

People Management

Recruit better with strengths based interviewing

The traditional job interview tends to focus on competencies: the company states what it's looking for, and the candidate must "prove" they fit the bill. No wonder recruiters often encounter the same well-rehearsed answers, or worse – candidates stretching the truth. Both may lead to a square peg taking up a new post in a round hole.

Hence the rise of the strengths-based interview, now favoured by everyone from EY and Barclays to Nestlé and Royal Mail. The approach is designed to establish what really makes the candidate tick. Advocates say it helps establish a

more mutually beneficial long-term fit, where successful candidates naturally love and thrive in the job.

Commonly-asked questions include: "What would you be doing even if you didn't get paid?", "What always stays at the bottom of your to-do list?" and "Do you prefer starting or finishing things?". A candidate can't Google the "right" response, and their energy, enthusiasm and other non-verbal clues will reveal as much as any answer.

Charlotte Hart, Barclays' head of infrastructure campus recruitment EMEA, corporate & investment bank, introduced strengths-based interviews for graduates in 2011. "The questions, which aren't reliant on past work experience, elicit a more natural and authentic response," she says. "Where a candidate has a genuine strength, they



A new approach can help both candidate and recruiter, says Sally Bibb

spontaneously give you the richness of example you are seeking."

A strengths-based interview will take about an hour and be faster paced than a normal interview, as well as more relaxed, authentic and enjoyable, say its fans – even though it's harder to prepare for.

"The strengths approach to selection is a win for both the individual and the organisation," says Sally Bibb, director of consultancy Engaging Minds. "If the individual doesn't get the job, they realise it's because they are not a good fit, not that they're deficient in some way. Interviewers almost always say both that they get to know the real person and that they are confident in their selection decision."