Digital Structured Interviews
The Secret to Doubling Your Recruiting Success

Learn More
Introduction: What Are Structured Interviews, and Why Are They Useful?

Hiring managers often trust their guts when making hiring decisions. In fact, research shows that more than 75 percent of HR professionals believe unstructured interviews – e.g., their gut feelings – can help them learn more about candidates and make better hiring decisions than structured interviews.¹

The problem is, this belief is entirely unfounded. In fact, our guts are terrible at making hiring decisions, and data-based hiring methods in general always outperform our instincts by at least 25 percent.²

In fact, when it comes to data-based hiring methods, one in particular stands above the rest: the structured interview. **Structured interviews, when administered correctly, have a predictive validity of 62 percent – twice as high as the predictive validity of unstructured interviews.**³

Structured interviews, also known as behavioral interviews, situational interviews, rated interviews, ranked interviews, and/or competency interviews, offer a clearly superior method of hiring. These interviews are twice as reliable as their unstructured, instinct-based counterparts.

This is because structured interviews can control for unconscious biases and inconsistent interviewing methods, thereby presenting to interviewers the clearest, most accurate pictures of each candidate. With structured interviews, employers can cut through the noise and get to the heart of the hiring matter: who is truly the best person for the job?

² https://hbr.org/2014/05/in-hiring-algorithms-beat-instinct
³ https://www.recruiter.com/i/what-are-the-most-reliable-candidate-assessment-tools/
A Definition of Structured Interviews
The U.S. Office of Personnel Management\(^4\) defines a structured interview as “an assessment method designed to measure job-related competencies of candidates by systematically inquiring about their behavior in past experiences and/or their proposed behavior in hypothetical situations.”

In a structured interview, an interviewer has a pre-prepared list of questions, and they stick exclusively to these questions. They ask every candidate the same questions, in the same way, and in the same order. Interviewers essentially have a script from which they must not deviate. This ensures that each candidate receives the same interview experience.

Structured interviews also protect employers from potential lawsuits. By making it so that each interviewer asks each candidate the same exact questions, structured interviews ensure that no illegal criteria enter the hiring process.

Why Should We Use Structured Interviews?
When interviewers can make judgment calls about what to ask each candidate, they can inadvertently stack the deck in favor of or against certain candidates. Some candidates may get questions that really allow them to shine, while others may get questions that turn out to only emphasize their weaknesses, rather than their strengths.

This situation is unfair to job seekers, but it’s even worse for the organizations doing the hiring. They end up with inaccurate pictures of each candidate, because they are not judging the candidates according to the same baselines.

The person who looks like the best choice may actually only look that way as a fluke, the result of the interview questions they received that other candidates did not. By the same token, the person who truly was the best for the job may go completely undetected.

Structured interviews, on the other hand, allow employers to measure each candidate according to the same set of static criteria. That way, employers can make more informed, more reliable judgments about who the best candidate is. As Recruiter.com’s Kazim Ladimeji has pointed out, this makes structured interviews one of the most “valid forms of assessment.”

Mitigating Personal Biases Through Structured Interviews

Structured interviews are a better way to predict which candidates will succeed in a role, and they’re also a better way for interviewers to quell their unconscious biases – biases which, left unchecked, can result in poor hiring decisions.

In unstructured interview scenarios, interviewers may be subconsciously swayed by candidate characteristics that have nothing to do with the candidate’s ability to do a great job in the role he or she is interviewing for. Traits such as race, gender, style of speaking, weight, height, and perceived attractiveness can make positive or negative impressions on interviewers. More often than not, interviewers are unaware of these impressions.

The result is that interviewers look more favorably on candidates who may not necessarily deserve that favorable look. Interviewers may even pass over the most qualified candidate in favor of someone else, simply because unconscious biases drew the interviewer away from the person who would have been best for the job.

5 https://www.recruiter.com/i/what-are-the-most-reliable-candidate-assessment-tools/
Structured interviews can curtail the power of interviewers’ unconscious biases or even completely remove said biases from the hiring process. When all candidates are asked the same exact questions and scored according to the same exact criteria, interviewers achieve more objective rankings of the candidates they are considering.

The result is better hiring decisions: interviewers select the best candidates based on objective rankings, rather than subjective instincts or gut feelings. These better hiring decisions can save employers a lot of money: according to research from the Society for Human Resource Management, a bad hire can cost a company up to five times the amount of the bad hire’s salary when one considers the original cost of hiring the employee, the cost of lost productivity, the cost of training the bad hire, and the cost of hiring and training a replacement, among other factors.6

6 http://resources.dice.com/report/the-cost-of-bad-hiring-decisions/
Better Legal Defensibility with Structured Interviews

Structured interviews also present a better way for HR departments to ensure that they comply with all government hiring regulations. When the questions are prepared ahead of time, organizations can make sure that none of their interviewers are asking about things they shouldn’t be.

Moreover, structured interviews can act as an organization’s legal defense against any unfounded charges of discrimination. When every candidate goes through the same exact interview – and when that interview adheres to government regulations – an organization can easily prove that no illegal criteria entered into consideration during the hiring process. All an HR professional has to do is pull out the interview record, and the proof is there.

In 2015, Jennifer Yugo, who holds a Ph.D. in industrial and organizational psychology, wrote that roughly half of the unstructured interviews challenged in court have been found to be discriminatory, whereas only 13 percent of structured interviews challenged in court were found to be discriminatory.7

Similarly, the team at legal-industry research company Lawyer Metrics found that, in a study of 158 hiring discrimination cases, 100 percent of all structured interviews stood up against legal challenges, whereas only 59 percent of unstructured interviews did. Lawyer Metrics also found that unstructured interviews were far more likely to be challenged in court than structured interviews.8

---

7 http://www.corvirtus.com/standardized-and-structured-interviews
Structured interviews are one the most reliably predictive candidate assessment methods out there – and yet, 92 percent of employers continue to make use of unstructured interviews, instead of relying on structured interviews exclusively. What’s going on here?

As it turns out, for all the benefits they offer, traditional structured interviews do come with some challenges that can be difficult for companies to overcome.

**Manually Collecting Data**
The point of structured interviews is to assess every candidate according to the exact same criteria, and this is done by collecting data about candidates via their responses. Interviewers must record the responses of each candidate to each question, and then manually score candidates’ responses according to the same reference points. This can be a terribly time-consuming process,
especially when interviewing for high-volume positions. Instead of breaking their backs collecting data, many recruiters and HR professionals just go with their guts instead. It seems, from their vantage points, to be a much more time-effective way of doing things.

Another problem that organizations often encounter when collecting candidate data is the messiness and unwieldiness of paper rubrics – especially when multiple interviewers are scoring each candidate.

Say, for example that each candidate is interviewed by a panel of 5 interviewers, and that each interviewer has 1-2 paper interview rubrics for each candidate. That’s 5-10 pieces of paper per candidate that the companies must keep track of and analyze. If there are 10 candidates for the job, that’s 50-100 pieces of paper in total. If there are more candidates, that number can increase significantly. Collecting these paper rubrics and calculating scores for each candidate based on these rubrics requires a lot of time and effort, and there’s no guarantee that some of the rubrics won’t be mislaced along the way, leading to skewed rankings.

It can be hard enough to keep track of paper rubrics when the interview process is conducted in person at a central office, but it becomes vastly more difficult in remote hiring situations. Consider a candidate being interviewed for a telecommuting position. Perhaps the candidate’s interviewers are also remote workers, or members of a distributed hiring team. Each interviewer may be located in a different city, state, or country. To collect the notes and rubrics from each interviewer and bring them to one central location for processing will take a lot of time and careful coordination.
Even if the interviewers simply email their data to a central location, someone will still have to spend time collecting the data from each email and aggregating it. Moreover, it is possible that some of the data will be erroneously entered when transferred from paper to email, thus impacting the candidate’s scores and compromising the objectivity of the ratings.

**Establishing a Baseline Across Multiple Interviews**

Aside from simply collecting data, interviewers must also score candidates according to their responses, as mentioned above. These scores are supposed to be objective, but, as we all know, human beings have a hard time with objectivity. Interviewers may subconsciously score especially charismatic candidates higher than they deserve, thereby skewing the results of the entire structured interview process.

And that’s to say nothing of the problems that can occur when multiple interviewers participate in the scoring process. How can we be sure that every single interviewer is scoring candidates similarly? How can we be sure that one person’s “3 out 5” isn’t another person’s “1 out of 5”? 
But before we even get to the issue of scoring itself, we often run into a more basic problem. Interviewers are expected to score candidates as the interview proceeds. To do this, they must constantly shift their focus back and forth between the candidate and their guides.

The result is that interviewers must divide their attentions, and this can dramatically impact the scoring process. While searching through an interview guide to find the appropriate spot for their notes, an interviewer may miss valuable information from the candidate. Similarly, an interviewer may get wrapped up in a candidate’s answers and unintentionally skip a question contained in the interview guide, thereby negatively affecting the candidate’s whole ranking.

Divided attentions can lead to ineffective interviews, and ineffective interviews can lead to inaccurate rankings. If your rankings aren’t accurate, then the predictive validity of the structured interview process is shot.

Calculating Candidate Rankings

If collecting data and scoring individual candidates is time-consuming, wait until you have to calculate each candidate’s overall ranking. These overall rankings require more data, more scores, more calculations – and more time. Again, it starts to seem like unstructured interviews are the way to go, simply because they don’t take so long.

It also doesn’t help that candidate rankings are not calculated in real time. Instead, they are calculated whenever people can make time to calculate them. That means recruiters and HR professionals have to do a lot of waiting around, wasting time until they have the rankings they need to make a decision.

The wait for rankings can negatively impact a company’s time-to-hire. The longer it takes to
calculate candidate rankings, the longer the req remains open. The longer the req remains open, the more work piles up – because a new hire has not been brought aboard to do the work.

Similarly, a longer time-to-hire can cause the candidates themselves to grow frustrated. If they do not hear from a company in a timely manner, candidates – especially highly skilled, in-demand candidates – are likely to abandon the application process and look for work elsewhere. The company, in turn, loses out on top talent because the ranking process took too long to complete.

It’s also important to note that manually calculated rankings don’t simply require time – they also cost money. Analyzing the data collected through structured interviews and turning this data into candidate rankings generally requires the work of in-house or contracted data teams. The price to hire or maintain such a team is often quite high.

Because of these hurdles, many organizations choose to forgo the structured interview process, even when they know that structured interviews are more reliable. It is often the case that employers simply don’t have the resources, time, or money to collect data, score candidates accurately, and rank candidates against one another.

But what if there were a way to achieve structured interviews without these hassles? What if there were a way for companies to take advantage of the benefits of structured interviews without any of the associated challenges?

The good news is, there is such a way. All it takes is having the proper tools on hand.
VidCruiter is a video interviewing software that uses digital interview guides, customizable rubrics, and an automated scoring system to reduce the amount of administrative effort required to run structured interviews. In doing so, VidCruiter solves the problems inherent in traditional approaches to structured interviews, while freeing organizations up to leverage all the benefits. Employers can use VidCruiter’s software for all types of interviews: in-person interviews, video interviews, phone screenings, assessment centers, and even hybrid in-person/live video interviews.

No Manual Data Collection
With VidCruiter, all of an organization’s rubrics and interview guides are completely digitized. There’s no paper to keep track of whatsoever. Interviewers can access these guides through any device with an Internet connection – tablets, smartphones, laptops, or desktops. And, these digital guides can be used in any type of interview, including face-to-face interviews, video interviews, and even hybrids of the two.

Moreover, these rubrics and interview guides are completely customizable. Organizations can rate candidates on whatever scales they prefer and according to whatever criteria they prefer.

With VidCruiter, no one has to spend time keeping track of interview guides or candidate scores. There is no manual data collection required. The software automatically captures data as it is entered and ranks
candidates accordingly, giving interviewers a real-time picture of how each candidate is doing at a given moment. Interviewers no longer have to worry about remembering which candidate said what: candidate’s responses are captured and their associated scores are readily available.

Establish a Reliable Baseline Across Multiple Interviews
When using paper guides to score candidates and lead interviews, interviewers can get tripped up or confused because they have to somehow focus on both the candidate and the stack of paper in front of them. This, as mentioned above, can lead to ineffective, inaccurate interviews.

With VidCruiter, however, interview guides are entirely digitized and easy to access. During video interviews, guides are presented in the same screen as the candidate’s video feed, which means no switching back and forth between candidate and guide. Similarly, during in-person interviews, interviewers can quickly rank candidates and move through each question without having to sift through a stack of papers.

The ease of access to interview guides also allows interviewers to more quickly gain clear understandings of how the scoring process works. Rubrics and rankings appear on the same screen, so interviewers can calibrate their scores to align with the rubric’s criteria and never miss a beat of the interview.
Not sure if a candidate deserves a 3 or 4 on this question? All an interviewer has to do is quickly scan the rubric, see what each score means, and choose the appropriate one. Interviewers will no longer be misled by half-read, misremembered rubrics, nor will they have to spend valuable interview time looking for the information they need.

Because VidCruiter’s software calculates candidates’ overall rankings automatically, there’s no confusion regarding questions scored on different scales.

For example, perhaps question No. 1 is scored on an 8-point scale, but question No. 2 is scored on a 5-point score and question No. 3 is scored on a 3-point scale. Interviewers don’t have to worry about standardizing these ratings and giving candidates overall rankings – VidCruiter takes care of all that. No more calculators, no more spreadsheets.

As interviewers rate candidates, the candidates’ overall rankings are calculated in real-time. Interviewers can see these rankings any time they’d like, making it easier for them to compare multiple applicants. As soon as an interview is over – and even in the middle of the interview itself – interviewers can immediately see how the candidate they just spoke to stacks up against the rest of the pack.

**Automatic Candidate Rankings**

When rankings are calculated manually, a company’s time-to-hire can balloon to an unfortunate length, driving candidates away and leaving roles empty for far too long. With VidCruiter, candidate rankings are calculated automatically and instantly. There’s no wait, no matter how many interviewers are scoring a candidate.
Say, for example, that 5 interviewers are scoring a single candidate simultaneously. As soon as each interviewer scores the candidate on a given response, VidCruiter takes these scores and calculates the candidate’s ranking in real time. At any point in the process, interviewers can see which candidates are leading the pack. This facilitates much faster hiring processes: when the messy calculations are removed, interviewers can make quick and accurate decisions about whom they should hire.

**Added Benefits**
We’ve looked at how VidCruiter can help employers clear the three major hurdles of traditional structured interviews, but that’s not all the software offers. Here are a few of the other benefits VidCruiter can bring to the table:

**Easier Scheduling**
In traditional interviews of all kinds – both structured and unstructured – scheduling can be a hassle.

Consider this common occurrence: the interviewer sends a suggested time to the candidate, but the candidate cannot make it at that time. The candidate then suggests a different time, but now the time does not work for the interviewer – and so on, ad nauseam.

Or consider the difficulty encountered when one attempts to arrange a panel interview.

Communicating and agreeing upon possible times with multiple parties can be time-consuming and, in some cases, virtually impossible.
To solve this issue, VidCruiter offers a built-in scheduler. Candidates invited to interview can select a time to interview through the platform, and VidCruiter automatically notifies all involved parties. The software also automatically sends the proper interview guides and rubrics to all the interviewers, so that they are prepared when it is time for the interview.

Employers can use VidCruiter’s scheduling feature to arrange interviews of all kinds: in-person interviews, video interviews, phone-based interviews, or any combination thereof.

In case some members of the hiring team cannot make the scheduled interview, VidCruiter allows for the recording of interviews, whether in person or via video. Thus, interviewers who could not make the original interview can review the interview at a later time and score the candidate when it is convenient for them.

Works On Every Device
VidCruiter can be used for in-person and video interviews, and interviewers can access interview guides and rubrics on any device. They can videoconference with candidates on laptops, desktops, or tablets. In the case of an in-person interview, interviewers can score candidates via whichever device they prefer while sitting in the same room, whether it be a smartphone, tablet, laptop, or desktop.
More Time With Qualified Candidates, Less With Unqualified Ones

VidCruiter’s pre-recorded video interviews offer an excellent prescreening tool, one that allows interviewers to spend more time with the right candidates.

For example, say knowledge of Excel is crucial for a given role. Interviewers need not watch an entire interview to determine whether a given candidate meets the basic qualifications for the role. Instead, they can simply watch the candidate’s response to a question about Excel. If the candidate cannot answer the question properly, he or she is not right for the role – and interviewers need not watch the whole interview. On the other hand, if a candidate can answer the question correctly, interviewers can proceed to watch the whole pre-recorded video to learn more about the candidate.

Such “early knockout capability” can save interviewers a lot of time. Rather than going through 20-minute screening interviews with unqualified candidates, interviewers only need a minute or two to learn who is qualified and who isn’t.
Better, More Legally Defensible Hiring Decisions
This, after all, is the main reason why employers should use structured interviews: they have a higher predictive validity than unstructured interviews, and they provide protection against frivolous lawsuits.

VidCruiter removes all the barriers that prevent employers from leveraging structured interviews, which means that hiring teams can make smarter hiring decisions, mitigate their personal biases, and build the strongest possible workforces.
Now that we’ve explored the overarching benefits of structured interviews, let’s spend some time looking at what structured interviews with VidCruiter are like in action.
Use Case No. 1: Pre-Recorded (Asynchronous) Video Interviews

With pre-recorded interviews, candidates have the opportunity to record themselves at home, on their own time. The employer creates a list of interview questions – either via text or video – and candidates record themselves responding to these questions.

Interviewers can then watch these pre-recorded interviews on their own time, which removes scheduling hassles from the equation.

As interviewers watch a pre-recorded interview, they can simultaneously view rating scales and scoring guides for each question. Interviewers can review and score candidate responses without ever leaving the VidCruiter platform. Meanwhile, the software captures all this data and automatically ranks candidates in real time.

If multiple interviewers are involved in the process, each interviewer can watch the candidate’s prerecorded interview on their own schedule.
Use Case No. 2: Live Video Conference

Up to five interviewers can join a live video conference with a candidate via VidCruiter. On the side bar of the software, in the same window as the candidate’s video feed, interviewers can see their interview guides and scoring rubrics. There’s no moving between guides, notes, and candidates: everything is in one window.

As with all interviews conducted through VidCruiter, candidate scores are automatically captured and the candidates are ranked instantaneously, in real time.

Interviewers can also record live video interviews through VidCruiter. If some members of the hiring team cannot make it to the live video interview, they can view the recording and score the candidate at a later date.
**Use Case No. 3:** In-Person Interviews

VidCruiter’s software can also be used to conduct in-person structured interviews. Interviewers can access their interview guides, scoring rubrics, and rating scales via their smartphones, laptops, tablets, or even desktops. As interviewers sit with candidates, they can score the candidates’ responses directly through the VidCruiter software. Interviewers don’t have to worry about taking notes or otherwise distracting themselves: all scoring can be done right at the time of the interview, and VidCruiter will calculate the candidates’ rankings in real time.

Interviewers can also record in-person interviews via VidCruiter, in case members of the hiring team want to review and score candidates at another time.
Use Case No. 4:
Hybrid In-Person / Live Video Interview

These types of interviews are especially useful when the members of a hiring team are distributed across cities, states, or even countries. The candidate may walk in for an in-person interview with one interviewer, and the other interviewers can join in via live video feed.

All of the interviewers will be using the same interview guides, rubrics, and scoring scales through VidCruiter. Despite the geographical disparities, VidCruiter will capture all the scores and calculate the candidate’s overall ranking instantaneously. Interviewers need not send notes or scores to one another.
Use Case No. 5: Assessment Centers

In a traditional assessment center, teams of evaluators conduct a series of structured interviews with a large number of candidates in one central location. The evaluators must then bring all the data they collect back to a central team, which analyzes the data, inputs evaluator feedback into a system, and ranks the candidates accordingly. This process is incredibly time-consuming when one considers the sheer number of candidates that must be ranked and all of the data that goes into each ranking.

With VidCruiter, evaluators need not bring their data back to a central team. Instead, evaluators can collect the necessary data directly through VidCruiter, which automatically captures and stores it. VidCruiter also ranks the candidates automatically, eliminating the need for a lengthy process of data analysis. This dramatically reduces the amount of time it takes to sort through candidate rankings. There is no wait time between the day of the assessment and the eventual rankings: this information is available as soon as evaluators submit their assessments via VidCruiter.

By eliminating the need for a central data team, VidCruiter also drastically lowers the administrative costs associated with running assessment centers. Companies no longer need to hire or maintain expensive teams of data professionals.
Conclusion

Structured interviews are far more reliable than their unstructured counterparts, and they allow hiring teams to make smarter more objective, more legally defensible hiring decisions.

Unfortunately, structured interviews often require a lot of administrative effort: data must be collected, papers must be tracked, and candidates must be ranked.

Through VidCruiter, however, employers can enjoy the benefits of structured interviews without any of the challenges. It does not matter if the interview is live, in person, via pre-recorded video, at an assessment center, over the phone, or any combination of those. With VidCruiter, employers can collect input from multiple evaluators in a timely, efficient manner. Interviewers all use the same guides and the same scoring systems, and VidCruiter automatically collects this data and calculates candidate rankings in real time across platforms.

Employers looking to hire better candidates in less time should look to structured interviews conducted through VidCruiter as the obvious solution.