Get The Whole Picture!

Asking Probing Questions In A Behavior-Based Interview

A **Video Participant Learning Tool**

By:

Paul C. Green, Ph.D.

This *Participant Learning Tool* is designed to be used with simulated interview responses presented in the video titled, *Get The Whole Picture! Asking Probing Questions In A Behavior-Based Interview*. Prior to watching the video it is recommended that each participant complete the *Probing Style Assessment Tool.* This tool is designed to improve learning by involving each participant in (1) self-assessment, (2) creation of personal learning objectives, (3) responding to interview simulations, (4) discussion of probing techniques, and (5) using the skills during interviews.

Comments are invited by the author, Paul C. Green, Ph.D. His e-mail address is paulcgreen@earthlink.net.

Introduction to the

PROBING STYLES ASSESSMENT TOOL

The *Probing Styles Assessment Tool* is designed to help you create your own learning objectives on probing into a candidate's answers in selection interviews.

After completion of this class you will be able to:

1. Describe the structured, job-related approach of the informational probing style
2. Use class materials to explain five behavior-based probing strategies and skills associated with them
3. Demonstrate how to use behavior-based probing techniques
4. Use a "Reminder" to help you apply behavior-based probing in actual interviews

Your learning will begin with the probing styles assessment tool. It will involve four steps:

1. Completing a 20 item questionnaire
2. Scoring the questionnaire to determine your probing style
3. Responding to questions about your probing style in a group
4. Identifying your own learning objectives on probing

Once you have completed these steps you will practice using the video, *Get The Whole Picture!* This video will deal with many of the skills you need to learn in order to reach your learning objectives.

Follow the directions on each page for best use of the tool. The learning assessment will begin on page 3.

1

Instructions

On the following pages you will find 20 items that describe what a candidate has just said in an interview. The first part of each item is the phrase, "What would you do if a candidate …" It is at the top of each page of the questionnaire. Then, each choice shows what a hypothetical candidate said in response to a valid interview question asked in a professional way.

You should assume that each of the 20 items involves a different candidate for a different job. Also, assume that the interviewer is using a structured interview with questions about past work experiences. Each question is organized under the job skill it is to measure.

Your task is to decide the extent to which each choice describes your current probing style. Then mark your choices on the answer strip which is to the right of each question. Use the following approach:

- Put a "4" next to the option <u>most like</u> your probing style.
- Put a "3" next to the option that is <u>second most like</u> your style
- Put a "2" next to the option that is <u>third most like</u> your style.
- Put a "1" next to the option that is <u>least like</u> your style.

Respond to all of the choices, even if they do not perfectly describe how you would respond to the candidate.

Once you have ranked all four of your choices for all 20 items, turn to page 10 where you will find instructions on how to compile your scores. Be sure to follow the directions at the bottom of each page.

How would you respond if a candidate…

1. … says repeatedly that s/he is a close friend of a local politician.
   a. Ask what the politician is really like . . . .
   b. Listen to your feelings about this candidate . . . .
   c. Engage in a conversation about the friendship . . . .
   d. Ignore the comments and stick to your structured interview . . . .

2. …persists in talking about family values instead of job skills.
   a. Support the topic by asking about the candidate's family . . . .
   b. Redirect the answer by repeating the question tactfully . . . .
   c. Recognize that the candidate probably has high integrity . . . .
   d. Initiate a two-way discussion about values on the job . . . .

3. …indicates that s/he is very involved in national politics.
   a. Transition to another question on your structured interview . . . .
   b. Suspect that s/he may put political interests ahead of the job . . . .
   c. Start an exchange of ideas on current political issues . . . .
   d. Probe into feelings about political issues related to work . . . .

4. …gives a very negative answer for a job skill being assessed.
   a. Ask for a time when the candidate successfully used the skill . . . .
   b. Add to the conversation by sharing one of your job mistakes . . . .
   c. Politely cut the interview short . . . .
   d. Ask about circumstances that could justify the answer . . . .

5. …comments casually that s/he just can't quit smoking.
   a. Tactfully exchange ideas about building positive health habits . . . .
   b. Conclude that s/he could be a burden on the insurance program . . . .
   c. Use the comment as an opportunity to probe into health issues . . . .
   d. Ignore the comment and focus on job-related questions . . . .

Turn the page and continue ↝

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4

How would you respond if a candidate…

6. …gives an answer providing very strong evidence for a skill.
   a. Ask why s/he was motivated to learn the skill . . . .
   b. Listen to your "gut feel" about the honesty of the answer . . . .
   c. Say "good" and swap ideas about skill building . . . .
   d. Ask for negative information on the skill – nobody's perfect . . . .

7. … changes from a smile to a frown after a valid question.
   a. Ask if the question triggered negative feelings . . . .
   b. Repeat the question tactfully and nod reassuringly . . . .
   c. Conclude that this candidate is subject to mood swings . . . .
   d. Express concern that the question may have been misunderstood . . . .

8. … hints that s/he can bring a confidential customer list if hired.
   a. Ask for an example when s/he protected confidential information . . . . . .
   b. Recognize that you are dealing with a person with low integrity . . . .
   c. Ignore the hint and start a conversation on earning customer loyalty . . . . .
   d. Ask about the types of customers on the list . . . .

9. … says "I am in a lawsuit with my last employer."
   a. Ask for a description of the key event leading to the suit . . . .
   b. Exchange thoughts / feelings about the stress in litigation . . . .
   c. Conclude that you are dealing with a troublemaker . . . .
   d. Ask why litigation was the best choice in this situation . . . .

10. … says honestly, "I can't think of an example for your question."
   a. Give tips on how the question could be approached . . . .
   b. Use your intuition to discover if the candidate is hiding something . . . . . .
   c. Ask if the question relates to a negative work experience . . . .
   d. Encourage the candidate to take some time to think of an example . . . . . .

5

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6

How would you respond if a candidate…

11. … tells you s/he had a manager who was selling illegal drugs.
    a. Ask how it felt to work in those circumstances . . . .
    b. Have a suspicion that this candidate may also use illegal drugs . . .
    c. Share a difficult experience you once had at work . . . .
    d. Get an example of how learning from this experience was used . . .

12. …describes him/herself as an aggressive personality.
    a. Explore how the candidate's background contributed to this style . .
    b. Ask for an example of a time when s/he was aggressive . . . .
    c. Make an intuitive decision about the candidate's people skills . . .
    d. Start a discussion on the pro's and con's of the aggressive style . . .

13. … acts overly personal, winking / smiling when answering.
    a. Ask about a time when s/he had to work in a formal situation . . . .
    b. Listen to your intuition that this candidate is a flirt . . . .
    c. Respond with an informal style to get complete interview data . . .
    d. Probe into the background causes of this personal approach . . . . .

14. … uses very poor grammar and mild profanity.
    a. Don't react to the language, and follow your interview plan . . . . .
    b. Avoid any comment that might hurt the candidate's feelings . . . . .
    c. Conclude that this candidate is a loser . . . .
    d. Ask about level of comfort in writing reports / public speaking . . .

15. … gives an answer that was obviously rehearsed.
    a. Use a friendly style to get the person to open up . . . .
    b. Conclude that this person is holding back information . . . .
    c. Ask if s/he had recently taken an interview training class . . . .
    d. Probe for a different example in response to your question . . . . . .

Turn the page and continue ☞

7

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8

How would you respond if a candidate…

16. …complains extensively about unfair treatment on the last job.
    a. Get the inside story and gossip on what happened . . . .
    b. Conclude that this person is probably a complainer . . . .
    c. Compare experiences in that type of situation . . . .
    d. Ask for an example when his/her positive attitude paid off . . . .

17. …drifts from the question and talks about a recent vacation.
    a. Find out some of the interesting details . . . .
    b. Tactfully interrupt and re-ask the question . . . .
    c. Decide that s/he lacks focus as a communicator . . . .
    d. Maintain rapport by adding your own comments . . . .

18. …frequently looks down and avoids eye contact.
    a. Ask about a time when s/he had to speak up at work . . . .
    b. Conclude that s/he is a shy person . . . .
    c. Smile and use a friendly tone to warm up the interview . . . . . .
    d. Probe into why s/he may feel uncomfortable . . . .

19. …gives an answer that uses "we" instead of "I."
    a. Ask what s/he actually did in the situation . . . .
    b. Move into a conversation of the value of team work . . . .
    c. Assume that the person had an active role on the team . . . .
    d. Probe into things like self-confidence and independence . . . . .

20. …asks if you are asking legal questions.
    a. Explore the candidate's feelings about illegal questions . . . . . .
    b. Decide that s/he is a troublemaker . . . .
    c. Ask if the candidate has had an illegal interview . . . .
    d. Say that your questions are legally defensible and job-related . .

Turn the page for scoring ➭

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The answers you provided are in rows on page 11. Add the numbers in each row and place the overall total for each of the styles at the bottom of the page. Then, use the following guide to convert your total score for each style to categories. Write the letter for the scoring category under the style it goes with.

Scoring Categories

Style	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Inquisitive = _____	20-38	39-42	43-44	45-46	47-48	49-50	51-54	55-57	58-80
Intuitive = _____	20-25	26-28	29-32	33-35	36-38	39-41	42-45	46-48	49-80
Interactive = _____	20-40	41-43	44-45	46-47	48-49	50-52	53-54	55-57	58-80
Informational = _____	20-50	51-55	56-63	64-66	67-68	69-70	71-72	73-74	75-80

Plot your four categories on the Probing Styles Profile on page 14. Use the categories to make a square box in each quadrant to show the extent to which you use that style. Shade in each box and review the explanation of the Probing Styles Model on page 12 – 13.

Your profile results might look something like this.

Intuitive   Interactive

Inquisitive   Informational
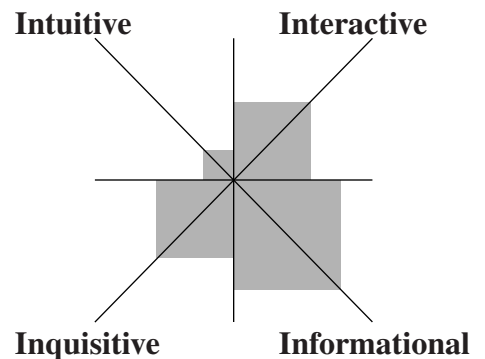
Open page 14 so that it lies next to page 11 ➱

Inquisitive = ___ . . . . 16a__ 11a__ 6a__ 1a__

Intuitive =___ . . . . 16b__ 11b__ 6b__ 1b__

Interactive = ___ . . . . 16c__ 11c__ 6c__ 1c__

Informational = ___ 16d__ 11d__ 6d__ 1d__

Inquisitive =___ . . . . 17a__ 12a__ 7a__ 2a__

Informational =___ 17b__ 12b__ 7b__ 2b__

Intuitive =___ . . . . 17c__ 12c__ 7c__ 2c__

Interactive = ___ . . . . 17d__ 12d__ 7d__ 2d__

Informational =___ 18a__ 13a__ 8a__ 3a__

Intuitive =___ . . . . 18b__ 13b__ 8b__ 3b__

Interactive=___ . . . . 18c__ 13c__ 8c__ 3c__

Inquisitive = ___ . . . . 18d__ 13d__ 8d__ 3d__

Informational =___ 19a__ 14a__ 9a__ 4a__

Interactive=___ . . . . 19b__ 14b__ 9b__ 4b__

Intuitive =___ . . . . 19c__ 14c__ 9c__ 4c__

Inquisitive = ___ . . . . 19d__ 14d__ 9d__ 4d__

Interactive=___ . . . . 20a__ 15a__ 10a__ 5a__

Intuitive =___ . . . . 20b__ 15b__ 10b__ 5b__

Inquisitive = ___ . . . . 20c__ 15c__ 10c__ 5c__

Informational =___ 20d__ 15d__ 10d__ 5d__

Interactive   **Intuitive**   **Inquisitive**   **Informational**
Total = _____   **Total = _____**   **Total = _____**   **Total = ____**

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Explanation Of The Probing Styles Model

The probing styles model is based on two dimensions of probing.

Technique. The probing techniques used by interviewers range from a perceptive approach to a structured approach. The perceptive interviewer uses spontaneous questions and rapport building as tools for gathering interview information. Emphasis is placed on the interviewer's interpersonal skills and intuition for gathering and evaluating information about the candidate. In contrast, the structured approach involves using a structured interview, with written questions organized under job skills. Emphasis is placed on objective, systematic gathering of information. Then answers are evaluated by comparing them to the job skills being assessed.

Focus. Interviewer follow-up may range from curiosity questions to job-related probes. Curiosity questions are based on the interviewer's desire to know about the candidate's general characteristics, interesting experiences, and reasons "why" actions were taken. These questions may provide interesting information about the candidate. But this information is not necessarily job-related. In contrast, job-related inquiries are asked to get information needed to assess a candidate's skills for doing a job. General information and reasons why an action was taken are de-emphasized. What was done is of more importance than why something was done.

The combination of the two dimensions yields four different probing styles.

Intuitive. The intuitive style combines the interviewer's insights and curiosity. This usually takes the form of a "gut feel" interview style which assesses the candidate based on the interviewer's feelings and intuition. Decisions are based on the interviewer's perceptions of the candidate. This approach may lead the interviewer to draw conclusions more on reactions to the candidate and less on information about the candidate. Consequently, it tends to be difficult to defend this approach, particularly in litigation.

Interactive. The interactive style combines perceptions of the candidate with spontaneous, but job-related questions. This interview is relaxed and enjoyable because of easy conversation and smooth transition from topic to topic. This interviewer uses his or her social skills to build a sharing atmosphere that is

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characterized by open discussion and two-way conversation. <u>Although this interviewer does ask questions about job skills, the lack of structure may lower the reliability and validity of the interview. Also, the lack of a plan may result in the failure to ask important questions.</u>
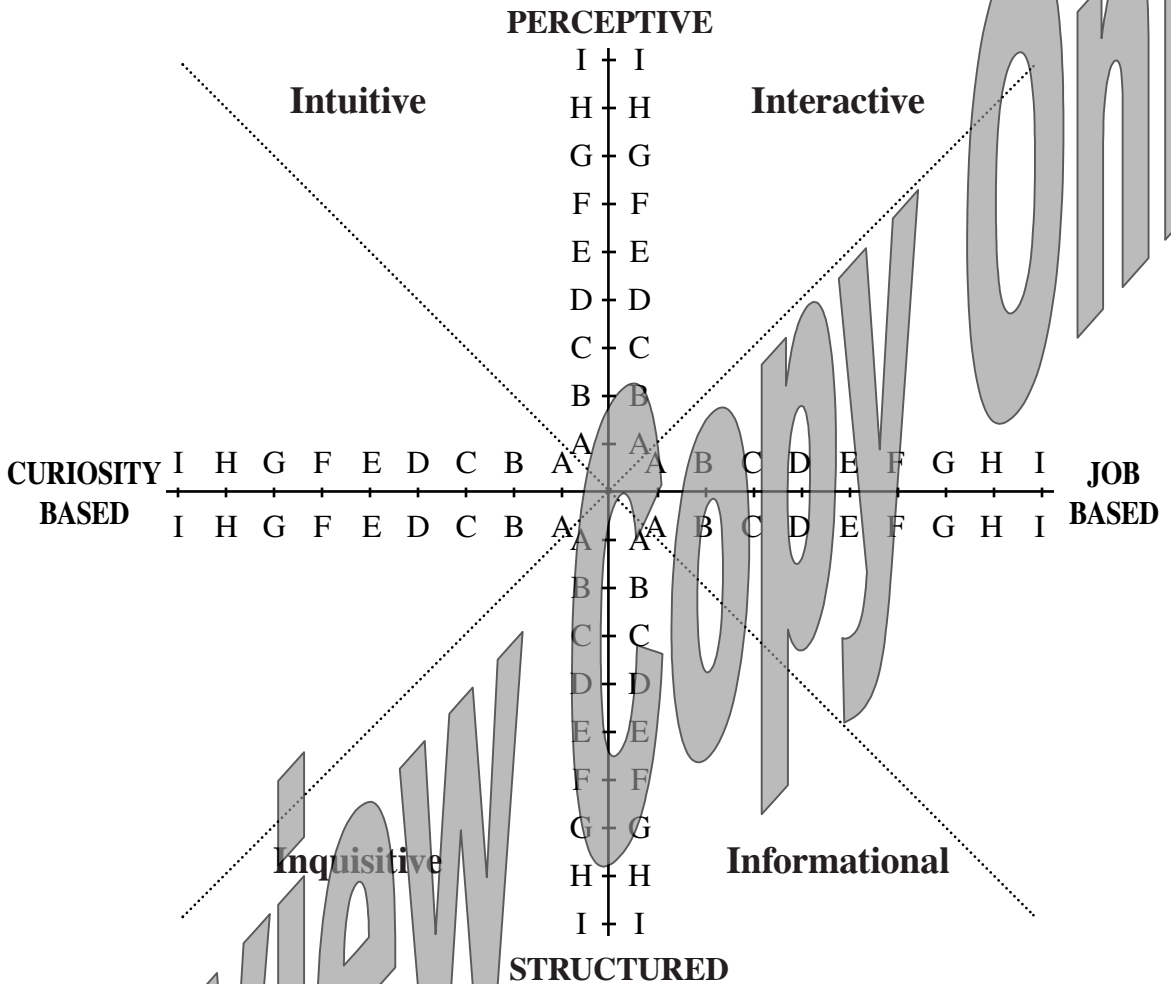
Inquisitive. The inquisitive style combines curiosity with a structured approach. A possible benefit of this approach is that this interviewer may discover the reasons why a particular action was taken. However, a weakness with <u>"why" questions may lead to speculation and rationalization which require additional probing for specific information. Also, this interviewer may indulge the inquisitive strategy and stray from the structured interview to ask potentially illegal questions involving, family, lifestyle, and values.</u>

Informational. The informational style is a natural outgrowth of the behavior-based interview. It involves a structured, job-related approach to asking follow-up probes which are designed to gather specific information that relates to the question asked of the candidate. <u>Although this approach limits the boundaries of conversation in the interview, a skilled interviewer can be professional, friendly, and supportive</u>. The informational strategy is the foundation for legal defensibility as well as the basis for the reliability and validity of the interview.

Each probing style has some merit, depending on the circumstances. Intuitive probes may be effective when the interviewer is a trained professional in the behavioral sciences. Interactive probes may be of value with a tense candidate. Inquisitive probes may be needed to uncover the reasons why an action was taken. However, <u>the informational style should be used for a large percentage of probes in a selection interview. Informational probes enhance defensibility because they are job-related. In addition, research has consistently shown that a structured approach is essential for reliable measurement of a job candidate's skills</u>.

PROBING STYLES PROFILE

PERCEPTIVE

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                          I + I
          Intuitive       H + H       Interactive
                          G + G
                          F + F
                          E + E
                          D + D
                          C + C
                          B + B
                          A - A
CURIOSITY  I H G F E D C B A       A B C D E F G H I   JOB
BASED                              A A B C D E F G H I   BASED
          I H G F E D C B A       A
                          B + B
                          C + C
                          D + D
                          E + E
                          F + F
          Inquisitive     G + G       Informational
                          H + H
                          I + I
```

STRUCTURED

Any style may be of value, depending on the purpose of the interview. However, for a selection interview the informational probing style is most likely to give you valid information based on a defensible, job-related system.

↪ *Page 14 will be across from page 11 during scoring.*

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Take turns asking these questions in your discussion group.

1. What is my primary style?

2. What does my Probing Styles Profile say that I need to learn? (Check the underlined text on page 12 and 13).

3. Why is the informational probing style recommended for most interviews?

4. What parts of my current probing style are important for me to keep?

5. What is my secondary style and how can it be of value to me in probing?

6. Which probing choices on the questionnaire did I make that were probably illegal? (Tip: See your answers to questions 2a, 3c, 5a, 5b, 5c, and 7c. Probes and conclusions may be challenged if they relate to such things as personal background, lifestyle, health, political affiliations, and legal rights. A candidate may volunteer this information but it is risky for you to probe into it.)

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Describe what you feel that you need to learn about probing in an interview.

On completion of the Get The Whole Picture video and additional practice I want to be able to:

1. Build rapport more effectively.

2. Avoid drawing quick conclusions.

3. Follow my structured interview more reliably.

4. Avoid potentially illegal questions.

Other_____

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16

Introduction to
BEHAVIOR-BASED PROBING

The behavior-based interviewing strategy has been shown to offer a valid technique for the selection of job candidates. The use of a job-related, structured interview provides employers with a legally-defensible selection tool designed to measure a candidate's skills for doing a particular job.

Here are primary characteristics of the behavior-based strategy:

- Determine the job skills, or competencies, important for doing a particular job well
- Define each skill with behavioral language in about 25 words
- Generate singular, open-ended, past event questions from the skill definitions
- Develop a structured interview with questions organized under the job skills
- Build rapport to develop a friendly, professional atmosphere
- Ask questions and help the candidate provide examples of actual times when skills were used
- Rate the candidate's overall performance by comparing answers to the job skills

Behavior-based probing into candidate responses involves asking job-related, follow-up questions that will provide information about the candidate's job skills. This section of the learning tool is designed to help you use behavior based probing techniques as you respond to job candidate simulations during the viewing of *Get The Whole Picture!*

Turn the page ✎

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Instructions For Practice Simulations

You will now use the *Participant Learning Tool* to help you interact with the video, *Get The Whole Picture!* Here are the steps to take after reading these instructions.

1. Prepare To Watch The Video. Each participant should briefly share his/her learning objectives (page 16) in small group discussion. Then individually read the explanations of the five "Probing Strategies And Skills" listed on page 19.

2. Familiarize Yourself With The Page Layout. Open the "Reminder Page" (page 43) and fold it between pages 20 and 21 without tearing it out of the booklet. You will see the "Candidate Response Page" (page 20) to the left of the "Reminder Page." The "Tips Page" (page 21) should be exposed only after you have decided how you would probe into the candidate's answer.

3. View The Introduction And First Simulation. The trainer will start the video. You will see an introduction to different probing strategies and more specific information on the first skill to be used in practice. Then you will see a simulation of a candidate's answer to a question. After the candidate responds, the trainer will stop the video.

4. Respond To The Simulation. Independently decide how you would ask a follow-up probe into the candidate's answer. After sharing probes in your small group, lift up the "Reminder Page" and discuss the tips underneath it. The trainer will facilitate the overall discussion and continue with the practice.

5. Apply Your Learning. After you have responded to the simulations in class, tear out "Probing Strategies And Skills" (page 19) and keep it with your interviewing materials. Use it as a reminder of the skills to use during actual interviews.

Probing Strategies And Skills

Strategy #1: Return to the target of the question. This strategy is used when the candidate did not answer the question. One approach is to repeat or paraphrase the question. Or, when the candidate's answer does not involve a specific example, it is logical to use the generalities in the answer as a lead-in to asking for a specific. Another technique is to create a probe from a phrase in the job task / competency that the question was designed to assess.

Strategy #2: Follow a verbal or non-verbal lead. The candidate's answer will often reflect information which you want to clarify or expand. In this case it makes sense to probe into the verbal clues in the answer. In addition, the candidate's non-verbal clues may reflect how s/he feels about the answer. Here you may choose to probe when there are indicators such as a change in facial expression, hands-to-the-face, folded arms, or a shifting body movement.

Strategy #3: Probe for a current work example. It is not unusual for a candidate to provide an answer involving an event which took place many years ago. The candidate's skills may have changed significantly since that time. So, it makes sense to probe for a more current example. Or, a candidate may give a current example which does not involve a work situation. In this case, you may choose to probe for a work example.

Strategy #4: Clarify actions and outcomes. It is important to clarify exactly what the candidate did, as one person or in a team role. So, it is desirable to ask probes that clarify exactly what actions were taken, particularly when reference is made to team efforts or to what "we" did. In other cases it is important to probe for the causes of the outcomes in the example. A great result could be explained by new resources or even luck. Or, a bad result could come from the individual's actions.

Strategy #5: Seek contrary evidence. It is important to gain representative information about the positives and the negatives in a candidate's skills. When a candidate gives a negative example, probe for positive information. Or, if the candidate gives a positive example, probe for negative information. Ask questions about strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures, and achievements and mistakes.

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #1

Probing Strategy: Return to the target of the question

Probing Skill: Repeat/paraphrase the question

Job Task: Identify customer needs and respond in a timely manner

Question: Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer.

Angie

"Well …that's one of the things I'm best at. I'm sensitive and compassionate when it comes to helping people and I basically have a service-oriented personality. I just have strong feelings for people…even strangers…to be honest, the people who I work with…they are surprised when I respond to abuse with a caring attitude. So, if you're looking for someone who can be amiable and friendly, I'm the type of person you're looking for."

Notes: _____

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ➷

20

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Tell me specifically what you did when you used compassion <u>to deal with a difficult customer</u>."

2. "Give me an example of one <u>difficult customer</u> you had to <u>deal with</u>."

3. "Pick out one <u>difficult customer</u> and tell me what you did."

4. "Think of a specific <u>customer</u> who was <u>difficult</u> and tell me how you handled the situation."

Remember to repeat or paraphrase the question to gain a specific example!

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*Note: The underlined words were taken directly from the question.

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #2

Probing Strategy: Return to the target of the question

Probing Skill: Probe for specifics linked to generalities

Job Task: Clarify roles, responsibilities, and goals to organize work

Question: Describe a time when you were able to help someone get organized.

Lenny

"That's a good question...I have thirty years of experience in getting people organized in shipping. Usually, I start every day with a meeting…I tell everybody what's coming up. Then I generally have to check and see that they're doing their jobs. But that's always kind of easy because a lot of time the good workers will complain about the others, you know…but with new people I always had to double check their work against the packing slips…sometimes the computer system helps…But, you know, there's usually so much turnover that I just don't have time for things like that."

Notes: _____

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ↩

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TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Tell me what you did when you helped a specific person get organized."

2. "Describe what you did to make one meeting really effective for getting a person organized."

3. "Give me an example of a time when a good worker's complaint helped you get someone organized."

4. "When did you use the computer system to improve an individual's organizational skills?"

Remember to use generalities as an opportunity to ask for a specific example!

Notes: _____

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*Note: The candidate's use of "usually," "generally," "always" and "sometimes" suggest a general example.

Turn this page for the next simulation ✏

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #3

Probing Strategy: Return to the target of the question

Probing skill: Probe based on the job task

Job Task: Involve others in setting realistic, challenging sales goals

Question: Tell me about a time when you were able to get another person committed to an important work goal.

Bruce

"Well…the only time I really worked as a sales manager was when I did direct marketing…We would sell off-brand cologne and perfume to people in parking lots…sports events and things like that. I mean we would just walk right up to people, show the product, and make the sale for cash. My job was to recruit and train my own group every week. Then on Fridays we would go out-of-town to where the crowds were and sell like crazy, you know…"

"I guess, the goal setting began in training where I helped recruits define their vision of success and relate it to tangible product sales. It wasn't unusual for a new rep to make several hundred dollars a day. That helped with commitment, but the real commitment came when I got them out-of-town where they had to pay their own expenses. They had to work to get home!"

Notes: _____

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ↩

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TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Describe what you did to get a person <u>involved in setting a sales goal</u>."

2. "What specific steps did you take in <u>setting a sales goal</u> with one of your reps?"

3. "Tell me what you said to get a new recruit to set <u>a realistic sales goal</u>?"

4. "Give me a specific time when you helped one person stretch for a <u>challenging sales goal</u>?"

Remember to build a probe based on the job task!

Notes: _____

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*Note: The underlined words were taken from the job task.

Turn this page for the next simulation ✎

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #4

Probing Strategy: Follow a verbal or non-verbal lead

Probing Skill: Probe based on verbal clues

Job Task: Determine the causes of problems and evaluate alternative solutions before taking action

Question: Describe a recent programming challenge, which required you to be particularly systematic in developing a solution.

<div align="center">Ken</div>

"…I wrote a program for our new sales management system. I did a good job but then I got a lot of criticism from my boss when it crashed a couple of times. I thought that there was some kind of problem that I really didn't deserve to be criticized for. Anyway, I systematically tested the software with each type of computer and operating system we used. Then I talked with a programmer that worked for the vendor…boy was he was an idiot. I double checked the utilities I used…and finally started to systematically de-bug the software to see what kinds of errors I got. This lead me to find out that the firewall on our intranet had been modified. I fixed the problem with five lines of code. But, I find it very irritating to be criticized and then pull overtime to fix somebody else's mistakes. That's why I'm leaving that place."

Notes: _____

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<div align="right">Match this page to the Reminder Page ➫</div>

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Responses Like:

1. "What steps did you take to prepare to explain the solution to your boss?"

2. "What did your reaction to the programmer teach you to do in another situation?"

3. "Tell me how you applied your learning from mistakes in this situation."

4. "Describe a time when you made a distinction between personal criticism and a professional critique."

Remember to probe based on clues in the answer!

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*Note: The verbal clues in this answer lead to a question involving a different job task for this position — professional communications.

Turn this page for the next simulation ↩

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #5

Probing Strategy: Follow a verbal or non-verbal lead

Probing Skill: Probe based on non-verbal clues*

Job Task: Make effective presentations to communicate new ideas

Question: Tell me how you built a specific presentation for a challenging audience.

<div align="center">Tina</div>

"Well, let's see. A *challenging audience. Ah... Okay*. Once, I had to summarize what was learned in a Communities Of Practice Seminar for Senior Management. My personal challenge was that I felt like this was…well…*make it or break it for my career*. I was alone with 5 of the most powerful people in our organization. But, at the same time, I had the opportunity to get them to move us toward a more efficient learning organization. So, I overcame my anxiety through preparation.

Over a two-week period I boiled the information down to what I called the CORE ideas - Concept, Opportunity, Results, and Evaluation. I, ah…I *introduced* each topic with two minutes of information followed by a key question for the group. It generated a lot of discussion…and…I'm happy to say that my voice only cracked once…but *my palms were sweaty* the whole time."

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* Suggestion. Watch for the non-verbal clues with words in italics.

Match this page to the Reminder Page ↝

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Describe a different time when you were put on the spot by a challenging audience."

2. "What happened to your career after the presentation?"

3. "What part of your introduction was most uncomfortable to you?"

4. "What did you fail to do that made your palms sweaty?"

Remember to observe all behavior…verbal and non-verbal!

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*Note: The underlined words were taken from the answer when there was an eye shift, hand-to-face, or body shift.

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #6

Probing Strategy: Probe for a current work example

Probing Skill: Probe for a current example

Job Task: Follow security procedures with absolute consistency

Question: Describe a time when you followed procedures when it was not convenient to do so.

Nancy

"The best example of that would be 10 years ago. I was on patrol with a rookie who wasn't the sharpest tool in the shed…and we arrived at the scene of a shooting…we were requesting an ambulance…and then we were advised of a 20 minute ETA by the dispatcher. My partner was freaking out because the victim was going into shock and kept saying "We have to transport"…to the hospital he meant…which was totally against procedures. Being the lead officer, I refused. Anyway, as I remember, the victim lived. When they finally got there the EMT's did a great job."

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ↩

30

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Give me a more recent example of following procedures."

2. "When was the last time you had to take a stand on procedures?"

3. "Tell me about a more current time you did the right thing by following procedures."

4. "Describe a time in the last year when you followed procedures even when others didn't."

Remember to probe for a current work example!

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*Note: The example involves an event that took place 10 years ago.

CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #7

Probing Strategy: Probe for a current work example

Probing Skill: Probe for a work example

Job Task: Deal with multiple demands, priorities, ambiguity, or change

Question: When were you especially successful in managing several important priorities?

Cindy

"That question is perfect for me because after my divorce I had three kids to raise and a lot of bills. With my life in chaos, I had to prepare lunches, pick up the kids, supervise homework…so I prioritized going for a job with predictable hours and good benefits. Then, I had to manage career and family at the same time. That went on for about 8 years. When you check my references just ask my supervisor…he'll give you an earful."

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ↩

32

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "What did you do at one specific time at work to manage priorities?"

2. "Give me an example of the steps you took to deal with multiple work demands."

3. "How did you use a systematic approach to handle ambiguity at work?"

4. "Describe a time in those eight years that shows your approach to dealing with changes at work."

Remember to probe for a work example!

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*Note: This was a personal example involving divorce, children, and finances.

Turn this page for the next simulation ↪

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #8

Probing Strategy: Clarify actions and outcomes

Probing skill: Probe for the actions taken

Job Task: Monitor market trends that influence product sales

Question: Describe a time when you did market research that had a meaningful influence on product sales.

Ken

"Well, we had the assignment of developing a marketing plan for a major staffing firm. They were losing market share like crazy…I mean…it was a disaster waiting to happen. Our solution was to combine Quantitative and Qualitative approaches. First, we collected public information on the industry, competitors, customer demographics, things like that. Essentially we hired a researcher to do nothing but look for information in government reports, trade magazines, newspapers, and so forth. Then, we did a survey of current customers to identify their major issues and compiled all of that information.

The quantitative research involved focus groups with people who did not know who our client was. Our focus group questions came from the customer survey and uncovered some important dynamics in the industry. Well, I compiled the results and submitted them to the team. Then, we developed the concept around the phrase "Right Now, Right!" The resulting marketing campaign involved the whole company. It showed an immediate 2% increase in market share, with a projected long term increase of 5%."

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ↩

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Tell me what you did as a team member."

2. "Describe your individual responsibilities with the quantitative research."

3. "What was your role in running the focus groups."

4. "Who got the credit for coming up with the "Right Now, Right!" idea?"

Remember to probe for the actions taken!

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*Note: The candidate's frequent use of "we" may be modest, but it is not clear what actions the candidate took to cause the outcome.

Turn this page for the next simulation ↜

CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #9

Probing Strategy: Clarify actions and outcomes

Probing Skill: Probe for the causes of outcomes

Job Task: Generate incremental quarterly sales in the territory

Question: Describe a time when you were the primary cause of sustained revenue growth in your territory.

Bob

"I've never had a territory that I didn't grow. Not once…never in my 20 years of selling…grow or die is my motto!

But, let's see, seriously, you want a good example of a time when I caused revenue growth…well…when I worked as a manufacture's rep I had a real challenge. We had an aging product line and an economy that was only just beginning to warm up again. I thought the manufacturer was wasting a lot of money on advertising so I decided to speak up. Now, first I got the manufacturer to drop another rep and give me his territory. See, he was the main problem. After I worked the new territory for a quarter my overall numbers were up 25% over the run rate in the two territories. See, I believe it's a matter of relationships. When I build a relationship with a customer it just turns into money."

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ✎

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TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Describe the steps you took to get a new, profitable customer."

2. "What was involved in the manufacturer's advertising program?"

3. "How much did the economy improve and to what extent did it help you out?"

4. "Tell me about one unprofitable customer relationship you turned into a profitable one."

Remember to probe for the causes of outcomes in the answer!

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*Note: The changes in the economy could have been the cause of the 25% increase in the run rate.

Turn this page for the next simulation ↩

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #10

Probing Strategy: Seek contrary evidence

Probing Skill: Probe for a positive example

Job Task: Advocate balance between fitness, work, community service, and lifestyle

Question: When have you used the idea of a balanced life as a fitness trainer?

Bruce

"… is that a legal question?…I mean asking about my personal values and all that?…I guess I just have to trust you. Anyway, to be honest with you. I reject the idea of a balanced life. I mean I don't know anybody who has accomplished a lot living a balanced life. Mahatma Gandhi, John F. Kennedy…even Elvis Presley… all had lives committed to one thing. Sure they had personal lives, but their real passion was in their work and that's me. I mean I love fitness…I dream about swimming laps…actually, for me weekends are just an opportunity for iron man training."

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ✏

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "When did you advance your commitment to fitness by taking a time out?"

2. "Tell me about one of the organizational values you emphasized in your last job as a fitness trainer."

3. "When have you been effective in maintaining balance in your work activities?"

4. "Give me an example of a time when you had to learn how to be an advocate of a new idea."

Remember to seek contrary evidence when the answer is negative!

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*Note: This candidate needs help in going beyond his philosophy in order to give a specific example of when he did use the idea of a balanced life.

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CANDIDATE RESPONSE PAGE
For Simulation #11

Probing Strategy: Seek contrary evidence

Probing Skill: Probe for a negative example

Job Task: Work respectfully with people who have different values, cultures, or backgrounds

Question: Give me an example of when you were especially respectful of a person who was different from you.

Angie

"When I was just starting in public accounting I had a coworker who was being ostracized by everybody because he was gay. There were only a few people who would talk to him besides me and that really made me mad. So, anyway we became friends…and I marched in the Gay Rights parade right along side him…afterwards, when he thanked me, we both cried…just a little bit…it was great."

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Match this page to the Reminder Page ↝

40

TIPS PAGE*

Consider Probes Like:

1. "Give me an example of a time when someone took advantage of your desire to be respectful."

2. "Tell me about a time when you were not respectful of a person who was different from you."

3. "Describe a situation in which you shouldn't have been respectful to a person who was different from you."

4. "Tell me about a time when being respectful backfired on you."

Remember to seek contrary evidence when the answer is positive!

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*Note: This candidate may be so respectful and supportive that she doesn't set limits on what she expects of herself.

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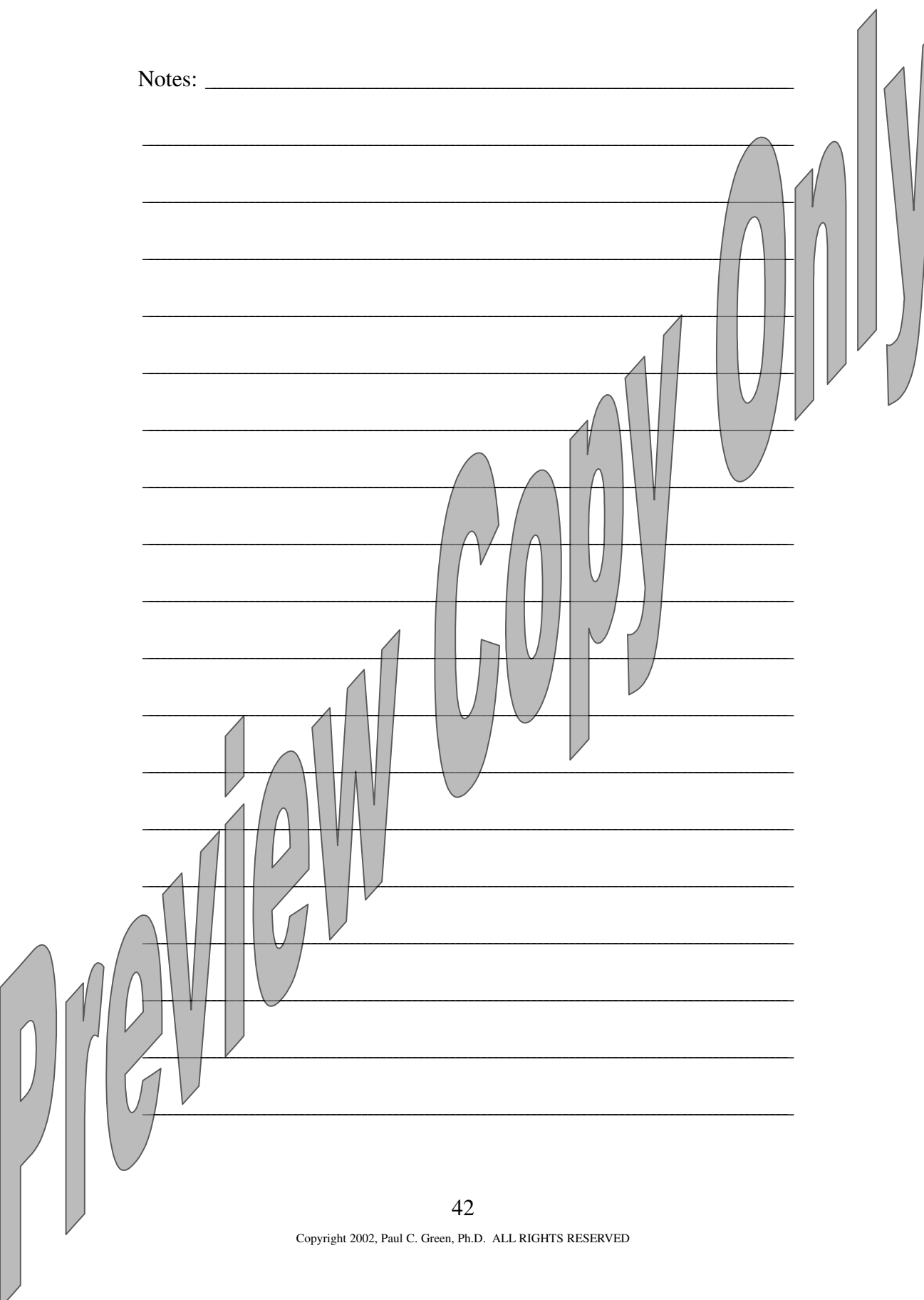
REMINDER PAGE

Strategy #1: Return to the target of the question

- Repeat / paraphrase the question

- Probe for specifics linked to generalities

- Probe based on the job task

Strategy #2: Follow a verbal or non-verbal lead

- Probe based on verbal clues

- Probe based on non-verbal clues

Strategy #3: Probe for a current work example

- Probe for a current example

- Probe for a work example

Strategy #4: Clarify actions and outcomes

- Probe for the actions taken

- Probe for the causes of outcomes

Strategy #5: Seek contrary evidence

- Probe for a positive example

- Probe for a negative example

⇦ *Match this page to the Candidate Response Page*

Great ideas
start with
Vision

VISIONPOINT