Interviewer questioning strategies: Small business: The implications that inappropriate questioning has for compliance with the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984

Kelly Pember

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INTERVIEWER QUESTIONING STRATEGIES

SMALL BUSINESS

THE IMPLICATIONS THAT INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONING HAS FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THE WEST AUSTRALIAN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY ACT, 1984

By

Kelly Pember

A Thesis submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of

Bachelor of Business with Honours

at the

Faculty of Business and Public Management

EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

Date of Submission:
July 2002
ABSTRACT

This study explores the recruitment and selection practices and, the interviewer questioning practices of twenty owner / managers in small real estate agencies, both independent and franchise. Further to this, the study investigates the implications the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 has for questioning in the selection interview.

A review of the literature revealed that approaches to the selection interview process do not address the implications that poor questioning may have for fairness and equal employment opportunity (Dipboye, 1992).

The research has adopted a case study design that is comprised of semi-structured interviews. The qualitative approach employed a semi structured interview format, enabling the researcher to gather rich data and to record additional comments reflecting individual's perception about the subject matter. Systematic data analysis following the cyclical process outlined by Miles & Huberman (1994) was utilized.

The findings of this study have shown that owner / managers from small real estate businesses, have a limited understanding of the importance of a standardized recruitment and selection-interview process. Further, the majority of respondents displayed a limited knowledge of appropriate interviewer-questioning practices and the subsequent implications that poor questioning may have for discrimination via the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984. Institutional Theory was used to explore the cultural and environmental patterns and the non-rational understanding of why small real estate owner / managers approach the selection interview process in this way (Scott, 1995).

This study concludes by suggesting that owner / managers conduct informal and unstructured interviews. This is reflected in their limited knowledge and understanding of
appropriate questioning techniques. The findings support the view that the selection interview is essentially a social process (Posthuma et al., 2002), demonstrated through the respondents perceived importance of and reliance upon first impressions and gut feelings when making a final selection decision. The findings also suggest that more work needs to be done by the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia and the West Australian Equal Opportunity Commission to educate and inform small real estate owner / managers and small businesses in general.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution or higher education; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature: __________________________

Date: ___________________________ 14 September 2002
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the support, assistance and guidance of a number of people, to whom I express my sincere gratitude.

I would firstly like to say thank you to my supervisor Joy Hocking for agreeing to supervise me, over nearly three years of study, despite her teaching commitments and her own very busy schedule, completing her Doctorate. I must extend a special thank you to Joy for her very careful, thorough supervision and guidance, and continued support and encouragement given to me throughout the completion of this study. This experience has been a challenging one, yet one of personal growth and development. Thank you for helping me to believe in myself. You are a truly wonderful source of inspiration.

My thanks goes to each small real estate business for agreeing to become involved in this study. My appreciation goes to those who generously gave their time during the interview process. Without their participation, this research would not have been possible.

A very special word of thanks and appreciation goes to my family. Their support and encouragement over the past three years has been unwavering. I don’t know how I could have survived this experience without your love, continuing guidance and “belief in me”. Thank you, from the very bottom of my heart. I hope I have succeeded in making you all very proud and at last, you can see me in my robe.

Finally, I offer my thanks to Justin. Your support, patience and consideration have contributed to making this achievement possible. Thank you.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The employment interview undeniably continues to be the most popular and most frequently utilized recruiting and selection device across both large and small business (Posthuma, Morgeson, Campion, 2002; Buckley, Norris & Wiese, 2000). The reliability, validity, structure and predictive power of the interview has been analysed and examined through the eyes of a myriad different researchers, and, for a number of years, these topics have dominated the personnel selection research literature (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990; Campion, Palmer & Campion, 1995; Hough & Oswald, 2000). However, issues such as the adverse impact of interviewer behaviour and the fairness and legality of the interview as a tool for making selection decisions, are beginning to be increasingly visible within literature and practice (Gilliland, 1993; Robertson & Smith, 2001, Posthuma et al., 2002). Therefore, a focus on these topics is particularly important, given that employers depend on the interview as their primary selection tool (Buckley et al., 2000).

The research confirms that organizations, large and small, are continuing to use a combination of unstructured and informal approaches to recruiting and selection interviewing (Di Millia & Smith, 1997, Dipboye, 1994; Bartram et al., 1995). This was particularly identified as a problem within small business, because of their limited capacity to cope with the financial burden associated with an equal opportunity complaint, the result of inappropriate interviewing practices (Bartram et al., 1995; Schaper, 2000). The research has shown this approach to the selection interview has implications for discrimination and fairness (Arvey & Renz, 1992; Campion et al., 1995).
As a result, small business employers, in particular, need to place greater importance on developing and maintaining formalized and standardized selection-interviewing techniques. Hough & Oswald (2000) argue that interview questioning is a very important aspect of achieving this structured approach. Having a list of pre-determined, job related questions would lead to a more organized process, where the content is explicitly defined (Hough & Oswald, 2000).

At a fundamental level, the selection interview is essentially a social interaction between applicant and interviewer. As such, a number of social factors can influence an interviewers judgment, and therefore the outcome of the interview (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Dipboye, 1994; Posthuma et al., 2002). This research is based on the notion that individuals act and behave in a social context and this context can influence their behaviour and the processes and outcomes of an interview (Posthuma et al., 2002). Selection research focusing on “social” factors have consistently argued that unstructured approaches to interviewing can lead to issues such as:

- First impressions, halo effects (Graves & Powell, 1996)
- Stereotyping (Parsons, Cable, Wilkerson, 1999)
- Contrast effects (Gatewood & Field, 1998)
- Interviewer – applicant similarity (Lin, Dobbins & Farth, 1992; Howard & Ferris, 1996)
- Biased perceptions of applicant fit (Cable & Judge, 1997)
- Appropriateness and influence of verbal behaviour (DeGroot & Motowildo, 1999).
- Appropriateness and influence of non-verbal behaviour (Liden, Martin & Parsons, 1993)

These ‘social’ issues may influence the ‘fairness and legality’ of the selection process. Some researchers have argued that these issues, such as first impressions, halo effects and stereotyping can manifest themselves in the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer (Cooper & Robertson, 1995). As a result, there is growing concern regarding the ability of an employer to legally justify the selection choice made, based on strictly
job related and skills based grounds (Gardner & Palmer, 1997). For a small business, the research has particularly highlighted a lack of training and an absence of uniform, industry-wide professional standards for recruiting and selection practices as a contributing factor to bias in the selection interview (Bartram et.al, 1995). These issues highlight the need for small businesses, to improve their knowledge, skill and ability to conduct interviews appropriately, in view of the costs incurred through inappropriate employment decisions (Kramer, McGraw, Schuler, 1997).

Campion, Palmer, Campion (1995) argue that an interviewer’s questioning technique is a critical component of interview structure. Similarly, other researchers identify standardizing information gathering as a strategy for improving the interview process (Dipboye, 1994; McConnell, 1999; Hough & Oswald, 2000). These researchers suggest that structuring interview questioning will improve the fairness, reliability and validity of the process, thereby reducing unnecessary equal opportunity complaints.

This thesis examined owner / managers recruiting and selection interview practices, and in particular, their knowledge and understanding of appropriate interviewer questioning techniques. This research was closely related to issues of “fairness” and “legality”. The study explored the potential implications that inappropriate interviewer questioning has with regard to the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984. It was envisaged that the findings of this study may provide a clearer picture of owner / managers knowledge of the subject matter and raise awareness of the importance of appropriate interviewer questioning.
Significance of the study

The effectiveness of the interview as a tool for gathering information, evaluating and selecting candidates and the social and cognitive factors influencing the interview outcome have been the subject of investigation and analysis over several decades (Campion et al., 1995; Buckley, Norris, Wiese, 2000; Posthuma et al., 2002). As a result, an extensive literature has developed on the interview, with consistent attention directed towards "interviewer unreliability and bias, and lack of predictive validity between the interview and subsequent job performance" (Gardner & Palmer, 1997, p.277). Despite these concerns, relatively little research attention, particularly within small business, has focused on inappropriate interviewer questioning techniques as a potential source of this bias and unreliability (Campion et al., 1995, Gatewood & Field, 1998). Furthermore, little research has addressed the legislative implications of improper selection practices (Gilliland, 1993), in particular, inappropriate interviewer questioning strategies, which stem from an informal, unstructured approach (Campion et al., 1995; Bartram et al., 1995; Hough & Oswald, 2000). This should be a concern for small business, given they have less capacity to defend an equal opportunity action (Schaper, 2000).

As mentioned previously, interviews are designed to gather information about applicants so employment judgments can be made. However, as information processors, interviewers have limitations and biases (Morgesson & Campion, 1997). Cognitive factors research has examined how interviewers information processing strategies and capabilities affect interview outcomes. In doing so, this research has examined such issues as decision-making, pre-interview impressions, confirmatory biases, applicant and job information and how these various factors impact cognitive processing in the interview (Posthuma et al., 2002).

The research suggests the interview is essentially a social process and recognizes that the social context can influence interviewers behaviour and the processes and outcomes of an interview (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Posthuma et al., 2002). This perspective has
examined issues such as interviewer-applicant similarity, applicant fit and verbal and non-verbal interviewer behaviour (i.e., questioning) to show how these factors impact social processing in the interview (Posthuma et al., 2002). Cooper & Robertson (1995) argue these ‘social issues’ are more likely to occur in an unstructured interview format, where the interview is informal in content, structure and questioning (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Dipboye, 1994).

Interviewer questioning is a particular area of the selection-interviewing research that has remained relatively under-studied, despite its critical role in ensuring the validity and reliability of interviewer evaluations (Gatewood & Field, 1998). More often than not, an interviewer’s biases that prejudice fairness are reflected in their conduct of and behaviour during the interview (Campion et al., 1995; Dipboye, 1994; Gatewood & Field, 1998; Posthuma et al., 2002). The most visible impact of this lies in the style and nature of interviewer questioning. The literature has argued therefore, that in order to overcome the potential for this bias in the questioning of candidates, a structured interview questioning process is crucial (Arvey & Renz, 1992; Campion et al., 1995; Foster & Godkin, 1998; Hough & Oswald, 2000). This can be achieved by applying the following rules to interviewing (Gatewood & Field, 1998; Dipboye, 1994, Campion et al., 1995):

- Base all questions on a job analysis
- Question candidates in a consistent and objective manner
- Limiting the use of leading or follow up questioning
- Use varied styles and types of questions
- Apply a standardized scoring system to each question
- Train interviewers in structured questioning techniques

However, it is important to recognize that small businesses often do not have the resources available to ensure that good selection practices, such as these, are developed and maintained (Schaper, 2000). The importance of each of these will be discussed thoroughly in the literature review section of this study.
The implications of inappropriate selection practices are significant for all organizations, however is even greater for a small business. It is particularly problematic because a large percentage of interviewers are untrained and have a very limited knowledge of the legislative implications of inappropriate interview behaviour (Bartram et al., 1995). This has far reaching implications for equal employment opportunity.

Interview questioning within a structured interview format is organised and its content is explicitly defined prior to the commencement of the interview (Campion et al., 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998; Foster & Godkin, 1998). Some of the literature has argued that standardized, structured questioning significantly influences the legal defensibility of an interviewer in the event of a discrimination action (Latham & Finnegān, 1993; Gatewood & Field, 1998; Hough & Oswald, 2000). Gilliland (1993) suggested that discrimination challenges are less likely to occur if the selection method has four characteristics: job relatedness, an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate ability, sympathetic interpersonal treatment and questioning that is not improper (Gilliland, 1993 cited in Posthuma et al., 2002).

It is argued here that this study is important because inappropriate interviewer behaviour, resulting from unstructured questioning has very serious implications for fairness and equal employment opportunity (Campion et al., 1995; Dipboye, 1994; Gatewood & Field, 1998). Small businesses, in particular, underestimate the critical importance of adopting a structured interview format, formal in content, structure and questioning (Bartram et al., 1995; McConnell, 1999; Buckley, Norris & Wiese, 2000). If challenged in a discrimination action, they are less likely to be able to defend themselves (Robertson & Smith, 2001). As this topic has been relatively understudied, it was necessary to examine the practices in both large and small business.
Objectives of the study

This study will explore the implications the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 has for small business real estate owner / managers and the interview questioning practices utilised in the selection interview.

The objectives of this study are:

- Critically examine small business owner / managers knowledge and understanding that the implications of inappropriate questioning strategies has for fairness in the selection interview.

- Critically examine small business owner / managers knowledge and understanding of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.

- Critically examine small business owner / managers knowledge and understanding of appropriate interviewer questioning strategies.

- Critically examine small business owner / managers knowledge and understanding of appropriate recruiting and selection practices.
Research Questions

This study seeks to explore and examine the following questions:

- Do small business, real estate owner / managers have a good knowledge and understanding of the discriminatory implications that inappropriate interviewer questioning practices may have for compliance with the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984?

- Do small business, real estate owner / managers understand the importance of appropriate interviewer questioning practices that ensure fairness in the selection interview?

- Do small business, real estate owner / managers have a good knowledge and understanding of appropriate recruiting and selection interviewing practices?

- What kind of support do small business, real estate owner / managers receive from their Industry Body (The Real Estate Institute of Western Australia – REIWA or The Australian Property Institute – API) in regard to equal employment opportunity guidelines for staffing issues?
Definition of Terms

Questioning Strategy
The nature of questions asked during the interview, their job relatedness and consistency in application (Gatewood & Field, 1998).

Small Business
Numerous criteria can be used to define small businesses, with employee numbers being the most commonly used. Using this as the basis, in Australia, a small enterprise has less than 100 employees in manufacturing and less than 20 in services or construction (ABS Cat 1321.0).

The Selection Interview
Structured Interview: “the same questions across interviews, detailed rating scales, multiple interviewers per candidate, extensive interviewer training, note taking, and consensus processes” (McDaniel et al., 1994, Wright et al., 1989 cited in Pulakos, Schmitt, Whitney, & Smith, 1996).

Semi Structured Interview: “Questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is more free to probe beyond the answers in a manner which would appear prejudicial to the aims of standardisation and comparability. Information about age, sex, occupation, type of household and so on, can be asked in a standardized format” (May, 1997). By using this format, the interviewer has greater freedom to probe beyond the answers given and thus enter into a dialogue with the interviewee (May, 1997) without being discriminatory.

Unstructured Interview: informal and un-standardized in content, structure and questioning. This style of interviewing raises serious concerns regarding reliability, validity and fairness (May, 1997).
Small Business owner / operator / manager

A small business owner / manager is typically responsible for all functions within the business and ensuring their success. These functions may include accounting, finance, production, marketing and personnel management. Despite the extent of this responsibility, small business owners / managers generally have less skill and experience in selection techniques. They have little, if any, specialist human resource management knowledge and most owners simply learn by trial and error as they work through the process (Schaper, 2000).

Equal Employment Opportunity Legislation

This legislation states that it is against the law to discriminate against people, or treat them unfairly in employment. Under the West Australia Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 an employer cannot discriminate on the following grounds: sex, marital status, pregnancy, race, religious or political conviction, age, racial harassment, impairment, family responsibility or family status, sexual harassment (www.hreoc.gov.au/employers_page). Professional small businesses are bound by this legislation.

Real Estate and Business Agents Act 1978

Section 101 of the Act highlights the code of conduct for agents and sales representatives. This Act is merely there to oversee the operational and ethical requirements of real estate agents and sales representatives in their professional practice with clients.

Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA)

REIWA’s mission statement - To constantly foster the professionalism of real estate agency practice, the protection and goodwill of agents’ clients, and the business environment in which agents operate. The objectives of REIWA are as follows (www.reiwa.com.au):

1. Promote consumer protection and confidence through professional service by member agents.
2. Ensure public sector understanding of the legitimate professional business interests of real estate agents.
3. Promote public appreciation of the rights, interests and expectations of private property owners.
4. Promote public understanding of the professional services of real estate agents.
5. Provide effective, comprehensive membership services to enable member agents to constantly improve their knowledge, service and business practices

Theory
“a set of interrelated constructs (variables), definitions and propositions that presents a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relationships among variables with the purpose of explaining natural phenomena” (Hussey, 1997).

Institutions
“cognitive, normative and regulative activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Institutions are transported by several carriers – cultures, structures and routines – and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction” (Scott, 1995, p.33).

Institutional Theory
Institutional Theory “is to emphasise the importance of psychological, social and political elements in the study of social phenomena generally and organisations specifically” (Scott, 1995, p.xiii)

First Impression Error
“Making an evaluation of the applicant within the first few minutes” (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.495).

Halo Effects
“Allowing one or two either good or bad characteristics of an applicant to influence the evaluation of all other characteristics” (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.495).
Similar to Me Error
“Favorably evaluating an applicant because he or she is similar to the interviewer in some way” (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.495).

Contrast Error
“Allowing the quality of the applicants who preceded the present applicant to influence the ratings of the present applicant” (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.495).

Leniency, Central Tendency and Stringency Error
“Rating many applicants the same in evaluations, either superior (leniency error), or average (central tendency error) or poor (stringency error)” (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.495).

Case Study
Is an “empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidences are used” (Yin, 1993, p.24). The case study research can involve qualitative only, quantitative only, or a combination of the methods to facilitate an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon (Yin, 1993).
Outline of the study

Chapter 2
Chapter two begins the thesis investigation by reviewing the literature pertaining to the research topic. A review of the literature and the theoretical framework utilized in the study will be critically evaluated.

Chapter 3
Chapter three discusses the sample for the study, the subject population, the research methodology and design of the study. A case study, incorporating a qualitative approach will also be discussed, taking into consideration personal interviewing, which is used as a major tool for data collection.

Chapter 4
Chapter four will discuss the major findings of this study. This is followed by a discussion and analysis of each of these findings, and how they relate to the literature and research questions.

Chapter 5
Chapter five is the final summary and conclusions of this study. The implications of these findings and the limitations experienced in the present study will be outlined, together with recommendations for future research on the topic.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will explore the influence of interviewer questioning on fairness and the implications this has for the interviewing process. In doing so, this chapter examines the literature pertaining to the recruiting and selection interviewing practices of large and small businesses, with particular attention to small business. The literature has shown the selection interview in small business is understudied. Over the past several decades, the research suggests the interview is fraught with difficulties and issues that have been of particular concern include reliability, validity and fairness. However, despite the emphasis on these issues, the research has not addressed micro aspects of the interview such as questioning strategies, but rather focused on the structure of the interview itself. In this literature review, the selection interview will be examined, with specific attention given to interviewer questioning and the implications for fairness in a small business.
Human Resource Selection Practices

A review of the last 100 years of literature on the recruiting and selection interviewing practices of organizations has yielded a number of important themes. The structure, reliability, validity and predictive power of the interview has been investigated, analyzed and examined by countless researchers. Through all of this, the interview has remained the most popular and most frequently utilized tool in recruiting and selection activities (Posthuma et al., 2002).

The majority of this research has been specific to large organizations (Storey, 1992 cited in Wagar, 1998 & Heneman & Berkley, 1999). For small businesses, the processes involved in recruiting, selection-interviewing and associated interviewer-questioning are under-studied. This raises critical issues in light of the research suggesting small business experience greater difficulties in recruitment and selection (Bartram et al., 1995). This chapter will briefly examine the literature pertaining to recruiting practices and follow with a more comprehensive examination of literature in relation to selection interviewing. In particular, its association with interviewer questioning, specifically in the area of small businesses will be explored.

A number of studies, with a large business focus have explored the strengths and weaknesses of various recruiting practices and the employment interview as a selection device, comparing structured interviewing with unstructured approaches (Storey, 1992 cited in Wagar, 1998; Heneman & Berkley, 1999). Recent research has begun to recognize the critical importance of interviewer-questioning strategies in influencing the outcome of the interview and raise concerns for fairness and equal employment opportunity (Hough & Oswald, 2000; Robertson & Smith, 2001). These studies highlight the need for research to be conducted in the area of small business.
The Recruitment Process


“getting the right people in the right jobs in the organization is a fundamental basis for getting value added performance from people and a key mechanism for aligning the management of people with the organizational vision and mission”.

Hornsby & Kuratko (1990), Ram (1992) and Marlow & Patton (1993) confirm the size of a firm does influence the formality and structure of recruiting activities and the sophistication of the recruiting methods utilized. Smaller businesses differ significantly from larger organizations with specialist human resource departments and clearly defined recruitment procedures in place (Schaper, 2000). The research has shown a smaller business is more likely to have less skill and experience in recruiting techniques and, as a result, very often relies on informal, un-structured processes, based on the knowledge of the owner / manager (Marlow & Patton, 1993; Bartram et al., 1995). Schaper (2000) argues most small business employers learn by trial and error as they work through the process. They tend to be more vague in defining their ideal applicant and as a result tend to fall into the trap of recruiting individuals on the basis of a series of desired, yet non job-related characteristics such as personality, age, appearance, the potential to “fit in” etc (Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Bartram et al., 1995; Schaper, 2000).

Bartram et al., (1995) investigated recruitment and selection practices in small businesses in the UK. The findings from this study support the above conclusions. The recruitment policies and procedures adopted by smaller businesses, employing ten or fewer people, differ markedly from larger organizations, being far more informal, diverse and unstructured. Bartram et al., (1995) reported the three most important functions of the interview to assess were: personal qualities, an applicant’s ability to fit in and their job competence. These were considered and rated more important than ability to perform the
job, qualifications, experience or training. This was reflected in their process, policies and guidelines for recruiting, information they provided to interested applicants, criteria specified to recruiting agencies and the use of reference checks. In general, the picture that emerges, and one that is consistent throughout the literature is a far more informal approach to recruitment by small business (Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Bartram et al., 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998).

The Selection Process

Over the past ten years, the literature has consistently argued that good selection practice evolves from a clear specification of the qualities required for the position, with the justification for these qualities being tied to a well-prepared and planned job description (Smith & Robertson, 1993; Kramer et al., 1997). Bartram et al., (1995) reinforced that there is very little research to suggest that smaller businesses have a systematic or formalized approach to defining what qualities they require – apart from placing a very high value on general, personal qualities, which are largely non job-related.

The research confirms that small businesses are behind their larger counterparts in developing specialist skills in personnel management and selection practices (Bartram et.al, 1995; Heneman & Berkley, 1999). This is evidenced by a critical gap in research on the selection practices of small business when compared to large business. It has also been argued that when compared to larger companies, small businesses face a number of unique and unusual problems (Finney, 1987; Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Schaper, 2000), which contribute to the difficulty in developing effective selection procedures. The following issues have been identified by the literature:

- The functional areas of accounting, finance, marketing and production all take precedence over personnel management (McEvoy, 1984; Hess, 1987).
• Small businesses generally have less skill and experience in recruitment and selection techniques. There is little, if any, specialist human resource management knowledge in small business, and most small business owners/managers learn by trial and error as they work through the process (Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Bartram et al., 1995; Schaper, 2000).

• The research has identified a general perception among owners/operators that training in appropriate recruitment and selection practices is not important (McEvoy, 1984; Bartram et al., 1995).

• The research suggests a lack of understanding of what is involved in designing appropriate selection programs, and this was particularly addressing the issue of interviewer questioning in the selection interview—knowledge of what can and cannot be asked (Deshpande & Golhar, 1994; Bartram et al., 1995).

• The study by Hornsby & Kuratko (1990) found that fewer than 33% of small businesses use a structured interview format, meaning a predetermined set of interview questions. The conclusions from the study by Bartram et al., (1995) suggest that little has changed.

In general, small businesses are more inclined to approach selection activities in an informal, subjective and casual way (Ram, 1992; Marlow & Patton, 1993; Bartram et al., 1995).

In the case of larger businesses, which typically have well defined selection guidelines in place, the structured selection interview was found to be a crucial element in the selection process (Kirkwood & Ralston, 1998; McConnell, 1999). The fact that the interview has remained the most popular and widely used selection tool in the selection process for 100 years is confirmation of this (Buckley et al., 2000). There is now a considerable body of literature on the interview as a selection device and although complex and lengthy, provides some clear guidelines. Researchers argue the unstructured interview is
unreliable. Structured interviews, on the other hand, where the content is job-related and is evaluated against job-related criterion, can have a very high validity and reliability (Dipboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995; Bartram et al., 1995; Hough & Oswald, 2000).

A review of small business personnel selection literature

The need to focus on the recruiting and selection interviewing practices of small business evolves from a lack of research attention in this area to date (Marlow & Patton, 1993; Bartram et al., 1995). The literature suggests a small business owner often does not have access to personnel resources that can ensure selection strategies are appropriate; job related and complies with the legislative standards for fairness and equality (Bartram et al., 1995). Gatewood & Field (1998) argue that poor selection decisions will have much larger consequences for a small business and therefore they should spend the necessary preparation time developing and maintaining appropriate selection instruments. Small businesses are not just micro-versions of larger companies. There are numerous factors that contribute to making the recruiting and selection interviewing practices of a small business completely different from those of a well-established larger company. Some of these factors include limited financial resources and a lack of time to spend on training and developing appropriate methods for recruiting and selecting (Gatewood & Field, 1998; Schaper, 2000).

Schaper (2000) argues smaller businesses are much more personal because the owner is usually the manager and there is only a limited number of employees. As such, personality issues, personal characteristics, the ability to 'fit in', the ability to work in teams, and group efforts become much more important, whether these characteristics are related to the job or not (Bartram et al., 1995; Schaper 2000). Each individual in a small business counts, and making a poor selection decision will have a much greater impact on a smaller business than it would in a larger firm (Bartram, 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998; Schaper, 2000). Therefore, the task of recruiting and selection interviewing can be considerably more challenging for a small business.
A small business survey prepared by Hornsby & Kuratko (1990) found that “fewer than 33% of small businesses used a structured interview format. The study by Bartram et al., (1995) supports this conclusion. More often than not, the interview is informal and inconsistent in content, structure and questioning, is largely ad-hoc, and the process relies heavily on the knowledge of the owner / manager, who is often inexperienced, with no training in interviewing procedures (Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Bartram et al., 1995). As a result, an increasing percentage of businesses may find themselves breaching the equal opportunity legislation.

The literature has consistently argued that if properly focused, structured and analyzed, selection interviews can be very effective, valid and reliable tools (Diboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995; McConnell, 1999; Buckley et al., 2000) However, sitting down for an unprepared, unstructured and unplanned chat and without a clear specification for the job being sought will not yield the best results (Diboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995; Hough & Oswald, 2000).

The study by Bartram et al., (1995) provided some important insights into interviewing practices in small business. Their research found that 91.4% of small business employers in the sample formally interviewed applicants, though many quantified this by saying that the interview was ‘informal’ in content, structure and questioning. If an interview structure was utilised, it was more likely to consist of a broad checklist of topics, rather than a specific list of questions (Bartram et al., 1995, p.347). The studies by Campion et al., (1995) and Dipboye (1994) support this finding.
The Selection Interview

The selection interview has long been acknowledged as the most popular and most commonly utilized form of personnel selection for organizations large and small (Kramer, McGraw & Schuler, 1997; Arnold, Cooper & Robertson, 1998; Gatewood & Field, 1998). In the 80-year history of published research on employment selection, dating back to Scott, 1915, few conclusions have more widely supported the idea that structuring the selection interview enhances validity and reliability (cited in Campion, Palmer & Campion, 1995, p.655). The research shows that structured interviews, utilizing job related questions, are much better predictors of a candidates subsequent job performance than more unstructured procedures (Arvey & Campion, 1982; Campion, Pursell & Brown, 1988; Cooper & Robertson, 1995). Furthermore, several studies of interview validities have revealed the superiority of structured, job related interviews (Huffcut & Woehr, 1992; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt & Maurer, 1994; Huffcut & Arthur, 1994).

One of the most important benefits of encouraging interviewers to follow a pre-determined, structured format, and to ask only job related questions, is of minimizing the opportunity for irrelevant information, prejudice and biases to have an effect on final interviewer decisions (Dipboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995). When constrained by a structure and questioning strategy, interviewers are forced to pay more attention to job related items of information (Arvey & Renz, 1992; Dipboye, 1994; Campion, Palmer & Campion, 1995). Although the literature has consistently raised the importance of the structured approach, sampling errors such as stereotyping, halo effects and first impression biases have been widely acknowledged interviewing problems throughout the 1990’s.
The Selection Interview – cognitive factors or social factors

An early trend in the study of the selection interview has been the development of cognitive models of the interview process and interviewer decision-making. Cognitive factors research has particularly focused on identifying characteristics of the interviewer, the applicant, or the overall interview process that were related to low validity and reliability. Cognitive models are based on the assumption the interviewer is gathering and processing information about the applicant for the purposes of evaluating the applicants fit with the job (Gatewood & Field, 1998; Posthuma, 2002). Two of the more completely described cognitive models are by Dreher & Sackett (1983) and Dipboye (1992).

In contrast, the interview can also be viewed as a social process and this trend in the research has increased in recent years (Posthuma, 2002). This research recognizes that the interview is essentially a social process and as such, the interview can be the subject of flawed communications and judgments and interviewer biases and prejudices. As a result, the social context in which the interview is conducted can influence interviewers behaviour and the processes and outcomes of the interview (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Posthuma, 2002).

The following section examines the interview from a cognitive perspective compared to the interview as a social process.
Cognitive approaches to the interview

Two of the most often referred to cognitive models (Dreher & Sackett, 1983; Dipboye, 1992) are very similar in respect to their assumptions that the interviewer is continually seeking, receiving, processing and evaluating information about the applicant’s job fit. Both models follow the entirety of the interview, beginning with an evaluation of pre-interview factors that might influence an interviewers interaction with and evaluation of an interviewee. They conclude with a detailed discussion on post-interview influences (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.492). The critical problem with these cognitive models is they do not recognize the influence of the social context on interviewer questioning and its subsequent impact and implications for fairness. While some researchers address problems relating to interviewer characteristics and recognize that biases and prejudices arise during the interview process (Dreher & Sackett, 1983), they do not outline where the pitfalls may occur and, in particular, the implications for interviewer questioning.

Dipboye (1992) focuses on the construction of the interviewer’s knowledge structures. Central to this model is the argument that these have direct effects on the interviewers expectations about particular applicants and subsequent behaviour towards that applicant (Dipboye, 1992 cited in Gatewood & Field, 1990, p.477). This cognitive model does not recognize and/or address the specific aspects of verbal behaviour, such as interviewer questioning and its influence on the interview outcome. Research models needs to be focus on the seriousness of the implications for fairness for an organization, particularly a smaller organization.

The cognitive model by Dreher & Sackett (1983) draws attention to the influence of pre-interviewer biases, stereotypes and evaluations and in doing so, beings to highlight the “social factors” influencing the interview process (Dreher & Sackett, 1983 cited in Gatewood & Field, 1998). This model recognizes the impact these social factors can have on interviewers behaviour, verbal and non-verbal. However, it does not address the impact or importance of interviewer questioning in particular, and its relationship to the pre-interview phase. Furthermore, they do not state how these first impressions, beliefs
and stereotypes will influence the evaluation of the applicant and how they relate specifically to the construction of interview questions.

To summarize, what these models do not discuss is the potential implications of poor recruiting and selection-interviewing practices, and more importantly, how inappropriate and unstructured interviewer-questioning practices have implications for fairness and equal employment opportunity, particularly for a small business. What they need to emphasize is that structured interviews require structured questioning practices (Dipboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995). This is because interviewers not only evaluate applicants but also make the decision to employ, not to employ or to gather more information based on job related and non job related factors (Gatewood & Field, 1998), therefore raising the concern for fairness in recruiting and selection-interviewing practices.

Ideally, important employment decisions are based on a very thorough analysis of costs and benefits (Cooper & Robertson, 1995). However, Beach (1990) and Dipboye (1994) argue that most interviewer decisions are made quickly, simply and very early on in the process, without any consideration of the implications for fairness of the recruitment and selection process and more importantly, the fairness of questioning. Furthermore, the initial criteria for a new employee can often be based on individual interviewer biases and prejudices (Tullar, Mullins & Caldwell, 1979 cited in Dipboye, 1994; Posthuma, 2002). It is therefore very important to consider the influence of “social factors” impacting on the outcome of the interview, because flawed questioning is an outcome of flawed judgment.

Applicant Characteristics (e.g., sex, race, work history, attractiveness, test scores)

Interviewer characteristics (e.g., sex, race, work history, attitudes)

Interviewer beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes, or expectations about the applicant

Interviewer training and experience

Job Information

Interviewer behaviour in the interview (verbal and non verbal)

Applicant reactions

Applicant attitudes, expectations

Interviewer behaviour in the interview (verbal and non verbal)

Interviewer impressions of applicant

Interviewers final decision

Impressions of previous applicants (contrast effects)

Hiring quotas

Begins to examine "social factors" (1, 2, 3 & 4) but does not explore the impact of these on Interviewer Questioning or fairness of the overall recruitment & selection interviewing process
Dipboye's Model - Multiple Phases of the Selection Interview (1992, p.10)

**Pre-Interview Phase**
- Interviewer's Knowledge Structures
- Ancillary data about the applicant

**Interview Phase**
- Interviewer's Conduct of the interview
- Behaviour of applicant
- Interviewer's Processing of Data from the Interview

**Post-Interview Phase**
- Interviewer's Final Evaluation of KSAs
- Interviewer's Pre-Interview Evaluation of KSAs

**Diagram Notes**
- Does not mention the impact of an interviewers conduct on Interviewer Questioning or fairness
The interview as a social process

The selection interview is the subject of various social influences such as interviewer-applicant similarity, perceptions of applicant fit, verbal and non-verbal behaviour, impression management and the way in which information is exchanged (Posthuma et al., 2002). This research has argued the “social factors” impacting on recruiting and selection interviewing practices are more likely to occur in unstructured than structured interview settings (Dipboye, 1994; Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Schaper, 2000).

Interviewers in small business are quite heavily influenced by the social context such as social fit and personality when making a selection decision (Di Millia & Smith, 1994; Bartram et al., 1995). The selection literature argues the majority of these “social” biases and prejudices arise due to the preferred use of a casual, unstructured interview (Graves & Karen, 1996; Dipboye, 1997). This presents a strong argument for further research into small business interviewer-questioning practices and an examination of whether employment decisions are being made according to the guidelines of fairness.

The following discussion shows the interview is essentially a “social process” and, as such, the outcome of the process and, in particular, interviewer-questioning practices is impacted by various “social factors”.

Personal interviewer beliefs – impression management

An interviewers propensity to form biased theories of the ‘ideal applicant’ is evidence the interview is a “social process” (Campion et al., 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998; Posthuma et al., 2002). Researchers argue the problems resulting from an unstructured interview process are compounded by personal, idiosyncratic beliefs that individual interviewers bring to the interview (Rowe, 1984 cited in Dipboye, 1997, Posthuma, 2002). Interviewers tend to rely on personal, individual theories of job requirements. These are more vague than the detailed information on knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s) that a formal job analysis would provide. As a result, what an employer asks for as initial
criteria from a candidate may be based on bias and prejudice (Dipboye, 1994). A job analysis would promote job relatedness, because it allows the interviewer to obtain job-related samples of applicant behaviour (Campion et al., 1995).

Anderson & Shackleton (1990) argue personal and undifferentiated theories provide a poor basis for evaluating applicants. Mecan & Dipboye (1990) found that post interview ratings of candidates were related to pre-interview impressions (Mecan & Dipboye, 1990 cited in Posthuma et al., 2002). Furthermore, Graves (1993) argues that experienced interviewers should have a more thorough and accurate understanding of job requirements. However, Dipboye (1994) argues, the few studies addressing the issue have failed to prove that experience has any influence. What the research has consistently found is that interviewer biases and prejudices are more likely to arise when an unstructured interview is utilized (Dipboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995; McConnell, 1999; Hough & Oswald, 2000).

The information gathering process
An interviewers propensity to bias the information gathering process is evidence the interview is a “social process” (Dipboye, 1994). Dipboye (1994) argues interviewers conduct the interview in ways that can bias the information gathering process, and this is reflective of their inherent theories of job requirements. The study suggests that in an ideal world, the applicant is not influenced by the way the interviewer behaves and conducts the interview. Therefore, the applicant is not affected by the content of the interview (situational, behavioural, job content), how the interview is conducted (structured versus unstructured, individual versus panel) or the behaviour of the interviewer. Contrary to this ideal, many interviewers form first impressions and stereotype applicants early on in the process, which can then bias the content and conduct of the interview (Dipboye, 1992; Dipboye, 1997). These first impressions and stereotypes may encompass, for example, physical attractiveness, ethnic background, non-verbal behaviours / body language, attitude, demographics, interpersonal skills and goals orientation. The research has also shown that interviewers form impressions of applicants
assertiveness, motivation, self-confidence, enthusiasm, sociability and similarity to oneself etc (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Gatewood & Field, 1998; Posthuma et al., 2002). An interviewers perception of similarity with an applicant, usually in the first few minutes of an interview, has been found to inherently influence the evaluation process (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.485; Posthuma et al., 2002). Therefore, consistent with a social process model of the interview, Mecan & Dipboye (1990) argue pre interview impressions are positively related to post interview impressions. Increasingly, the findings of many studies are showing that qualifications and experience do not have as great an influence (Rynes & Gerhart, 1990; Di Millia & Smith, 1994; Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Bartram et al., 1995).

**Verbal and non-verbal behaviour**

The interviewers opinions or first impressions of the applicant, whether positive or negative, can be communicated unintentionally through the verbal and non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer. This can subsequently influence the conduct of the interview and how well the applicant performs (Dougherty, Turban & Callender, 1994 cited in Dipboye, 1994, p.459; Posthuma, 2002). The research has shown that an interviewers behaviour impacts on the applicant’s performance and the effects are displayed through:

- Non-verbal influences (Liden, Martin & Parsons, 1993; Motowildo & Burnett, 1995; DeGroot & Motowildo, 1999)
- First impressions, Halo Effects, Stereotyping and Similar-to-me errors (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.495)
- Leniency, Central Tendency and Stringency Error (1993 CCH Australia Limited; Gatewood & Field, 1998)
- Questioning – inconsistently or inappropriately (Campion, Palmer & Campion, 1995; McConnell, 1999; Kirkwood & Ralston, 1999)
- The degree to which questions are open ended vs. closed-ended (Dipboye, 1997; Gatewood & Field, 1998)
- Questioning – on non merit and non job related variables (Arvey & Renz, 1992)
• The extent to which the interviewer dominates the session (Dipboye, 1997).

Liden, Martin & Parsons (1993) suggest that these and other interviewer behaviours influence an applicant’s presentation and performance in the interview (Liden et al., 1993 cited in Dipboye, 1997, p.459). Furthermore, the literature argues self-fulfilling prophecies can occur, whereby interviewers impressions bias applicant behaviour in the direction of confirming these first impressions (Dougherty, Turban & Callender, 1994 cited in Dipboye, 1997; Posthuma et al., 2002). As a result, the information gathered on the applicant is more a reflection of interviewer behaviour, rather than the applicants true knowledge, skills and abilities (Dipboye, 1997, p.459; Posthuma, 2002).

**Categorical and Biased judgments – Applicant fit**

An interviewers susceptibility to make categorical and biased judgments is another example of the interview as a “social process”. Prior to, during, and after gathering information about the applicant, an interviewer must judge the “fit” of the applicant to the job criteria (Dipboye, 1997; Campion et al., 1995). In doing this, ideally an interviewer would focus their whole attention on the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s) necessary to perform the job and then evaluate the degree to which the applicant possesses each KSA. In addition, they would evaluate each individual KSA on its own merits without being influenced or biased by any additional information gathered (Dipboye, 1994). However, the literature shows the initial reaction of interviewers is to categorize applicants (Rowe, 1984; Posthuma et al., 2002). The problem is, this decision is made automatically with minimal consideration into the underlying reasons. Following this is a process known as characterization, whereby traits are inferred from applicant’s responses to questions and other behaviours. The distinct biases inherent in the interview process at this stage include the underestimation of the influence of the interviewer’s own conduct and the overestimation of the importance of particular applicant traits, whether related to the job or not. More often than not, it is those traits or values, which are similar with the interviewer and suggest a ‘social fit’ with the organization (Dipboye, 1994, p.500, Posthuma et al., 2002). In other words, the interviewer seeks out information by
questioning candidates in such a way to confirm their initial hypotheses (Dougherty & Turban, 1999).

The interview research has demonstrated numerous factors impacting on the rating of applicants, including halo, negativity, primacy, contrast, similar-to-me and personal liking (Dipboye, 1994; Gatewood & Field, 1998). These biases reflect the continuing influence of initial categorizations. The study by Stone, Stone & Dipboye (1992) shows that an applicant’s race, age, disability, gender and physical attractiveness can influence interviewers evaluation. These characteristics are recognized under Equal Opportunity Legislation as discriminatory. Despite this, research has shown that these characteristics influence the interviewer’s conduct of the interview and their evaluation of the applicant (Stone, Stone & Dipboye, 1992; Posthuma et al., 2002). The next section will examine the implications that the social context has for questioning.

**Strategies for Improving the Interview process – the importance of questioning**

More often than not, an interviewer’s prejudices and biases towards particular applicants are reflected in the way they conduct the interview. The most visible impact of this prejudice lies in the style and nature of questioning (Gatewood & Field, 1998). Campion, Palmer & Campion (1995) suggest this encompasses various aspects such as:

- Basing questions on a job analysis.
- Asking the exact same questions of each candidate – standardizing information gathering
- Limiting prompting, follow up questioning and elaboration of questions
- The types of questions – situational, behavioural, job content / knowledge / background
- Leave questions from candidates until after the interview
- Scoring and rating scales
- Interviewer training
Researchers have long argued that structuring the selection interview should facilitate more valid and reliable interviewer judgements and eliminate unwanted biases in information gathering, questioning and processing (Campion et al., 1995; Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Dipboye, 1997).

What follows in this literature review is a consideration of alternative strategies for structuring the selection interview and, in particular, strategies for improving interviewer-questioning technique. It will also highlight how these identified strategies might improve the quality of interviewer judgments, and reduce the implications for discrimination or an equal employment opportunity complaint arising. The cognitive models discussed earlier (Dreher & Sackett, 1983; Dipboye, 1992) do not address the impact of the “social context” on the recruiting and selection interviewing function and, in particular, the impact on interviewer questioning. A model emphasising fairness in the recruitment and selection-interview process is diagrammatically presented below (Page 33). Particular importance is placed on interviewer-questioning strategies, given the potential implications via The West Australian Equal Employment Opportunity Act, 1984. This model draws together the whole recruitment and selection process, not just the interview in isolation. It emphasizes the relationship between the micro processes of recruitment and selection, which includes interviewer questioning, with the macro effect via the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984. This model will be discussed in the following section.
A model emphasising fairness in the recruiting and selection interviewing process

Sources of recruitment
- Internal & External

Recruitment Activities

Recruitment

Pool of potentially qualified applicants

Legal considerations
- laws, guidelines
- courts, decisions

Interviewer beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes or expectations about the applicant pre-interview

Unfair Interviewing Practices
- Unstructured & unplanned, inconsistent
- Irrelevant & biased questioning
- No formal scoring system
- No interviewer training

Fair Interviewing Practices
- Structured
- Questioning consistency
- Job Relevant questioning
- Systematic scoring
- Multiple interviewers
- Interviewer training

Selection Interviewing
Structured (fair) versus un-structured (unfair)

Equal Employment Opportunity Act 1984

Legal implications

Potential for Discrimination
EEO Complaint - unfair

No Discrimination
Equal Employment - fair

Unfair Interviewer Questioning
- Unstructured & inconsistent
- Non job relevant questioning
- Stereotyping applicants and allowing personal bias to influence interview questions
- Allowing questions to be influenced by non verbal behaviour of applicants
- Allowing one or two good or bad characteristics of an applicant to influence the nature of questioning and final evaluation (halo effect)
- Making an evaluation of the applicant within the first few minutes (first impressions)
- Unplanned, informal, ad-lib questioning of applicants

Fair Interviewer Questioning
- Questions based on a job analysis
- Consistent & structured
- Limit prompting, follow up questioning & elaboration
- Using varied questioning styles i.e., behavioural, situational etc.
- Control the influence of ancillary information when questioning
- Leave candidate questions till the end
- A scoring system to rate responses to questions
- Extensive interviewer training in interview content, structure and questioning
Standardizing the interview: exploring the role of questions

Several researchers have recognized that standardizing interviewer-questioning processes may eradicate personal, individual biases and prejudices when comparing candidates, thereby improving the validity and reliability of the interview as a tool for evaluation (Dipboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995; Posthuma et al., 2002). Applying a consistent, structured questioning format will not ensure that each question is job related and job relevant, but it may reduce potential interview deficiencies by not overlooking certain questions for certain candidates or asking only particular questions of particular candidates (Campion et al., 1995; Hough & Oswald, 2000). The importance of a consistent, structured questioning approach and how it fits into the overall recruitment and selection interview process is addressed in the model on Page 33. Dipboye & Gaugler (1993) suggest this approach to questioning may also reduce interview impurity by focusing the attention of interviewers to specific questions, thereby reducing the incidence of discussions on biasing topics, which may lead to prejudicial interviewer judgments.

Limiting prompting, follow up questioning and elaboration of questions

Dipboye (1994) debates the use of prompting, follow up questioning and elaboration of questions is a central means by which interviewers bias the information gathering process.

Structuring the interview to ensure the same prompts, follow-up questions and elaboration's are sought from each candidate will improve reliability and validity. This is because it acts to reduce variation between interviews (Campion et al., 1995). However, from an alternative viewpoint, it is important to recognize that at the expense of improving reliability and validity, candidate and interviewer interactions will decrease, because interviewers will be using the same prompts and follow up questions across all candidates. Furthermore, prompting is often utilized as a technique for further clarifying
responses and seeking more in-depth information (Campion et al., 1995). Haffcutt & Arthur (1994) argue that restricting an interviewer’s ability to prompt candidates might create interview deficiencies. On the other hand, Campion et al., (1995) argues prompting and follow-up questioning can lead to biased or prejudiced decision making if irrelevant and inappropriate information is introduced or if candidates are ‘coached’ into giving the correct responses.

**Job Related Questioning Approaches**

Gatewood & Field (1998) argue the type and nature of questioning throughout the interview is critical to its overall reliability and validity. For example, if the questioning is not job-related and job-relevant, then validity will not be high. If the questioning is not consistent amongst interviewers, then the reliability of their evaluations of applicants will not be high. In this case, each interviewer has collected different information from each applicant, therefore making it almost impossible to fairly compare applicants based on the selection criterion (Gatewood & Field, 1998). Therefore, to improve the reliability and validity of the interview and to ensure it is meeting the standards for equal employment opportunity, it is critically important that questioning is specific and job related (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; McConnell, 1999; Hough & Oswald, 2000).

Until recently, there has been very little explicit direction within the selection literature as to how to develop specific, job related questions (Gatewood & Field, 1998). This is quite evident considering well-recognized cognitive models (Dreher & Sackett, 1982; Dipboye, 1992) do not specifically address the importance and relevance of questioning. In recent years, four methods of developing questions have emerged, these being, situational, behavioural, job content / job knowledge and background (Campion et al., 1995; Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998). Although each of these approaches to questioning are quite formalized and structured, many questioning types adopted by interviewers are less structured. The research shows this can lead to questioning based on interviewers personal opinions and attitudes, self-descriptions and self-evaluations.
(Gatewood & Field, 1998). The difficulty with this is that the interviewer tends to focus on criteria or traits with no clearly defined links to job performance (Campion et al., 1995, p.668; Posthuma, 2002).

The most likely effect of improving the quality and nature of questioning is enhanced validity. Cooper & Robertson (1995) suggest this is achieved through enhanced job relatedness and by reducing contamination resulting from lower quality questioning (Cooper & Robertson, 1995). Many research articles on situational and behavioural questioning present validity evidence (Locke & Latham, 1984; Mumford & Stokes, 1992).

In summary, the research suggests that as long as different questioning styles can achieve the desired level of validity and reliability, then a range of questioning styles can be utilized to provide optimum variety for both interviewers and candidates (Campion et al., 1995, p.668). It is important to note, this research is concentrated on larger organization samples. Very limited research specifically focusing on interviewer questioning has been conducted within a small business setting to date.

_Leave questions from candidates until after the interview_

Naturally, all candidates have varied questions about the nature of the job and the organization. The problem is that these questions tend to be random, ad-hoc and uncontrolled. This has the effect of reducing the standardization and structure of each interview by altering the content (Tuller, 1989; Campion et al., 1995, p.672). A simple way of maintaining a standard of structure and consistency throughout the interview and controlling the fairness of the outcome is to restrict candidate questioning till the end of the interview (Gatewood & Field, 1998; Schaper, 2000).
**Scoring and rating scales for interview questions**

Researchers examining the effectiveness, accuracy, reliability and validity of interviewer judgments have consistently argued interviews that provide a formally defined rating scale for each interviewer question are superior (Campion et al., 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.515). An unstructured format, poorly defined rating scales, and an interview process that relies heavily on personal, intuitive judgments is likely to reduce the quality of interviewer evaluations and ratings, thereby raising concerns for fairness and equal employment opportunity (Dipboye, 1994; p515; Gatewood & Field, 1998).

**Interviewer Training and questioning strategies**

The importance and value of interviewer training is highlighted throughout the selection literature (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Bartram et al., 1995; Campion et al., 1995, Gatewood & Field, 1998). However, despite the emphasis on training, many organizations, particularly smaller organizations, believe that effective interviewing comes through experience. A recruitment survey conducted by Ruhnow, Noe, Odem and Adamson (1992) confirms this viewpoint. One respondent noted that she had been interviewing for her company for 20 years, and was even promoted from secretary to senior interviewer, but had never received any formal training.

The research is consistent in arguing the most important interviewer skill is the ability to accurately receive information, critically evaluate the information received and control behaviour in delivering questions to interviewees (Dipboye, 1994; Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998). In particular, training focused on job-related questioning and objective-scoring processes should improve the job-relatedness of the overall interview (Campion et al., 1995, p.685). Vance et al., (1978) and Dougherty et al., (1986) showed that more extensive training improved interviewer behaviour and interviewer accuracy in receiving and evaluating information. The study by Werner (1991) found that
when trained to ask more neutral questions, interviewers asked less loaded and more open-ended questions.

Campion et al., (1995, p.686) suggested training may raise interviewers awareness of the legal aspects of interviewing and questioning. It may act to emphasise candidate’s legal rights, the potential for discriminatory questioning, how bias and prejudice can enter into the interview process and the resulting legislative implications (Campion et al., 1995). Raising the awareness of interviewers regarding these issues should reduce the potential for bias. Reviews of court cases have supported this conclusion (Gollub-Williamson et al., 1996 cited in Campion et al., 1997, p.686). The importance of interviewer training and how it fits into the overall recruitment and selection interview process is highlighted in the figure on page 33 of this literature review.

**Fairness & Discrimination – implications for questioning**

Inappropriate, unstructured interviewer questioning may involve the eliciting of information from applicants that could be perceived as biased, prejudiced or discriminatory (McConnell, 1999, p.81). Dipboye (1997) argues the standardization of questioning across all candidates should reduce the potential for equal employment opportunity biases or legal exposure from arising.

McConnell (1999) and much of the literature on interviewing suggests that sometimes interview questions are asked out of habit and may reflect personal interviewer assumptions or biases about certain groups of people such as women, the disabled and minority groups. On many occasions, questions are not job related or job relevant, and are influenced by the social, cognitive characteristics of the interviewer, thereby leaving organizations vulnerable to equal employment opportunity or discrimination claims (McConnell, 1999).
According to Gatewood & Field (1998, p.487) an organization would be in a very defenceless position in a question of discrimination if two conditions occurred:


b. The interview could not be defended in terms of job relatedness (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.487).

Interviewer questioning, within a structured interview format, is organized and its content is explicitly defined (Hough & Oswald, 2000, p.642). Nonetheless, organizations and small business, in particular, still prefer unstructured interviews and unprepared, impromptu questioning (Graves & Karren, 1996 cited in Hough & Oswald, 2000, p.642). Comprehensive reviews by Dipboye, (1994) and Campion et al., (1995) indicated various components of structured interviews, including fair and standardized questioning, significantly influence the psychometric properties, legal defensibility and applicant / interviewer interactions and reactions. Williamson et al., (1997) found court outcomes on disparate treatment favoured organizations high on three interview characteristics: standardized administration and questioning, high job relatedness, and multiple raters (Williamson et al., 1997 cited in Hough & Oswald, 2000, p.643).

The West Australian Equal Employment Opportunity Act, 1984, makes it unlawful to discriminate on certain grounds and in specific areas of public life. The act covers two types of discrimination: direct and indirect. Firstly, direct discrimination means that a person receives less favourable treatment than another person in the same or similar circumstances on any grounds of unlawful discrimination. Indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral rule, policy or practice can, in effect, have an adverse impact on a particular group, and is not reasonable in the circumstances. The Act makes it unlawful for organizations to use age, family responsibility, family status, impairment, marital status, political conviction, pregnancy, race, religious conviction and sex in making selection decisions in employment. Therefore, it is discriminatory to question
applicants in an interview on these topics and to use these responses or characteristics of an applicant to influence the evaluation and subsequent decision-making process (The West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984).

Interviewers must treat people fairly and equally, whether they are male or female, from one ethnic group rather than another, married or not, older or younger, and so on. It is critically important that interviewers do not allow any personal or “social” prejudices or stereotyped views that they have about people of a particular sex, race, age and so on to influence them. This is particularly important in relation to the treatment of applicants during the recruitment and selection process and the type of questions asked during the interview. In effect, interviewers must give everyone a fair and equal opportunity and this must be reflected through the conduct of the interview, the questioning throughout the interview and the behaviour of the interviewer towards the interviewee. A penalty will be applied if unlawful discrimination in the selection interview is found to have occurred by the Equal Opportunity Tribunal (www.hreoc.gov.au/employerspage).

Issues of racial and sexual discrimination in the selection interview have been brought to the forefront over several years. Researchers have critically examined sexual discrimination (Riach & Rich, 1995), racial discrimination (Echiejile, 1992; Bourn, 1993) and the influence of a candidate’s physical attractiveness (Cesare, 1996) in the selection interview.

Research has shown that women with exactly the same credentials as men get fewer job offers following selection interviews (Cooper & Robertson, 1995). Furthermore, even when women applicants represent less than a quarter of the applicant pool, they are still viewed less favourably (Cooper & Robertson, 1995). Research findings also suggest that racial biases may be introduced in the selection interview because of the stereotypical views interviewers have of ethnic minority personalities and background (Jenkins, 1986 cited in Cooper & Robertson, 1995). It is biases and prejudices similar to these and the seriousness of the legislative implications for discrimination in the selection interview, for both large and small business, that warrants further critical analysis and study of the
conduct of the selection interview, particularly addressing the nature of interviewer questioning.

The following are a selected sample of discrimination cases in Australia arising as a result of poor interviewer-questioning strategies and demonstrate the seriousness of a breach of equal employment opportunity. The first example, a case brought to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in 1992 (C.M and S. versus Australian Telecommunications Corporation) presents unlawful, sexual discrimination in the conduct of interviewer questioning during the selection interview. It was proved successfully that the three women complainants were subjected to demeaning and hostile questioning, going beyond the bounds of reasonable selection interview practice and that male applicants were not treated in a similar way. It was concluded that each of the interviews were unfair, because they included reference to irrelevant, personal information, were conducted in a highly intimidating way and the interviewers were very aggressive. Each of the complainants was provided compensation (1993 CCH Australia Limited).

In the second example, a case was taken to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in January 2000 (Lorraine Smith versus The Commonwealth of Australia) on the basis of unlawful discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status and pregnancy. It was proved that approximately 20 minutes of a 45-minute interview was consumed with irrelevant, personal questioning relating to the complainants sex, marital status and pregnancy or potential pregnancy. One member of the panel openly stated during the interview that he had problems employing “young women with children” suggesting conflicts commonly arise involving balancing children and a job. The panel further suggested that travel commitments would cause problems for her. It was found that the nature of questioning during this interview had caused the complainant to suffer ongoing distress. The lines of questioning relating to sex, marital status and pregnancy were unlawful and the complainant was subsequently awarded a sum in damages (1993 CCH Australia Limited).
In the final example, a case was brought to the Equal Opportunity Board in Victoria in 1993 (Bridges versus Ballarat University College) where unlawful discrimination in offering employment on the grounds of parenthood was found. During the interview by a selection panel, it was found that the complainant had been asked a series of questions about her children and family responsibilities which had made her feel unsettled and confused so she was unable to perform well in the interview. The types of questions asked at the interview included the following:

- Tell us about your family background?
- What ages are your children?
- What does your husband do?
- How will your family life be affected with the long hours?
- What arrangements would you make over the school holidays?
- If you received a phone call from your children’s school, your youngest child has a temperature; it happens more often in younger children than older ones, what would you do?
- Who would you call?

It was successfully shown that interviewer questioning of this nature was unrelated to the job requirements and the conduct of the interview constituted less favourable treatment on the ground of parenthood. The complainant was awarded a sum for damages (1993 CCH Australia Limited).

The results of these selected cases highlight the critical importance of being scrupulously fair when questioning in the selection interview. The most effective person for a job will vary. They may be female, may be from an ethnic minority, or may have a disability and to disregard such a person on grounds not directly related to the job may lead to a breach of the legislation and a costly appearance before an Industrial Tribunal. Whilst this is essential for the conduct of interview questioning in large and small business, it is
perhaps even more important for a small business as the research shows they are less capable of coping with the financial loss that may result from an equal opportunity complaint.
Conclusion

More research is needed to better understand the interview questioning practices of owner / managers in small business in Western Australia. The limited research in the area to date, particularly within small real estate firms in Western Australia, supports the focus of the present study.

This chapter has argued that good interview questioning practices improve the fairness, reliability and validity of the selection interview. Therefore, there is a particular need for this research in small business because they are less capable of coping with the financial costs of inappropriate selection decisions. Most complaints lodged with the West Australian Equal Opportunity Commission come from small businesses, confirmation that further study of interviewer questioning practices in the selection interview is necessary (1999 Small Business Review).
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

QUESTIONING STRATEGIES: AN INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH

The utilisation of Institutional Theory allows for an examination of the environmental impact of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 and the cultural and institutional influence of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Commission on the questioning practices of owner / managers in the Real Estate Industry. The West Australian Equal Opportunity Act has been in force since 1984 and its cultural impact on small businesses has yet to be determined.

Institutions

Scott (1995) suggests that to take on an “institutional perspective” is to emphasise the importance of psychological, social and political elements in the study of social phenomena in an organisational setting, large or small. Institutionalists call attention to the role of environmental forces and the demands they place on organizations, formal and informal (Hatch, 1997; Scott, 1995). According to Scott (1995, p.33)

“Institutions consist of cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Institutions are transported by various carriers – cultures, structures and routines – and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction (Scott, 1995, p.33).

Earlier perspectives emphasised the importance of materialistic forces – technology, resources, production systems and economic demands that required organizations to produce and exchange their goods and services in a market. More recent perspectives highlight the role of knowledge systems, beliefs and rules in the structure and operation of organizations and the social and cultural demands that require organizations to play
particular roles in society and to establish and maintain certain outward appearances. This process that forces an organization to play a particular role in society and to resemble other organizations that face the same set of environmental conditions is known as Isomorphism (Hawley, 1968 cited in Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). In this study, society places pressure on organizations, in the form of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984, to conduct interviews fairly and in a non-discriminatory manner (Scott, 1995; Hatch, 1997). According to Hatch (1997, p.85) organizations whose environment questions their right to survive, could be driven out of business. This study has examined the effect of the effect of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 on the way small businesses approach the recruitment and selection interviewing process.

During the past three decades, several theoretical perspectives have evolved that focus attention to organizations. These include contingency theory, resource dependency and population ecology theory. These approaches have emphasised that organizations are open systems, affected by and affecting the environment in which they operate (Scott, 1995; Morgan, 1997). However, only institutional theory highlights the importance of the wider social and cultural environment and the values, norms, rules and beliefs that are imposed on organizations by society (Scott, 1995). There are three mechanisms through which institutional isomorphic change occurs and each of these will be discussed in the section to follow.

When an organization becomes “institutionalised”

Powell & DiMaggio (1991), Scott (1995) and Tolbert & Zucker (1996) are three researchers who have studied “institutions” and distinguished between the different isomorphic institutional pressures placed on organizations, large and small, by the external environment and by internal forces. These consist of coercive isomorphism, mimetic isomorphism and normative isomorphism (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 1995).
Scott (1995) developed the following table to describe these institutional elements and carriers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carriers</th>
<th>Regulative</th>
<th>Normative</th>
<th>Cognitive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultures</td>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Categories</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Laws</td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>Typifications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structures</td>
<td>Governance Structures</td>
<td>Regimes</td>
<td>Structural Isomorphism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Power systems</td>
<td>Authority Systems</td>
<td>Identities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routines</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>Conformity</td>
<td>Performance programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>Performance of duty</td>
<td>Scripts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Scott (Table 3.2).

**Institutions as coercive systems**

Firstly, institutions can be viewed as regulatory systems (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991; Scott, 1995). Therefore, sometimes organizations actions are repeated because explicit rules or laws exist that ensure their repetition or by cultural expectations in the society in which the organization operates (Powell et al., 1991; Scott, 1995). These institutional rules or laws that exist are backed by enforcement mechanisms, whether formal or informal (Scott, 1995 cited in Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p.63). This is known as political and legal influence (Hatch, 1997). This theory assumes that organizations have interests, which they pursue external to the organization. As human nature would predict, interests often conflict and differences arise, and these must be resolved. As such, rules and laws are formulated. Organizations adhere to these rules primarily out of self-interest, in order to avoid relevant consequences or sanctions (Scott, 1995). For example, in the present study, small businesses should adopt appropriate recruiting and selection interviewing techniques in order to meet the standards imposed by the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 and therefore, to avoid allegations of discrimination. However, DiMaggio & Powell (1983) argue the primary institutional control mechanism for this
purpose is "coercion". In many cases, institutions are established by a powerful 'group' enforcing rules and regulations that favour an organization's best interest (Scott, 1995). The coercive force of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 suggest that owner / managers should be aware of the importance of their role in maintaining appropriate and fair recruiting and selection interviewing techniques, and the implications that may result if they don't maintain the standards set.

A view of organizations as coercive systems suggests their primary role as stipulating "rules of the game, whether formal or informal, and emphasises the critical importance of enforcement mechanisms" (North, 1990 cited in Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p.63). In discussing these 'rules of the game' North (1990, p.4) points out:

"Institutions consist of formal written rules as well as typically unwritten codes of conduct that underlie and supplement formal rules... the rules and informal codes are sometimes violated and punishment is enacted. Therefore, an essential part of the functioning of institutions is the costliness of ascertaining violations and the severity of punishment" (North, 1990, p.4 cited in Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p.64)

North (1990) suggests that it is unwritten codes that support the formal rules. Therefore, if equality in terms of West Australian Equal Opportunity requirements have not become cultural, then the formal rules may have no impact (North, 1990 cited in Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p.64).

Schultz & Hatch (1996, p.64) argue that one of the major strength's of North's conception of "institutions" is that it highlights the critical importance of the role played by political structures and the differing methods of enforcement. This is highlighted below:

"Institutions entail enforcement either of the self-enforcing variety, through codes of behaviour, or by a third party policing and monitoring. Because ultimately, a third party must always involve the state as the
source of coercion, a theory of institutions also inevitably involves an analysis of the political structure of a society and the degree to which that political structure provides a framework of effective enforcement” (North, 1986, p.231 cited in Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p.64).

The present study will explore the influence of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984, as a regulatory pressure on organization’s, ensuring they recruit, select and question candidates in an appropriate, non-discriminatory manner.

**Institutions as cognitive (mimetic) systems**

Another perspective of “institutions” sees them composed of cognitive elements. Scott (1995, p.xvii) argues that, in this view, “people don’t discover reality; they create it”. He argues that actors don’t naturally exhibit particular interests or capabilities, but rather these are the constructions of the society and environment in which they operate. The characteristics of actors are modelled, influenced and defined by cultural rules and belief systems (Scott, 1995, p.xvii).

Researchers such as Berger & Luckman (1967), Meyer et al., (1987), and DiMaggio & Powell (1983) similarly emphasise that from a cognitive perspective, institutions are not so much made up of rules, enforcement processes and collections of norms, but rather are knowledge systems that rely on cultural, shared beliefs. Scott (1995, p.xviii) argues that cognitive systems control behaviour by influencing and modelling our perceptions of what the world is and what type of actors can take what kind of actions. Institutions are seen as influencing and shaping our social actions by creating social categories, typifications and classifications systems specifying what things and people are similar, and thus should be treated according to one set of rules, by imposing certain identifies on actors and by determining what information is remembered and forgotten (Scott, 1995, p.xvii). In situations of uncertainty, organizations will model themselves on other organizations, this being isomorphism (Di Maggio & Powell, 1991). Thus, the cultural
practices of the social environment will influence organisational practices and rules, whether formal or informal, will not affect the way these have always been done.

Therefore, institutions are seen to control actors by providing definitions of situations and how to act in these situations (Scott, 1995 cited in Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p.66). DiMaggio & Powell (1983) emphasise there is a great pressure on organizations who engage in the same types of activities to look and act alike (mimetic isomorphic pressure). However, in this study, the institution that has a direct impact on the respondents is the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA).

**Institutions as normative systems**

Di Maggio & Powell (1991) suggest that normative isomorphic organizational change stems from a collective organisational struggle to define and control the conditions and methods of their work. Scott (1995) emphasises that normative rules exist in the expectations that others have for our behaviour. These rules then become internalised through socialisation processes so that they then exist in the expectations that we hold for our own behaviour (Scott, 1995 cited in Schultz & Hatch, 1996, p.63). Therefore, in this perspective of normative pressure, an actor's behaviour within an organization is modelled not primarily by self-interest, but rather by an awareness of one's role in society and concern to behave appropriately, in accordance with societies expectations and internalised standards of conduct (Scott, 1995). An organization whose environment or the society in which it operates questions their right to survive can be driven out of business (Hatch, 1997, p.85). This may be a concern for small businesses. The impact of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 as a socialisation process will be examined and, in particular, whether it translates to the interview process.
Institutions and governance systems

Institutional researchers such as Meyer and Rowan (1977), DiMaggio & Powell (1983) and Tolbert & Zucker (1983) suggest that frameworks external to the organization provide models of organisational arrangements from which organisational actors and participants choose or to which are they are subjected. From this perspective, organisational participants are viewed as being subject to normative pressures and cognitive constraints. They are pressured to adopt forms and behaviours regarded as appropriate or legitimate for organizations of the type to which they belong.

This study will examine the effect of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, 1984 on the way small businesses approach the recruiting and selection interviewing process and, in particular, interviewer questioning. The West Australian Equal Opportunity Commission governs the standards for equal employment opportunity. The study will also explore what kind of support small real estate businesses receive from their professional industry body (REIWA) in regard to equal opportunity guidelines for staffing issues.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter will provide the outline of the research design, the means of data collection and method of data analysis.

The research has used a case study design, which is comprised of semi-structured interviews. The qualitative approach employed a semi-structured interview format, enabling the researcher to gather rich data and to record additional comments reflecting individual’s perception about the subject matter, in an interview setting at the workplace.

Definition of small business

Numerous criteria can be used to define small businesses, with employee numbers being the most commonly used. Using this as the basis, in Australia, a small enterprise has less than 100 employees in manufacturing and less than 20 in services or construction (ABS Cat 1321.0 and Cat 8127.00).

Design of the Study

According to Gable (1994) qualitative and quantitative approaches to research are not mutually exclusive and researchers will often adopt both techniques in the design of their study (Gable, 1994 cited in Remenyi et al., 1998). Remenji, Williams, Money & Swartz
(1998) also argue that we should view these research techniques as related concepts rather than as two approaches, operating separately. That is to suggest,

“The distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is really a technical matter whereby the choice between them is to do with their suitability in answering particular research questions.” (Bryman, 1988, pp.108-109 cited in Remenyi et al., 1998)

Therefore, researchers should always observe that research methods are not so much valid and reliable alone, but whether they are effective for particular research purposes. A number of researchers have supported the combination of the two approaches to encourage practical and productive research (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p.75) and to overcome the potential bias and sterility of a single-method approach (Remenji et al., 1998).

Evered & Louis (1981, p.392) suggest that research studies in the organizational sciences require “both approaches to be simultaneously pursued, either by different researchers or by a single researcher”. They have proposed that when only one mode of inquiry is put into practice, the researcher’s efforts to uncover comprehensive and realistic pictures of organizational phenomena would be restricted. For example, research from the outside overlooks critical features such as human action in specific settings, the actor’s particular definition of his situation, the human interest of the organizational actor, and the historical context of the situation. Although inquiry from the inside may appear to be biased, its findings often have suspicious precision, rigor and credibility (Evered & Louis, 1981, p.392). Therefore, as both quantitative and qualitative approaches are unique and do contribute distinctive advantages and disadvantages, it is important to simultaneously utilize both perspectives in this study, providing a valuable and powerful combination of data collection methods. As Mintzberg (1979, p.587) states in his study, “we uncover all kinds of relationships in our hard data, but it is only through the use of soft data that we are able to explain them” (Mintzberg, 1979 cited in Eisenhardt, 1989).
Quantitative versus Qualitative Research Approach

Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research design have evolved from two opposing epistemological viewpoints. Epistemology is “concerned with the study of knowledge and what we accept as being valid knowledge” (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p.49). They argue that this involves an examination of the relationship between the researcher and that, which is being researched. A positivist approach examines only phenomena, which are observable and measurable, and can be validly and reliably regarded as knowledge. These researchers try to maintain an independent, experimental and objective position. On the other hand, phenomenologists attempt to minimize the distance between themselves and that, which is being researched. These researchers argue the importance of maintaining a subjective, contextual, interpretative and personal viewpoint. They examine and reflect on perceptions in order to gain an in-depth understanding of social and human activities (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p.49). The contrast between the two approaches has been captured by Smith (1983, p.10 cited in Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p.49) who states, “In quantitative research, facts act to constrain our beliefs; while in interpretative research, beliefs determine what should count as facts.”. These approaches represent two different perspectives and two different ‘grounds of knowledge about the social world’ (Remenyi et.al., 1998, p.103). For example, Morgan & Smircich (1980) use the terms ‘objective and subjective viewpoints’ or Evered & Louis (1981) use the terms ‘inside and outside inquiry’ in their research studies to explain the opposing perspectives. Therefore, the choice of research methodology depends entirely on which epistemological stance the researcher wishes to take (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Morgan & Smircich, 1980; Easterby-Smith et.al., 1994 cited in Remenyi et.al., 1998, p.103).

Silverman (1993) developed the table below to describe the differences between quantitative and qualitative methodologies:
Different uses of four methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Quantitative Research</th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Observation</td>
<td>Preliminary work, e.g. prior to framing questionnaire</td>
<td>Fundamental to understanding another culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Textual Analysis</td>
<td>Content analysis, i.e. counting in terms of researchers categories</td>
<td>Understanding participants' categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Interviews</td>
<td>“Survey Research”: mainly fixed choice questions to random samples</td>
<td>“Open ended” questions to small samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcripts</td>
<td>Used infrequently to check the accuracy of interview records</td>
<td>Used to understand how participants organise their talk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Silverman, 1993, Table 1.2, p.9)

The present study adopts a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies through a case study approach. As Silverman (1993, p.10) suggests, interviews are commonly used in both methodologies.

A Case Study Approach – combining quantitative and qualitative approaches

There are many distinctive types of research strategies encompassing quantitative (positivistic methodology) and qualitative (phenomenological methodology) research approaches. For the purpose of a positivistic methodology, cross sectional studies, experimental studies, longitudinal studies and surveys can be utilized. A phenomenological approach employs action research, case studies, ethnography, feminist perspective, grounded theory, hermeneutics and participative inquiry (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p.59). Whilst the key methodologies have been grouped together under the two main paradigms, Hussey et.al. (1997) argues there is flexibility to move each methodology some way along the continuum according to the individual researcher’s
assumptions. In determining the appropriate research strategy for a particular study, several researchers argue three conditions should firstly be addressed (Yin, 1989, p.16; Yin, 1994, p.23):

1. Type of research question (purpose of the research)
2. Extent of control the researcher has over the actual behavioural events
3. Degree of focus on contemporary rather than historical events

The main research question for this study was described as “Do small business, real estate owner / managers have a good knowledge and understanding of the discriminatory implications that inappropriate questioning practices may have for compliance with the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984”. A review of earlier studies in the selection literature has confirmed a very limited focus on this issue. This therefore requires the use of an exploratory methodology. Hussey et.al. (1997) suggests the aim of exploratory studies is to “look for patterns, ideas or hypotheses, rather than testing or confirming a hypothesis” (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p.10). The focus is on gaining in-depth insights and familiarity with the subject area for more pertinent, rigorous investigation in the future. The typical techniques used in exploratory research include case studies, observation and historical analysis, which can provide quantitative and qualitative data. Such techniques are very flexible given there are few constraints on the nature of activities employed or the type of data collected (Hussey et.al. 1997, p.10).

In exploratory methodologies, the researcher has minimal control over actual behavioural events. In this study, the researcher has no way of controlling the knowledge of owner / managers regarding interview questioning. The situation under investigation is real, with the aim being to gain an in-depth insight into the subject matter without assuming any control over the events that take place (Hussey et al., 1997).

This study has a focus on contemporary events. Its examination of the literature on interview questioning practices and its exploration of this issue within present-day real
estate agencies confirms this. Therefore, it is evident that this study focuses entirely on contemporary events and not historical ones.

In view of the three research conditions discussed above, the case study methodology was identified as the most appropriate research strategy for addressing the topic. This is because it meets the requirements of all three conditions above (Yin, 1989, p.16).

Eisenhardt (1989) supports the choice of case study methodology where various data collection methods can be utilized such as archives, interviewing and questionnaires. It also provides the flexibility of adopting a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodological inquiries. Case studies can be used to accomplish various research aims: to provide description (Kider, 1982 cited in Eisenhardt, 1989), test theory (Pinfield, 1986; Anderson, 1982 cited in Eisenhardt, 1989), or generate theory (Gersick, 1988, Harris & Sutton, 1986 cited in Eisenhardt, 1989). The case study method is considered suitable because it seeks to explore the knowledge of owner / managers in the real estate industry regarding interview questioning and their understanding of the implications for the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984. As discussed earlier, an exploratory case inquiry will be applied because of the limited body of knowledge in the area (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Therefore, these measures may provide some way of ensuring reliability of the data. For this study, the quantitative inquiry encompasses a structured personal questionnaire (Appendix B). The qualitative inquiry will utilize semi-structured interviews (Appendix B). According to Yin (1994), this approach to inquiries will facilitate 'the best' in-depth investigations under naturalistic conditions.

Justification For Selecting Case Study Methodology

The case study overcomes the bias and sterility of a single methodological approach because it enables both quantitative and qualitative lines of inquiry (Remenyi et.al, 1998). This combination of data collection methods in the one study of the same phenomenon is defined as triangulation (Denzin, 1970). Lindlof (1995) similarly define triangulation as
"a comparative assessment of more than one form of evidence about an object of inquiry". Hussey & Hussey (1997, p.75) also propose that triangulation "encourages productive research, enhances qualitative methods and allows for the contemporary use of quantitative methods". The methodological triangulation for this study will occur through:

1. Miles & Huberman Data Display Analysis
2. Semi structured interviews with small business, real estate owner / managers
3. The Literature Review

Yin (1989, p.23) describes three critical components of a case study methodology;

- It investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context
- The boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident which means that the phenomenon under investigation should be examined within the context in which it naturally occurs; and
- Multiple sources of evidence are being used

Case study methodology has been extensively described in research studies over the years i.e., Bonoma; 1985; Patton, 1990 and Bell, 1993. Patton (1990, p.384) describes the case approach as a "Specific way of collecting, organising and analysing data. The purpose of it is to gather comprehensive, systematic and in-depth information about each case of interest". Bonoma (1985) offers a definition from a managerial perspective and is therefore the most useful definition for this study. He argues a case study "offers extensive descriptive data on management situations within single organizational settings, thereby encouraging theoretical generalization from empirical observation and examination". Bell (1993) proposes the case study approach is an "umbrella term for a family of data collection and analysis procedures, having in common the decision to focus on an inquiry around a specific instance" (Bell, 1993 cited in Remenyi et.al, 1998, p.165). The definitions above are based on earlier work by Yin (1989) and Eisenhardt (1989).
Eisenhardt (1989, p.534) defines a case study as a “research strategy, which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings”. With a similar viewpoint, Yin (1994, p.13) defines it as “an empirical study that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context”. This definition suggests that important interpretations of human behavioural experiences can only come from a researcher who has completely immersed him or her self in the phenomenon being studied. The researcher draws on multiple sources of evidence to explore the phenomenon within their natural, holistic context. This immersion enables the researcher to thoroughly compare the complexity of organisational settings and operations with managerial experiences (Bonomo, 1985; Yin, 1994; Perry, Alizadeh & Reige, 1997). Remenyi et al., (1998) suggests a case also provides the opportunity to describe a phenomenon from a managerial perspective, whilst not intervening or controlling behaviour in any way. This permits the researcher to focus on specific issues and to “identify detailed interactive processes which may be crucial to understand, but which is transparent to a large-scale survey” (Remenyi, et al., 1998, p.51). The details uncovered as a result can “address a research problem, probing into the complexities of processes, people and organisations” (Perry, Alizadeh & Reige, 1997). In this way, the case study research methodology will be useful for the organisational settings (small real estate agencies in the real estate industry) that this study is exploring.

According to Yin (1993, p.xi) a case study is most appropriate when researchers examine the topics broadly. This study is designed with an exploratory methodology and a descriptive case research strategy. Descriptive Research is “research that describes phenomenon within its context” (Yin, 1993, p.5). It is used to “identify and obtain information on the characteristics of a particular issue or problem” (Hussey et al., 1997, p.10). It will also “facilitate a closer, more pertinent examination of the contextual conditions under study” (Miles, 1979; Emory & Cooper, 1991; Yin, 1993) and facilitate the analysis of individual organizations in greater depth. Therefore, the case study will be suitable for an in-depth analysis of the pertinent issues raised by this research.
Eisenhardt (1989) suggests a case study methodology is valuable when a “researcher must formulate frameworks or theory in the infant stages of research on a topic”. Bonoma (1985) supports this viewpoint and goes further to suggest that cases are most appropriate when researcher’s interests or the requirements of the phenomenon under study impose theory building rather than theory testing. Several researchers support the case study methodology and suggest that it is particularly well suited to new areas of research or research where existing theory is limited, as in the present study (Bonoma, 1985; Eisenhardt, 1989). It is also most suitable to situations where the behaviour or event etc. under investigation should not be examined outside the context in which it naturally occurs. The direction of this study reflects these issues. The absence of a thorough literature framework exploring the interview questioning practices of owner / managers in small real estate agencies in the Real Estate Industry in Western Australia and the further implications for compliance with the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 is the reason for conducting this study. The aim is to build upon the limited knowledge on the topic. Therefore, case study methodology is justified as the most suitable research strategy for this study.

The Advantages versus the Disadvantages of Case Study Research

Advantages
The advantages of employing case study methodology are numerous. Employing a qualitative methodology in case study research “facilitates in-depth investigations under naturalistic conditions, allowing the phenomenon being studied to retain the characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 1994). Furthermore, quantitative inquiry may be utilized in order to allow comparisons with a wider population. When both approaches are used in conjunction, they may assist to “overcome the natural deficiencies of each” (Evered & Louis, 1981, p.393). Eisenhardt (1989, p.538) further argues that “quantitative evidence can keep researchers from being carried away by vivid, false impressions in qualitative data, and it can bolster findings when it corroborates those findings from qualitative evidence”. Silverman (1985, p.140) offers a similar viewpoint by suggesting
that "simple counting techniques can offer a means to survey the whole corpus of data ordinarily lost in intensive qualitative research".

**Disadvantages**

The case study methodology has often been criticized for its lack of rigor and objectivity, bias and sterility of a single methodological approach (Gay & Diehl, 1992; Yin, 1993; McCutcheon & Meredith, 1993; Remenyi et al., 1997). The researcher will often attempt to minimize the bias in the study by ensuring that a balanced view is presented. This is achieved by utilizing a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis in order to allow in-depth understanding. Another limitation of case studies often highlighted throughout the literature is the issue of generalizability. It has often been criticized on the scientific, positivistic basis that findings from a sample must be generalized to a population (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, this is only one type of generalization. The aim of a case study "is not to generalize to a population, but to establish linkages, patterns and concepts of theoretical propositions from one setting to another" (Yin, 1994). Gummesson (1991) and Normann (1970) both suggest "it is possible to generalize from a very few cases, or even a single case, if your analysis has captured the interactions and characteristics of the phenomena you are studying" (Gummesson, 1991 & Normann, 1970 cited in Hussey et al., 1997, p.58).

**The Sample**

Prior to determining the data collection methods and the questions to be investigated, the sample group of cases to which these questions will be administered should be identified.

According to Yin (1984), a "case study can involve either single or multiple cases, and numerous levels of analysis". Patton (1990) suggests there are no standard rules governing the number of cases in a qualitative inquiry. He argues "The validity, meaningfulness and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the analytical capabilities of the researcher".

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than with sample size” (Patton, 1990, p.185). Yin (1994, p.50) argues “the decision on the number of cases to pursue should be justified by the need to achieve external validity and theoretical and literal replication”. If a single case study is to be pursued, it must firstly satisfy at least one of the following three criteria below (Yin, 1994):

1. The case is a critical example for confirming, challenging or extending a theory because it is the single one case that satisfies all the conditions of the theory.
2. The case is of rare or extreme occurrence and locating other cases is so improbable that research about the situation could never be done if the single case was not investigated.
3. The case provides unusual access for academic research. This means that unless the case is investigated, a chance to explore a significant social science problem may be forgone.

In light of the above, this study meets two of the stated criteria. Firstly, this study is intending to confirm, challenge or extend a theory. Secondly, if this case is not investigated, a chance to explore a significant social science problem (i.e., the relationship between Equal Employment Opportunity / Questioning / Real Estate Industry) may be forgone. Therefore, a single industry level case analysis (The Real Estate Industry) would be appropriate for this research project.

Researchers like Harris & Sutton (1986), Bettenhausen & Murnigham (1986), Patton (1990) and Yin (1994) encourage the use of multiple samples in a single industry-level case analysis. Therefore, this study will investigate multiple case samples through its examination of owner / managers in 20 small real estate businesses, independent and franchise. According to these researchers, it will improve the quality of data collection and analysis. This is because multiple samples within a single industry level case analysis “facilitate the investigation of complex social phenomena, the generation of theory and the attainment of a fuller body of evidence through the interviews conducted” (Bonoma, 1985; Gersick, 1988; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). Since this research study is seeking to generate theory on the evidence of the knowledge and understanding of owner / managers
on recruiting, selection-interviewing and questioning practices, multiple case samples would be viewed as a suitable design to provide compelling and potent findings. Therefore this study will adopt a single industry case analysis, this being the Real Estate Industry with multiple case samples - small independent and franchise real estate agencies (Pettigrew, 1988)

This studies sample was selected on the basis of convenience (Remenyi et al, 1998). This was quantified by the 'availability, accessibility and willingness' of owner / managers to participate in the study. Twenty respondents were interviewed from twenty small real estate businesses. In this context the 'owner / manager' is taken to refer to the person who is typically responsible for all functions within the business and ensuring their success. These functions may include accounting, finance, production, marketing and personnel management. Thirteen of the respondent organizations were small - independent real estate agencies. Seven of the selected agencies represented 'larger small businesses' and belonged to a franchise operation. The reason for this is to try and present a balanced viewpoint and to perhaps identify how unified or diverse their knowledge is regarding interview questioning practices and the implications for the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984.

As mentioned earlier, this case will adopt a single industry level analysis. Therefore, all twenty respondents are owner / managers within small real estate businesses, independent and franchise in the Real Estate Industry. The main reason for interviewing owner / managers within the organization is that they are typically responsible for personnel management. However, the research suggests they generally have less skill and experience in selection techniques. They have little, if any specialist human resource management knowledge and most owners simply learn by trial and error as they work through the process (Schaper, 2000). Therefore, the concentration of this research study in the Real Estate Industry is largely due to the following criteria:

1. The most recent national industry survey undertaken by the Real Estate Institute of Australia (1993) found that the majority of people working in the industry were male
and that females are concentrated in ‘other staff’ categories – reception, clerical, administration duties (Hyde, 1996). An exploration of selection practices and in particular, questioning strategies in the interview will be a valuable contribution to future research in small business – real estate.

2. The Real Estate Industry has experienced the highest rate of growth in the number of small businesses in Australia (1999 Annual Review of Small Business, p.46). It is also the largest employer of women in small businesses in Australia (Hyde, 1996).

3. In Western Australia, small real estate agencies must comply with the Real Estate and Business Agents Act 1978 and the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (state legislation). However, the Real Estate and Business Agents Act 1978 administered by the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA) are merely there to oversee the operational and ethical requirements of small business practice with clients. REIWA does not provide any professional or practical guidelines for staffing issues, nor equal employment opportunity or questioning strategy guidelines. This study is important because it will investigate the influence of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 as this has implications for the management of staff.

Sources of Data Collection for Case Study Research

When permission was granted by each of the twenty real estate agencies to participate in this study, the researcher made a follow up telephone call to each owner / manager to discuss the formalities of the study, and to organise the date, time and place of the interview sessions. The respondents were selected based on their accessibility, availability, willingness and consent to participate. Prior to the interview session, a “Letter of Informed Consent” (Appendix A) was given to each respondent. This formally notified them of their right to withdraw their consent from participating in the interview session at any time.
Yin (1989) argues "multiple sources of evidence and data collection methods may be utilized to increase the construct validity of a study". Bonoma (1985) who also suggests that it "ensures case study findings are more convincing, accurate, valid and generalizable" supports this viewpoint. Because of the inductive and descriptive nature of qualitative research and its importance to this study, it is deemed in-depth personal interviews will provide a clearer perspective as to the knowledge and perceptions of owner/managers and how they view the research topic. Each interview was tape-recorded and data was collected over the period of two weeks. The duration of each interview was approximately forty-five minutes to one hour, as Robson (1993) argues, "anything less than thirty minutes will be unlikely to yield rich, valuable data".

The same female interviewer conducted each interview. This assisted to "control variability of interviewer effects" (Burnett & Motowildo, 1995, p.7). The interview sessions were tape recorded to assist with later data analysis (May, 1997, p.14). Each interview commenced with informal greetings, as the primary purpose was to establish a sense of trust and rapport. Each respondent was informed about the purpose, aim and significance of the study, and they were assured anonymity and confidentiality. It was made very clear to them that they could choose not to answer questions and to stop the interview at any stage during the session, if they so wished. Any fears the respondent held about their participation in the study were discussed during the interview. They were also given the opportunity to ask questions at the conclusion and to voice any concern. It was also agreed upon, that a summary of the findings of this study would be given to them after its completion. This informal introduction and discussion led into the semi-structured interview.

The interviews in this study took the form of semi-structured interviews that included open and closed ended questions. According to May (1997) the "personal interview is commonly used to yield rich insights into people's experiences, aspirations, attitudes and feelings" (May, 1997).
In a semi-structured interview, questions are normally specified, but the interviewer is more free to "probe beyond the answers and enter into a dialogue with the interviewee in a manner which would appear prejudicial to the aims of standardization and comparability" (May, 1997, p.111). The present study employed a semi structured interview approach, whereby the interviewer was free to probe and enter into a conversation with the respondents.

The semi structured interview format facilitated greater flexibility to draw out the perceptions, knowledge and understanding of owner / managers regarding the selection interview and particularly, questioning in the interview. This meant that minimal restriction was exacted upon their responses. This style of questioning also allowed for prompt clarification of any issues that may have been misconstrued. Although each interview covered a standard set of questions using an interview schedule (Appendix B), each respondent was encouraged to raise and discuss issues related to the topic. As each interview was tape-recorded, extensive transcript notes were prepared. These assisted in cross checking the accuracy of the data and ensuring its authenticity.

The Personal Interview

In this study, the personal interviews encouraged face-to-face communication with owner / managers of small real estate businesses, both independent and franchise operations. May (1997, p.109) defines interviews / interviewing as "the methods of maintaining and generating conversations with people on a specific range of topics, and the interpretations which social researchers make of the resultant data". Cooper & Emroy (1995) similarly define personal interviews as "two way conversations initiated by an interviewer to obtain information" from respondents. Both Moser & Kalton (1983) and Cooper & Emroy (1995) similarly argue three necessary conditions for the successful completion of personal interviews: (1) availability of the needed information from the respondent – accessibility; (2) an understanding by the interviewee of his or her role – cognition; and (3) adequate motivation felt by the interviewee to participate and cooperate – motivation.

The greatest value in interviewing lies in the “in-depth and detailed information that can be secured” (May, 1997). May (1997, p.109) suggest, “Interviews yield rich insights into peoples experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitudes and feelings”. Lindlof (1995) argues that interviews are “well-suited techniques to assist the researcher to understand a social actor's own perspective”. Although personal interviews are time consuming, they provide in-depth, rich information that can be specifically related to the research concepts (Robson, 1993). According to Bell (1993) personal interviewing “should not be viewed as a mere reporting of answers but rather, as a means of obtaining more valuable data, with greater clarity and validity” (Bell, 1993).

Clarification of misunderstood answers and the re-stating of questions were additional benefits of the interviewing technique. It enabled the interviewer to follow up on incomplete or confusing responses through the use of probing, which assisted with clarification of the original responses (Cooper & Emroy, 1995; May, 1997). Even though personal interviews “cannot lead an interviewer directly to a situation in question, or at least a completely accurate record of an event, they do enable the researcher to learn about things that cannot be observed directly by other means” (Patton, 1990, p.278).

The use of a tape recorder to record the responses of interviewees assisted the collection of data and ensured that thorough, detailed answers were noted. However, it has been argued by some researchers that the use of a tape recorder could increase the bias of the research, as the interviewees may feel intimidated and therefore may be less likely to provide truthful information (Sekaran, 1992; Cooper & Emory, 1995). Therefore, in order to reduce this bias, permission to use a tape recorder was sought from each interviewee. Anonymity and confidentiality of the responses was also assured. Each interviewee was also offered the opportunity to listen to their tape-recorded interview responses. Although this offer was not taken up, it provided for the qualification of responses, thus increasing validity (Cooper & Emroy, 1995).
The Disadvantages of Personal Interviewing

Personal, face to face interviewing can present several problems owing to the subjectivity and the possibility of bias. According to Sekaran (1992, p.193) bias is defined as “errors or inaccuracies in the data collected”. Furthermore, the lack of interviewing training or interviewer skills may enhance the bias. According to Cooper & Emory (1995), the establishment of trust and rapport with the interviewee is therefore critical in order to gain credibility as an interviewer and to obtain truthful responses from interviewees (Cooper & Emroy, 1995). The major problems of the interviewing process, such as personal biases, talking excessively, listening too little and suggesting answers, were considered as one of the limitations of this study. However, according to Bell (1993) “an effective interviewer who recognizes these issues prior to interviewing can reduce the likelihood and the magnitude of such factors affecting the outcome of results”.

In order to minimize these effects, a pilot study was conducted, prior to the main study. This pilot study provided the researcher with an opportunity to test the interview with two real estate valuers and two Edith Cowan University academics. The pilot interviews also gave an indication of the time that would be required for each interview session. It also provided the opportunity to expose any problems and to develop an awareness of any non-verbal behaviours or cues that might influence the quality of answers during the interview. This pilot also enabled the interviewer to practice and refine interviewing skills and technique and to modify some of the interview questions.

The Interview Process

The interview processes followed in this research study are based on the recommendations made by May (1997).

Step One – Plan the interview by:
a. Gaining access to organizations and interviewees (convenience sampling)  
Owner / Managers of small real estate agencies in the Perth Metropolitan and Central Business District areas were approached by telephone. The purpose of this method was to directly seek their availability, accessibility and willingness to participate in the research interviews.

b. Informing the interviewees and determining the time and setting of the interviews.  
The date, time and settings of the interviews were decided on a follow up telephone call made by the researcher. The interviews were conducted at the respondent’s place of work.

**Step Two – Managing the research process by:**

a. Making the interviewee feel comfortable and establishing initial rapport.  
Spradley (1979, p.78) refers to rapport as the development of a mutual trust “that allows for the free flow of information”. May (1997, p.118) suggests, “The establishment of rapport is of paramount importance given that the method itself is designed to elicit understanding of the interviewee’s perspectives”. Spradley (1979) views this as a four-stage process encompassing descriptive questioning, exploration, co-operation and structured questioning (Spradley, 1979 cited in May, 1997, pp.118-119).

The establishment of initial rapport in the interview sessions followed these broad steps:

- Informal greetings
- General conversation to initiate communication between the interviewer and interviewee and to establish trust and rapport.
- Respondent was thanked for their willingness to participate in the study.
- Reconfirmed the purpose, aims and significance of the study and assured confidentiality and anonymity.
- Permission was sought to use a tape recorder and for note taking during the interview session.
- Letter of informed consent (Appendix A) was presented to the respondent.
• The role of the interviewer and interviewee was explained and what is required of each, with the interviewer being the active listener and the interviewee, the expert.

• A copy of the interview schedule (Appendix B) was given to the interviewee for easy reference during the interview process, particularly with regard to the questionnaires.

b. The Opening Question

The opening question was designed to put the respondent at ease. Thus, it was formulated to be as simple and straightforward as possible and general enough to encourage the respondent to talk freely without any fear. As Whyte (1984, p.104) recommends in considering the build-up of initial dialogue “the interviewer deliberately keeps the conversation away from evaluative topics and tries to get the informants to make descriptive statements”. The opening question used in this study was “Can you explain how you would approach the recruitment of a new staff member”. The remaining interview questions were more specific and exploratory with the view to an in-depth examination of the research topic. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in the Appendices Section (Appendix B).

c. Keeping the interviewee talking

May (1997) argues the interviewer “must make the subjects feel that their participation and answers are valued, for their cooperation and dialogue is fundamental to the successful conduct of the research” (May, 1997, p.116). According to Moser & Kalton (1983, pp.271-272) this means “maintaining interest during the interview by ensuring the interviewee continues talking with minimal interruptions”. The following are suggested methods for maintaining this:

• Maintaining eye contact with the subject
• Remaining interested and listening intently to what the interviewee said.
• Positive body language and smiling during periods of pause
• Using non-directive questioning such as "can you suggest an example" or "could you tell me a little more about that" (May, 1997, p.116).
• Using encouraging comments such as 'mmm', 'yes' and 'interesting'.
• Minimal use of probes such as "do you have an opinion on this". Hoinville & Jowell et al. (1987, p.101) define probing as "encouraging the respondent to give an answer, or to clarify or amplify an answer" (cited May, 1997, p.117).
• Referrals to earlier issues raised by the interviewee by saying "you mentioned earlier that" in order to gain important elaborations on certain statements (May, 1997, p.117).

d. Concluding the interview
The interviewee was thanked for participating in the research study and especially, for graciously giving up time for the interview session. The respondent was again assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of the information given. The respondent was also asked if he or she would like a copy of the findings of this research. The interview session was then concluded.

**Step Three - Preparation of Transcripts:**

An interview transcript for each subject was prepared from a tape recording of the interview session. These interview transcripts assisted in identifying the pertinent issues for analysis. These transcripts also formed part of the case study database.

**The Interview Guide & Questionnaire Design**

An interview guide was designed to ensure a semi structured interview format was followed. The use of an interview guide is supported by Robson (1993) who suggests "it is important in preventing the potential problem of inconsistency of data collection". This interview schedule ensured that certain topics were covered whilst remaining sufficiently
flexible to draw out the perceptions of owner / managers concerning interview questioning and equal employment opportunity. Before it was used in the interview sessions, it was pre tested by two real estate valuers and two academics at Edith Cowan University to ensure its reliability. The same predetermined lists of questions were posed to all respondents, in roughly the same order, with probing and follow up questioning. In this way, Patton (1990) suggests, “the researcher minimizes the interviewer effects and thus achieves greater efficiency of information gathering; thus ensuring the same information and data is collected from different respondents” (Patton, 1990). The standardized personal questionnaire formed part of the interview schedule (Appendix B), and the following section outlines its design in conjunction with semi structured questioning (Appendix B).

Section One: Background Information (Questionnaire)

This section consists of demographic questions, which deal with the respondent’s background information.

Section Two: Employee Recruitment (Semi Structured Interview)

This section consisted of three open-ended, semi structured interview questions. The open-ended questions were designed directly to probe and elicit respondent’s knowledge and perceptions of the recruitment process in relation to the research topic. Each respondent was asked the same questions with regards to their experiences in employing a new staff member and the recruitment information they provide to interested applicants. This assisted the researcher to make comparisons, and qualifying judgements, against the quantitative evidence arising from past research on the recruitment practices of small businesses.

Section Three: Employee Selection (Semi Structured Interview)

This section consisted of two open-ended questions examining the most frequently utilized approaches in selecting employees into the business. This question was chosen because it remained one of the most important and frequent questions used in studies on selection in small and large business (Dèchpande & Goldhar, 1994; Bartram, Lindley,
Marshall & Foster, 1995). This question was also used to guide respondents into the next section of the interview session, specifically focusing on the selection interview.

Section Four: The Selection Interview (Semi Structured Interview)
The Selection Interview was assessed by means of nine semi-structured questions. Several questions in this section were designed to tap into the formalities of the interview process i.e., number of interviews before making a final decision, number of interviews for each applicant, number of applicants interviewed for a particular position, single or multiple interviewers. The first question was designed to tap into the ‘real’ characteristics of the interview and the way in which the interview is conducted. The question was “Can you explain the steps and processes you go through when interviewing a candidate”. The aim was to get the interviewee talking freely about how they approached the selection interviewing process.

Section Five: Interview Questioning (Semi Structured & Structured)
Questioning in the interview was assessed by means of four semi-structured questions and two structured questions. This section was designed to test the respondent’s knowledge on appropriate interviewer questioning techniques. These questions addressed the questions the respondents would ask in the interview, and whether the questions followed a certain format or structure, were consistently covered in each interview and how the questions would be phrased in the selection interview. The final structured questions were designed to directly access their knowledge regarding appropriate questioning practices.

Section Six: Training and Legislation (Semi Structured Interview)
The questions in this section were open-ended, encouraging the respondent to talk freely. They were designed to build up a dialogue and elicit responses with regard to extent of interviewer training, knowledge of government departments, which could assist with selection, the role of The Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA) and The Australian Property Institute (API), and the knowledge of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines, and discrimination issues in selection and interviewing.
Data Analysis Procedures for Case Study Research

Before the information that has been gathered can be organized and analysed, it is important that it is “displayed to assist with the logical flow, connection and location of events” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles & Huberman (1994, p.91) define display as “a visual format that presents information systematically, so the user can draw valid conclusions and take needed action”. Therefore, it would be beneficial if data gathered from qualitative inquiries such as personal interviewing were transformed into meaningful patterns and trends to facilitate analysis and final conclusions to be made (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data for this study was obtained from the transcripts of semi-structured interviews with respondents. The data from the questionnaire (Appendix B) served to provide a personal background profile of the respondents. The semi-structured interview responses were transcribed and analysed for content and meaning. They were then grouped into two sections (independent and franchise responses) to facilitate comparison between respondents using Miles and Huberman’s (1994) data analysis.

Addressing Validity and Reliability

According to Yin (1989) the quality of a case study is judged in terms of its reliability and validity.

Reliability of the study

According to Remenyi et al (1998, p.181) research reliability refers to “whether the evidence and measures used are consistent and stable”. The distinguishing characteristic is that “similar observations or findings should be made by researchers on different occasions using the same procedures” (Yin, 1989; Emroy & Cooper, 1991; Easterby – Smith et al, 1994).
According to Remenyi et al., (1998) when discussing the issue of reliability in phenomenological studies, it is important to highlight "the aim of the research is to investigate the manifestation of a particular issue in a particular setting" (Remenyi et al., 1998). Therefore, "the conditions under which a study has been conducted would be difficult to reproduce or replicate" (Remenyi et al., 1998, p.115). Hence, Marshall & Rossman (1995) suggest that, "rather than pretend the research conditions can be replicated; it would be much better to accept the particularistic nature of the research and to follow good practice guidelines". They advocate this can be achieved by keeping the evidence collected in an easily retrievable form to enable others to investigate it should doubts regarding the research ever be raised (Marshall & Rossman, 1995 cited in Remenyi et al., 1998). In this research study, a Miles & Huberman (1994) data display was used to catalogue evidence. Respondents comments were separated into independent and franchise for ease of comparison. As a result, the findings could easily be reviewed at a later stage.

**Validity of the study**

In phenomenological studies, validity concerns "whether the researcher has gained full access to knowledge and meanings of respondents" (Remenyi et al., 1998, p.115). Gummesson (1991) refers to validity as representing a "good fit between theory and reality" (Gummesson, 1991 cited in Remenyi et al., 1998).

Remenyi et al. (1998, p.180) defines external validity as "knowing whether the researchers' findings are generalisable to a wider universe beyond the immediate research environment". However, it is well recognized that phenomenological studies are less concerned with external validity and more concerned with the authenticity of the research and whether it is properly representative of the events being studied (Remenyi et al., 1998). Case studies rely on in-depth evidence that is evaluated on the basis of analytical generalizations (Remenyi et al., 1998). According to Yin (1989) in analytical generalizations, "the researcher is trying to associate a particular set of results to some broader theory, and thus the sample size is not such a relevant issue" (Yin, 1989 cited in
Remenyi et al., 1998, p.180). In this study, the use of a single industry level analysis (The Real Estate Industry) with multiple case samples (Real Estate Agencies) facilitated replication logic, which enhanced the external validity of the research design.

The methodological triangulation of this study through Miles & Huberman data display analysis, semi structured interviews with real estate owner / managers and the literature review enhanced the usefulness of this study.

In conclusion, a perspective, which continues to gain support and credibility, relating to reliability and validity of research studies is that expressed by Gummesson (1988). He said:

"It no longer seems so ‘obvious’ that a limited number of observations cannot be used as a basis for generalization. Nor does it appear to be ‘obvious’ any longer that properly devised statistical studies based on large numbers of observations will lead to meaningful generalizations” (Gummesson, 1988 cited in Remenyi et al., 1998, p.181).

**Limitations of Case Study Research**

Whilst case studies are very valuable data collection techniques for qualitative research inquiries, they do have limitations.

Firstly, case studies can be criticized for their tendency to develop very complicated theories (Eisenhardt, 1989). This was overcome by developing very specific research questions in the present study.

Secondly, case study research is thought to challenge the aspects of logistics and operations (Eisenhardt, 1989). In order to overcome this limitation, this study applied a
semi-structured case study interview guide. This acted to provide more direction, focus and control in executing the methodology.

External validity is often challenged in case study research (Remenyi et al., 1998). This was overcome by the use of a single industry level analysis with multiple cases samples (20 small real estate businesses), which facilitated replication logic. These case samples enhanced the research study and external validity was achieved (Hussey et al., 1997).

Finally, case study research is criticized because it is not a stand-alone approach for sound theory development. This criticism is not only to case studies, it is experienced by all other methodologies. Although this limitation may act to discount the efforts of this research, it should be highlighted that this study is not suggesting a complete theory in itself. This study is simply attempting to make a contribution towards a theory. It is developing a theory but not presenting a complete theory.

In light of the above, this study has attempted to produce valid and reliable results.

Limitations of this study’s methodology

This research study was influenced by a number of limitations outside the immediate control of the researcher. They are discussed below.

- One of the main problems is a very limited amount of past research specifically examining interviewers questioning strategies in a small business environment. Furthermore, very few research studies have specifically explored this issue and the implications for equal employment opportunity within the Real Estate Industry in Australia. The majority of studies have only covered the broad recruitment and selection process, and only touch on the issues surrounding guidelines for questioning and the legislative implications for questioning. Most of these studies have been done overseas.
• Another main limitation of this study is the subject matter. The implications of poor interviewing and poor questioning practices for equal employment opportunity are very significant, particularly for a small business. Therefore, owner / managers may not be willing to openly discuss their current selection processes for fear of the image of inefficiency, incompetence and the legislative repercussions. In anticipation of this problem, the researcher assured all respondents that anonymity and confidentiality of responses would be maintained at all times. However, some of the questions in this study still achieved low response rates; despite this assurance of anonymity.

• The information gathered is the perceptions and opinions of owner / managers of the real estate agencies, who are typically responsible for the interviewing function. Therefore, a biased viewpoint may be presented considering their closeness to the business.

• The size of the study has been limited by the time constraints associated with a research project designed to fulfil the Bachelor of Business Honours degree.

• Another limitation of this study is its ability to be generalized due to its sampling strategy. Convenience sampling was utilized.

**Ethical Considerations**

Individuals participating in a research study would need to be assured their protection from any harmful or adverse consequences that may perhaps result from research activities (Patton, 1990; Emroy & Cooper, 1995; Remenyi et al., 1998). Therefore, there is a very important need for the application of ethical consideration. For this study, three main ethical considerations were applied:
1. Prior information to the interview
   - Letter of Informed Consent
   - Pre interview discussion with respondents as to the purpose of the interview

2. Confidentiality of respondents
   - Confidentiality and anonymity was assured prior to the commencement of the interview
   - Permission to tape record the interview was also sought. Respondents were also made aware that they could cease the interview and tape recordings at any time during the interview process.

3. Adherence to university rules and regulations

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed and justified the combined choice of qualitative and quantitative case study methodology. The research design has been thoroughly explained, including issues such as

   - The sample
   - Data collection methods
   - Data analysis
   - Validity and reliability of the case study and
   - Limitations and ethical considerations for case study research.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will present the findings of the study, discussion of these findings and finally the implications they may have for owner / managers in small real estate businesses.

The finding’s section provides the outcomes of the profile of the responses and the presentation of the data collected.

The discussion and analysis section attempts to critically analyse the relationship between the finding’s and the study’s theoretical framework (institutional theory). The outcomes emerging from the analysis draw attention to the seriousness of issues concerning small business selection and specifically, interviewer questioning practices and their implications for compliance with equal employment opportunity guidelines via The West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.
Findings - Section One: Respondents Profile

Twenty respondents were interviewed, ranging from 25-30 years to 61+ years. Sixteen of the respondents were males and four were females. The respondent's highest educational levels were varied – 55% had completed a valuation diploma, 35% have a university degree in property and valuation and 10% had only completed secondary education. All respondents described their position within the organisation as either partner, principal, managing director or office manager. Given the seniority of their positions within the organisation, the respondents’ supervised between one to twenty-nine employees. The length of time each respondent has been in an owner / manager position ranged from 1-5 years to 16 or more years. Furthermore, the length of time each has been working in the real estate industry ranged from 7 years to 40 years.

Two types of small real estate businesses were represented. Namely, 65% (13) were independent and 35% (7) were franchise operations. The independent firms were smaller in size and tended to employ between one to ten employees, while the franchise firms employed between eleven to twenty employees.

The sample of targeted respondents was quite diverse in terms of their length of experience in an owner / manager position, their years of experience in the real estate industry, their educational level, age and type of business operation.

The respondent’s summary profile can be viewed in the Appendices Section (Appendix 1.0 – Page 202).
Qualitative Data

The semi-structured interview was prepared as six main sections. These encompassed:

a. Section Two: Employee Recruitment (Page 205)
b. Section Three: Employee Selection (Page 208)
c. Section Four: The Interview (Page 209)
d. Section Five: Interviewer Questioning (Page 212)
e. Section Six: Training and Legislation (Page 220)

The questions in each section were designed to explore, in depth, the issues as outlined above. The study specifically explored owner / managers interview questioning strategies and the implications for compliance with equal employment opportunity guidelines via the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984. In addition, the general recruiting and selection interviewing practices of owner / managers were studied.

Appendix 2.0 shows a data display matrix of all respondent’s comments. This is to enable comparison between respondents (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
Findings - Section Two: Employee recruitment

**Question 1**

_**Explain how you would approach the recruitment and selection of a new staff member?**_

This question explored owner / managers approach to the selection of a new staff member. The majority of the respondents’ comments indicated that their approach to the recruitment and selection of a new staff member would differ between secretarial, support staff and professional staff. In employing support staff, their approaches varied from recruitment agencies, word of mouth, contacts in the industry, headhunting, advertising, business schools and doing it all yourself. For professional staff, the approach was quite different, with contacts within the industry, word of mouth and advertising exercises clearly being the most popular approaches. The table below is a summary of their responses.

**Table 2.0 – Approach to Recruitment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support Staff</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Franchise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Recruitment Agency</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Advertising</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Word of mouth</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Headhunting</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Business Schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Industry contacts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do it yourself</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional Staff</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Franchise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Industry Contacts</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Advertising</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Word of mouth</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Recruitment Agency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Headhunting</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Universities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Knowledge of people already in the industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Personal referrals</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Doing it “yourself”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A closer examination of the comments from the interviewees provided, in more detail, the reasons behind the responses. Comments from the interview showed that, in general, small business employers, whether in franchise or independent operations, placed a very high level of importance and value on finding "the right type of person" over choosing an appropriate approach to recruitment and selection. The comments revealed that this seemed to take a back foot to finding the right sort of person (see figure 1.0). The majority of the respondent's comments indicated an importance associated with "ability to fit in", "personal characteristics and profile", "first impressions", "desirable personal qualities and compatibility" and having "the right attitude and the right personality". There seemed to be an underlying pattern, both with the franchise operations and independent firms, that finding the right type of person with the right attitude and personality, was far more important to employing someone with the correct qualifications and experience. The following comments represent the majority of responses to this question.

**Figure 1.0**

"I believe it is more important to find someone who is compatible with the existing people in the business, in respect of age, personality, experience and so on" (R15 - independent).

"It's critical to find the right person, with the right sort of personal characteristics. First impressions are critical" (R20 - franchise).

"We believe its very important to find the right sort of people, with the right attitude and the right personality" (R10 - franchise).

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix - Summary of Comments: employee recruitment (Page 205).
Question 1 (a)
Are there any particular formal guidelines that you follow during the recruitment process?

A total of ninety-five (19/20) of respondents indicated they did not follow any particular formalised guidelines during the recruitment process. However, most respondents qualified this by saying they set their own personal standards and guidelines in terms of what type of person they wanted, gender, age, level of maturity, personal and social lifestyle, family responsibilities, personal presentation and physical appearance, personal qualities, characteristics and attitude.

The most common pattern of responses, across both franchise and independent firms, was the recruitment process adopted a very informal, flexible and unplanned approach. It was based largely on first impressions, gut feelings and whether the applicant would ‘fit in’.

The following comments are a sample of responses to this question.

Figure 2.0

“Nothing is formal or written that we follow” (R7 - independent)

“There are certain prejudices in relation to gender and ethnicity. I don’t have any firm written policy or guideline that I follow when recruiting” (R14 - franchise).

“What I am looking for is someone that I will get on with well” (R17 - franchise).

“ We don’t follow any workplace relations laws or guidelines” (R5 - independent).

No pattern, distinction or difference in respondents’ comments could be made on the basis of male and female owner / managers and franchise / independent operations. Only one respondent (R2 - independent firm) recognised that there was a certain protocol that
should be followed when recruiting new staff members and further qualified this by saying that “you can’t discriminate against anybody in particular”

Therefore, this analysis of interview comments reveal that no particular guidelines are followed during the recruitment process by the sample of small business owner/managers. Rather, broad personal guidelines and standards are adopted. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix - Summary of Comments: employee recruitment (Page 205).

**Question 2**

*During the recruitment process, what kind of information do you provide to interested applicants?*

A detailed examination of respondents’ comments revealed the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information provided to candidates</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Nothing</td>
<td>7 independent &amp; 6 franchise</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. An informal, verbal description of the job</td>
<td>4 independent respondents</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Information about the company</td>
<td>3 independent respondents</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Information about role and responsibilities</td>
<td>1 independent respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. A formal written job description</td>
<td>1 independent respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than half of the respondents (70%) stated they did not provide any information to interested applicants during the recruitment process. However, a more detailed examination revealed, that in seventy percent of cases, where no information was provided, this was qualified by stating that when they approached the recruitment process, they try and find out as much information as possible about the interested applicant, their personality and personal qualities and so on. It was also emphasised by these same respondents that they engage in a very informal, unplanned, relaxed
recruitment process. As one respondent stated "its more a chance for me to look at the person, and their personality" (R17 - Franchise).

The following comments represent the general pattern of responses to this question. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: employee recruitment (Page 205).

**Figure 3.0**

"Nothing really. We certainly don’t provide anything written like a job description or anything that sophisticated" (R4 - independent).

"Nothing is in written, formal terms. During the process, we try and find out as much as we can about the applicant, both professionally and personally" (R16 - independent).

"In terms of formal, written information, very little. Personality is a very important factor" (R14 - franchise).

"We don’t provide anything formal during this phase. Whilst experience is very important, finding someone with the right personality and personal qualities is critical" (R20 – franchise).

**Question 2 (a)**

*When approaching an agency for recruitment purposes, what kind of criteria do you specify?*

Only fifty percent of respondents answered this interview question. The other ten respondents (50%) could not think of any criteria during the interview and therefore did not provide a response to this question. Many of the respondents listed more than one-desired criteria. Their responses were clustered as follows.
### Table 4.0 - Criteria specified to recruitment agency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Personal qualities &amp; character</td>
<td>2 independent &amp; 1 franchise</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Age Bracket</td>
<td>2 independent &amp; 1 franchise</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personality</td>
<td>3 independent respondents</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal stability (personal &amp; family life)</td>
<td>1 independent &amp; 1 franchise</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Technical skills &amp; ability</td>
<td>1 independent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attitude</td>
<td>1 independent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Personal appearance</td>
<td>1 Franchise</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only one respondent (5%) stated they would provide the recruitment agency with a desired standard for technical skills and abilities. None of the respondents stated there was a desired level of qualifications and experience necessary for the position. The majority of the other respondents described the criteria in the form of personal attributes such as the applicant's personality, attitude and grooming. There was no distinction found between independent and franchise firms in their development of recruitment criteria.

The following comments represent the general pattern of responses to this question. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: employee recruitment (Page 205).

### Figure 4.0

"The only thing we really specify is an age bracket" (R4 - independent).

"We highlight certain personal qualities" (R13 - independent).

"We try and emphasise the importance of grooming, their level of stability, their family life and so on" (R17 - franchise).
**Question 2 (b)**

*What has been your experience with using recruitment agencies ie, good or bad?*

A total of fifty percent (10/20) of respondents answered this interview question. Of those respondents, only thirty percent (6/20) stated they had good experiences. They revealed the greatest advantages of using an agency was:

a. Saving time  
b. An agency could screen applicants much more efficiently and effectively and;  
c. It left time for them to focus on their core business and what they do best.

The following comments represent the general pattern of responses to this question. No major distinctions were found between independent and franchise real estate firms in terms of their experiences with agencies. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: employee recruitment (Page 205).

**Figure 5.0**

"Saving time has been the greatest benefit" (R5 - independent).

"The main advantage is that it allows us to focus on what we do best. We usually have a pretty strong gut feel about someone though" (R9 - franchise).
Question 3

Before undertaking the recruitment process, do you discuss the role that needs to be filled and desirable criteria of the new employee with the existing staff members?

A total of seventy percent (14/20) of respondents interviewed answered this question in significant depth. The other thirty percent (6 respondents) answered the question with "no" and chose not to expand their comments further. Of the respondents, fifty percent (10/20) said "yes" they did discuss the role and the type of person with their existing staff members prior to commencing the recruitment process. An examination of these comments revealed that many qualified this by saying they discussed the type of person they wanted, desired personal qualities and characteristics, personality, age, what they want the person to do, whether they think the person will fit in, personal presentation and appearance, body language and so on.

Two of these respondents (10%) further highlighted the importance they place on seeking the first impressions, gut feelings and opinions of their existing staff members and that this was a very good determining factor. Their approach was summarised in the following comments:

Figure 6.0

"We would discuss the type of person we would like and who we think would fit in" (R7 – independent).

"We talk about the type of person we would like, in terms of personal qualities and characteristics, age and so on" (R13 – independent).

"Because we are fairly close nit, we really talk about the type of person we want (R11 – franchise).

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: employee recruitment (Page 205).
Discussion & Analysis - Section Two: Employee Recruitment

The results from this section were consistent with the literature on small business recruitment and confirmed that owner/managers approach the recruitment process in a very informal, ad-hoc manner (Bartram et al., 1995). The majority of respondents, whether from an independent or franchise operation, placed a very high level of importance and value on “finding the right type of person” and the findings show this takes priority over choosing an appropriate recruitment approach. A candidates “ability to fit in”, “personal characteristics and profile”, “first impressions”, desirable personal qualities and compatibility”, and having the “right attitude” were characteristics emphasised by respondents. The findings are consistent with the literature on small business recruitment practices and both emphasise the importance that small business employers place on “the person” rather than “their qualifications and experience” (Di Millia & Smith, 1994; Bartram et al., 1995). The research by Schaper (2000) highlights personality issues, personal characteristics, the ability to fit in, the ability to work in teams and group efforts are much more important, whether they are related to the job or not (Schaper, 2000). This was emphasised by respondents in the study and has implications for interview fairness and equal employment opportunity. Not one respondent mentioned a consideration for equal employment opportunity when making a recruitment decision. This is shown in the findings from the question concerning formalised recruitment policies and procedures.

The findings showed that ninety five percent of respondents do not follow any particular formalised guidelines during the recruitment process. This was consistent with the literature on small business recruiting and selection interviewing practices (Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Bartram et al., 1995). An analysis of the findings indicate that most owner/managers have very particular and specific personal standards and guidelines they follow during recruitment. These guidelines or standards are related to characteristics such as the type of person, gender, age, level of maturity, personal and social lifestyle, family responsibilities, physical appearance, personal qualities, characteristics and attitude. These guidelines and standards are un-related to an applicant’s ability to perform
the job. The findings correspond with the research by Deshpande & Golhar (1994) and Hornsby & Kuratko (1990), who proposed that recruitment decisions are largely based on an individual, intuitive perception of fit, gut feelings, first impressions and a personal liking of a candidates personality and personal qualities. The respondents give minimal consideration to the potential for discrimination or the requirements of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.

The findings from this section of the study revealed that seventy percent of respondents do not provide any information to the applicant during the recruitment process. This is consistent with the research by Bartram et al., (1995). The majority of respondents from both independent and franchise firms adopt a very informal, un-planned recruitment process and, as such, do not provide any formal information to candidates. These findings were consistent with those outlined in the literature (DiMillia & Smith, 1994; Dipboye, 1994; Oliver, 1998).

The criteria given to recruitment agencies did not rate technical skills, qualifications and/or experience as the most important criteria. The majority of respondents described their preferred criteria in the following order: personal qualities and character (30%), age (30%), personality (30%), personal and family stability (20%), attitude (10%), appearance (10%). These findings are consistent with those formed by Bartram, Lindley, Marshall & Foster (1995) who also found that information specified to agencies during the recruitment process tends to be focused on ‘personal details’. As a result, job related information tends to take a back foot.

The majority of respondents (71%) discuss the role and type of person they would like to employ with their existing staff members before engaging in the recruitment process. The findings revealed that discussions regarding preferences for personal applicant characteristics take precedence over an applicant’s desired role and responsibilities, qualifications and experience, knowledge, skills and abilities (Di Millia & Smith, 1994). The respondents placed more importance on seeking the first impressions, gut feelings and opinions of staff members, rather than on the applicant’s ability to perform the job.
These findings are consistent with those formed by Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Deshpande & Golhar, 1994 and Bartram et al., 1995.

In light of these findings, it appears that small business employers not only have a limited understanding of the importance of the recruitment process, but also the potential legislative implications of poor recruiting decisions (Gatewood & Field, 1987; Bartram et al., 1995; Schaper, 2000). It is plausible that this limited knowledge is reflective of their informal and un-planned approach to recruitment activities. This may lead to expensive recruiting decisions in the future as a result of equal employment opportunity legislation (Campion et al., 1995). This may present a serious burden given a small businesses limited managerial resources and ability to cope with the financial loss that may result (Finney, 1987; Bartram et al., 1995; Schaper, 2000). These findings are consistent with Oliver (1998) who found the most common mistake made by small businesses is to rely heavily on chemistry and gut feelings in preference to a well-planned and structured interview process. This is demonstrated in the findings from Section Two: employee selection (Page 95).

In summary, small real estate businesses recruiting activities are focused on gathering personal applicant details, rather than gathering detailed information about an applicant’s knowledge, skills and abilities. As a result, this may unfairly bias the conduct of the selection process to follow.
Findings - Section Three: Employee selection

Question 1

Can you explain the process you would go through when selecting a new staff member?

In response to this question, ninety five percent (19/20) of respondents stated the interview was their primary means of selecting a new employee. Some respondents also mentioned the following:

Table 5.0 – processes leading up to the selection of a new staff member

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The processes</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Interviewing</td>
<td>19 respondents</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Advertising</td>
<td>2 respondents</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reviewing the resume</td>
<td>1 respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Short-listing candidates</td>
<td>1 respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ninety five percent (19/20) of respondents stated that interviewing was their primary selection tool. Seventy percent of these (14 respondents) stated they primarily used the interview to assess applicants on personal as well as job related attributes. These attributes included personality, appearance, personal presentation, personal qualities, experience, qualifications, level of stability, family background, age, marital status, career paths and aspirations, work history.

As the interview progressed, the respondent’s preference for focusing on personal details, rather than the applicant’s knowledge, skills, abilities and experience became more evident. A ‘typical’ response regarding how the selection of a new employee was approached, is summarised in the following comments:
Figure 7.0

"The interview process is more of a device that we use to assess their personality and personal qualities (R6 – independent).

"I use the interview to examine experience, qualifications, level of personal stability, family background, age and so on" (R7 – independent).

"I am just looking to use the interview to find out if the person has the personal qualities that I both require and desire" (R18 – independent).

"We use the interview more as a tool to find out about the person" (R11 – franchise).

These same respondents also emphasised the importance they placed on first impressions and gut feelings when making their final selection decision. Overall, both independent and franchise firms placed more importance on ‘fitting in’ and ‘feeling comfortable’ with the new employee, rather than examining experience and qualifications. This was highlighted in the comments below:

Figure 8.0

"In the majority of cases I find it comes down to first impressions and my own gut feel" (R5 – independent).

"First impressions and gut instincts are very important. A lot of it comes down to the manner in which they greet you, their appearance and personal presentation" (R12 – independent).

"It’s based on an informal chat. I have a set of characteristics in mind that I would like this person to have" (R15 – independent).

"The interview has got a lot to do with first impressions and this why the interview is such an effective tool (R9 – franchise).

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: employee selection (Page 208).
**Question 2**

*Are there particular desirable qualities that you have in mind for a candidate before approaching the selection process?*

A total of forty five percent (9/20) of those interviewed responded to this question. Table 6.0 lists the most important qualities that the respondent’s looked for in a candidate. Some respondents mentioned more than one quality.

**Table 6.0 – important qualities highlighted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Personal qualities (Personality &amp; character)</td>
<td>2 independent &amp; 2 franchise</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Personal presentation</td>
<td>2 franchise respondents</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal background</td>
<td>1 franchise respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ability to fit in</td>
<td>1 franchise respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Age</td>
<td>1 franchise respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attitude</td>
<td>1 independent respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings show that the qualities outlined do not relate to a candidate’s ability to perform the job. These respondents perceive personal details as being a superior quality to experience and qualifications. However, the respondents were often unable to identify these qualities very clearly and rely on first impressions and gut feelings as evidenced in the comments below.

**Figure 9.0**

"I do have certain personal qualities in mind, but at the end of the day, I think it comes down to first impressions and gut feelings" (R6 – independent).

"I have a high priority on personality and personal characteristics" (R20 – franchise).

"Particularly in regard to personal qualities. We like to find out as much as we can in respect to personal details" (R10 – franchise).
Discussion & Analysis - Section Three: Employee Selection (general)

The findings from this section were consistent with the literature on small business selection activities.

Gatewood & Field (1987) and Di Millia & Smith (1997) suggest that effective selection lies in making predictions about the future job performance of applicants. Other researchers argue that such predictions are very difficult to make, because only a limited amount of information can be gathered during the selection process and important, job-related applicant characteristics are often difficult to measure (Dipboye, 1994; Campion et al., 1995). Bartram et al., (1995); Campion et al., (1995) and Buckley et al., (2000) suggest the interview is still the most popular selection device and thus, support the findings of this study.

Herriot’s (1989) study showed that employers seem to be preoccupied with whether the applicant has certain personal qualities and characteristics, which will see them “fit in” to their organization. The interview appears to be the tool best suited for this purpose. A total of ninety five percent of small business owner / managers in this study use the interview as their primary selection tool. However, seventy three percent of those respondents stated that they used the interview to assess largely non job-related variables such as personality, appearance, personal presentation, personal qualities, level of stability, family background, age, marital status, career path, personal aspirations and work history. These findings correspond with the research by Herriot (1989) and Bartram et al., (1995) who found that employers are unlikely to select applicants based on technical merit alone. This study has shown that small business owner / managers place a great level of importance on evaluating an applicant’s personal details. Bartam et al., (1995) found the three most important functions of the interview for small businesses was to assess personal qualities, the applicants fit to the organization and their job competence.
The comments made by respondents in this section confirmed an informal approach to selection practices. This conclusion corresponds with the findings of Dipboye (1994) who argued the traditional, unstructured interview is still favoured by organizations today.
Findings - Section Four: The interview

Question 1

Can you explain what steps and processes you go through when interviewing a candidate?

A total of forty percent (8/20) of those interviewed responded to this question. For the purposes of this question, and for ease of analysis, the interview has been classified into two styles or formats - structured and unstructured. This classification is consistent with the literature review. The comments provided by each respondent gave greater insight into the extent that formalised procedures were in place during the interview process. Their approach was summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Unstructured</td>
<td>5 independent &amp; 2 franchise</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Structured</td>
<td>1 independent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses reinforced the findings that emerged from the previous questions that the majority of interviews conducted by small business employers are informal in content, structure and questioning. For example, one respondent stated he conducted a structured interview but later revealed he wasn’t really sure what a structured interview entailed.

The respondents (35%) who stated they conducted an unstructured interview also qualified this by saying that it was more of an informal chat and a chance to get to know the applicant personally. Again, the importance of personal qualities, personality, attitude, first impressions and gut feelings was emphasised. The following comments show this:
Figure 10.0

"I adopt a very informal approach. I am just looking to find out if the person has the personal qualities that I require (R18 - independent).

"The steps I apply are by no way formalised or prepared in advance. At the end of the day, its whether they have the personality and attitude that will fit in" (R19 - independent).

"We are fairly informal. We like to organize the interview in the way their CV is structured. We like to go through their whole life experience (R11 - franchise).

"I like to use the interview as a means of getting to know the person. It's a very informal process (R7 - independent).

The majority of small business owner / managers who answered this question did not develop any formalised steps, processes and procedures for interviewing candidates. The process is very much based on an informal, ad-lib chat whereby first impressions and gut instincts play a large role. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix - Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

Question 2
Do you use the candidates CV during the interview, as a guide to what questions you will ask?

Overall, seventy percent (14/20) of respondents stated they used the candidates CV in some form during the interview. Their comments were summarised as follows:
Table 8.0 – the purpose of the resume

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What it is used for</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 A basic guide to explore applicants personal qualities and personality</td>
<td>7 independent respondents</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 A basic guide to the interview topics and to establish some kind of ‘interview flow’</td>
<td>2 franchise &amp; 1 independent respondent</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Establish some form of uniformity between interviews and candidates</td>
<td>1 independent &amp; 1 franchise respondent</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 A basic guide to examine the type of person and their level of stability</td>
<td>1 independent respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 A basic guide during the interview to complement reference checks</td>
<td>1 independent respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the respondents stated that the candidate's resume was utilised during the interview as a 'basic guide', the respondents still heavily focused on personal qualities and personality. The comments below confirm this.

Figure 11.0

"I would use it as a basic guide to establish some kind of uniformity between candidates" (R1 - Independent).

"I would have it sitting in front of me during the interview. We would use it as a basic guide to look at their personality and that side of things" (R5 - Independent).

"We use their resume as a guide. We would use that as a basis for the interview. During the interview, we make brief notes on it" (R11 - Franchise).

Overall, thirty percent of respondents (6/20) stated they did not use the candidate's resume during the interview as a guide to questioning. These responses showed the importance owner / managers continue to place on first impressions and gut feelings and the influence they have over their final decision. For a more detailed outline of the
comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

**Question 3**

*Do you use any type of scoring system or rating scale during the interview?*

A total of eighty-five percent of respondents (17/20) stated they did not use any form of scoring system or rating scale as a tool for comparing applicants. Their comments are summarised in the table below:

**Table 9.0 – respondents who do not use a scoring system or rating scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Franchise</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rely on a combination of first impressions, gut instincts, perceived applicant ability to fit in, and continual impressions of personality and character formed throughout the interview</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Do not use a scoring system because it is too formal, restrictive and inflexible.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Because they conduct such as informal interview process, they do not see the need to compare applicants in such a formal manner.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Compare applicants using memory</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Compare applicants using informal notes written on the resume</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.0 shows the majority of respondents are clustered in the first response. Rather than rely on a formal rating scale, they relied heavily on a combination of first impressions, gut instincts, perceived applicant ability to fit in and continual impressions of personality and character formed through the interview.
Only fifteen percent of respondents (3/20) stated they used some kind of scoring system or rating scale during the interview. Each of these respondents stated they had prepared their own scoring system using a basic matrix framework.

The responses below show the informal, unplanned nature by which small business owner / managers approach the interview process. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

**Figure 12.0**

"We don’t really feel that we have a need for a rating scale. The interview is more a chance for us to see who would fit in and whether or not we would be comfortable working with this person" (R8 - independent).

"We don’t use any scoring system. At the end of the day, its just comes down to gut feelings" (R9 - franchise).

"Comparing applicants comes down to gut feel, first impressions as well as continual impressions" (R5 – Independent).

"No we don’t use a rating scale. Its all to do with personality, gut instincts, initial impressions and fitting into the office and with the people" (R6-Independent).

**Question 4**

*How many applicants would you interview for a particular position?*

A total of fifty five percent (11/20) of those interviewed responded to this question and each of those respondents provided very similar comments. Most respondents stated they would interview approximately 3 to 5 candidates for a particular position, although this would be dependent on the method of selection i.e. advertising or agency and would also be dependent on the type of position. A sample of their comments is summarised below.
For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

**Figure 13.0**

"Between three and five. Sometimes you make less desirable decisions because you just want to fill the gap quickly" (R3 – independent).

"It just depends on the position, but generally no more than 3 or 4 candidates" (R9 – franchise).

"I like to interview about 5 people for a particular position" (R18 – independent).

**Question 5**

*How many times would you interview each candidate before making a final selection decision?*

A total of seventy five percent (15/20) of those interviewed responded to this question and again, the responses were very similar. The majority stated they would interview an applicant twice before making a final decision. Only twenty percent of respondents (4) stated they are satisfied with interviewing once before making a final decision. It was also stated that this might vary according to the type of staff member being employed. A sample of their comments is summarized below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).
Figure 14.0

"Probably twice. The second interview is a confirmation of your first impressions and gut feelings of the person" (R9 – franchise).

"I would conduct two interviews maximum, the second one with the person I am sure I am going to employ" (R7 – independent).

"Just the once. We tend to get a pretty good idea just from the one interview. If we needed some kind of final confirmation, then we might go to a second interview" (R13 – independent).

Question 6
How many people would be involved in interviewing an applicant?

Overall, sixty percent (12/20) of those interviewed responded to this question and again, the comments reinforced the views expressed in previous questions. The majority stated that at least two people would be involved in the interview process. Only ten percent (2) of respondents said that one person was enough and stated they felt they could make a good enough judgment on their own. A sample of their comments is summarized in the table below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0 – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

Figure 15.0

"The interviewee would be considered by the employer and superior to whom he or she would report to" (R2– independent).

"It would generally be myself (owner) and my partner” (R9 – franchise).

"If it’s a female applicant, I would always have our receptionist or another lady involved in the interview process as well as myself (R12 – independent).
**Question 7**

Before interviewing a candidate, do you consider any guidelines or standards that might need to be followed?

Only twenty five percent (5/20) of those interviewed responded to this question. The other seventy five percent (15/20) responded with "no" and would not expand their answer further.

Although the small response rate to this question, those who did respond again confirmed the influence that gut feel and first impressions have on the interview process. The uncertainty of five respondents as to the meaning of the question and the unwillingness of fifteen respondents to comment further, suggest that very little is actually known about what kind of guidelines should be in place for selecting new employees and what formal policies and procedures need to be adopted to ensure a fair, unbiased interviewing process. Their comments are summarized below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

**Figure 16.0**

"It's based on gut feel" (R1 – independent).

"My gut feeling tells me this is an experience issue. I wouldn't know what procedures I would need to follow" (R2 – independent).

"We don't follow any certain structure when we interview or follow any particular guidelines" (R4 – independent).
Question 8
Do you check references as part of the selection process?

Only thirty five percent (7/20) of those interviewed responded to this question. Of those who responded, a total of four stated they checked references. The three respondents that stated they didn’t reference check qualified this by saying they tended to rely on their own personal judgment, or the trusted judgment of the person referring the candidate. They also revealed they considered the judgment of the referee to be slightly biased, and therefore preferred to rely on their own impressions. Their comments are summarized in Table 17.0 below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

Figure 17.0

“At the end of the day I rely on my own judgement a little bit. With more mature people, I follow my personal instincts and gut feel” (R20 – franchise).

“Not really. I guess reference checking is usually through trusted contacts or sources within the industry” (R7 – independent).

“I tend not to because normally referees are only going to say wonderful things about the person. It’s a slightly biased opinion” (R4 – independent).

Question 9
Do you prefer to employ people who are in the process of changing jobs rather than people who have been unemployed for a period?

Only twenty five percent (5/20) of those interviewed responded to this question. Three of these respondents (15%) commented very honestly and said that by human nature, they would prefer to employ somebody who was in the process of changing jobs.
They said they would certainly examine those who had been unemployed more closely, and would be skeptical of why. The comments of a few respondents, who stated they would employ the person regardless, highlighted criteria that were un-related to the ability of the applicant to perform the job. A summary of their comments is provided in the table below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: the interview (Page 209).

**Figure 18.0**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“To be honest, I would prefer to take on somebody who had been recently employed to somebody who hadn’t”</td>
<td>R6 – independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“By human nature I would always wonder why someone hadn’t been employed and I would therefore look a lot more critically at them”</td>
<td>R10 – franchise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“To be honest, I am very sceptical of someone who has been unemployed for a period”</td>
<td>R14 – franchise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Providing that their grooming, personal articulation, presentation, appearance and those sorts of things are up to scratch, then we would employ them”</td>
<td>R17 – franchise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion & Analysis - Section Four: The Interview

An owner / managers approach to the selection interviewing process was elicited from the data in this section. The majority of the respondents (75%) approached the interview in an informal, unstructured manner. The respondents qualified this by saying it was informal in content, structure and questioning. This is consistent with the research by Bartram et al., (1995) who found that although 91.4% of the sample stated they formally interviewed applicants, the majority qualified this by saying it was informal in structure and content. Moreover, the majority of respondents revealed the interview was more of an “informal chat”, used for the purpose of getting to know the applicant personally (Bartram et al., 1995; Oliver, 1998). When the comments were examined in detail and matched with the respondents approach to the selection interviewing process, they again demonstrated the emphasis that each owner / manager (independent and franchise) places on an applicants personal details over and above their knowledge, skills and abilities (Di Millia & Smith, 1994). Therefore, this has highlighted that small businesses rarely have formalised steps, policies and procedures in place for selection interviewing. This conclusion is consistent with the literature (Dipboye, 1994; Bartram et al., 1995; Cooper & Robertson, 1995). No differences were found between the respondents in independent and franchise firms. The comment made by one owner / manager demonstrates the general attitude towards selection interviewing.

"the steps I apply are by no way formalized or prepared in advance. At the end of the day, its whether they have the personality and attitude that will fit in"

A total of seventy percent of owner / managers use the candidates resume in some form during the interview. However, half of these respondents qualified this by saying that it was used as a basic guide for questioning an applicant on their personal qualities and personality (Bartram et al., 1995). It was not mentioned by any of the respondents that it was used as a tool for the purposes of gathering more job related information about the candidate to make an assessment of their ability to perform the job (Campion et al., 1995;
Gatewood & Field, 1998). Therefore, the conclusion formed is that selection decisions are often based on an individual, intuitive perception of fit, first impressions and a personal “liking” of a candidate’s personality. This is consistent with the findings of Hornsby & Kuratko (1990) and Deschpande & Golhar (1994).

The question examining the use of a scoring system or rating scale during the interview showed that eighty five percent of small businesses in the sample do not utilise any form of scoring system. The respondents relied on first impressions, gut instincts, perceived applicant ability to fit in and continual impressions of personality and character formed throughout the interview, rather than making a decision based on formal, scored selection criteria. Again, these results are consistent with those outlined in the literature (Dipboye, 1995; Bartram et al., 1995; Oliver, 1998). Schaper (2000) argues that small businesses feel that the consequences of selecting someone who will not fit in, is far greater than the consequences associated with someone who is lacking in competence. He suggests this is why small businesses emphasize the assessment of personal characteristics. As such, the use of a formalized scoring or rating scale is not a priority. This conclusion is supported by Gatewood & Field, (1998). However, why a preference was associated with selecting someone who would “fit in”, rather than someone who could perform the job competently, was not clearly outlined by the respondents in this thesis. Gatewood & Field (1998, p.515) suggest:

“It is simply not possible for a selection specialist to retain all relevant information, weigh it appropriately, and use it to compare a number of individuals – at least in a consistent and effective [and non biased] manner”

The comment below, made by a respondent summarizes the general attitude towards the use of a formalised rating / scoring procedure:
"We don’t really feel the need for a rating scale. The interview is more a chance for us to see who would fit in and whether or not we would be comfortable working with this person" (R8 – independent).

However, this is not consistent with Gatewood & Field (1998) who argue a rating scale is critical for a consistent and un-biased evaluation of a candidate. Therefore, the respondents in this study were not willing to pursue the interview as a technical / cognitive process, but rather focused on it as a social process (Posthuma et al., 2002).

The respondents in this study stated that three to five applicants would be interviewed for a particular position. The applicants would be short-listed after the first interview. The short-listed applicants would be interviewed a second time before a final decision is reached. Using two interviewers (either owners/managers or partners) was the most popular interview format. The research was consistent with these findings (Di Milia & Smith, 1994; Bartram et al., 1995). According to Di Milia & Smith (1994), a typical applicant within a small business will undergo more than one interview and the interview is conducted by two interviewers and involves the owner/manager.

The study showed that owner / managers were not aware of appropriate selection-interviewing guidelines and standards that needed to be followed (Campion et al., 1995; Robertson & Smith, 2001). Most adopt a very intuitive, unprepared approach, with minimal consideration into what would make the selection – interviewing process more effective (Hornsby & Kuratko, 1990; Deshpande & Golhar, 1994). This is supported by Finney (1987) and Schaper (2000) who propose that the task of selection and in particular, interviewing, is considerably more challenging for a small business as they have less access to the right sort of information needed to employ the best people. The findings from this study confirmed that owner / managers are reluctant to spend the time necessary to develop a structured interview process (Gatewood & Field, 1998).

The importance of reference checking has been emphasized throughout much of the literature (Campion et al., 1995). However, this study revealed that only slightly more
than half (57%) of the respondents reference checked. Of those respondents, not one mentioned the use of a standardized / structured reference checking format. A detailed examination of the comments revealed that reference checks were more likely to be used for the purpose of delving into an applicant’s character, personal qualities and ability to fit in, rather than an examining job-related competencies in order to reach a final hiring decision. This finding is consistent with Bartram et al., (1994). Those respondents who did not reference check (42%) stated they preferred to rely on their own impressions and gut feel when making a final selection decision. These results are consistent with the studies by Hornsby & Kuratko (1990) and Deshpande & Golhar (1994).
Findings - Section Five: Interviewer Questioning

Question 1
Can you give me an example of the types of questions you would ask an applicant during the interview and give your reasons why you believe these questions are important?

Ninety five percent (19/20) of respondents comments revealed the influence that personal, non-job related questioning play in the information seeking process. This is shown in the table below.

Table 10.0 – what owner / managers question candidates on

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Personal qualities and character / personality</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Family life / background / personal and family stability</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education and professional experience</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Marital status / partners / boyfriends</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Outside, personal interests / hobbies</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Personal and social life</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Potential to fit in</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Age</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Motivation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Technical competency</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Hopes, goals, ambitions</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Smoker / non smoker</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Outside commitments / responsibilities</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Work ethic</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Medical health</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sample of their comments is highlighted in Figure 19.0 below.
"Questions about their personal life, social life, what they get up to in their own time. These tell you a lot about their personality" (R3 – independent).

"More than anything, we would use the interview questioning just to sound them out and look at their personality and whether they have the potential to fit in" (R4 – independent).

"I try and get a good insight into the person, their personal interests, their family background, boyfriends, partners / marital status” (R12 – independent).

"I will question on age, medical health, marital status, family status and so on. I want stability from an employee, so I need to find out about personal background” (R14 – franchise).

The findings revealed a slight difference in the responses from independent and franchise firms. Whilst independent firms demonstrated a heavy emphasis on personal lines of inquiry, the comments made by owner / managers in franchise firms demonstrated a more mixed questioning approach, concentrating on both professional and personal lines of inquiry. They tend to concentrate on working through the applicant’s resume to explore professional background information and stability, motivation, work ethic, academic history and so on, as well exploring an applicant’s personal details. The franchise firms are larger and must comply with franchise requirements. This may explain the small difference between the two groupings.

The comments in Figure 20.0 below demonstrate a ‘mixed’ approach of both personal and professional questioning in the selection interview:
Figure 20.0

"I would first just question them in such a way to re-confirm information in their resume, both professional and personal" (R9 - franchise).

"The aim is to get a complete profile of the person regarding professional, academic, social, personal and family details. The questioning usually varies each time" (R17 - franchise).

"I like to think that I would ask a good balance of both professional and personal questions without intruding too much into their personal life" (R20 - franchise).

"Personal questions are most important. Then I would move on to questions regarding what work they have done" (R19 - franchise).

The comments made by franchise owner / managers reveal a slightly greater knowledge regarding the need for job-related questioning. Nevertheless, the findings reveal the majority of respondents would ask inappropriate questions during the interview process. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

Question 2
Do you follow any certain format or structure when questioning applicants?

Overall, seventy percent (14/20) of the respondents interviewed provided comments on this question.

A total of sixty percent of respondents (12/14) revealed an informal, unstructured approach towards a questioning format or structure. The respondent's comments suggest that the interview will be formatted according to a basic set of questions and topics, will be free flowing, will depend on how the conversation develops between interviewer and applicant, will vary between candidates and will be informal and ad-lib. These
characteristics represent the opposite of a structured questioning approach as discussed by Campion et al., (1995); Cooper & Robertson, 1995; McConnell (1999) and Buckley et al., (2000).

Only ten percent (2/14) of respondents stated that they did not adopt any pre-determined questioning approach. It was emphasized that each interview is entirely ad-lib, varies each time and is just a friendly chat ‘to get to know the person’.

The findings reveal there is a similarity between independent and franchise firms in their approach to interview questioning. The comments suggest that neither adopts a structured or formalized approach to interview questioning. The comments below in Figure 21.0 demonstrate this. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

Figure 21.0

"Each interview is informal enough to allow for variation between candidates. We adopt a very informal approach, relying on our gut instincts and our impressions of their personality” (R10 - franchise).

“We don’t really follow any rigid structure / format or guideline when questioning. We adopt an informal approach where we can be flexible in what we ask” (R9 - franchise).

“The format of the questioning is quite informal. It takes on more of a conversational style” (R8 - independent).
**Question 3**

*Do you find that you consistently cover the same questions or topics in every interview?*

A total of eighty percent (16/20) of respondents interviewed commented on this question. Only forty-five percent (9/20) recognized the need to maintain some level of consistency in questioning between interviews. However, more than half (55%) openly admitted there was some degree of variation in their questioning and the interview topics addressed in each interview. A sample of their comments is highlighted below.

**Figure 22.0**

"The questions and topics would vary between interviews. You tend to become a little blaze and skip things" (R3 - independent).

"I think the questions vary a lot, depending on the type of person" (R7 – independent)

"The questions and topics will vary between applicants. Its just a chance for me to find out as much as I can about the applicant and then make a judgement call based on my impressions and gut instincts. I mean there is no real consistency or structure to it at all" (R18 – independent).

"Questioning is more of an informal, free flowing, unprepared, ad-lib sort of discussion" (R20 – franchise).

As mentioned previously, only forty five percent (9/20) of respondents recognized the need to cover the same questions and topics in each interview. Whilst most of these respondents stated that nothing was formally written or prepared, they did emphasize that they used broad categories to establish some consistently and used this as a tool to compare applicants on certain criteria. The following comments reflect the general tone of responses, which capture this theme:
“It’s often very difficult to follow or maintain a strict format, but in general I make an effort to cover all the same questions in each interview”, (R11 – franchise).

“Generally, the interview structure and therefore the questions would fit into broad categories such as experience, academic history, social and personal life for every interview– but done on an informal, flexible basis” (R17 – franchise).

“We try and photocopy a list of topics before the interview begins to maintain some level of consistency between interviews. In this way, the interview is still flexible enough to allow us to formulate questions as we go along” (R9 – franchise).

“Even without a written / formal guide, I tend to follow the same type of questioning pattern” (R14 – franchise).

In summary, the findings showed that franchise firms tended to place a greater emphasis on establishing some kind of interview consistency by way a more prepared approach towards questioning and interview topics. The large size of franchises and the requirements placed on their operations may reflect the difference between the two groupings. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

**Question 4 (a)**

*Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant’s job competence (knowledge based question)?*

One hundred percent (20/20) of respondents interviewed commented on this question. Their responses have been grouped and summarized below for comparison, with the most popular response listed first to the least popular response.
The following three questions (4a, 4b, 4c) were designed specifically to examine an owner / managers:

1. Knowledge of how to phrase a question in the selection interview
2. Knowledge of what questions can be asked in the interview (The West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984) and;
3. Understanding of different styles or approaches to questioning, these being knowledge-based (Question 4a), situational (Question 4b) and behavioral (Question 4c)

Table 11.0 – how to phrase a question to assess job competence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Independent (%)</th>
<th>Franchise (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Provide an example of a situation or a problem and ask them to comment on how they would deal with it (a role play)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This question is covered when you ask them what type of work they have done in the past (their experience, previous jobs etc).</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There is no direct question to assess job competency.</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Job competency is too hard to assess in the interview.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Assess job competency by asking the applicant loaded questions.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11.0 shows the most popular question to assess an applicants job competency (35% of respondents) was to ‘provide an example of a situation or problem and ask the candidate to provide comment or a solution’. This approach is very similar to a role-play exercise. The following comments reflect a sample of the ‘most popular’ response provided:
Figure 24.0

"The job entails this and this. How would you deal with these issues" (R1 - independent)

"I would give them an example of a situation and ask how they would respond to it, kind of like a role play situation" (R12 - independent)

"I might give them an example of a problem and ask them how they might solve it" (R8 - independent)

"I would ask a question about how they dealt with working under pressure and give a specific example - kind of like a role play" (R17 - franchise)

The findings showed no major differences in responses from independent and franchise firms. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

**Question 4 (b)**

*Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess applicant’s personal characteristics (behavioural based question)?*

A total of ninety percent (18/20) of respondents interviewed commented on this question. Their responses have been grouped and summarized below for comparison.
**Table 12.0 – how to phrase a question to assess personal characteristics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I (%)</th>
<th>F (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. There is no direct question to assess this. Personal characteristics are assessed through an informal / ad-lib discussion where you get the applicant to openly reveal personal details about themselves ie. Family, personality, social lifestyle etc.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Personal characteristics would be judged by physical / personal appearance, first impressions, gut feelings and instincts.</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personal characteristics would be assessed by running through the “personal characteristics section” in their resume and examining their strengths and weaknesses from this.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. The question would depend on the position and the applicant.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This would be assessed by asking them to rate themselves on various personal characteristics such as communication skills.</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings show the most favored approach (35%) to questioning an applicant on their ‘personal characteristics or qualities’ in the selection interview is via an informal, ad-lib conversation. The interviewer will encourage the applicant to reveal ‘personal details’ about themselves, without having to ask a direct question.

As the interview progressed, it was noted that the respondents placed greater emphasis on assessing appearance, personality, personal character and qualities, family and social life, sporting interests, travel plans, personal aspirations, strengths and weaknesses and relationships.

Table 12.0 again confirmed the informal, unplanned and ad-lib approach to questioning in the selection interview by both independent and franchise firms. The comments below show this:
Figure 25.0

“I look at appearance and first impressions. If somebody is untidy, looks daggy or has their boobs falling out, you just don’t want that” (R3 – independent).

“You tend to find out (about personal details) through an informal discussion. It doesn’t take long to find out what type of person they are, personally and socially” (R6 – independent).

“Most of it involves delving into their personal circumstances such as looking at their social and sporting activities, travel interests, their personal aspirations” (R17 – franchise).

“I think it is a personal judgement / gut instincts call. There is no direct question that can be asked to address this” (R18 – independent).

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

Question 4 (c)

Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant’s ability to work under pressure (situational based question)?

Overall, ninety percent (18/20) of respondents interviewed commented on this question. Their responses have been grouped and summarized below for comparison.
Table 13.0 – how to phrase a question to assess ability to work under pressure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I (%)</th>
<th>F (%)</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. We look at their past experience, previous jobs, roles and</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities, volume and hours of work etc – which is</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usually on their resume and question them on this.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Its not something that can be assessed in the interview. It</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can be only be judged when you see them performing on the job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(so you have to take a risk)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. There is no direct question to assess this in the interview</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. We would describe a pressure situation and see how they</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>respond (like a role play situation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. We try and assess their ability to work under pressure</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through reference checking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Its assessed entirely using personal judgement / gut instincts</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. This is not something that we try and assess in the interview – it is an expected requirement of all our employees</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. We examine their capacity to work long hours, rather than</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>their ability to work under pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings showed the responses are quite scattered for both independent and franchise firms. The most popular responses can be seen in Figure 26.0 below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
Figure 26.0

"I look at their past experience, volume of work, work responsibilities. It is a personal judgement call" (R4 – independent).

"It is very difficult to assess. It might come out when talking about previous jobs, experience, responsibilities" (R14 – independent).

"You can only assess this when they are performing on the job. So, you have to take a risk and make a personal judgement call" (R8 – independent).

"It just comes down to a personal judgement call” (R18 – independent).

Question 5
I am going to describe 3 personal styles towards interviewing. Which best reflects you?

a. You go into the interview with a pre-determined list of questions?

b. You go into the interview with a broad checklist of topics?

c. You use the CV as a guide to the questions and topics you will cover?

One hundred percent of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. Their responses are summarized in Table 14.0 below.

Table 14.0 – approach to interview questioning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A combination of (b) and (c)</td>
<td>7 independent &amp; 7 franchise</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. (c) only</td>
<td>3 independent respondents</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. (b) only</td>
<td>2 independent respondents</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. A combination of (a) and (b)</td>
<td>1 independent respondent</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As the findings show, a combination of approach (b) and (c) is the most popular approach adopted by independent and franchise firms. This finding is very similar to the findings in previous questions examining the approach to the selection interview and questioning in particular.

A more detailed examination of responses showed that the majority of owner / managers (70%) approached the selection interview with a broad checklist of topics, coupled with the applicants resume. The majority of respondents emphasized that this checklist of topics was not necessarily written and was quite informal. It was also emphasized that the selection interview was approached in a very ‘casual, flexible and informal manner’. The following is a selection of comments that highlights this approach:

Figure 27.0

“A combination of two and three. Probably leaning slightly more towards 3. We do have a broad idea of some topics but we are more concentrated on working through their CV and making up suitable questions as we go” (R8 - independent).

“A combination of 2 and 3. But we don’t go into the interview with a list sitting in front of us” (R17 - franchise).

“A combination of 2 and 3. We have things in our mind and we will go through their CV and address certain things” (R11 – franchise).

Therefore, a combination of (b) and (c) is the most popular approach to questioning in the selection interview by both independent and franchise firms. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
Question 6

I am now going to ask you a list of questions. Can you tell me whether you believe they are suitable or unsuitable to question an applicant on during the interview?

This question explored the respondents' knowledge concerning inappropriate versus appropriate questioning strategies. Questions that were consistent with and questions that were inconsistent with Equal Employment Opportunity legislative requirements were included in the list.

a. What part of the city do you live in?

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question.

The findings showed that seventy five percent (15/20) of respondents thought it was a suitable question to ask during the selection interview. The other twenty five percent (5) of respondents felt this question was unsuitable. Therefore, the findings reveal the majority of both independent and franchise firms believe this question is suitable and they would ask it. A summary of the findings can be seen in Table 15.0 below.

Table 15.0 – what part of the city do you live in?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This is suitable and a ‘very important’ question to ask</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This is unsuitable to question a candidate on</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sample of comments is provided below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
b. *How many years of work experience do you have?*

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question.

A total of ninety percent (18/20) of respondents believe this question would be suitable to ask during the interview. No major difference was found between independent and franchise interviewee comments.

Of those respondents who thought this question was suitable, forty five percent stated that the response would be very important; thirty percent stated they felt it was ‘suitable’ for inclusion in the interview. Another fifteen percent of respondents (3) also stated that work experience would have no impact on their final decision, “particularly if they liked the person” and “felt they would fit in”, as two of these three respondents stated.

Only ten percent (2/20) of respondents felt this question was unsuitable for inclusion in the selection interview. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
c. **Have you ever been arrested or convicted?**

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question. The findings showed that more than half of the respondents – fifty five percent (11/20) believed this was a suitable interview question. A sample of their comments is provided below.

**Figure 29.0**

| “Suitable and if we got a yes response, we would be concerned” (R8 – independent). |
| “Suitable. If someone does have a record, you certainly want to know about it and what it is for” (R13 – independent). |

Only forty five percent (9/20) of respondents stated they felt this question was unsuitable to ask an applicant during the interview. Interestingly, only one respondent (independent firm) recognized there might be a discriminatory component in asking this question. The following is a selected sample of their comments. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

**Figure 30.0**

| “Unsuitable. Its not something I ask (R4 – independent). |
| “Unsuitable. We wouldn’t ask this in the interview (R9 – franchise). |
d. Are you single, married or other?

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question. More than half of the respondents – fifty five percent (11/20) stated this question was suitable for inclusion in the selection interview. Of those respondents, five (25%) further emphasized the importance of finding out about personal relationships because it gives a good indication of an applicant’s personality, personal and family stability, family responsibilities, commitments and family background information. There was no significant difference between independent and franchise firms. The following is a sample of their comments.

**Figure 31.0**

“Suitable. It provides a good indication of their personality” (R3 – independent).

“Suitable. It is important to determine their level of stability, personal / family responsibilities and background” (R7 – independent).

“Suitable. I always think it is important because of the family commitment aspect of it” (R20 – franchise).

“Suitable. It gives you a good idea of their stability” (R5 – independent).

A total of forty five percent (9/20) of respondents felt this question was unsuitable for inclusion in the selection interview. A sample of their comments follows:

**Figure 32.0**

“Unsuitable. I don’t think their personal relationships should have anything to do with whether or not they get the job” (R2 – independent).

“Unsuitable. From what I understand, we are not allowed to ask this question, but I will definitely get it out of them” (R14 – franchise).

“Unsuitable. I don’t believe this is of any importance” (R19 – franchise).
Only one respondent (5%) recognized that this question might be ‘unsuitable’ for discriminatory reasons. However, this respondent further stated he would definitely get it out of the applicant, at some stage during the interview, indirectly. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

e. How old are you?

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question. The majority of respondents – ninety percent (18/20) stated that it was ‘suitable’ to question a candidate on how old they are. Their comments are grouped and summarized in Table 16.0 below:

**Table 16.0 – how old are you?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The answer to this question is very important to know but we would not ask it directly in the interview. We would find out about a candidate's age through their work experience or work history</td>
<td>4 independent &amp; 2 franchise</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The answer to this question is very important and as an employer, we are entitled to know the answer.</td>
<td>4 independent</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. It is important to know the age of an applicant from a pay perspective.</td>
<td>3 independent</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is important to find out the age of a candidate because age influences their ability to “fit in”.</td>
<td>2 independent &amp; 1 franchise</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. This question is suitable but the answer would have no influence on our final decision.</td>
<td>2 franchise</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A sample of their comments is provided in Figure 33.0 below.
Figure 33.0

“Suitable. I think we are entitled to know the answer” (R2 – independent).
“Suitable. We are a young office, so it is important that the person can fit into that, so this is where age comes into it” (R4 – independent).
“Suitable. It is very important that I perceive they will fit in” (R10 – franchise).
“Suitable. It is something I like to know but my gut feeling of a candidate carries much greater weighting” (R19 – franchise).

Only ten percent (2/20) of respondents stated that this question would be unsuitable to ask a candidate during the selection interview. Only one of these respondents recognized the potential discriminatory impact of asking this question. However, they went on to state, that they would find out during the course of discussions indirectly.

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

f. What languages do you speak?

A total of ninety percent (18/20) of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. A total of seventy five percent (15/20) of respondents stated this question was unsuitable. Respondents from both independent and franchise firms provided very similar comments. They stated this question was of no importance or relevance in the real estate industry. Only fifteen percent (3) of respondents stated this question was suitable to ask an applicant during the selection interview. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
g. *Who recommended you to us?*

A total of ninety percent (18/20) of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. Forty-five percent (9) of respondents stated it was important to know where the candidate was coming from (particularly if wasn’t a reputable source) and who recommended them (particularly if it wasn’t through an agency or trusted industry source). Only five percent (1) of these respondents, who felt it was ‘suitable’, further stated that it would have no impact on their final decision.

A total of forty five percent (9) of respondents stated this question with unsuitable. The majority qualified this by saying that it wasn’t important because in most cases, they knew where the candidate was coming from. Interestingly, one of these respondents commented that it was unsuitable “as long as they fit in with other people”. This comment summarized the general attitude of the respondents. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

h. *This position may require extensive travel and over-time, do you think you could handle this?*

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question.

The majority of respondents – seventy five percent (15/20) believed that this question was suitable. They stated that addressing the issue of overtime in the interview was highly important, particularly for the purpose of examining the candidate's attitude. A sample of their comments is in Figure 34.0 below.
“Suitable. There attitude definitely influences our decision” (R3 – independent).

“Suitable. That is definitely something we try and address” (R8 – independent).

“Suitable. We definitely like to try and interpret how they respond to the issue of overtime” (R11 – franchise).

“Suitable. I would discuss overtime to try and interpret their attitude” (R14 – franchise).

Only twenty five percent (5) respondents stated that this question was unsuitable. The comments or explanations for why they held this belief were quite varied. For a detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

i. Have you made arrangements to have your children taken care of whilst at work?

A total of ninety five percent (19/20) of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. Fifty percent (10) of respondents stated that this question was suitable. The majority of these respondents qualified their responses by stating it was their right as an employer to know about an applicants family background and commitments, particularly if their was the potential that these might interfere with their work performance.
Figure 35.0

“We don’t want somebody who will be continually running home to look after children or constantly interrupted” (R8 - independent).

“I would just say, if you have children, are they in care whilst you are at work and what are their ages. This is very important to know” (R12 - independent).

“I would definitely want to know about their family situation, whether they have children liability before I employed them” (R13 - independent).

"I would ask if they had to pick up their children after school" (R20 - franchise).

A total of forty five percent (9) of respondents stated that this question was unsuitable. Of those respondents, the comments were quite varied. However, there were no distinct differences between independent and franchise firms. A sample of their comments is provided in Figure 36.0 below.

Figure 36.0

“Unsuitable. We address family background and responsibilities informally, but I wouldn’t ask the question directly” (R7 – independent).

“Unsuitable. This is never really relevant because the people I employ are usually fairly young” (R18 - independent).

“Unsuitable. I think the family is a hell of a lot more important” (R10 - franchise).

“Unsuitable, I would never ask this question of anybody” (R14 – franchise).

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
j. Would you be comfortable supervising men (if the applicant was a woman)?

A total of ninety five percent (19/20) of respondents interviewed provided comments on this interview question. Fifty percent (10) of respondents stated that this question was suitable. The majority of those respondents revealed they would ask the question if it were applicable to the situation. In other words, if a woman were applying for a position, where she would largely have to supervise men, then this question would be very applicable and important. It was also emphasized this question would be asked from a “comfort” perspective. The following is a sample of their comments.

**Figure 37.0**

“Suitable. It's important that everybody feels comfortable” (R9 - franchise).

“Suitable. I would ask for the fact that some women wouldn't be comfortable in a supervisory role, particularly of men” (R7 - independent).

“Suitable. If the position required it, then I would address the issue indirectly” (R6 - independent).

“Suitable, if relevant, because I know some men wouldn't be comfortable with a woman boss and vice versa” (R12 - independent).

A total of forty five percent (9) of respondents stated that this question was unsuitable. They qualified their responses by arguing this question was not important, was irrelevant and that if a candidate had been selected for an interview, then there is an expectation that she would be capable of performing the job, irrespective or regardless of who she is supervising. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
k. Do you own a car?

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question. Of those respondents, ninety percent (18) believed that this question was suitable. The majority stated that 'having a current driver's license is a critical part of the job, particularly for a professional staff member. The two respondents (10%) who felt this question was unsuitable offered no real reasoning for this. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).

l. Do you suffer any disabilities or health problems?

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question. Sixty percent (12/20) of respondents stated that this question was suitable and the majority revealed it is a very important question to ask. A sample of their comments is in Figure 38.0 below.

**Figure 38.0**

"Suitable. This is one of the most important questions to ask" (R3 – independent).

"Suitable. You don't want to hire somebody and find out later that they cant perform the job because of a disability" (R8 – independent).

"Suitable. Its something that you make a judgement call on based on their sporting activities, hobbies, appearance etc" (R14 – franchise).

A total of forty percent (8/20) of respondents stated that this question was unsuitable. Most of these comments were similar and no major distinctions were found between independent and franchise firms. A sample of these is provided in Figure 39.0 below.
**Figure 39.0**

"Unsuitable, because their CV would indicate whether or not they enjoyed good health by looking at their hobbies" (R12 – independent).

"Unsuitable. If they can still do their job, then it’s none of my business" (R11 – franchise).

"Unsuitable. Unless physically obvious that something was wrong, then I wouldn’t ask the question" (R17 – franchise).

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: interviewer questioning (Page 212).
Discussion & Analysis - Section Five: Interviewer Questioning

This section was designed to examine owner / managers knowledge of appropriate questioning techniques, what questions can and cannot be addressed in the selection interview and their knowledge regarding the correct content and structure of questioning.

The majority of respondents (95%) demonstrated the influence that personal, non-job related questioning plays in the information seeking process during the interview. Questioning related to personal qualities / character, family life, education / professional experience were ranked as the most popular topics that interviewers will question candidates on. Other key characteristics mentioned by respondents included personal and social life, motivation, hopes / goals and ambitions, general work ethic etc. The extent of non-job related questioning suggests these characteristics are more important than seeking job-related information on qualifications, experience or training. Bartram et al., (1994) proposes that this may reflect the view that appropriate qualifications and experience can always be attained; however an employer cannot expect to change the personal character and qualities of an individual. Therefore, when examining the respondent's comments from this perspective, it is not surprising they place such importance on personal characteristics and qualities. Bartram et al., (1994) further suggests that most employers see job competence as something that can be developed, while personal qualities are relatively invariant (Bartram et al., 1994, p.356). These findings support that the interview and questioning, in particular, is a social process (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Posthuma et al., 2002).

A detailed review of the comments showed a slight variation in the opinions of respondents from independent and franchise firms regarding the types of questions they would ask an applicant during the selection interview and, which questions they believed were most important. Independent firm respondents showed a greater emphasis towards personal questioning. This suggests a more limited understanding of what are appropriate and effective interviewing practices. The franchise operations exhibited a more balanced approach, questioning on both personal, non-job related interests and professional, job
related topics. This finding supports the conclusion that franchise firms, which are larger in size, are given greater access to detailed information regarding procedures for selecting and interviewing candidates. In other words, they are guided by franchise requirements. More often than not, this information will assist in reducing the potential for a breach of the equal employment opportunity legislation.

The respondents demonstrated a tendency to vary the questioning content and structure between different candidates during the interview process. The comment below summarizes the ‘general attitude’ towards questioning in the interview:

“The aim is to get a complete profile of the person regarding professional, academic, social, personal and family details. **The questioning usually varies each time, depending on the candidate**”.

This finding is consistent with the conclusion of Bartram et al., (1994) and McCourt (1999). Both researchers propose that small business employers are not optimally utilizing a planned and structured questioning approach, consistently and objectively, in order to penetrate a reliable and fair interview process.

The implementation of statutory requirements within Australia will act as a pressure for the formalization and standardization of selection procedures. As the implications resulting from a breach of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 become more widely recognized, this will act as a pressure on all small businesses to regulate their selection procedures, so that all candidates are evaluated in a consistent and objective manner and thoughtless bias is checked (Gardner & Palmer, 1997). In the meantime, Finney (1987) and Schaper (2000) argue that an increasing percentage of small business owners will find themselves in breach of the legislative requirements for recruitment and selection. They also propose that this will represent a serious burden, particularly given their limited managerial resources and ability to cope with the financial loss that may result from an equal opportunity complaint (Finney, 1987; Gatewood & Field, 1998).
A total of eighty five percent of respondents (independent and franchise) do not follow any certain format or structure when questioning candidates. The majority revealed an informal, unstructured approach to questioning. Oliver (1998) suggests that sitting down for an unprepared, unplanned chat without a clear specification of the job being sought will not yield the best results. As a result, small business employers will easily find themselves straying into areas of discrimination. The comment made by one respondent below highlights the reason for this concern:

"Each interview is informal enough to allow for variation between candidates. We adopt a very informal approach, relying on our gut instincts and our impressions of their personality" (R10).

Only forty five percent of respondents recognized the need to maintain a level of consistency in questioning between interviews and made an effort to do so. Whilst most of these respondents stated that questions were not formally written down or prepared in advance, they did try and adopt broad categories to use as a basis for comparing applicants on certain criteria. A total of fifty five percent of respondent’s openly admitted to varying their questioning content and structure between interviews. This finding is consistent with one research survey, which reported that fewer than 33% of companies used a structured format, this being a pre-determined list of interviewer questions (cited in Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.485). Therefore, you would not find questions consistently asked of all applicants under those circumstances (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.485).

Researchers have recognized that standardizing interviewer-questioning processes could assist in minimizing personal, individual biases and judgments when comparing candidates (Dipboye, 1994; Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Campion et al., 1995). As Dipboye (1994) argues, this will act to restrict many sources of bias and individual prejudices from arising. However, the findings in this study showed that consistency was not an issue. Respondents were more concerned with “social fit”, rather than matching the person with the job.
A more detailed examination of the findings showed that franchise operations are more inclined to establish some kind of interview consistency by way of a more prepared approach towards questioning structure and content. This finding could be related to an earlier conclusion that franchise operations (typically larger than the independent firms) have more readily available resources and these are more focused on managing effectively. There is also a greater pressure on franchise operations from ‘centralised’ management to conform to recommended, standard practices.

The responses to the three questions examining the different approaches to questioning, confirmed the very limited knowledge and understanding of owner / managers. Not one respondent was able to give a detailed example of a hypothetical question used in an interview situation to assess an applicants job competence, personal characteristics or ability to work under pressure. The findings showed the questioning style adopted by these respondents are less formalized and less structured. Their choice of questioning is ambiguous, ad-lib and flexible enough to vary between candidates. As Campion et al., (1995, p.668) argued, they tend to focus on criteria or traits with no clearly defined links to job performance. The findings of this study supported the conclusions of Campion et al., (1995). The respondents emphasized a myriad of personal questions they felt were most important to assess during the interview. However, the effectiveness of these types of questions in assessing future job behaviors and performance is limited.

Seventy percent of respondents interviewed stated they approached the selection interview with a very broad checklist of topics, coupled with the candidates resume. A deeper examination of their comments revealed this checklist was not written, was informal and the interview was approached in a very casual, ad-lib manner. This approach was consistent with independent and franchise firms. As much of the literature argues, small businesses are disadvantaged because of this approach to interviewing. One of the most consistent recommendations made by those who have written about improving the use of the interview in selection has been to “impose structure on the verbal exchange of information between the parties” (Gatewood & Field, 1998, p.510). Gatewood et al., (1998) suggests that this is done by providing the interviewer with a
formal, written and pre-determined set of job-related questions that must be asked of all candidates. They propose that this will aid in building consistency between interviews and in reducing contamination from biased interviewer judgments, which arise when interviewers question candidates freely in an informal, ad-lib manner (the approach of owner/managers in this sample).

The final question in this section examined whether particular interview questions were discriminatory (unsuitable) or non-discriminatory (suitable). Each of the questions is discussed below and Maddux (1994) provides the reasoning for each question.

a. What part of the city do you live in?
“This question is not job related and has nothing to do with job performance. It could be construed as an attempt to obtain ethnic background information” (Maddux, 1994, p.71). The majority of the respondents in the sample (15/20) stated that this question was suitable and, as such, put themselves at risk of breaching equal employment opportunity requirements, if a candidate felt this information was used unfairly in making a final selection decision.

b. How many years of work experience do you have?
“This question might be considered age related and a problem if you tend to eliminate applicants in the 40 to 70-range age group”. It is preferred to ask instead, how many years of job related work experience has the applicant had (Maddux, 1994, p.71). The majority (18/20) of the respondents stated that this question was suitable and, as such, are putting themselves at risk of breaching equal employment opportunity requirements, if a candidate can prove they were treated unfairly on the basis of age (The West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984).

c. Have you ever been arrested or convicted?
This question violates equal employment opportunity and privacy requirements. Asking this question in an interview situation represents a breach of an applicant’s private details (Maddux, 1994, p.71). More of than half (11/20) of the respondents stated that this
question was suitable and, as such, would have breached privacy and equal employment opportunity guidelines.

d. Are you single, married or other?

“This question is not necessarily discriminatory, but if asked mostly of women, it could have discriminatory implications. It would be difficult to show relevancy to job qualifications for either sex” (Maddux, 1994, p.71). More than half (11/20) of the respondents stated that this question was suitable to ask and was utilized for the purposes of evaluating an applicant’s personality, family responsibilities / commitments and level of stability. Each small business that uses this question in making a final decision is breaching the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.

e. How old are you?

“Questions about an applicant’ age could be viewed as discriminatory, especially when an applicant is in the “protected age group” (40-70 years). It would be preferable to obtain age related information after employment for a separate record” (Maddux, 1994, p.71). The majority (18/20) of respondents stated that this question was suitable and, as such, would have breached the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984, if a candidate proved they were treated unfairly on this basis.

f. What languages do you speak?

If you are looking for a specific language capability to meet a specific job requirement, it is better to ask, “what degree of fluency to you possess”. This question does not represent a direct breach of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984, but it is important that it is phrased correctly (Maddux, 1994, p.71). The majority (15/20) of respondents stated that this question was unsuitable, because it had no relevancy to the Real Estate Industry.
g. *Who recommended you to us?*

This question itself is not a problem and does not breach the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984. However, it may become a problem for hiring practices if they depend on employee referral and have a predominantly white, male, Christian, or youthful staff etc (Maddux, 1994, p.71). A total of forty five percent (9/20) of respondents stated that this question was suitable. These respondents are not breaching equal employment opportunity requirements, but need to be careful when relying on employee referral.

h. *This position may require extensive travel and over-time; do you think you can handle this?*

This question does not represent a breach of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 and would be a suitable question to ask, as long as travel or overtime are job requirements (Maddux, 1994, p.71). The majority (15/20) of respondents stated that this question was suitable. However, these respondents did not state that they would ask this question only when travel and overtime was a job requirement. If this question were being used to eliminate certain candidates, then it would represent a breach of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.

i. *Have you made arrangements to have your children taken care of whilst at work?*

This question is not discriminatory if asked equally of men and women. It is dangerous, however, since the traditional stereotype is that women follow their husbands’ career. A woman might feel that she has been discriminated against if other questions were in the same vein. To avoid breaching the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984, it is probably advisable to avoid asking this question (Maddux, 1994, p.72). A total of fifty percent (10/20) of respondents stated that this question was suitable. If these respondents were using this question to eliminate certain candidates (i.e., particularly women) then this question would represent a breach of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.
Would you be comfortable supervising men (if the applicant was a woman)?

Any question that is asked of one sex and not the other puts the onus on the interviewer to prove they are not discriminating. To ask if the applicant is simply “comfortable supervising” would be a more appropriately phrased question and would not place the interviewer in danger of breaching the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 (Maddux, 1994, p.72). A total of fifty percent (10/20) of respondents stated that this question was suitable to ask a woman and as such, would have breached the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.

Do you own a car?

All questions, including this one, that are related to personal habits, finances and politics are unjustifiable invasions of personal privacy unless owning a car was an inherent requirement of satisfactorily performing the job. Asking this question and allowing the response to influence whether or not an offer of employment was made, would represent a breach of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 (Maddux, 1994, p.72). The majority of respondents (18/20) stated that this question was suitable, but further revealed that having a current drivers license was a critical part of the job, particularly for a professional staff member in the Real Estate Industry. Therefore, if owning a car and having a current drivers license were an inherent requirement of performing the job effectively, then these respondents would not have breached equal employment opportunity requirements.

Do you suffer any disabilities or health problems?

Pre-employment questions about health problems or illnesses may not be asked because they may reveal the existence of a disability, which could unfairly prejudice the offer of employment (Maddux, 1994, p.72). The majority of respondents (12/20) stated that this question was suitable and, as such, would have breach the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.
The findings from this question confirmed the limited knowledge that small business owner/managers have regarding appropriate interviewer questioning practices because the majority of respondents did not recognize the questions that were discriminatory. There was only one question where the majority of respondents (75%) felt it was unsuitable to question a candidate on this topic. This was related to whether the candidate spoke any other languages. The respondents stated this was not an important requirement for work in the real estate industry.

Over the past several decades, researchers have examined the impact of social and institutional implications on the fairness of the interview outcome (Buckley et al., 2000). In other words, researchers have explored how an applicants age, gender, race, religion, marital status, appearance, personality, lifestyle, disability etc have led to biased and prejudiced judgements by interviewers. Many studies have shown that interviewers do discriminate on the basis of these characteristics (Dipboye et al., 1975; Schmitt, 1976; Arvey & Campion, 1982; Harris, 1989; Conwell, 1991; Caldwell & Burger, 1998).

This studies findings demonstrate the influence that these non job-related applicant characteristics still have on interviewer questioning and subsequent evaluations of an applicants ability to perform the job. They also support the conclusion that the interview and, in particular, interviewer questioning, is a social process. The respondents in this study are more concerned with employing someone who will “fit in” rather than one who could perform the job competently, again highlighting that the interview and interviewer questioning is essentially a social process (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Posthuma et al., 2002).
Relevance of findings to Institutional Theory

The findings from this section demonstrate that the coercive effect of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 has not been effective. Owner / managers use and continue to use inappropriate questioning strategies. The limited coercive effect of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 also suggests that interviewers in this sample do not know or recognise discriminatory questioning practices. Thus, neither formal nor informal pressures have affected the recruiting and selection interviewing practices of owner / managers in small real estate businesses in the Real Estate Industry.
Findings - Section Six: Training & Legislation

**Question 1**

*Have you ever undertaken any formal professional or practical training in interviewing?*

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed provided answers to this question.

Eighty five percent (17/20) of respondents stated they had never undertaken any formal professional or practical training in selection interviewing. The comments indicated most respondents believe interviewing is something that you learn through experience. A selection of their comments is in Figure 40.0 below.

**Figure 40.0**

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“No. Its just something you pick up as you get more experience at it” (R6 – independent).

“No. Its just something you learn through experience” (R8 – independent).

“No. Its something that evolves through experience” (R17 – franchise).
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Only a small percentage of respondents (15%) revealed they had received some training in selection interviewing techniques. However, all emphasized this training was undertaken many years ago and they would be very surprised if they could actually remember any of the formalized interviewing techniques they were taught. There were no major differences in responses from independent or franchise firms.

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).
**Question 2**

*Do you believe that training in selection interviewing practices and techniques would be valuable?*

One hundred percent (20/20) of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. Seventy percent (14/20) of those stated training would be valuable. A sample of their comments is provided below.

**Figure 41.0**

"Yes, particularly considering I have absolutely no idea of what guidelines I am supposed to be following" (R3 – independent).

"Yes. We have picked up some lemons over the years and I don’t know if the techniques would help eradicate them" (R11 – franchise).

"Yes, but what I have been doing so far has worked, so I will continue doing what I have done, training or no training" (R19 – franchise).

A total of thirty percent (6) of respondents stated that training would be of no significant value. A sample of their comments is below. There was no significant difference between independent and franchise firms responses.

**Figure 42.0**

"No I don’t believe training would be valuable. We don’t do it enough to warrant training” (R5 – independent).

"No, because the interview is more a case of judging if we like their personality and whether or not they will fit the mould” (R8 – independent).

"No because I know what I am looking for. I know the position I am trying to fill and I know what kind of personality and personal qualities I am looking for” (R17 – independent).
For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).

**Question 3**

*Were you aware that Departments such as DOPLAR or the Small Business Development Corporation provide recruitment and selection assistance?*

A total of ninety five percent of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question.

Forty percent of respondents argued they were aware that DOPLAR and the Small business Corporation provided recruitment and selection advice and assistance. However, although these respondents stated they were aware of these services, only one respondent has ever approached them for assistance and has inquired about the types of topics and questions that can be covered in the selection interview. Some respondents stated they have only approached these departments for inquiries relating to salary and conditions, award rates and related topics. Samples of their comments are below.

**Figure 43.0**

"Yes. But I have never sought their assistance. I don’t have time to go through the formal rules that you are supposed to" (R1 – independent).

"Yes, but I don’t think I would seek their assistance. I find you get a better feel for the candidates when you do it yourself. You know what you want" (R2 – independent).

"Yes, but the conditions are so onerous and bureaucratic. So, you tend to think, I cant be bothered following those. I would prefer to make up my own" (R12 – independent).
Fifty Five percent (11) of respondents stated they were not aware that DOPLAR or the Small Business Development Corporation provided this type of assistance. Therefore, all respondents similarly stated they had never sought the assistance of these agencies for interviewer questioning techniques. The comment made by one respondent summarizes the general attitude towards these Departments:

“I would imagine the guidelines they provide for recruitment and selection are fairly formalized. I just don’t know if we would fit into that kind of approach” (R21 – independent).

For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).

**Question 4**

*Do you receive any guidelines on staffing or equal employment opportunity issues from REIWA or the API?*

A total of ninety five percent of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. All of these respondents stated they did not receive any guidelines on staffing or equal employment opportunity issues from either REIWA or the API. The following statements summarize the general attitude. There were no differences in responses between independent and franchise firms.

**Figure 44.0**

“I don’t want to be hassled with their standards. I would rather do it myself” (R12 – independent).

“We are small. I know what I want, so its just a matter of finding the right person. We don’t go into any great depth with our interviewing or employment practices and I would like to keep it that way” (R13 – independent).
For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).

**Question 5**

*What type of assistance or service do these Departments provide?*

Sixty percent (12/20) of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. All of the comments were very similar, with no differences in responses between independent and franchise firms.

Most respondents suggested these departments were professional bodies. They exist for the purpose of providing rules and regulations and a code of professional conduct and ethics for the real estate industry. As one respondent commented

"It is also about further education and training on industry specific matters" (R5 – independent).

These respondents stated that the advice they provide is very limited in respect to staffing and employment. The following comments highlight this

**Figure 45.0**

"It is up to the individual business to take responsibility for recruitment and selection matters" (R18 – independent).

"It is up to the individual business to set their own standards and guidelines for staffing and EEO. There is no industry body in real estate to govern this. We don’t receive any information on employment. They provide information related to a code of ethics and industry/professional practice standards (R9 – franchise).
For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).

**Question 6**

*Do you believe that it would be beneficial for your small business to receive staffing or equal employment opportunity guidelines from these Departments?*

A total of fifty five percent of those respondents do not believe that it would be beneficial to receive these guidelines and provided very similar comments. It was argued that even if they did provide such guidelines, it wouldn’t really have any influence on what they did at present. A sample of their comments is below:

**Figure 46.0**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“No. Even if they did provide guidelines, I don’t know if it would change what we are doing at present”</td>
<td>R4 – independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No. I don’t really want them interfering in the way we run our operations. Ignorance is bliss”</td>
<td>R5 – independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No. I don’t think it is there job to provide these type of guidelines”</td>
<td>R14 – franchise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of forty percent (8) of respondents stated it would be beneficial to receive these kinds of guidelines from either REIWA or the API. Samples of their comments are below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).
Figure 47.0

“Yes, I believe it would be a good idea” (R11 – franchise).

“Yes, I don’t think it would hurt and it would certainly save us a lot of time (R8 – independent).

“Yes, but they need to provide these guidelines are in a precise format. You don’t want to be bombarded with legislation and guidelines (R20 – franchise).

Question 7
Can you explain what you know about the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984?

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed answered this question.

The findings showed a very limited knowledge and understanding of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 by both independent and franchise firms. Two respondents in the sample were not even aware that an Equal Opportunity Act existed in Western Australia. The other eighteen respondents provided only very basic comments because of their limited understanding. The following is a selected sample of these:

Figure 48.0

“My basic understanding is that you cant discriminate against people on certain things, which personally, I think is a load of nonsense” (R5 – independent).

“I know that there are some areas that I cannot go into during the interview and I cant judge people on it. The key is not to be seen to be judging people on it” (R14 – franchise).

“I am aware that the act exists but that is as far as it goes” (R16 – independent).
For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).

**Question 8**

*What knowledge do you have of the grounds for unlawful discrimination in the selection interview?*

Only forty five percent (9/20) of respondents interviewed provided comments on this question. Of those who responded to this question, their knowledge of the grounds for unlawful discrimination in the selection interview was almost non-existent. The majority argued they were aware that you couldn’t discriminate against an individual during the interview for any particular reason, but could not specifically comment on those particular areas that were “out of bounds”. A sample of their comments is below.

**Figure 49.0**

```
“All I know is that you are not supposed to discriminate against people on the basis of certain characteristics” (R5 – independent).

“I think it comes down to basic common sense. I don’t have any specific grounds that I know” (R7 – independent).

“I know that you can’t be seen to be making an unfair judgement in an interview. Because of that, I keep what I write and say to a minimum” (R20 – franchise).

“My knowledge is only very generalised. I know you can’t discriminate against a male or female” (R2 – independent).
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For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).
**Question 9**

Do you have any understanding of how the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 might impact on the types of questions you might ask a candidate during the selection interview?

A total of twenty respondents (100%) interviewed provided comments on this question.

The majority of the twenty respondents had no idea how the act might influence the types of questions or topics addressed in the selection interview. Not one of the twenty respondents could offer any detailed explanation of how and why the act might influence interviewer questioning. Furthermore, many respondents were of the belief, that because they are a small business, they did not have to worry about a lot of these staffing and EEO guidelines.

The findings showed no difference in the knowledge and understanding of small business owner / managers in independent or franchise firms. A selection of their comments is below. For a more detailed outline of the comments made in response to this question, see appendix 2.0, Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: training and legislation (Page 220).

**Figure 50.0**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I guess it should impact on the questions, now that you make me think of it. You may well overstep the mark by asking the wrong questions”</td>
<td>R2 – independent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t really think it would impact directly on the specific type or nature of questions you would ask or the kinds of topics that you cover”</td>
<td>R4 – independent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t specifically know how it would affect me asking questions in the interview”</td>
<td>R7 – independent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I imagine there are guidelines indicating what you can ask, what you can’t ask. Being a small business, we don’t have to worry about a lot of those”</td>
<td>R13 – independent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion & Analysis - Section Six: Training & Legislation

The findings from question one in this section on the issue of interviewer training, confirmed that the respondents in this study had very little training in appropriate recruiting and selection interviewing techniques. This is not an uncommon statistic according to Bartram et al., (1995). A total of eighty five percent of the respondents in this study had never received any formal professional or practical training in interviewing. Most respondents stated that training was not necessary and that interviewing can be learned through experience. Although there is very little literature on the influence of an interviewer’s experience, a few studies suggest that interviewer experience may affect ratings of applicants (Furnham & Burbeck, 1989; Gehrlein, Dipboye & Shahani, 1993; Dipboye & Jackson, 1999 cited in Posthuma et al., 2002).

The findings by Bartram et al., (1995) on interviewer training are consistent with the findings of the present study. The study by Bartram et al., (1995) found that less than one in four small business employers had general training in selection and recruitment, with fewer having training in the interview. The findings from this study revealed that only fifteen percent of respondents had undertaken some form of training, but several years ago, and would be very surprised if they could remember any of the techniques they were taught. This lack of training in all aspects of selection, particularly in interviewing and questioning, is a matter of concern. Given that the majority of the literature argues the positive influence of interviewer training on the standard and quality of interviewer judgements, it is concerning that most small business employers have had no training in the formalities and procedures associated with appropriately interviewing a candidate (Werner, 1991; Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Campion et al., 1995).

The findings from question two revealed that seventy percent of respondents believed that training in appropriate interviewing techniques would be valuable. However, some of these respondents further stated that whether or not it would actually change their present interviewing conduct, practices or behavior was questionable. Cooper & Robertson (1995) argue that training focused more on improving interviewer behavior and the social
aspects that influence interviewers conduct, rather than the scientific, rating errors may be more beneficial. This type of training would be value for the respondents in this study, who are more concerned with judging social fit in the interview, rather than matching the person with the job.

Question number three in this section revealed that only forty percent of respondents in the sample were aware that governments departments such as DOPLAR (Department of Productivity and Labour Relations) and the Small Business Development Corporation provided specialist recruitment and selection assistance for small business employers. However, the majority of these respondents revealed that they would not approach them for assistance. The respondents expressed similar concerns regarding the unnecessary formalities and bureaucracy associated with government agencies and stated they would prefer to formulate their own guidelines, policies and procedures for recruitment and selection, whether correct or not. This leads researchers to question their knowledge, skills and ability to accurately receive information, critically evaluate the information received and regulate their own behavior in delivering questions to interviewees (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Campion et al., 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998).

Question four explored whether respondents received any staffing or equal employment opportunity guidelines from their relevant real estate industry bodies, these being The Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA) or The Australian Property Institute (API) – for which you have to be a member to receive any benefits. Ninety five percent of respondents stated they did not. This findings showed that most respondents adopted their own individual interviewing practices, whether in line with appropriate and recommended guidelines or not. This is a recurring theme and echoes the previous concerns for bias and prejudices arising, particularly considering the majority of respondents are untrained in formalized recruitment and selection practices. This adds weight to the idea that the interview should be viewed as a social process, and as a result, recognizes that it will be subject to potential problems such as bias and prejudice, due to flawed communications and judgments (Cooper & Robertson, 1995). Overall, the
findings suggest that REIWA has no effect on the respondents approach to recruiting and selection interviewing practices.

The findings from question five are consistent with the recurring attitude towards these two industry bodies. When respondents were questioned on what kind of guidelines these agencies did provide, they stated they provide general rules and regulations and a code of professional conduct and ethics for the real estate industry. However, these are principally related to dealing with clients. They do not provide detailed guidelines, policies and procedures in relation to staffing or equal employment opportunity. The following comment highlights the general attitude:

“It is up to the individual business to set their own standards and guidelines for staffing and equal employment opportunity. There is no industry body to govern this”.

Given this finding, it is not surprising that the respondents adopt an informal, unstructured approach to recruitment and selection. As there is no specific industry-wide body to regulate their conduct or behavior during the selection interview, the majority will be unaware of the legislative implications of inappropriate practices.

Question seven and eight sought respondent’s comments in relation to their knowledge of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 and the grounds for discrimination. The findings from these two questions demonstrated a very limited knowledge and understanding. The majority of respondents simply stated that you are not allowed to discriminate against anyone in particular on the basis of certain issues. However, when probed as to what these issues were, most respondents couldn’t answer. This finding suggests the respondent’s conduct and questioning during the interview is leaving them open to an equal employment opportunity complaint. Therefore, the findings suggest that owner / managers have a very limited understanding of the discriminatory implications that poor interviewing practices may have for compliance with the standards set by the West Australian Equal Opportunity Commission.
Question nine concluded by examining respondents understanding of how the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 might impact on interviewer questioning in the selection-interview. Not surprisingly, and consistent with the previous findings in this study, the majority of the twenty respondents had no idea how the act might influence the types of questions or topics addressed in the selection interview. A very limited number of respondents understand the critical importance of good interviewer questioning strategies for ensuring fairness in the selection interview.

In conclusion, this section highlights the lack of training in small business and the limited knowledge and understanding of the respondents regarding appropriate interview conduct, questioning and the legislative implications of this. Given the lack of training and the fact that there is no specific industry wide standard for staffing and equal employment opportunity, it is not unlikely to predict that many small business employers in the future will find themselves involved in discrimination cases.

**Relevance of findings to Institutional Theory**

The findings from this section demonstrate that the normative pressure from professional socialisation has more of an impact on the respondents than the coercive pressure imposed by the professional influence of The Real Estate Institute of Western Australia (REIWA). REIWA direct their attention at maintaining a professional standard and code of ethics through the Real Estate and Business Agents Act, 1978. Other legislative environments such as Equal Employment Opportunity are not discussed or referred to in professional documentation or magazines. REIWA educate members on their professional obligations, but do not provide information to guide small real estate businesses on equal employment opportunity, staffing / HR obligations and, most importantly, the relationship between the two.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Conclusion

The thesis examined the knowledge of small business owner / managers regarding appropriate recruiting and selection interviewing practices. Particular attention was given to exploring their understanding of the appropriate conduct of the selection interview, the critical importance of interviewer questioning practices and the implications this has for fairness via the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984. The findings showed that the respondents conduct a very informal and unstructured recruiting and selection interviewing process. They rely heavily on first impressions and gut instincts and have a very limited knowledge of the critical importance of appropriate questioning in the selection interview.

Therefore, this thesis found that the selection interview, and in particular, interviewer questioning is not primarily utilized as a tool for assessing and evaluating an applicant’s knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the job competently. Instead, it is utilized as a means of delving into an applicant’s personality and their ability to “fit in”. The respondents evaluations of candidates are based largely on first impressions and gut feelings, and, not surprisingly, each owner / manager has a very limited understanding of the implications of this. Overall, the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 did not have any coercive influence on the respondents approach to the selection interview and interview questioning. The institutional influence on each owner / manager reflected the normative influence of the profession.
Employee recruitment

The findings showed that the respondents approach the recruitment of a new employee in a very informal, ad-hoc manner. Their comments revealed that finding the "right type of person" is more important than choosing an appropriate recruitment method. Furthermore, personality, personal characteristics and the applicant's ability to "fit in" are more important than recruiting on the basis of 'qualifications and experience', regardless of whether these characteristics are related to determining the applicant's ability to perform the job or not.

This thesis showed that owner/managers do not follow any particular, formalised equal employment opportunity guidelines during recruitment. This response reflected and confirmed their limited knowledge of appropriate recruitment policies and procedures, and also their limited knowledge of the implications of their actions. This was confirmed by specific comments made during the interview. Some of the respondents made reference to making recruitment decisions based on personal guidelines and standards. These personal standards were related to the type of person, gender, age, level of maturity, personal and social lifestyle, family responsibilities, physical appearance, personal qualities, characteristics and attitude. This corresponds with the research by Hornsby & Kuratko (1990) and Deshpande & Golhar (1994) who proposed that recruitment decisions are largely based on an individual, intuitive perception of fit, gut feelings, first impressions and a personal liking of a candidates personality and personal qualities.

The comments made by owner/managers confirmed they view recruitment as a social process (Cooper & Robertson, 1995), rather than a scientific process based on structure and consistency (McDaniel et al., 1994). However, viewing the recruitment process in this way can unfairly bias the conduct of the selection interview (Dipboye, 1994; Cooper & Robertson, 1995).
The interview

The findings showed that all of the respondents used the interview as their primary selection tool. However, the majority of those respondents further stated they primarily used the interview to assess largely non job related variables such as personality, appearance, personal presentation, personal qualities, level of stability, family background, age, marital status, career path, personal aspirations and work history. This finding suggests the respondents view the interview as a “social process” rather than an organised technical process (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Posthuma et al., 2002). The respondent’s comments showed they approach the interview in an informal manner, this being informal in content, structure and questioning. They also revealed they use the interview as an “informal chat” with the purpose of “getting to know the applicant personally”. The conclusions drawn from this study’s finding are consistent with the literature, arguing that small businesses rarely have formalised processes, policies and procedures in place for selection interviewing and, in particular, interviewer questioning (Bartram et al., 1995; Gatewood & Field, 1998).

The majority of respondents stated they used the candidate’s resume during the interview as a basic guide to questioning. However, it was later revealed that the candidate’s resume is used as a tool for gathering personal, non job-related information. This confirms that important selection decisions are often based on non job-related information, first impressions, gut instincts and a personal liking of a candidate’s personality. This is consistent with the findings of studies by Hornsby & Kuratko (1990) and Deschpande & Golhar (1994).

The findings showed a total of eighty five percent of respondents do not use any form of scoring system or rating scale during the selection interview as a means of comparing applicants. Furthermore, only slightly more than half (57%) reported reference checking before making a final decision. These findings substantiate the informal, unprepared and unstructured manner in which the selection process is approached.
The findings confirmed that the respondents know very little about what kind of guidelines should be in place for selecting new staff members and what formal policies and procedures need to be adopted to ensure a fair, unbiased interviewing process. The studies by Finney (1987) and Schaper (2000) suggest the reasons for owner / managers limited knowledge in this area may be because they have less access to the right sort of information needed to employ the best people.

The model of on Page 33 of the literature review section provides alternative strategies and guidelines for ensuring fairness in the recruitment and selection process and, in particular, formalised strategies for improving interviewer-questioning technique. It highlights how these identified strategies will improve the quality of interviewer judgements and reduces the potential for discrimination or an equal employment opportunity complaint arising. This model provides a more useful approach than other models because it addresses the impact of the “social context”. It doing so it emphasises the relationship between the micro processes of recruitment and selection, which includes interviewer questioning, with the macro effect via the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984.

**Interviewer Questioning**

The findings from this section highlighted the limited knowledge of the respondents regarding appropriate questioning techniques, what questions can and cannot be addressed in the selection interview and the correct content and structure of questioning. Overall, the results showed that questioning of a personal nature takes priority over job-related questioning, the questioning varies in content and structure between candidates, and very little is actually known about appropriate questioning technique and the implications of inappropriate interviewer questioning. The studies by Finney (1987) and Bartram et al., (1995) identify that this may represent a severe burden for small businesses, particularly given their limited managerial resources and ability to cope with the financial loss that may result from an equal opportunity complaint.
Interviewer Training & legislation

The findings in this section showed that eighty-five percent of respondents have not undertaken any formal professional or practical training in interviewing. Furthermore, sixty percent of these respondents were not aware that Departments such as DOPLAR and the Small Business Development Corporation provide recruitment and selection assistance. The majority of respondents (95%) revealed they did not receive any guidelines on staffing or equal employment opportunity issues from their relevant industry body. This has contributed to a very limited knowledge and understanding of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 and the implications this may have for their small business.
Institutionalism & fairness – theoretical implications

The findings showed no major differences in the recruiting and selection interviewing practices of independent and franchise real estate businesses. Institutional theory was applied to this study to highlight the influence of knowledge systems, beliefs and rules in the structure, practices and operation of an organization and, specifically, the social and cultural demands that require organizations to play particular roles in society and to establish and maintain certain outward trends. This emphasises the importance of maintaining a fair, un-biased approach to recruitment and selection, particularly interviewer questioning, considering the social and cultural implications imposed via the West Australian Equal Opportunity Commission. However, the findings showed that owner / managers in small business are often unaware of the social and cultural implications of their behaviour and conduct during the selection interview. As a result, the importance of these, are often overlooked.

An examination of the respondent’s knowledge of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984, the implications of this and the need to employ appropriate questioning strategies revealed a very limited understanding. It is therefore not surprising the majority of small businesses in the sample overlook the importance of appropriate interviewer questioning. This is reflected in their informal, un-structured and ad-hoc approach to the recruitment and selection process, relying heavily on gut instincts and first impressions when making a final decision. The limited coercive effect of the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 is due to the lack of awareness of owner / managers of the Act and, in particular, a limited understanding of the relationship between the interview, questioning and the equal employment opportunity.

This raises an awareness that small businesses may need to reconsider their approach to recruitment and selection practices, in particular interviewer questioning, and regard it as an important organisational, social and cultural process. A focus on the implications that could be imposed on a small business via the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 and the limited resources they have available to cope with a discrimination action
should encourage an examination of their own practices and processes. Training in appropriate staffing practices and equal employment opportunity issues may be useful in assisting owner / managers in designing fair recruitment and selection programs. However, the normative influence of the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia is directed at maintaining a code of ethics and conduct for the industry and profession via The Real Estate & Business Agents Act, 1978. One of the main objectives of REIWA is to “provide effective, comprehensive membership services to enable member agents to constantly improve their knowledge, service and business practices. In working towards achieving this objective, REIWA needs to draw greater attention to the cultural persistence of inefficient human resource practices and raise awareness of the potential implications of this for a small real estate business.

Therefore, to help instil an awareness of the importance of appropriate interviewing practices, REIWA should be educating owner / managers in small real estate businesses of the value of good staffing and equal employment policies and practices. If REIWA was to encourage the development and maintenance of appropriate recruitment and selection interviewing practices by small business owner / managers, the economic losses in terms of potential discrimination suits, and the associated social and human costs could probably be reduced. Small business employers need to understand the various institutional pressures at play within their organization, as this may assist with the collaboration of more appropriate approaches to recruitment and selection.
Limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations that are inherent in this study. They are summarised as follows:

- One of the main problems is a very limited amount of past research specifically examining interviewer-questioning practices in a small business environment. Furthermore, very few research studies have specifically explored this issue and the implications for equal employment opportunity within the Real Estate Industry in Australia. The majority of studies have only covered the broad recruitment and selection process, and only touch on the issues surrounding guidelines for questioning and the legislative implications for questioning. Most of these have been done overseas.

- The confidential nature of the information gathered considering the implications for equal employment opportunity and labour legislation. As a result, I did not receive 100% responses for all of the interview questions.

- The information gathered is from the perception of the owner / manager of the firm who is typically responsible for the interviewing function. Therefore, a biased viewpoint may be presented, considering their closeness to the company.

- The results of the present study cannot be generalised, due to the limited sample size and the need to use convenience sampling; although it has provided many insights that are unique to a small business organization.

- Males are over represented in this sample and this may bias the results of the study.
• For some questions, there was a small response rate, making it difficult to determine if there were any major distinctions between independent and franchise real estate firms. It also made it difficult to generalise the findings.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the evidence suggests that the study of recruiting and selection interviewing practices, in particular, interviewer questioning strategies in a small business is very important, given the implications for equal employment opportunity. As such, it is deserving of further investigation.
Directions for future research

The following issues merit further research.

Firstly, there is a need to replicate this study using different samples, in order to corroborate the findings and assess its generalisability. A comparative case study of owner/manager in different small businesses, specifically differing industry groupings, will contribute to a greater understanding of the research topic. Although the results of the study are only preliminary, a replication of this study using a larger sample of respondents is recommended.

Further, there continues to be a relative lack of research on small business recruitment, selection, interviewer questioning techniques and the unique variables that may influence interviewer processes and outcomes in a small business environment. The settings in which people interview and the constraints that exist there can have a profound influence on their behaviour and conduct of the interview (Cappelli & Shearer, 1991; Johns, 1991a cited in Posthuma et al., 2002) as well as the nature and form of individual interaction (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999 cited in Posthuma et al., 2002). Therefore, more research is needed in small business on the contextual factors influencing the interview, particularly the interviewer questioning processes. These contextual factors can be either internal or external to the organization. They could encompass an examination of the influence of industry regulation, selection ratios, demographic characteristics of the applicant pool, job analysis, interview purpose, interviewer training and so on (Posthuma et al., 2002).

Most of the literature over the past decade have viewed interviewing at a scientific-level of analysis or have focused on simple relationships influencing its outcome. There needs to be more research in the future promoting increased recognition of the interview as a complex, social process with multiple factors influencing its conduct and outcome (Cooper & Robertson, 1995; Posthuma et al., 2002). These areas include interviewer-applicant similarity, stereotyping, verbal (interviewer questioning) and non-verbal behaviour, the influence of personality, first impressions and gut instincts, the decision-
making processes of an interviewer and the extent of training (Posthuma et al., 2002). Future research should try and explore the relationships between these factors and interview validity, reliability and effectiveness, particularly in a small business environment (Posthuma et al., 2002).

Finally, future research on recruitment and selection practices in both large and small business needs to specifically recognise and examine the critical importance and influence of interviewer-questioning practices on the conduct and outcome of the selection interview, particularly considering the implications of poor questioning under the Equal Opportunity Legislation. Very few models of the interview process consider the influence of the “social context” and recognise interviewer questioning as an important factor in influencing its outcome. The models by Dreher & Sackett (1983) and Dipboye (1992) are two very good examples of this. It is suggested that further examination should be aimed at addressing interviewer questioning from a social perspective, rather than from a scientific viewpoint, as this approach often ignores the influence of the social and cultural environmental factors.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT
LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

I, ______________________________ consent to participate in the research project undertaken by Kelly Pember under the supervision of Joy Hocking (Lecturer, Department of Management, Edith Cowan University). I understand I have the right to withdraw my consent in participating in the interview at any time during the investigation.

PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

To examine the implications the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 has for interviewer questioning strategies in small real estate agencies in Western Australia.

CONFIDENTIALITY PROCEDURES

All data gathered in the course of this research will be confidential and locked in a secure location. The identities of the subjects will not be disclosed to any unauthorized persons. Any references to the identities of the subjects that would compromise their anonymity will be removed prior to the preparation of the research reports and / or publications.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact Kelly Pember at 94482539 / 0411607450 or Joy Hocking at 92738635, Edith Cowan University, Churchlands Campus.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Signed: ____________________________

Dated: ____________________________
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section One: Personal Information Questionnaire

1. How would you describe your current position: ______________________________

2. How many people do you supervise: ________________________________

3. How long have you been in this organization: _________________________

4. How long have you been working in the Real Estate Industry: ____________

5. Are you part of a franchise or independent Real Estate firm: ______________

6. How long have you been in an owner / manager position?

   1-5 years  6-10 years  11-15 years  16 years or more
   □          □           □               □

7. Your age

   <25 years  25-30 years  31-40 years  41-50 years  51-60 years  61+ years
   □          □           □               □           □               □

8. Gender

   □ Male
   □ Female

9. What was your highest educational qualification?

   □ Secondary education: Year ____      □ MBA (Management)
   □ University Degree (Bachelor)       □ Other masters or higher degree
Section Two: Employee Recruitment

Question One
Can you explain how you would approach the recruitment and selection of a new employee?

Question One (a)
Are there any particular formalized guidelines that you follow during the recruitment process?

Question Two
During the recruitment process, what kind of information do you provide to interested applicants?

Question Two (a)
When approaching an agency for recruitment purposes, what kind of criteria do you specify?

Question Two (b)
What has been your experience with using recruitment agencies?

Question Three
Before undertaking the recruitment process, do you discuss the role that needs to be filled and desirable criteria of the new employee with the existing staff members?
Section Three: Employee Selection

Question One
Can you explain the process you would go through when selecting a new staff member?

Question Two
Are there any particular qualities that you have in mind, before you engage in the selection process?
Section Four: The interview

Question One
Can you explain what steps and processes you go through when interviewing a candidate?

Question Two
Do you use the candidates CV during the interview as a guide to what questions you will ask?

Question Three
Do you use any type of scoring system or rating scale during the interview?

Question Four
How many applicants would you interview for a particular position?

Question Five
How many times would you interview each candidate before making a final decision?

Question Six
How many people would be involved in interviewing an applicant?

Question Seven
Before interviewing a candidate, do you consider any guidelines or standards that might need to be followed?

Question Eight
Do you check references as part of the selection process?
**Question Nine**

Do you prefer to employ people who are in the process of changing jobs rather than those people who have been unemployed for a period.
Section Five: Interviewer Questioning

Question One
Can you give me an example of the types of questions you would ask an applicant during the interview and give your reasons why you believe these questions are important?

Question Two
Do you follow any certain format or structure when questioning applicants?

Question Three
Do you find that you consistently cover the same questions or topics in every interview?

Question Four (a)
Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant's job competence?

Question Four (b)
Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant's personal characteristics?

Question Four (c)
Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant's ability to work under pressure?

Question Five
I am going to describe three personal styles towards interviewing. Which best reflects you?

a. You go into the interview with a very specific predetermined list of questions?

b. You go into the interview with a broad checklist of topics?

c. You use the candidates CV as a guide to the questions and topics you will cover?
Question Six

I am now going to give you a list of questions. Can you tell me whether you believe they are suitable or unsuitable to question a candidate on during the selection interview?

a. What part of the city do you live in?
b. How many years of work experience do you have?
c. Have you ever been arrested or convicted?
d. Are you single, married or other?
e. How old are you?
f. What languages do you speak?
g. Who recommended you to us?
h. This position may require extensive travel and overtime, do you think you can handle this?
i. Have you made arrangements to have your children taken care of whilst you are at work?
j. Would you be comfortable supervising men (if the applicant was a woman)?
k. Do you own a car?
l. Do you suffer any disabilities or health problems?
**Section Six: Training & Legislation**

**Question One**
Have you ever undertaken any formal professional or practical training in interviewing?

**Question Two**
Do you believe that training in selection interviewing practices and techniques would be valuable?

**Question Three**
Were you aware that Departments such as DOPLAR or the Small Business Development Corporation provide recruitment and selection assistance?

**Question Four**
Do you receive any guidelines on staffing or equal employment opportunity issues from REIWA or the API?

**Question Five**
What type of assistance or service do these Departments provide?

**Question Six**
Do you believe that it would be beneficial for your small business to receive staffing and equal employment opportunity guidelines from these Departments?

**Question Seven**
Can you explain what you know about the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984?

**Question Eight**
What knowledge do you have of the grounds for unlawful discrimination in the selection interview?
**Question Nine**
Do you have any understanding of how the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act, 1984 might impact on the types of questions you might ask a candidate during the selection interview?
APPENDIX 1.0

RESPONDENTS PROFILE SUMMARY (TABLE 1.0)
## RESPONDENTS PROFILE SUMMARY (TABLE 1.0)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you describe your current position?</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Partner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Principal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Managing Director</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Office Manager / owner</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<th>How many people do you supervise?</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 6-10 people</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
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<td>- more than 20 people</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<th>How long have you been in this organization?</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>- Independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Franchise</td>
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<td>15</td>
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<th>Highest Educational level?</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Bachelor degree in valuation / property</td>
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<td>10</td>
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* No studies in management
APPENDIX 2.0

DATA DISPLAY MATRIX - SUMMARY OF COMMENTS: EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT

DATA DISPLAY MATRIX - SUMMARY OF COMMENTS: EMPLOYEE SELECTION

DATA DISPLAY MATRIX - SUMMARY OF COMMENTS: INTERVIEW

DATA DISPLAY MATRIX - SUMMARY OF COMMENTS: INTERVIEWER QUESTIONING

DATA DISPLAY MATRIX - SUMMARY OF COMMENTS: TRAINING & LEGISLATION
### Questions

**Question 1:** Can you explain how you would approach the recruitment and selection of a new staff member?

- "Employ an Agency" & "set job specifications" (R.1).  
- "Identify that we needed somebody" "identify the particular type of person" & "look at their personal profile" (R.2).  
- Office Staff - through an agency. Identify the type of person (R.3).  
- Office Staff - headhunt or agency. Prof. Staff - contacts in the industry (R.4).  
- Depends on type of staff member. Business schools (sec) or agency (prof staff) (R.5).  
- Headhunting: Look for suitable qualities & personal characteristics. Looking for a "guy who will fit in" (R.6).  
- For prof. - headhunting exercise. Very rarely do we advertise. For our office staff - agency (R.7).  
- Contacts and knowledge of people already in the industry. If that fails we would advertise or go directly to a recruitment agency (R.8).  
- Industry contacts and then personal referrals then advertising (R.12).  
- Initially I would determine if I needed somebody. For support staff - word of mouth, and then via recruitment companies. For prof Staff - contacts (R.13).  
- For prof staff - Universities & word of mouth. For secretarial, advertising. For me, I believe its more valuable to find someone who is compatible with the existing people within the business, in respect of age, personality, experience and so on (R.15).  
- Mostly just through word of mouth or recommendations from trusted sources in the industry. (R.16).  
- Decide on type of staff member then make inquiries with contacts in the industry. If unsuccessful, I would advertise. I think its more important to look at the persons ability to fit in," (R.18).

**Question 1 (a)** Are there any particular guidelines that you follow during the recruitment process?

- I set my own personal guidelines / standards in terms of what type of person I want, what gender, what level of maturity (R.1).  
- I think there is certain protocol. You can discriminate against anybody in particular (R.2).  
- No, nothing is really set in concrete. Through experience, I know the sorts I don't want and the sorts of things I want. (R.3).  
- No, we don't really follow any particular guidelines. We tend to adopt a very informal, unplanned approach, based on impressions and feelings of whether or not we think they will fit in (R.4).  
- We don't follow any labor / workplace relations laws or guidelines. We like to find out as much as possible about the applicants personal and social lifestyle and family responsibilities (R.5).  
- No, it's very informal. It comes down to whether they are going to fit in to the office (R.6).  
- No - nothing formal or written that we follow (R.7).  
- No, we have a very high priority for not employing people who smoke. Personal presentation, physical appearance and people skills are important - but nothing is formal or written (R.8).  
- Standards, yes we have standards. We judge them via their reports, personality and capacity to interact with colleagues (R.12).  
- There are basic parameters that we like to follow (R.13).  
- I mean first impressions always count for a lot, as well as personal presentation and fitting in (R.15).  
- We are a young office, so its important that we get people who will fit in well with this, will integrate (R.16).  
- Really, its just a matter to trying to ensure that they will fit in - first impressions and gut instincts (R.18).

### Independent Firm Responses

### Franchise Firm Responses

- For a prof. - advertise in the newspaper or approach a University. "Try and find out who is the best and grab them." For secretarial staff, we use an agency (R.9).  
- For Prof Staff - our contacts within the industry to find someone that we consider would fit into our business. "Because we believe its very important to get the right sort of people, with the right attitude and the right personality. For secretarial staff - agencies and advertise in the paper. If that fails, we use word of mouth" (R.10).  
- Firstly we would define the tasks to be resourced. If it was an administrative position, I would approach an agency (R.11).  
- For secretarial, - advertise or agency. For professional staff - word of mouth or University. "Find the right sort of person rather than just employing someone who has the correct qualifications (R.14).  
- I would decide what the position entailed, have in mind an idea of the personal characteristics, personality, ability of the person whom we would like to apply. We would then proceed to advertise (R.17).  
- For secretarial staff - ran advertisements its very important to get a good feel as to how they are going to fit in. (R.19).  
- We have used advertising, word of mouth, and recruitment agencies. Its critical to find the right person, right sort of personal characteristics. First impressions are critical (R.20).
During the recruitment process, what kind of information do you provide to interested applicants?

- What the role was, what the responsibilities are, hours of work, what the job might involve (R2).
- A written description of the job, some information about the company (R3).
- We would give them a run down about the organization and then explain the type of work (R4).
- Nothing really. We certainly don’t provide anything written like a job description or anything that sophisticated (R5).
- We do approach the agency with certain personal qualities in mind like we would prefer someone within a particular age group (R6).
- We really go through everything about the company. It’s a very informal, relaxed process (R7).
- We would generally outline the type of work that we were expecting them to do. And that would be verbal. Try and determine whether or we like this person (R8).
- Generally, we try not to provide too much information in this early stage (R9).
- I would probably provide the agency with a very basic outline of the person we want (R10).
- We provide the agency with the specific personal qualities that we are looking for (R11).
- I try to give a broad cross section of information about the whole business, what is expected of them etc. (R12).
- Nothing in written, formal terms. During this process we try and find out as much as we can about the applicant, both professionally and personally (R13).
- Nothing in the recruitment process. We try and find out as much as we can about them, whether it be professionally, personally, socially, family responsibilities and commitments etc (R14).

- It would probably only be at the interview stage, when we start providing applicants with information about the company and so on. We try and determine early whether they will fit in and have the right sort of personality for our office (R15).
- Well, we usually have a basic description of the job and provide the agency with information about the type of person we want (R16).
- In terms of formal, written information, very little. Personality is also a very important factor (R17).
- Its more a chance for me to look at the person applying, their personality (R18).
- Nothing formally. Its more an informal verbal process, where you try and get a good feel for the person (R19).
- We don’t provide anything formal during this phase. Whilst experience is very important, finding someone who has the right personality and personal qualities is critical (R20).
### Question 2 (a)
**When approaching a agency for recruiting purposes, what kind of criteria do you specify?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An enthusiastic attitude is something that we place a very high priority on (R3).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The only thing we really specify is an age bracket (R4).</td>
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<tr>
<td>We try and specify that we would prefer someone in a particular age group (R5).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personality and details regarding their technical skills and abilities, their level of personal stability, their personal and family life, (R12).</td>
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<tr>
<td>We highlight certain personal qualities (R13).</td>
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<tr>
<td>We look at the person themselves and try and emphasize the importance of personality. It just comes down to gut instincts (R18).</td>
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### Question 2 (b)
**What has been your experience when using recruitment agencies?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Its been quite good. Costly but good (R4).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Well, saving time has been the greatest benefit (R5).</td>
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<td>We have had some good and some bad experiences (R6).</td>
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<td>I guess our experience has been positive. Its useful having the agency do the initial screenings and narrow it down to a few (R8).</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have had very good experiences with agencies (R13).</td>
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### Question 3
**Before undertaking the recruitment, do you discuss the role that needs to be filled and desirable criteria with existing employees in the office?**

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<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would discuss it with my partner and we would talk about the type of person we wanted (R3).</td>
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<tr>
<td>No, not at all. At the end of the day, I make the call (R4).</td>
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<td>We had a young girl who came in for an interview once, who was extremely attractive as a result there was quite a lot of discussion surrounding her and the position. All the guys thought she would fit in just perfectly (R5).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, definitely. We would discuss what type of person we would like and who we think would fit in (R7).</td>
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<tr>
<td>No not really (R8).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, we talk about if there is anything in particular that we want this person to be able to do (R12).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Definitely. We talk about, the type of person we would like, in terms of personal qualities and characteristics, their age etc (R13).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, definitely (R16).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The main advantage has been that we can go and source people directly and that allows us to focus on what we do best. We usually have a strong gut feel about someone though (R9).</td>
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<tr>
<td>The one advantage is that the can come in and correct your mistakes very quickly and very efficiently (R10).</td>
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<td>With permanent staff, we have had a few situations where we have said that we would prefer a mature woman, rather than a younger woman, and they have given us a shortlist of young women applicants (R11).</td>
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<td>We have experienced mixed success. I mean if you do it yourself, you have the ability to form your own judgement (R17).</td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t think they really knew the sort of person that we wanted and I suspect they provided us with a selection of applicants that they wanted to give us, rather than candidates we were seeking (R20).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all. We generally have a pretty good idea of the sort of person we want, in terms of personality (R9).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oh yeah, definitely. Because we are sort of fairly close nit, we really know what we want, and the type of person we want (R11).</td>
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<td>Well, when I have had an interview and they are walking out of the reception, I always ask the secretary what she thought. Quite often, just from their looks, presentation, appearance and body language, you can get a good idea of the nature of the person (R14).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Only if we really need to (R19).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td>Independent Firm Responses</td>
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| **Question 1:**                                                          | • Expressions of interest, review the CV's and make a preliminary cut then bring the remaining applicants in for an interview (R1).  
• Well, basically I identify three main qualities - academic achievement, personal qualities, and interpersonal skills (R2).  
• The actual interview would take on more of an informal, ad-hoc chat. I would tell them a little bit about ourselves and then start going through their CV (R3).  
• An interview process. Its face to face and you can get a good feel for their personality and appearance. First impressions count for a lot (R4).  
• Well, basically we use the interview. In the majority of cases, I find it comes down to first impressions and my own gut feel. It is definitely a gut feel (R5).  
• The interview process is more of a device used to assess their personality and personal qualities (R6).  
• We use the interview. I use the interview to examine experience, qualifications, level of stability and family background, age and so on (R7).  
• We use the interview (R8).  
• I mean first impressions and gut instincts are very important. So, a lot of it comes down to the manner in which they greet you, their appearance and personal presentation (R12).  
• Well, we definitely use the. Its important that we both feel comfortable and that we can all work well together (R13).  
• Its based on an informal chat. I have set characteristics in mind that I would like this person to have (R15).  
• I am just looking to find out if the person I am interviewing has the personal qualities that I both require and desire (R18). | • Interview - its got a lot to do with first impressions and this is why the interview is such an effective tool (R9).  
• We run an advertisement, get the CVs in and closely review each application. Basically it comes down to first impressions and how comfortable we are with the person (R10).  
• We would firstly advertise. First and foremost, we look for experience and age. We use the interview more as a tool to find out about the person (R11).  
• During the interview I like to explore personal circumstances, travel, marriage, career paths and aspirations and so on (R14).  
• The interview process focuses on finding out who they are, where they come from, what their history is etc. We briefly run through their resume (R19).  
• The interview process is a means of looking at someone's personality. It comes down to a combination of first impressions, gut instincts and fitting in (R20). |
| **Question 2**                                                            | • A candidates attitude is one of the most important determining factors (R3).  
• I do have certain qualities in mind, but at the end of the day, I think it comes down to first impressions and gut feelings (R6). | • It just comes down to speaking with the various candidates and deciding who you think will "fit in" the best (R9).  
• Particularly in regard to personal qualities. We like to find out as much as we can in respect to personal details (R10).  
• I have strong preferences with regard to an age bracket (R14).  
• I have firm qualities and standards in mind with regard to personal presentation and appearance, and personal background details / family life (R17).  
• Yes, definitely. It starts with plain presentation and appearance, how they hold themselves and how they speak (R19).  
• I place high priority on personality and personal characteristics and qualities (R20). |
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<th>Independent Firm Responses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Can you explain what steps and processes you go through when interviewing a candidate?</td>
<td>- The interview would be semi-formal. I would first of all try and put them at ease and get them to talk about themselves and what their past experiences have been (R1).&lt;br&gt;- For senior positions, I am inclined to adopt a structured format – what kind of format, I am not actually sure (R2).&lt;br&gt;- Traditionally it is just a bit of an informal chit chat. We talk about experience, and them personally (R5).&lt;br&gt;- I like to use the interview as a means to getting to know the person. It’s a very informal process (R7).&lt;br&gt;- I adopt an informal approach. I am just looking to find out if the person has those personal qualities that I require (R18).&lt;br&gt;- These steps are by no means formalised or prepared in advance. At the end of the day, its whether they have the personality and attitude that will fit (R19).</td>
<td>- Well, we are fairly informal. We generally organise the interview in the way that their CV is structured. We like to go through their whole life experience (R11).</td>
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<td><strong>Question 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Do you use the candidates CV as a guide to what questions you will ask during the interview?</td>
<td>- I would use it as a basic guide to establish uniformity between candidates (R1).&lt;br&gt;- I use it as a basic guide to discuss the applicants qualities. This would consist of going through their personal qualities (R2).&lt;br&gt;- I would use it as a basic template, my own little questionnaire thing (R3).&lt;br&gt;- I would have the CV sitting in front of me. It gives you a good idea as to the type of person and their level of stability (R4).&lt;br&gt;- I would have it sitting in front of me during the interview. We use it to look at their personality side of things (R5).&lt;br&gt;- Sometimes I reflect on it to get a good feel for their personality and to try and determine their suitability (R6).&lt;br&gt;- I guess you could say that I would use it as a basic for the interview (R7).&lt;br&gt;- We generally make basic notes on their CV’s during the interview (R8).&lt;br&gt;- We generally look through their CV before we interview, not during (R12).&lt;br&gt;- Yes definitely. I normally have the candidates CV sitting in front of me and we tend to follow that through (R13).&lt;br&gt;- I may refer to it during the interview but I don’t really use it as a guide to questions I will ask (R16).&lt;br&gt;- I use both their CV and references (R18).</td>
<td>- Generally, I don’t really take any notes on their CV at length, its more just bits and pieces here and there (R9).&lt;br&gt;- Yes definitely and this influences the flow of the interview to some extent (R10).&lt;br&gt;- We use their CV as a guide. We would use that as the basis for the interview. During the interview we write brief notes on their CV (R11).&lt;br&gt;- Yes definitely. I have it sitting in front of me. I also like to take brief notes during the interview (R14).&lt;br&gt;- Yes but that doesn’t determine the flow of the interview. I mean, the interview is run fairly informally (R17).&lt;br&gt;- We don’t place a huge weighting on using their CV. To be honest, I do place a lot of weighting on first impressions (R19).&lt;br&gt;- I would then use it as a basic guide to the topics that I would like to address in the interview (R20).</td>
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### Question 3
Do you use any type of scoring system or rating scale during the interview?

- I think at the end of the day, you more than likely rely on gut instincts (R1).
- You would probably score each applicant individually, on positives and negatives and total the score (R2).
- I use the CV as a basic template and then have my own little questionnaire thing (R3).
- Our decision is based on first & continual impressions formed throughout the interview, a gut feel and how I think they come across. I tend to rely on the old memory (R4).
- Comparing applicants comes down to gut feel, first impressions, as well as continual impressions (R5).
- Its all to do with personality, gut instincts, initial impressions and fitting into the office and with the people (R6).
- Rating scales are too formal and inflexible and tend to disregard some people, that could fit in perfectly and work really well with your organisation (R7).
- We don't really have the need for a formal rating scale. The interview is to see who would fit in and whether or not we would be comfortable working with that person (R8).
- No I don't. We just try and generalize rather than go for 100% and we get a gut feel for the type that we want that way (R13).
- No not at all. The interviews that we conduct are nothing more than informal, casual conversations (R16).
- Its based on whether I feel comfortable with the person, and that I feel they have the personal qualities, which would see them, fit in (R18).

### Question 4
How many applicants would you interview for a particular position?

- No more than 3 or 4 (R1).
- Between 3 and 5. Sometimes you make less than desirable decisions, because you just wanted to fill the gap quickly (R3).
- Probably 3 to 4. It comes down to how desperate you are to fill the position and how long you can hold out (4).
- For a support role, we would interview around 3 people. If you advertised personally, then you might interview around 10 people (R12).
- I would probably look to interview about 3 people for a position. The maximum would be 5 people (R16).
- I like to interview about 5 people for a particular position (R18).

### Question 5
How many times would you interview each candidate before making a final decision?

- No more than twice (R1).
- Probably, only twice (R2).
- Probably about 2 or 3 times. At least twice (R3).
- Just the once. I think that gives us a good enough indication of whether or not we would like them to work for us (R4).
- The most would be twice. Usually we are pretty sure of who we like the best (R5).
- I would interview them once and if I am sure that that is the person I want, then I ask the

*) Not, not at all. With us, it just comes down to gut feelings (R9).
* No we don't. At the end of the day, it's a gut feeling (R10).
* I use a basic matrix system whereby we put a tick or cross next to certain criteria. I mean presentation, physical appearance, dress and personality type are high on our list of criteria. Fitting in is also a very important (R11).
* No, not at all. That comes down to personal intuition, first impressions and your own individual gut feel (R14).
* In our process, its just a case of who is the best person for the job and who has the personality that will best fit in with others in the office (R17).
* Its pretty much just an informal conversation. It's a very ad-hoc selection-interview process (R19).
* No none at all (R20).
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<tr>
<th>Question 6</th>
<th>How many people would be involved in interviewing an applicant?</th>
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| • The interviewee would have to considered by the employer and the superior that he or she would report to (R2).  
• Sometimes just myself (owner), sometimes there is another person who is involved in that Department (R3).  
• Myself (owner) and our office manager (R4).  
• Two people. Myself (partner) and the other partner (R5).  
• At the end of the day, no matter who interviews, it is the Managing Director’s (Owner’s) decision, and he would be involved in all interviews, at one stage or another (R6).  
• Myself (partner) and at least one of the other partners (R7).  
• If it’s a female applicant, I would always have our receptionist or lady involved in the interview process as well as myself (R12).  
• It would just be myself, the owner of the business (R18). | • It would generally be myself and my partner (R9).  
• For secretarial positions, it would be myself (owner) and our administration manager. For senior / professional staffing positions, it would just be myself – owner (R11).  
• Generally myself (the owner) but over the last year or two, there has often been myself and one of the partners simply to get a second opinion (R19). |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>Before interviewing a candidate, do you consider any guidelines or standards or formal procedures that might need to be followed?</th>
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</table>
| • It’s based on gut feel (R1).  
• My gut feeling tells me this is an experience issue. I wouldn’t know what procedures I would need to follow (R2).  
• We don’t follow any certain structure when we interview or follow any particular guidelines (R4).  
• I mean initial impressions of a candidate always count for a lot and obviously, personal presentation is very important (R16). | • Well, we don’t really have any formal guidelines or procedures (R20). |

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<tr>
<th>Question 8</th>
<th>Do you check references as part of the selection process?</th>
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| • I tend not to because normally referees are only going to say wonderful things about the person. It’s a slightly biased opinion (R4).  
• Not really. I guess the checking process is usually through trusted contacts or sources within the industry (R7).  
• Yes, I do (R8).  
• Yes, I have done them personally when we get down to the last two applicants or so (R13). | • I always reference check (R10).  
• Yes we do (R17).  
• At the end of the day I rely on my own judgement a little bit. With more mature people, I follow my personal instincts and gut feel (R20). |

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 9</th>
<th>Do you prefer to employ people who are in the process of changing jobs rather than people who have been unemployed for a period?</th>
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</table>
| • No, I don’t really have a preference (R5).  
• To be honest, I would prefer to take on somebody who had been recently employed to someone who hadn’t (R6). | • By human nature I would always wonder why someone hasn’t been employed and I would therefore look a lot more critically at them (R10).  
• To be honest, I am very skeptical of someone who has been unemployed for a period (R14).  
• Providing that their grooming, personal articulation, presentation, appearance and those things are up to scratch, then we would employ them (R17). |
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</table>
| Question 1 |  • Questions relating to technical competency, communication skills, and motivation, would be most important (R1).  
• Questions relating to their personal qualities, their education, their experiences, hopes, goals and ambitions (R2).  
• Questions about their personal life, social life, what they get up to in their own time. These tell you a lot about their personality (R3).  
• More than anything, we would use the interview questioning just to sound them out and look at their personality and whether they have the potential to fit in (R4).  
• Questions relating to family life and family, whether they are single or married, outside interests. A very important one is whether they are a smoker (R5).  
• I would ask just general, basic stuff. I would have a few personal questions in the back of my mind (R6).  
• I try and establish their family background, level of stability, children, married etc by asking them questions relating to those. It just comes down to gut instincts (R7).  
• I run through their CV so you can just start to get a feel for their personal character. That’s something that really comes across through first impression (R8).  
• I try and get a good insight into the person, their personal interests, family background, boyfriends / partners / marital status (R12).  
• Their age, experience, personality and outside commitments are very important to question on (R13).  
• Questions vary from experience, aims and objectives, personal details, lifestyle, recreational interests, family, marriage (R18). |  • I would firstly just question them in such a way to re-confirm the information in their CV, both personal and professional (R9).  
• I like to question them about their needs and wants. This gives you a good idea as to what their motivation is and certainly, the type of person they are (R10).  
• We certainly like to know that their personal life is stable. I like to get a good idea of their personality, work ethic and whether or not they will fit in (R11).  
• I will question on age, medical health, marital status, family status and so on. I want stability from an employee, so I need to find out about personal background (R14).  
• The aim is to get a complete profile of the person regarding professional, academic, social, personal and family details. It usually varies each time (R17).  
• Personal questions are most important. Then I would move on to questions regarding what other work they have done (R19).  
• Well I try to ask them personal questions without intruding too much into their personal lives (R20). |
| Question 2 |  • I would follow a very basic format. I like to go into the interview with a very basic set of questions (R3).  
• I have a very rough format. I guess it usually depends on how the conversation develops (R4).  
• None whatsoever. We tend to vary the interview according to the person. Its just a matter of getting to know the person (R5).  
• My personal approach would be more of an informal style (R7).  
• The format is quite informal. It takes on more of a conversational style (R8).  
• It's free-flowing. But I do have a list of topics in mind (R12).  
• I don't have questions written down, but I do have five or six questions in mind that I would like responses to (R13).  
• No, the interview leads itself (R16). |  • We don't really follow any rigid structure. We adopt an informal approach, where we can be flexible in what we ask (R9).  
• Each interview is informal enough to allow for some variation between candidates. We adopt a very informal approach, relying on gut instincts and our impression of their personality (R10).  
• It's fairly informal. I will ask them about themselves. I try not to start firing questions at people straight away (R14).  
• It's very ad-lib and depends on the applicant (R19). |
| Question 3 |  • To be honest, probably not, but I would hope to (R1).  
• If you don't use a scoring schedule, then you are going to be disadvantaged when you compare responses (R2).  
• They would probably vary. You tend to become a little blaseur and you skip things (R3).  
• I would generally but by no means, would I follow it rigidly (R4).  
• I try and cover the same types of things in each interview (R6). |  • We try and photocopy a list of topic to maintain some level of consistency. In this way the interview is still flexible enough to allow us to formulate questions as we go along (R9).  
• It's often difficult to follow or maintain a strict format, but in general I make an effort to cover all the questions (R11).  
• Even without a formal written guide, I tend to follow the same type of questioning pattern |
Question 4 (a)
Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicants job competence (knowledge based)?

- The job entails this and this. How would you deal with these issues (R2).
- How do you handle conflict - you have an irate customer on the phone - I would ask them what they would do (R3).
- There is not a direct question that I could give (R4).
- I see from your resume that you can type 90 words a minute, is that copy typing or via a dictaphone (R5).
- That’s something you cant really assess until you get them on the job (R6).
- I think this is covered when you ask them what type of work they have done before (R7).
- I might give them an example of a problem and ask them how they might solve it (R8).
- I would give them an example of a situation and ask how they would respond to it, kind of like a role play situation (R12).
- I would ask them questions to establish whether they would be comfortable working in a small office (R13).
- For a clerical position, I would ask questions like, how would you create a word document. For professionals, I ask questions about experience (R16).
- I would ask questions about experience and then specific questions about that particular job (R18).
- It is indicated here that you can type 90 words a minute, have you done a recent test (R9).
- We would load a lot of the questions, testing their technical ability, but we try and disguise them well (R10).
- I would ask them what sort of work they have done, So, we are trying to find out if they would complement our business (R11).
- I would ask questions that lead into a discussion about their last job. I try and get people to openly talk about their experiences (R14).
- I would ask a question about how they dealt with working under pressure and give a specific example - kind of like a role-play (R17).
- Job competency is something you can’t really assess until you see them performing on the job (R19).
- I just try and find out whether they would be comfortable working in a small office (R20).
### Question 4 (b)
Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant's personal characteristics (behavioural based)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Example Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of work under pressure</td>
<td>Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant's ability to work under pressure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of personal characteristics</td>
<td>What are the strongest personal attributes, what personal qualities will they bring to the company?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of past experience and work responsibilities</td>
<td>What is your experience in similar roles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of professional appearance</td>
<td>How would you assess an applicant's professional appearance and presentation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of family and social life</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's family and social life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of weaknesses</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's weaknesses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of strengths</td>
<td>What are your strengths?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of personal judgement</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's personal judgement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of communication skills</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's communication skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of adaptability</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's adaptability to new situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of team working</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's ability to work in a team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of leadership</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's leadership skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of integrity</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's integrity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of ethics</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's ethical values?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 4 (c)
Can you give me an example of how you might phrase a question to assess an applicant's ability to work under pressure (situational factor)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Example Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of past experience and work responsibilities</td>
<td>What is your experience in similar roles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of professional appearance</td>
<td>How would you assess an applicant's professional appearance and presentation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of family and social life</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's family and social life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of weaknesses</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's weaknesses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of strengths</td>
<td>What are your strengths?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of personal judgement</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's personal judgement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of communication skills</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's communication skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of adaptability</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's adaptability to new situations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of team working</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's ability to work in a team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of leadership</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's leadership skills?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of integrity</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's integrity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of ethics</td>
<td>How do you assess an applicant's ethical values?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question 5
I am going to describe 3 personal styles towards interviewing. Which best reflects you?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Style</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 with a bit of 3</td>
<td>I would like to see their CV but I would use their CV in accordance with a broad questionnaire (R2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 with a bit of 3 (R9)</td>
<td>Probably a hybrid of 2 and 3. It's a very informal approach and flexible enough to facilitate some variation in questions (R10).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of 2 and 3</td>
<td>We would pick up on their personal characteristics through asking them their strengths and weaknesses (R9).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of 2 and 3</td>
<td>We have things in our mind and we will go through their CV and address certain things (R11).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2 because</td>
<td>Resumes usually have a &quot;other interests or hobbies section&quot; and I pick out those kinds of topics and lead a discussion (R14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 2 because</td>
<td>It involves talking about what they enjoy doing and those things personal to them. Its very ad-lib (R19).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| Question 6 | Unsuitable (R1).  
|           | Suitable (R2).  
|           | Suitable. We would normally get that off their CV (R3).  
|           | Suitable to ask, but the answer isn’t critical (R4).  
|           | Suitable (R5).  
|           | Suitable. Yes, this is important (R6).  
|           | Suitable. Yes, that’s very important (R7).  
|           | Suitable. Medium to high priority (R8).  
|           | Suitable, depending on who it is and what the job is (R12).  
|           | Suitable. Yes that’s important (R13).  
|           | Unsuitable. I don’t believe this is important (R16).  
|           | Unsuitable - not very important (R18).  

| Unsuitable (R9).  
| Suitable. For valuation staff, that’s important. For secretarial staff, not so important, but still a suitable question (R10).  
| Suitable. We would ask it, definitely (R11).  
| Suitable. Where your staff live is very important. It’s definitely a determining factor (R14).  
| Unsuitable. It’s not really important, unless they live a long way away (R17).  
| Suitable. We treat this question as being fairly important (R19).  
| Suitable. Yes, important (R20).  

b. How many years of work experience do you have?  
- Suitable (R1).  
- This is a 50/50 one. If you are chasing work experience, then this would be suitable and important (R2).  
- Suitable. But we would generally get this information from their CV (R3).  
- Suitable (R4).  
- Suitable. Yes that’s very important (R5).  
- Suitable. I don’t think it would have influence on my final decision, particularly if I really liked the person (R6).  
- Suitable. That’s a very important question (R7).  
- Suitable - their response would be important (R8).  
- Suitable. Its very important (R13).  
- Suitable. This is very important (R15).  
- Suitable but if we like the person, and think that they will fit in well, then experience might not come into it (R16).  

| Suitable. This is very important (R9).  
| Suitable (R10).  
| Suitable. Its usually indicated in their CV (R11).  
| Suitable. I would ask this one straight up (R14).  
| Suitable but of no impact on my final decision (R17).  
| Suitable. We would ask it (R19).  
| Suitable, yes that’s important (R20).  

| c. Have you ever been arrested or convicted?  
| Suitable. Its something I like to know (R1).  
| I don’t know if there is a discriminatory component to this question (R2).  
| Suitable. I would ask about any criminal convictions (R3).  
| Unsuitable. Its not something I ask (R4).  
| Unsuitable. Its not something I have ever asked, but now that I think about it, it probably is very important to know (R5).  
| Unsuitable. I have never asked that. Now that I think about it, it probably would be wise to ask it (R6).  

| Unsuitable. We wouldn’t ask this in the interview (R9).  
| Suitable. Rather than asking, I would like them to tell me (R10).  
| Unsuitable. It may be important, but I would never ask (R11).  
| Suitable. I will ask them if they have a record (R14).  

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>d. Are you single, married or other?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Unsuitable (R1).</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsuitable. I don’t think their personal relationships should have anything to do with whether or not they get the job (R2).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable: It provides a good indication of their personality (R3).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsuitable. I would never ask (R4).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable. It gives you a good idea of their stability (R5).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable. Yes, we would ask that (R6).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable. To determine their level of stability, personal/family responsibilities and background (R7).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsuitable. But, it can be a way of judging their stability (R12).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable (R8).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable, but the answer has no significance. (R16).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unsuitable, but if I perceived it was an issue, I would ask (R18).</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>e. How old are you?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Suitable (R1).</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable. I think we are entitled to know the answer (R2).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable. It is important for level of pay &amp; maturity (R3).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable. We are a young office, and so its important that the person can fit into that, so this is where age comes into it (R4).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable. Very important to know (R5).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable. Its important because it generally reflects how much the person expects to be paid (R6).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable (R7).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable. I wouldn’t ask it directly, but I would find out (R8).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable. It is important from a salary perspective (R12).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable. I prefer personally to employ mature people (R13).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable. I would never ask directly, but its something I can usually find out through their experience (R16).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suitable. I would never ask directly, but its something I can usually find out through their experience (R16).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suitable. Its important to find out the age of all candidates, indirectly (R18).</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>f. What languages do you speak?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Unsuitable: That’s not really important (R1).</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsuitable. That pre-supposes that they are worldly and can speak multiple languages (R2).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unsuitable. I have never asked this question (R3).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsuitable. It doesn’t really matter for our positions (R4).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unsuitable: No relevance (R9).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsuitable. That’s not really important in our industry (R5).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unsuitable although English is preferred (R10).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsuitable (R20).</strong></td>
<td><strong>Unsuitable (R11).</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Who recommended you to us?

- **Unsuitable.** I don’t think you really should be asking that (R2).
- **Unsuitable because it is usually the recruitment agency (R4).**
- **Unsuitable (R6).**
- **Unsuitable, because we often headhunt (R7).**
- **Suitable.** Where they are coming from and who recommended them to us is quite important (R8).
- **Suitable.** That’s important and we do ask (R12).
- **Suitable - if they hadn’t come through an agency (R13).**
- **Suitable - if it wasn’t a reputable connection, then I would question it (R15).**
- **Unsuitable.** I usually know where they were sourced (R16).
- **Suitable.** Its reasonably important to know (R18).
- **Unsuitable, because we generally know already (R9).**
- **Suitable - we certainly give it consideration but most of the time they are recommended through an agency (R10).**
- **Unsuitable - because we generally know anyway (R11).**
- **Suitable, if they didn’t come through a direct route, then I would want to know (R14).**
- **Unsuitable. Because it’s usually the university (R17).**
- **Suitable (R20).**

### This position may require extensive travel and overtime, do you think you can handle this?

- **Suitable (R1).**
- **Unsuitable, we suss out their attitude towards these things indirectly (R2).**
- **Suitable.** Their attitude definitely influences our decision (R3).
- **Suitable.** I do try and address the issue of overtime, I think that’s very important (R4).
- **Unsuitable, because its not a requirement of our positions (R5).**
- **Suitable.** We indicate that we don’t pay overtime and judge their response (R6).
- **Suitable.** Its something we make them aware of (R7).
- **Suitable.** This is definitely something we try and address (R8).
- **Unsuitable.** The job involves whatever time it takes for you to get it done (R12).
- **Suitable.** We would definitely discuss overtime (R13).
- **Suitable.** Yes that’s important (R16).
- **Unsuitable (R18).**
- **Suitable - overtime we would address in the interview (R9).**
- **Suitable - because there is no point employing someone and telling them later, to find out they couldn’t handle it (R10).**
- **Suitable - we definitely like to try and interpret how they respond to issue of overtime (R11).**
- **Suitable.** I would discuss overtime to gauge their attitude (R14).
- **Suitable.** That’s a very important question (R17).
- **Unsuitable (R19).**
- **Suitable.** I would definitely ask the question (R20).
### i. Have you made arrangements to have your children taken care of whilst at work?
- **Unsuitable (R1).**
- **Unsuitable. It would just be expected (R2).**
- **Suitable. It’s something that you would consider before you made a final decision (R3).**
- **Unsuitable. I have never really considered asking that (R4).**
- **Suitable. I would phrase the question slightly differently, but still address the same topic (R5).**
- **Suitable (R6).**
- **Unsuitable. We address family background and responsibilities informally, but I wouldn’t ask that question directly (R7).**
- **Suitable. We don’t want somebody who will be continually running home or constantly interrupted (R8).**
- **Suitable. You would just say, if you have children, are they in care while you are at work, how old are they (R12).**
- **Suitable. I want to know about their family situation, whether they have children liability (R13).**
- **Unsuitable. The people I employ are usually fairly young (R18).**
- **Unsuitable. They should have made these arrangements (R9).**
- **Unsuitable. I think family is a hell of a lot more important (R10).**
- **Unsuitable. I would never ask this question of anybody (R14).**
- **Suitable. I probably wouldn’t ask it in those exact words, but I would definitely address it (R17).**
- **Suitable (R19).**
- **Suitable - I would ask if they have to pick up children after school (R20).**

### j. Would you be comfortable supervising men (if it were a woman)?
- **Unsuitable (R1).**
- **I don’t know. That’s a tough one (R2).**
- **Suitable. I would only ask it if it was applicable to the role (R3).**
- **Unsuitable (R4).**
- **Unsuitable. I would ask it, if it were applicable (R5).**
- **Suitable. If the position required it, then I would address the issue indirectly (R6).**
- **Suitable. I would ask if the situation were relevant, for the fact that some women wouldn’t be comfortable (R7).**
- **Suitable. It’s also important for the men to be comfortable (R8).**
- **Suitable, if relevant because I know some men wouldn’t be comfortable with a woman boss and vice versa (R12).**
- **Suitable (R13).**
- **Unsuitable. That’s not important (R15).**
- **Unsuitable. It’s totally irrelevant (R18).**
- **Suitable. It’s important that everyone feels comfortable (R9).**
- **Suitable. If relevant, I would ask the question, not in those direct words though (R10).**
- **Suitable. If applicable, then I would address it (R11).**
- **Unsuitable. If applying, then they should feel that they have the capacity to perform capably in it (R14).**
- **Unsuitable, because if they are being interviewed, we consider they are capable of performing the job (R17).**
- **Suitable (R19).**
- **Unsuitable. I have never had to ask that question (R20).**

### k. Do you own a car?
- **Suitable (R1).**
- **Unsuitable (R2).**
- **Suitable (R3).**
- **Suitable. This is critical for the professional positions (R4).**
- **Suitable. Particularly for valuation staff (R5).**
- **Suitable - because of the nature of our work (R7).**
- **Suitable. For technical staff this is critical (R8).**
- **Suitable. For a valuer or professional staff member, having a car is critical (R12).**
- **Suitable. Because it comes in handy knowing this (R13).**
- **Suitable (R16).**
- **Suitable. That’s important to know (R18).**
- **Suitable (R9).**
- **Unsuitable. For professional staff, it’s critical (R10).**
- **Suitable. We would ask for technical staff (R11).**
- **Suitable. Its generally a requirement (R14).**
- **Suitable. Yes this is important (R17).**
- **Suitable. We consider that very important (R19).**
| 1. Do you suffer from any disabilities or health problems? | • Suitable (R1).  
• Suitable. I think you are entitled to ask (R2).  
• Suitable. This is one of the most important questions to ask (R3).  
• Unsuitable. It's not something I really worry about (R4).  
• Suitable. This is very important. I usually wouldn't ask this question directly (R5).  
• Suitable. It really depends on the disability and the extent of the disability and whether they can perform the job regardless (R6).  
• Unsuitable (R7).  
• Suitable. You don't want to hire somebody and find out that they can't perform the job because of a disability (R8).  
• Unsuitable because their CV would indicate whether or not they enjoyed good health by looking at their hobbies (R12).  
• Suitable. That's important to ask (R13).  
• Suitable. This is very important to know (R16).  
• Suitable although I probably wouldn't ask it directly (R18). |
|---|---|
| | • Suitable. We ask if they have a current drivers license (R20).  
• Unsuitable because I would have expected the agency to check this out beforehand (R9).  
• Unsuitable. I wouldn't ask this question (R10).  
• Unsuitable. If they can still do their job, then it's none of my business (R11).  
• Suitable. It's something that you can make a judgement call on based on their sporting activities, hobbies, appearance etc (R14).  
• Unsuitable. Unless physically obvious that something was wrong, then I wouldn't ask the question (R17).  
• Suitable. Maybe I will ask it in the future (R19).  
• Unsuitable. No I don't ask this question (R20). |
## Data Display Matrix – Summary of Comments: Training and Legislation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Independent Firm Responses</th>
<th>Franchise Firm Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong>&lt;br&gt;Have you undertaken any formal professional or practical training in interviewing?</td>
<td>• No (R1).&lt;br&gt;• No (R2).&lt;br&gt;• No (R3).&lt;br&gt;• No (R4).&lt;br&gt;• No (R5).&lt;br&gt;• No - its just something you pick up as you get more experience at it (R6).&lt;br&gt;• No (R7).&lt;br&gt;• No. Its just something you learn through experience (R8).&lt;br&gt;• My army experience where we did all that sort of stuff (R12).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, many years ago. One of the courses I did there was a section on your responsibilities as an interviewer (R13).&lt;br&gt;• No (R16).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, but many years ago and I can't remember much (R18).</td>
<td>• No (R9).&lt;br&gt;• No and to our detriment probably (R10).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, a very long time and from time to time we will circulate some manuals that contain interview techniques. But to tell you the truth, I don't think I have ever read them (R11).&lt;br&gt;• No I haven't (R14).&lt;br&gt;• No - its something that evolves through experience (R17).&lt;br&gt;• No I haven't (R19).&lt;br&gt;• No (R20).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;Do you believe that training in interviewing practices and techniques would be valuable?</td>
<td>• Yes I do (R1).&lt;br&gt;• Yes it would be valuable. I think it depends on your own skills and confidence though (R2).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, particularly considering I have no idea of what guidelines I am supposed to be following (R3).&lt;br&gt;• Probably but I think most things with interviewing, you can just pick up as you go along (R4).&lt;br&gt;• No. I don't believe that it is necessary. I mean, we don't really do it enough to warrant training (R5).&lt;br&gt;• Well, I wouldn't knock it back if given the opportunity. (R6).&lt;br&gt;• Yes definitely (R7).&lt;br&gt;• No, because the interview is more a case of judging if we like their personality and whether or not they fit the &quot;mould&quot; (R8).&lt;br&gt;• Definitely (R12).&lt;br&gt;• If offered the chance, I would definitely do it (R13).&lt;br&gt;• No because I don't do it regularly enough to justify it (R16).&lt;br&gt;• I just don't know if I would have the time to do it (R18).</td>
<td>• Maybe, but there is no substitute for experience (R9).&lt;br&gt;• Definitely - If we came away with some practical skills (R10).&lt;br&gt;• Yes. We have picked up some &quot;lemons&quot; over the years and I don't know if the techniques would help to eradicate that (R11).&lt;br&gt;• I don't do it enough to warrant training in interviewing. As we expand further, it might become more of an issue (R14).&lt;br&gt;• No because I know what I am looking for, I know the position I am trying to fill, I know what kind of personality and personal qualities I am looking for (R17).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, but its worked so far, so I will continue doing what I have done, training or no training (R19).&lt;br&gt;• I think it would be. Yes, definitely (R20).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;Were you aware that Departments such as DOPLAR and the Small Business Development Corporation provide recruitment and selection assistance?</td>
<td>• Yes. But I have never sought their assistance. I don't have time to go through the formal rules that you are supposed to (R1).&lt;br&gt;• Yes. But I don't think I would seek assistance. I find you get a better feel for the candidates, and you know what you want (R2).&lt;br&gt;• I wasn't aware they provided assistance in the employment area (R3).&lt;br&gt;• I wasn't aware of that, no (R4).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, but our inquiries are more related to salary and conditions, rather than recruitment and selection (R5).&lt;br&gt;• No we haven't (R6).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, but have never approached them for Rec. and Sel. (R7).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, but this was for award rates and that type of thing (R8).</td>
<td>• Yes. We have just inquired about what types of things we are allowed to ask (R9).&lt;br&gt;• Asked what DOPLAR stood for (R10).&lt;br&gt;• I have never sought assistance on interviewing technique (R11).&lt;br&gt;• Yes, but nothing relevant to selecting and how to interview according to formal guidelines. We tend to make up our own process (R14).&lt;br&gt;• No I haven't and I wasn't aware of that, no (R17).</td>
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<td>Question 4</td>
<td>Do you receive any guidelines on staffing or equal employment opportunity issues from REIWA or the API?</td>
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| Yes, but the conditions are so onerous and bureaucratic. So, you tend to think - I can't be bothered following those (R12).  
No I haven't (R13).  
Not personally (R18). | No (R20).  
No we don't (R1).  
No (R2).  
No, REIWA might send stuff out, but I put most of their stuff in the bin and we don't receive much from the API (R3).  
No, not on employment issues. How you operate your own business, is entirely up to you (R4).  
Not that I am aware of. If they do, then I don't read it (R5).  
I am sure we receive some kind of guidelines. I am not sure if they are related to staffing issues though (R6).  
Yes, we receive a monthly newsletter, but that doesn't really give you information related to employment (R7).  
It is entirely our responsibility. The API or REIWA don't govern this and don't provide this type of information (R8).  
No and I don't want to be hassled with all the standards that you have to go through. I would rather do it myself (R12).  
We are small, I know what I want, so it's just a matter of finding the right person. We don't go into any depth with our employing practices (R13).  
No we don't (R16).  
The API sends out material occasionally (R18). |

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<tr>
<th>Question 5</th>
<th>What type of assistance or service do these Departments provide?</th>
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| They represent the professional standing of our members (R1).  
It is more to do with the real estate industry, rather than recruitment and the rules of hiring and firing (R3).  
Its about further education and training for valuers or industry specific matters (R5).  
They provide rules and regulations and a code of conduct (R7).  
The are professional bodies (R8).  
REIWA is there to uphold a code of conduct and a code of ethics for valuers. If you belong to the API, then you are obliged to meet a specific code of conduct (R12).  
It is very limited in respect to staffing - it is up to the individual business to take responsibility for those matters (R18). | We don't receive any information on employment. They provide information related to a code of ethics and industry / professional practice standards (R9).  
The API set industry standards (R10).  
We don't receive anything on staffing relationships from the API (R11). |

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<th>Question 6</th>
<th>Do you think that it would be beneficial for your small business to receive staffing and EEO guidelines from these Departments?</th>
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</table>
| No, not really (R1).  
Yes. My professional body is the equivalent of my union. They should be there to protect the well being of my business (R2).  
Yes it would especially for REIWA - just different rules and regulations regarding employment (R3).  
Even if they did provide guidelines, I don't know if it would change what we are doing at present (R4).  
No. I don't really want them interfering in the way we run our operations. Ignorance is bliss (R5).  
I don't think it is really going to be of much assistance (R6).  
I think that a lot of the time we should be able to source that information from other area's (R7).  
I don't think it would hurt. And certainly it would save us a lot of time (R8). | I certainly think it would be in our best interest's (R10).  
I think it would be a good idea (R11).  
No I don't think it is there job to provide these types of guidelines (R14).  
Well, it would be from there or from the relevant government bodies (R19).  
Yes, providing they are in precise guideline format. You don't want to be bombarded with legislation and guidelines (R20). |
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<tr>
<th>Question 7</th>
<th>Can you explain what you know about the West Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984?</th>
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<tr>
<td>• I didn’t even know that one existed for WA (R1).</td>
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<td>• No, I don’t know a thing about it (R2).</td>
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<td>• I know a little bit - you can’t not hire somebody because they are pregnant, black, disabled etc (R3).</td>
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<td>• Well, I don’t know any specifics but I know you can’t discriminate for any particular reason (R4).</td>
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<td>• My basic understanding is that you can’t discriminate against people on certain things, which personally, I think is a load of nonsense (R5).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I don’t know anything about it (R6).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Yes, I know about it. I think it relates to things like employing women, pregnancy etc (R7).</td>
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<td>• I know you have to be careful about certain issues and not to discriminate on the basis of them (R8).</td>
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<td>• It’s to try and see the person, not the problem (R12).</td>
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<td>• Not a lot really (R13).</td>
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<td>• I am aware that the act exists but that’s as far as it goes (R16).</td>
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<td>• I would assume that it says you have got to treat everybody on an equal footing (R18).</td>
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<th>Question 8</th>
<th>What knowledge do you have of the grounds for unlawful discrimination in the selection interview?</th>
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<td>• I know you have to give people so many verbal warnings before you lay them off (R1).</td>
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<td>• Only very generalised. You can’t discriminate against a male or female (R2).</td>
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<td>• I am aware of our responsibilities if somebody is not performing. There are certain processes you have to go through (R4).</td>
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<td>• All I know is that you are not supposed to discriminate against people on the basis of certain characteristic (R5).</td>
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<td>• I think it comes down to basic common sense. I don’t have any specific grounds that I know (R7).</td>
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<td>• Marriage, children, age - that’s what I understand it to be (R12).</td>
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<td>• It’s very much just common sense (R16).</td>
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<th>Question 9</th>
<th>Do you have any understanding of how the act might influence the types of questions you might ask a candidate in an interview?</th>
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<td>• I would probably ask them if they were aware of their rights under the EEO Act (R1).</td>
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<td>• I guess it should impact on the questions, now that you make me think of it. You may well overstep the mark by asking the wrong questions (R2).</td>
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<td>• This is why we ask about health, how often they get sick, their attitude, their marital status, family responsibilities etc (R3).</td>
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<td>• I don’t really think it would impact directly on the specific type or nature of questions you would ask or the kinds of topics that you cover (R4).</td>
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<td>• If I thought we were crossing the boundaries during the interview, then I would probably check it out beforehand (R5).</td>
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<td>• No I don’t really. I wouldn’t have a clue (R6).</td>
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<td>• I don’t specifically know how it would affect me in asking questions in the interview (R7).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• I understand you have to be careful when you ask questions and certainly try not to vary the level of questioning (R8).</td>
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| | I don’t have any great depth of knowledge regarding the Act and what it stands for (R9).  |
| | I presume that one exists for WA then (R10).  |
| | Not really. All I can say is that you have to treat all people equally (R11).  |
| | I know that there are some areas that I cannot go into during an interview and I can’t judge people on it or, importantly, not to be seen to be judging people on it (R14).  |
| | I try and keep an open mind. Provided they meet our criteria and fit in, and have the right sort of personality, then the best person for the job gets the job (R17).  |
| | I don’t really know anything of great significance (R19).  |
| | Absolutely nothing (R20).  |
| Most people want the job, so they are prepared to answer or offer the answers to those questions freely (R12). |
| I imagine there are guidelines indicating what you can ask, what you can't ask. Being a small business - we don't have to worry about a lot of these (R13). |
| I believe it would, but I have no idea which questions (R16). |
| I don't think it would make any difference to the way I conduct my interview (R18). |
| I wouldn't have the slightest idea, to be truthful (R20). |