

What's Your Greatest Weakness? The Optimality of Uninformative Interviews*

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Abstract

Job interviews are a nearly universal practice for hiring workers, but regularly consist of questions unsuited to the job of finding the best candidates for a position. We show that interviews can help employers even when they provide no direct evidence of a candidate's quality, and that it is often in a firm's best interest to deliberately lower the quality of the information that can be learned from an interview, even to the point of knowingly hiring workers that will be unprofitable for the firm and will be fired. Interviews are used to avoid only the most extreme left-tails of the distributions of workers, rather than to seek out high-quality candidates.

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