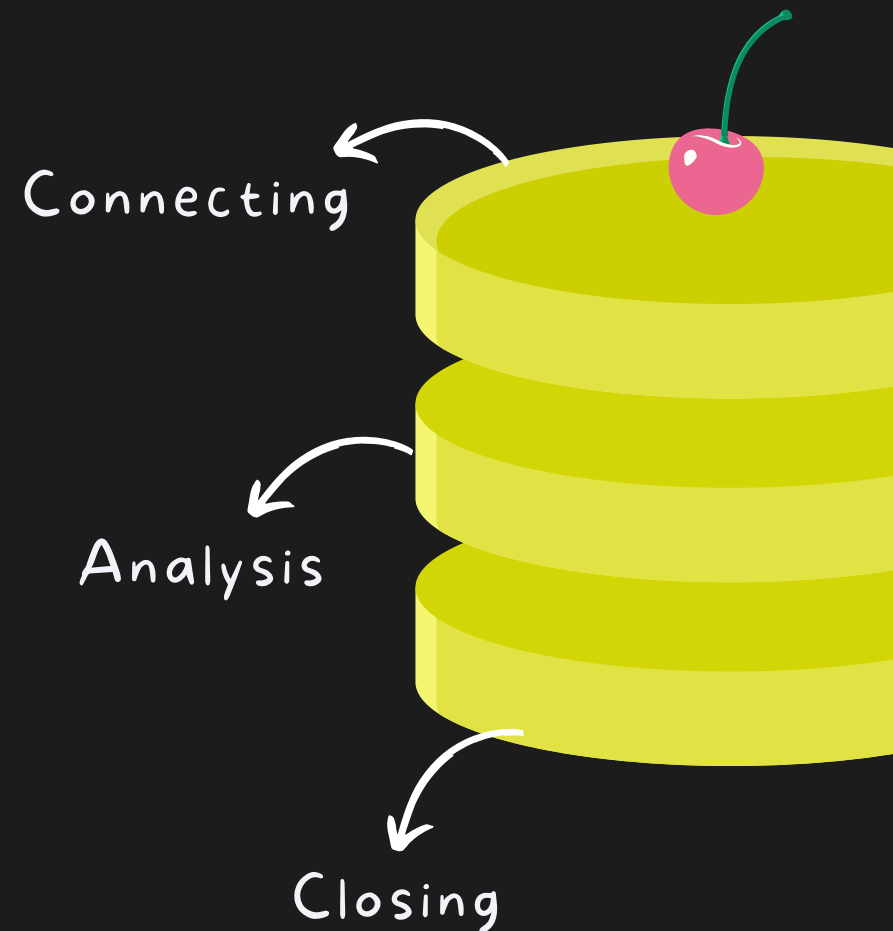


# The Guide to Interviewing

HOW TO BETTER EVALUATE A CANDIDATE DURING AN INTERVIEW



# The recipe to interviewing

Have you ever tried to bake a cake but weren't sure how much of the ingredients you need to use to make it taste great?

We found out that the same uncertainty appears when hiring managers of startups and scale-ups evaluate candidates for a new position. They rely on their gut when it comes to measuring a candidate's competencies - especially during the interviewing stage. But this does not guarantee an optimal hire for the job; just like too much of "a pinch of this, a smidge of that" can make a cake taste weird. So, **how can you efficiently evaluate a candidate during the interviewing stage and rely less on estimations?** Well, we have a recipe for you!

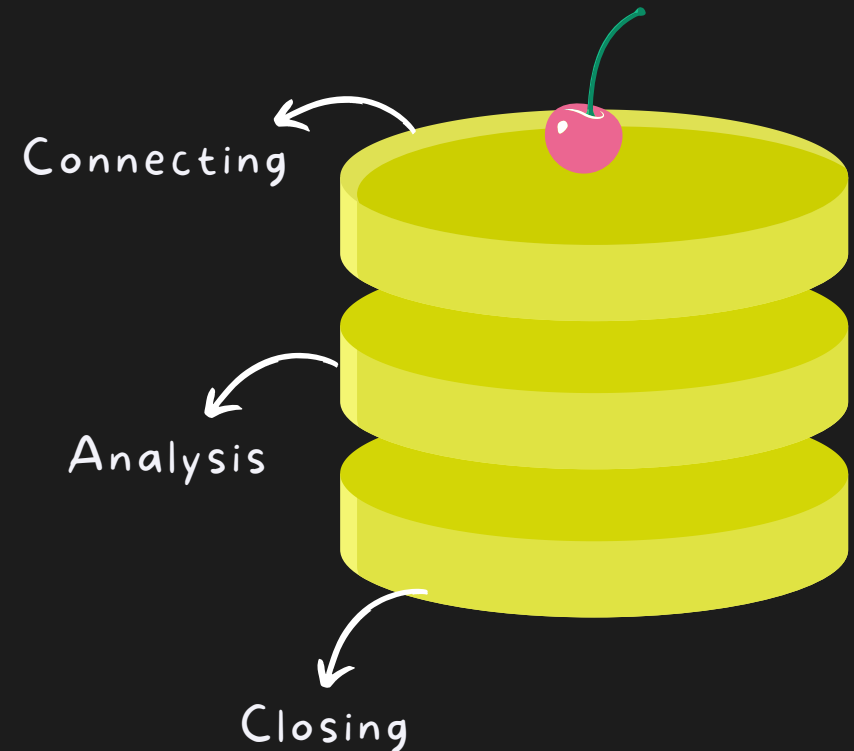
In this interview guide you will find techniques that will allow you to objectively measure skills and to manage time. It offers hands-on methods for you to prepare ahead of the interview. And with these tips and tricks you will be more confident when evaluating the competencies of a potential hire.



# The Structure

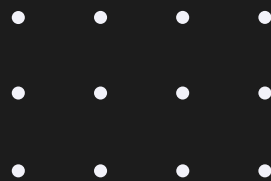
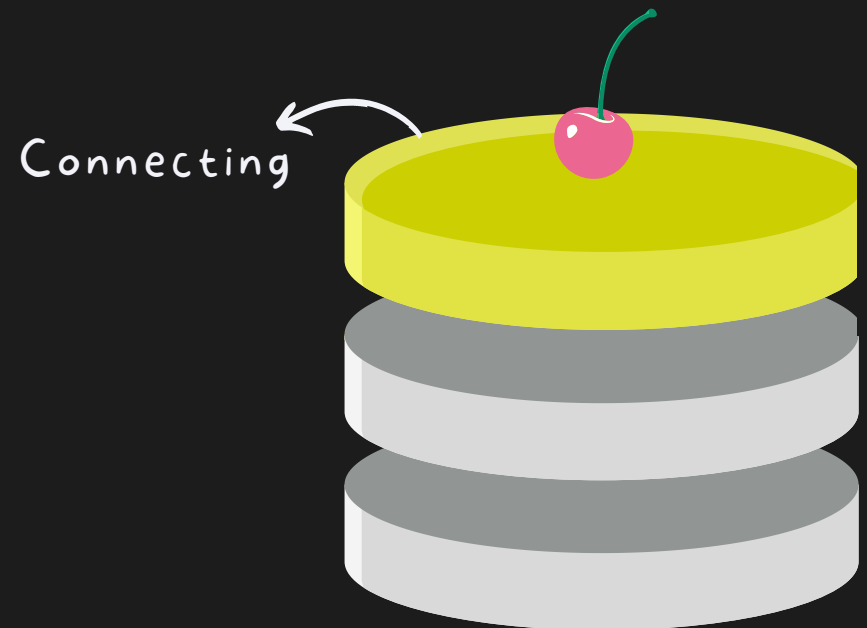
How do you structure an interview? First, you have to split it into three layers called **Connecting**, **Analysis**, and **Closing**. Each layer has a different goal, so it's smart to prepare them separately before the actual interview takes place. After all, preparation is key - whether it's in your kitchen or in hiring.

Let's see how you can 'bake it 'til you make it'!

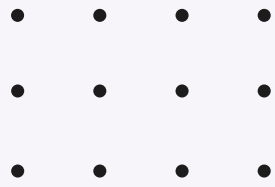


# Connecting

**The glazing of the cake:** evaluate your candidate's personality by paying attention to their soft skills



# Connecting - Find out the candidate's soft skills



## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

### Get your ingredient list ready: decide which personality traits the candidate should have

Think of this layer as the glazing of a cake - the first thing you'll notice about a candidate: when you meet them, you'll automatically evaluate their personality. You should decide beforehand which personality traits the candidate should ideally have, and which not. How? Think about whether you want the candidate's soft skills to be more compatible with the rest of your team's or for them to be different in order to revitalize your work culture.

### Create a personal introduction of yourself

Create an introduction of yourself which will spark a conversation by sprinkling a few personal details at the end. Talk about topics that matter, i.e. a topic that has personal meaning to you, so that the candidate can reciprocate. For example, if you tell them that you got a dog, they can talk about their pet as well. Get the dough rollin'!

**\*These blocks are editable. Before you proceed filling them in, download the PDF to save your work.**

# Connecting - Find out the candidate's soft skills

## DURING THE INTERVIEW



The opening should not take up more than **10 minutes**.



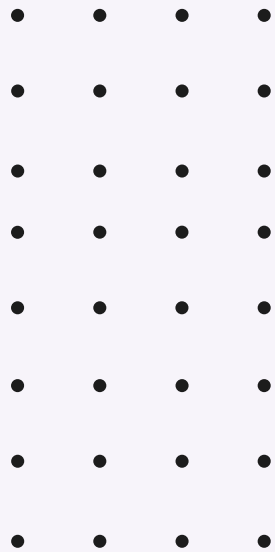
Immediately set the agenda by introducing yourself. By talking about personal subjects of interest, you don't come across small talk topics such as the weather, traffic etc.

**Our tip:** Avoid small talk chit-chats because they eat up valuable time which you can use to actually get to know one another.



By bringing in personal topics, you will be able to evaluate the candidate's soft skills throughout the entire interview.

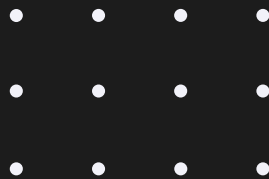
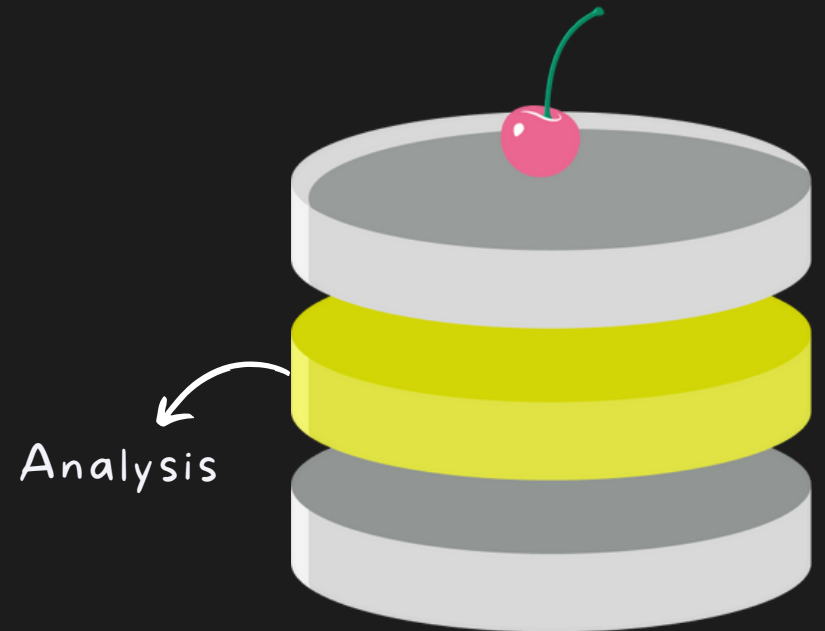
**Our tip:** Depending on your interests, you can ask them questions which naturally attach themselves to the personal things you talked about. Some examples would be, *"I am currently learning how to play darts. Do you do any kind of sports in your free time?"* or *"On our last company outing, the entire team went Karaoke singing and I took a liking to 80s Rock ballads. What genre of music do you enjoy listening to the most?"*

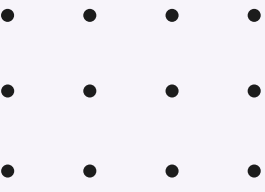


# Analysis

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**The batter of the cake:** dig into your candidate's work practices and solution strategies by figuring out their hard skills





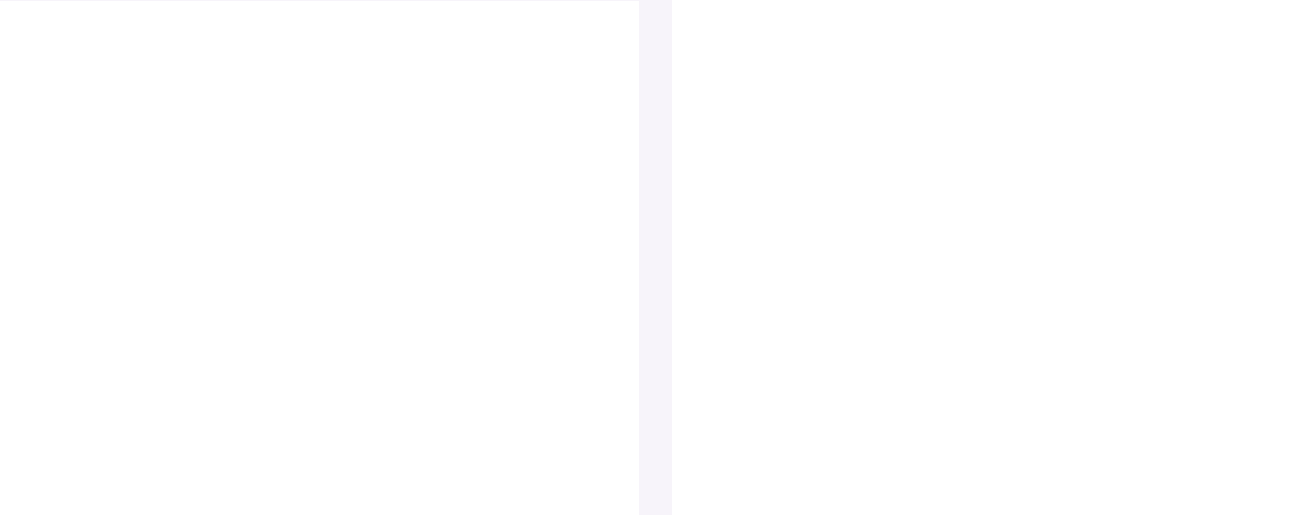
# Analysis - Find out the candidate's hard skills

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Decide the candidate's competencies before the interview

This layer is like the batter of the cake because in the analysis section, you quantify the candidate's hard skills.

And as such the batter consists of two types of ingredients alias hard skills: **the must-have hard skills** (just like a cake needs flour, milk and butter) and **the nice-to-haves** (vanilla essence, crumbled meringue or that special ingredient that gives the cake that certain 'je ne sais quoi'). To figure out which of either qualities the candidate must bring to the table, **you can depart from the competencies which you have written out in the job description.**





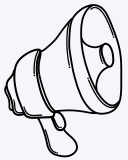
# Analysis - Find out the candidate's hard skills

## DURING THE INTERVIEW



The analysis may take up **30 minutes**

**Our tip:** 30 minutes is short. Try not to test all the hard skills in one interview, but work together with other people throughout the selection process to make sure you test all the 'must-have' skills.



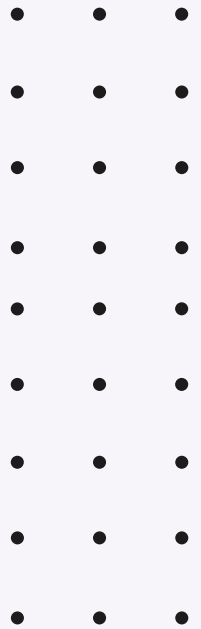
In this section, your main task is to be a good listener. That is actually harder to do than it sounds!

**Our tip:** Don't project your expectations and opinions of their hard skills onto the candidate. Keep them in your mind but mainly let them speak and take their time to explain their competency (i.e. experiences and choices) in a specific situation. After all, the more you know about their past experiences, the better you can predict their future quality of work.



Ask open questions to evaluate whether the candidate has your desired must-have hard skills. An example of an open question would be *What is your favorite type of cake?* instead of *Do you like cake?* (who doesn't!)

**Our tip:** From here, you can dig into their past experiences. You can do that by letting them explain specific work situations in which they used the skills you're looking for. How? **By using the STAR method.**



# Analysis - Find out the candidate's hard skills



## THE STAR METHOD

The STAR method is a common technique used in structuring an interview. This structure allows you to ask questions regarding the past behaviour of your candidates in various situations, thus pointing out their reactions in a challenging context:



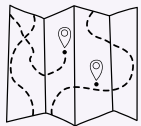
### Situation

They visualize the situation in which they had to demonstrate a particular competency. You can ask: *What was the situation or challenge you were facing?*



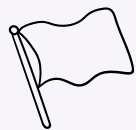
### Task

They describe the task they had to do (they can highlight issues, constraints, deadlines, etc.). You can ask: *What were your tasks and responsibilities for the situation?*



### Activities

They elaborate on the action they took (highlight leadership, teamwork, initiative, integrity etc.). You can ask: *What action did you take to solve the situation?*



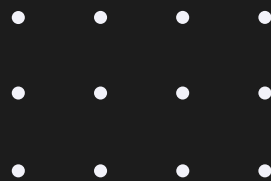
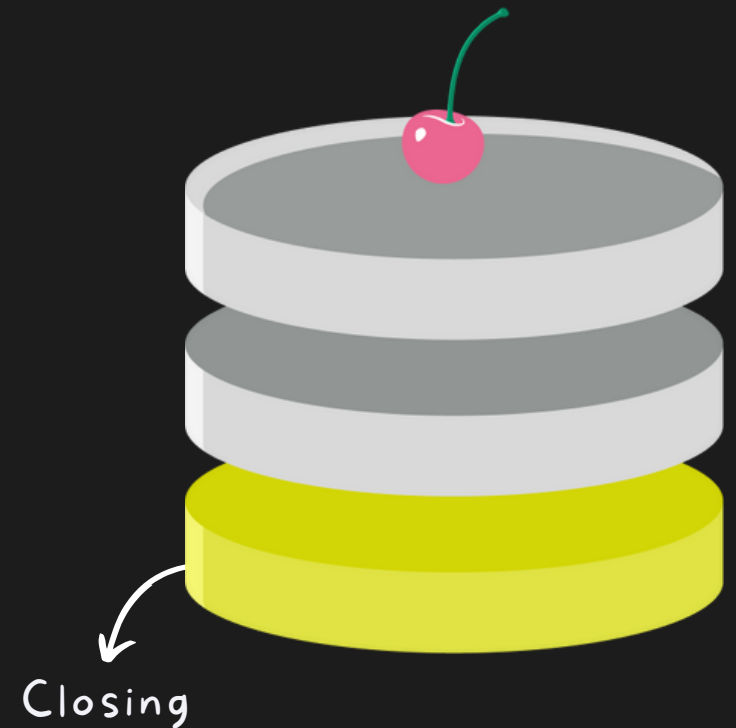
### Results

Finally, they explain the outcome of their actions (they can highlight achievements, improvements, delivery etc.). You can ask: *What were the results of your actions?*

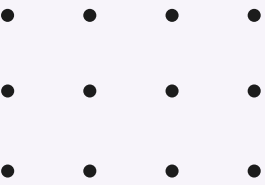
# Closing

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**To eat the cake or not:** don't waste time in informing your candidate of your decision



# Closing - Don't waste time with your decision



## DURING THE INTERVIEW



The closing should not take more than **10 minutes**

### Have you already made a decision during the interview? Then, let them know right away:



In case you want to move forward with the candidate, you can begin by talking about important cornerstones of your job offer, like salary and benefits. Discuss whether their expectations are congruent with your offer. Give them room for questions and announce the next steps you'd like to take with them. Additionally, dare to ask how likely they would be to commit to the next step, so that you can manage your expectations.



In case you want to reject them, be straightforward and respectful. Construct your rejection with clear arguments. You can formulate it in a way which shows how the candidate doesn't match with the company or what the position asks of them. See the example below:

*"I think we should not continue the hiring process with you. The reason for that is your ambition/needs does not align with what we can provide for you. We see that you have a strong need for structure, and as a startup, we operate in a fast-changing environment. This requires a lot of flexibility from you. So such environment would sooner or later make you unhappy."*

**Our tip:** Only reject the candidate's skills in case they applied for a position which clearly demands a higher level of skill set than the one they are on.

# Closing - Don't waste time with your decision

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

In case you are not 100% sure if they are the ideal candidate and really need more time to evaluate their performance, you can schedule a moment to connect with them at a later time, **but don't take too long**

## COMPETENCE SCORECARDS

To make this decision easier, you can make use of a **competence scorecard**. With these scorecards you can note down the must-have competencies, experiences, personality traits, basic information and other details necessary to know about the candidate (e.g. notice period, nationality, expected salary, etc.). Then, on a scale from 1 to 4 (1=weak; 4= excellent) score each criterion.

### Competence Scorecard

Basics	
Nationality, and need for visa?	
Age (if non-eu)	
Current/expected salary, based on FT/PT? Including holiday allowance, gross, 30%, bonuses, other benefits	
Possible start date, notice period?	
Parttime/Fulltime	
Expected seniority level	

Name interviewers	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3						

Experience	
e.g. scaling a tech team	

Competencies	
e.g. decision making, people management	

Personality	
e.g. people-oriented, structured	

Interviewer Name	Findings	Plus	Doubts
	Can he/she do the job?	Experience:	Experience:
	Will he/she be able to bring change?	Competencies:	Competencies:
	Does he/she fit the team?	Personality:	Personality:

Make sure you get the basics covered

List the must-have Experiences, Competencies & Personality traits

Give a score from 1 - 4 to each criterion

Write down the remarks and try to answer the questions above

Mark what impressed you and what doubts you have

With this recipe, you don't have to rely on your gut feeling when making the decision of whom to move forward in the hiring process. Instead, you can relax and enjoy the cake you made! Also, the cake does not run the risk of being too sweet or dry because of your estimations in judgment. We hope the given tools allow you to assess a future candidate more precisely, so that the interview is to your 'taste.'

**If you need more help or information on interviewing your next candidate, feel free to reach out to us!**



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