potential or lacking future potential into rising stars, core managers, question marks and deadwood managers.

♦ ***Rising stars*** are managers with the potential to go further. These managers will benefit from career planning, wider experience, mentoring and management training. The company may wish to fast track them by rapid promotion, challenging experience, special assignments and training and development opportunities. However, there should be no such thing as crown princes or people who feel they have an automatic right to managerial positions. It must be stressed to these people, that getting into senior management positions takes hard work, loyalty and dedication, competing with others, and many years of experience. Only the best and most capable will advance to these positions. Chances are enhanced with a primary degree in a business discipline, a professional qualification, or better still an MBA. You can determine to a large extent the direction of your career by getting the right experience, networking with the right people, taking on responsibility at an early age and qualifying in the right disciplines. Becoming visible to top management before the age of 30 will enhance prospects of developing into a rising star. Accountancy, marketing and engineering are some of the most popular disciplines for those aspiring to get to the top. You will need to develop interpersonal relationship skills, negotiation skills, broad business skills, leadership skills, and the ability to achieve results, and the willingness to take risks.

♦ ***Core managers*** are those that the organisation depends on to get things done and are seen as the backbone of the organisation being safe and reliable. They are very good at doing their existing jobs but are considered unsuitable for further promotion. They will need training to keep their morale high and expertise up to date. It's important to have incentives in place to keep these managers interested and motivated, and they should not be taken for granted. The important role they play in the organisation should be acknowledged explicitly. If you're ambitious and have your eyes set on the top management positions, you don't want to be categorised as a core manager. These managers are going nowhere, and often lack star qualities, such as flair, creativity and a willingness to take risks and new challenges. They are often set in their ways and are unlikely to be lifelong learners. To succeed in management, you need a willingness to take calculated risks, a capacity to work extremely hard, a desire to seek new opportunities, and the creativity to generate sounder ideas than your colleagues.

♦ ***Question marks*** are those managers who, for whatever reason, are not making the grade. They may have the ability but lack the motivation or they may have the motivation but lack the ability. Either way, something must be done about these problem managers. Those with the motivation but lacking ability may be brought up to standard by further on-the-job and off-the-job training. Those with the ability but lacking motivation should be encouraged by an appropriate incentive scheme. Here again, it is not in your future interest to be classified as a question mark. You don't want to be written off early and become stagnant in your career.

Sometimes if you give a dog a bad name it sticks with them for the rest of their careers, and irrespective of what they do they are unable to regain their reputation and momentum to advance. To progress in your company you should be curious, creative, enthusiastic and interested in your job. These are often the qualities that get you noticed and recommended for special assignments or even promotion. Realise that learning is a lifelong, self-directed process and that you can influence the direction of your career. Anticipate the skills that you may require for future roles and take action to acquire them.

♦ ***Deadwood managers*** are those who have reached the level of their incompetence and are coasting towards retirement. They are the kind of manager who has literally retired on the job. They are not good for the company and are blocking rising ambitious stars from potential promotional positions. Their negative attitudes may be transmitted to younger managers - something the company doesn't want to happen. Early retirement might be a solution for those who want to pursue other interests. From your own point of view, you don't ever want to be classified as a deadwood manager. If your career has come to a stop, you should calmly and objectively analyse and assess the reasons why. Consult a trusted colleague to get true objective feedback on your performance. You are too close to the problem to be objective about it yourself. A change of direction in your career or a change of company might solve the problem, if you feel you're going nowhere in your existing job. Early retirement might be a solution if you feel you have marketable skills which could be successfully used by other employers or in a self-employed capacity.

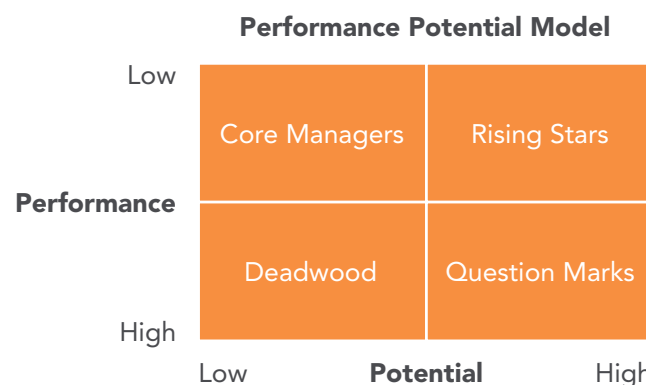**Performance Potential Model**

	Low Potential	High Potential
Low Performance	Core Managers	Rising Stars
High Performance	Deadwood	Question Marks

Fig. 3.3. Performance Potential Model - Source: Armstrong (1993)

3.7   TYPES OF BIAS

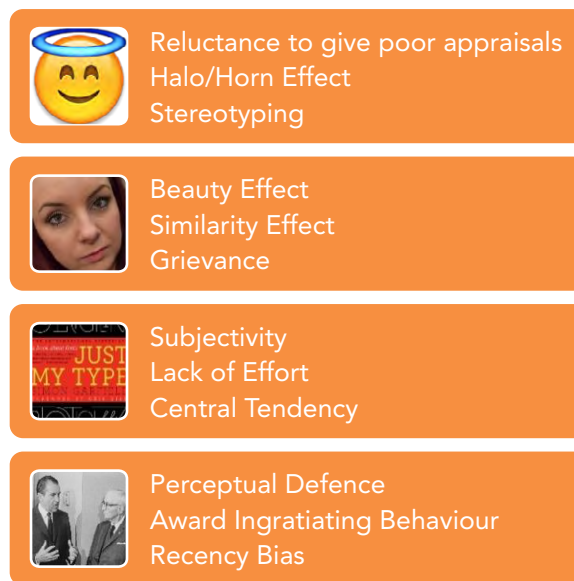|	Reluctance to give poor appraisals Halo/Horn Effect Stereotyping
	Beauty Effect Similarity Effect Grievance
	Subjectivity Lack of Effort Central Tendency
	Perceptual Defence Award Ingratiating Behaviour Recency Bias

Fig. 3.5. Types of Bias

A biased person has prejudices and sees differences in people that others do not. They look at everything from their own particular point of view. When appraising an employee, managers must realise that they too may suffer from bias. Thus, it is important that they always get the employee's viewpoint, and the viewpoints of independent others. According to Gibbons et al (1994) there are many biasing factors that may influence a manager. These include the following:

♦ **Reluctance to give poor appraisals.** The manager may feel this reflects badly on the manager particularly if they were involved in the original selection of the employee. The manager may also fear confrontation and conflict if they give a poor appraisal. Generally, managers like to be liked by their staff and so are reluctantly to make potential enemies.

♦ **Halo/horn effect.** If you like or respect a person you are normally going to think kindly of them. In an appraisal interview a manager might see a person as honest and enthusiastic and then mark them favourably on different traits such as loyalty, courtesy and efficiency even though there is no link between the two. Likewise, a manager may consider one attribute to be of great importance, and so they will rate employees as excellent or poor based on their possession of that one attribute. The horn effect is the opposite of the halo effect where the manager dislikes a person and marks them down accordingly. Some people find it very difficult to see any good points in a person they dislike or are prejudiced against. This phenomenon also arises in selection interviewing.

♦ **Stereotyping.** Stereotyping is a way of simplifying the perception process and making judgements about people. Individuals are judged on the basis of the group they are

perceived to belong to. We assume that they share the same traits or characteristics as that group. We may stereotype people as to behaviour, age, gender, race or appearance. This phenomenon also arises in selection interviewing.

♦ **Beauty effect.** Attractive people are often preferred over less attractive people and are often assumed to have other appealing characteristics as well such as honesty, charisma, friendliness, and intelligence.

♦ **Similarity effect.** Managers may prefer people who have similar views to them or look and dress like them. Research shows that performance assessment scores were higher when the style, gender and appearance of the manager and employee were similar.

♦ **Grievance.** Managers may react negatively to employees who successfully file grievances against them, take it personally, and view them as troublemakers. This perception may subsequently be used for interpreting all the employee's behaviours.

♦ **Subjectivity.** If managers and employees are work colleagues it is difficult for them to be impartial. If we work with people frequently we become aware of their good and bad points and will find it difficult to be impartial when the time comes to formally evaluate their performance.

♦ **Lack of effort.** Managers may choose more severe disciplinary actions when they believe an employee performs poorly because of lack of effort and commitment rather than lack of ability and intelligence.

♦ **Central tendency.** Managers may be reluctant to criticise and thus rate employees as average - neither very high nor very low. This is a particular problem with rating scales, as there is a tendency to move to the centre when marking the scale. For example, if a 1-5 scale is used, five being the best, managers will rate a majority of the employees at three and will be extremely reluctant to rate a person at 1 or 2. On the other hand, managers may have a leniency bias. They may have a tendency to rate employees higher than warranted and rationalise why this is appropriate.

♦ **Perceptual defence.** People are inclined to block out viewpoints that they find threatening or disturbing. They tend to select information supportive of their point of view and choose to ignore contrary information. In other words, they hear what they want to hear and see what they want to see. For example, a manager who is predisposed to making a particular decision may listen to viewpoints that support the decision, and ignore viewpoints questioning the decision.

♦ **Award ingratiating behaviour.** We all like to be admired and appreciated but being surrounded by "yes men" is not a healthy environment in which to operate. It is surprising how managers can be influenced and swayed by sycophants. The manager may give these employees favourable appraisals and recommend them for promotion.

♦ **Recency bias.** This is the tendency to remember and assess most recent behaviour because it comes to mind more readily and ignore behaviour that is older because it

may have been forgotten. This highlights the need to keep good records of critical incidents during the year as the more recent events will be more prominent in your mind and thus get preference. Careful review of the records will help avoid the selective memory effect.

> "To know the true reality of yourself, you must be aware not only of your conscious thoughts, but also of your unconscious prejudices, bias and habits."
>
> – Source unknown

3.8   APPRAISAL SKILLS

As a manager you need basic skills to carry out the performance appraisal process effectively:
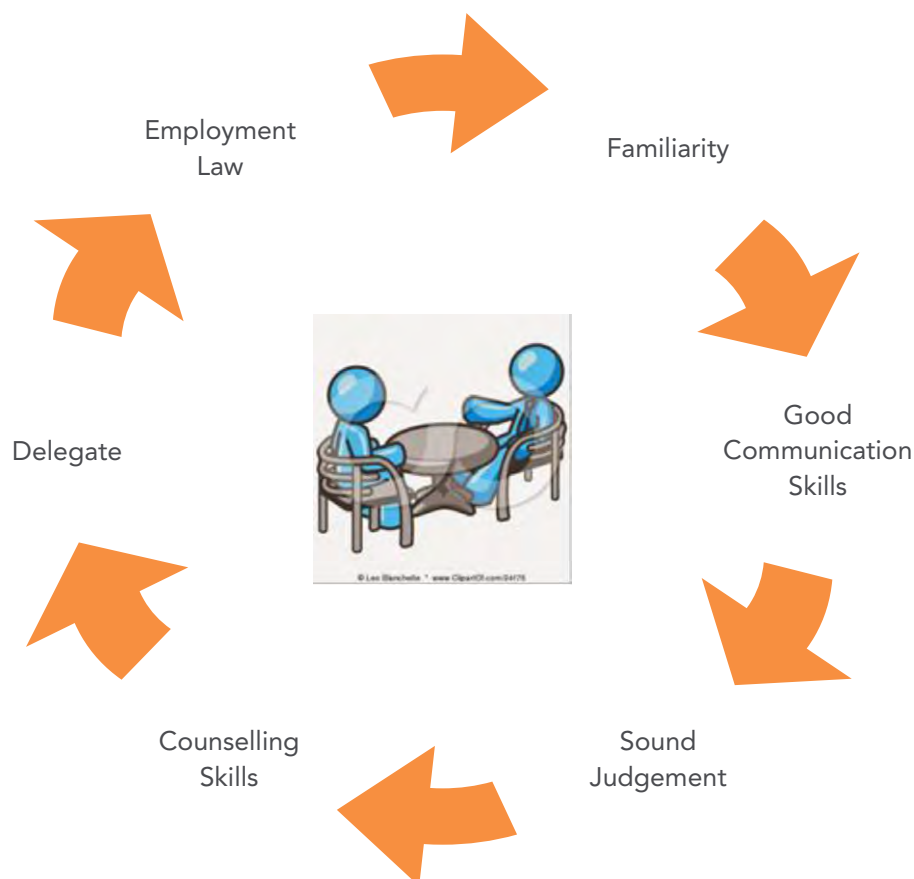

Fig. 3.4. Appraisal Skills

♦ You need to be very familiar with the performance appraisal procedure and criteria and the policies of the company.

- You need excellent oral and writing communication skills to converse with employees and write up formal reports. Be able to get across your expectations to staff in a direct, understandable and motivational way.

- You must have sound judgement and be seen as fair and impartial, and be able to solve problems and make good decisions.

- Develop coaching and counselling skills to help staff reach a desired level of performance. Have a basic knowledge of training and development so that you can suggest ways that the employee may improve performance. You will need conflict resolution skills to handle arguments and disputes effectively.

- You need to be able to delegate and empower your staff to take responsibility for their work. Most managers find it difficult to delegate as they believe that nobody can do the job as good as they can.

- You must have knowledge of employment law so that you understand the potential pitfalls in making appraisals such as accusations of sexual harassment, discrimination, prejudice, and lack of fairness.

3.9   SUMMARY

Performance appraisal is used to evaluate the performance of an employee with the objective of improving job performance. It can also be used to improve job satisfaction, career planning, management succession, manpower planning and as a basis for deciding levels of pay. Each stage of the appraisal interview should be planned. The manager should thoroughly prepare before the meeting. During the meeting he should create a non-threatening climate to encourage dialogue with the employee. After the interview write up a report on the interview and implement the improvement and training and development plan. There are many problems with the annual performance appraisal process. It should be continuous rather than once a year. Employees need to be told how they are doing during the year rather than be surprised at the interview. This feedback will enable them to continually improve and undertake lifelong learning.

The performance potential model with its core managers, rising stars, deadwood and question marks can be used to spot managerial talent. There are many potential sources of bias in appraisal interviews including the tendency to rate employees as average rather than very high or very low. Managers may also hold stereotypes as regards behaviour, age, gender, religion, and race. Inferior performance can be due to a skill or aptitude deficit, or a lack of resources to do the job effectively. Managers will need a variety of skills for the appraisal interview including communication, counselling, conflict resolution and problem-solving skills.

3.10 FIVE STEPS TO IMPROVE YOUR APPRAISAL SKILLS

1. Encourage employees to prepare for the appraisal interview. Get the employee to review their job description, job performance and the performance issues raised at the previous appraisal interview. The employee should do a self-appraisal that you can use as a basis for comparison and discussion during the interview. This gives a manager a helpful insight as to how employees view their own performance.

2. Create a non-threatening welcoming climate at the interview and encourage the employee to express their feelings, views and concerns by using open questions. Praise good performance and point out areas where improvements are needed.

3. Use the MASTER model to help you diagnose the possible performance problems such as motivation, aptitude, skills, and persistence. Provide assistance to help the employee overcome these shortcomings.

4. Keep in touch with the employee during the year and enquire how they are getting along. Provide feedback and support so that the employee can take corrective action before the next appraisal interview. This means that there will no surprises at the appraisal interview.

5. Support the employee to meet their improvement plan by providing coaching and training opportunities. Also find out about the constraints and lack of resources such as manpower and technology that are holding the employee back from meeting their targets and eliminate these constraints if possible by providing the necessary resources to help the employee meet their targets.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samuel A Malone is a self-employed training consultant, lecturer and author. He has published numerous journal articles in the fields of learning, study skills, personal development, motivation and management. He is the author of 28 books published in Ireland, the UK and abroad on learning, personal development, study skills and business management. Some of his books have gone into foreign translations including Russian, Spanish, Danish and Norwegian, and second editions. Some of his books have been published in India. He has an M.Ed. with distinction (in training and development) from the University of Sheffield and is a qualified Chartered Management Accountant (ACMA), Chartered Global Management Accountant (CGMA) and a Chartered Secretary (ACIS) and a Member of the Irish Institute of Industrial Engineers (MIIE). He is a fellow of the Irish Institute of Training and Development (FIITD).

Previous books published by the author include Awaken the Genius Within (2014). (*Glasnevin Publishing Dublin) Why Some People Succeed and Other Fail* (2011) *Glasnevin Publishing Dublin. Learning about Learning* (2003) (CIPD London), A *Practical Guide to Learning in the Workplace* (2005) (The Liffey Press Dublin), *Better Exam Results* (2005) (Elsevier/CIMA, London) and Mind Skills for Managers (1997) (Gower, Aldershot, UK) and *How To Set Up and Manage A Corporate Learning Centre* (2003) (Gower, Aldershot, UK). The last two books became best-sellers for Gower in their training and business categories. *Better Exam Results* proved to be a best-seller for Elsevier/CIMA and is still in print 30 years after its earliest incarnation (*Learning to Learn)*. Most of my published books are available on Amazon.co.uk. His latest books have been published online by bookboon.com in 2018 namely:

- *The Role of the Brain in Learning*
- *How Adults Learn*
- *Learning Models and Styles*
- *Experiential Learning*
- *Learning with Technology*
- *The Ultimate Success Formula*
- *A series of book on People Skills for Managers*

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