Microspeak: The As-Appropriate (AA) interviewer

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One term you may hear when people talk about the process of interviewing at Microsoft is the As Appropriate, or AA, interviewer. Why is the final interview of the day called As Appropriate?

The name is a holdover from how Microsoft used to structure hiring interviews. The term is not officially used any more, but you may still hear it used informally by old-timers.

A typical interview day used to consist of four (sometimes five) interviews, structured as follows:

	Start	
	⇓	
Interviewer 4 (as appropriate)	⇒ Recruiter ⇒	Interviewer 1
⇑	⬈	⇓
Interviewer 3	⇐ ⇐ ⇐	Interviewer 2
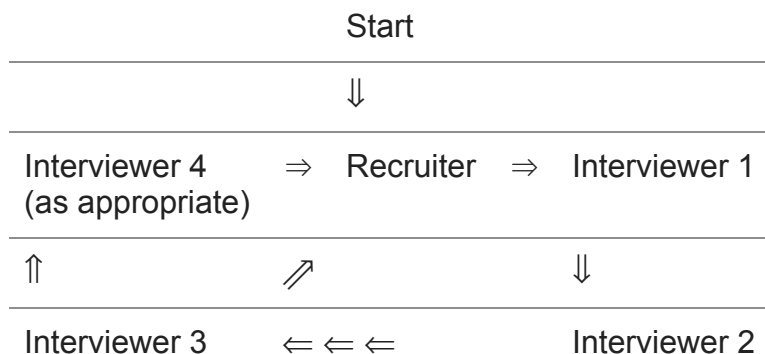
This set of interviews is called an *interview loop* because the candidate travels in a loop through the diagram, starting and ending with the recruiter.

Each of the interviews assesses not just the candidate's technical competence but also other factors such as their initiative, ability to teach themselves new things, and how well they work as part of a team. The results of these interviews are all shared with the recruiter and the final interviewer.

The final interviewer was typically someone more senior in the hiring group. Historically, their job was to take the information provided by the initial interviewers and, based on their recommendations, decide whether the candidate was still worth pursuing. If so, then they proceeded with the final interview. if not, then they sent the candidate directly to the recruiter

after completing their final "normal" interview. The final interviewer was called the "as appropriate" interviewer because the final interview took place only if they felt it was appropriate.

The term "as appropriate" was often abbreviated in speech to "as-app" (pronouncing the "app" like the first syllable of "application"), and in writing as "AA".

The Microsoft hiring interview process has been reworked several times since those early days. For example, at one point, the interviews were restructured so that the interviewer roles are rotated through the day, to improve throughput:

	Candidate 1	**Candidate 2**	**Candidate 3**	**Candidate 4**
Welcome	Recruiter 1	Recruiter 2	Recruiter 3	Recruiter 4
Slot 1	Interviewer 1	Interviewer 2	Interviewer 3	Interviewer 4
Slot 2	Interviewer 2	Interviewer 3	Interviewer 4	Interviewer 1
Slot 3	Interviewer 3	Interviewer 4	Interviewer 1	Interviewer 2
Slot 4 (as-app)	Interviewer 4	Interviewer 1	Interviewer 2	Interviewer 3
Wrap-up	Recruiter 1	Recruiter 2	Recruiter 3	Recruiter 4

Every interviewer serves as the "As appropriate" interviewer for a candidate. There is no special interviewer who is responsible for being the "As appropriate" interviewer.

At some point in the evolution of the interview loop, the "As appropriate" stopped being optional. Everybody got an "As appropriate" interview. The role of the "As appropriate" interviewer didn't change. It's just that the "As appropriate" interview always takes place, regardless of the feedback from the other three interviewers.

The final interview of the day lost the name "As appropriate", but people who have been conducting interviews for a long time sometimes accidentally slip into the old terminology.