

An Alternative to Behavioural-Based Interviews



OVERVIEW

Vancity's vision is to redefine wealth in a way that furthers the financial, social and environmental well-being of their members and their communities. One of the accessibility initiatives the credit union has implemented is the Workplace Inclusion (WIN) pilot that focused on hiring neuro-diverse individuals* in their branches to provide administrative support. To ensure they found the best candidates, Vancity amended its interview process to work closely with community partners and change the interview style to better understand whether an individual could perform the duties associated with the role.

OBJECTIVES

Vancity had a role to fill in their branches, and wanted to meet this need by hiring neuro-diverse individuals. Their objective in creating an alternative interview process was to ensure they found the best candidates for the roles.

APPROACH

Vancity took the following approach to selecting the best candidates for the roles:

- Working closely with a community partner who came to understand the role Vancity was looking to fill.
- Working with this community partner to recommend a select few candidates.
- Amending the interview process to focus on job skills, versus a behavioural questions-based interview.

*Neurodiverse: Neurodiversity, short for neurological diversity, refers to the diversity of human brains and minds, and to the idea that this is a natural, valuable form of diversity.

Community Partner Understands the Business

Vancity took the time to ensure that they selected community partners (disability service organizations) who understood Vancity and the specific roles they were trying to fill. This critical in ensuring that the candidates they recommended would be a good fit for the role. In some cases, the community partner came to the branch they were working with to observe, shadow, and get a sense of the role, the team and the business needs.

Community Partner Recommends Candidates

The community partner was asked to recommend 2-3 candidates maximum per role. This helped Vancity shortlist candidates, and ensured that those recommended possessed the necessary skillset to be successful in their duties. Once the community partner recommended candidates, the hiring manager would decide how many of the applicants to meet with.

Amending the Interview Process

Vancity knew from their past experience, and their relationships with trusted community partners, that a traditional behavioural-questions based interview would not result in understanding the candidates' skills. They decided that the first interview would be a conversation with the Branch Manager (and Assistant Branch Manager where applicable), the community partner, and the candidate.

Instead of interview questions, the conversation focused on getting to know the candidate in an informal setting. As a second step, the candidate would be invited in for a one-hour working interview. The candidate would shadow duties associated with the role they were applying for, and then have an opportunity to perform those duties. This allowed the hiring managers to assess whether the candidate could perform the job successfully.

OUTCOMES

The outcome of this adapted interview process proved to be successful as all 22 branches hired a candidate, and 21 of them remained with Vancity post pilot. The other candidate decided to go back to school. The retention of these hires is a testament to the candidates being the right fit.

LESSONS LEARNED

Vancity learned a few key lessons throughout the project:

Don't Make Assumptions

During working interviews, Vancity learned it was important not to make assumptions about a candidate's previous knowledge. As an example, instead of asking the candidate to file records, ask the candidate to file records alphabetically from a-z. Being specific and avoiding assumptions made it easier to tell if a candidate was the right fit.

Making Sure Your Community Partner Understands Your Needs

Vancity credits the success of this pilot in part to the relationships they built with community partners. Community partners understanding Vancity and the needs of the role allowed them to recommend suited candidates. It was also important that the community partner recommended no more than three candidates per opening, to ensure that the selection process was manageable for the hiring manager, and that each candidate was the right fit.

It's Not Charity

Vancity knew that each of the successful candidates wanted to earn the position, and that in order for them to be successful, they needed to be the right fit for the role. With this in mind, they emphasized to the hiring managers that each hire had to be a quality hire, that was right for the job – and that no candidate should get the role for any other reason.

NEXT STEPS

The 22 branches that have engaged in this process will continue to have these positions filled whenever vacant as they have now become permanent roles. When looking for new candidates, they will follow the same interview process they initially used. Looking at the interview process differently will also help Vancity as they review their hiring practices in general.