

## COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW

### WHAT?

Some interviewers may be more interested in your experience or previous qualifications, but a competency-based interviewer wants to know is whether you have the right skills to take the position on.

### WHY?

This is used to practically test how candidates would react in given situations. The tasks could range from oral and written communication to planning, organisation and problem-solving.

### KEY COMPETENCIES

- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Communication skills
- Decision making
- Leadership
- Problem-solving
- Organisation
- Goal-orientation

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Even though the type of question will depend upon the role and industry you're applying for, there are some common themes which run through competency-based interview questions.

Some examples include:

Tell me a time when...

Can you think of an example of how/when...?

Describe a way in which you...

The interviewer is looking for are practical examples of some key competencies, i.e. "describe a way in which you have demonstrated excellent leadership".

Pick out some of the key competencies stated in the job description and think of some examples for each one.

If they're looking for someone with excellent teamwork and leadership skills, think of a time in your life where you've demonstrated this and also think of situations in the workplace.

### STAR APPROACH

If you are not familiar with competency-based interview questions, the STAR model is a very useful way of communicating key points.

Once you have identified what the 'Situation', 'Task', 'Action' or 'Result' is, you formulate it into a short key point, ensuring that you include how you managed to achieve the result and how your actions addressed the initial situation and task.

## TIPS

- Before you arrive at the interview, decide what the key skills highlighted in the job description.
- For each key skill, have a pre-prepared example of how you have displayed that attribute.
- Use a wide variety of examples where possible, include examples during school, university, previous employment, or everyday life.
- Be honest. They will ask you questions about the subject and any embellishments you have made, will be found out.
- Do not try and think on your feet. Be prepared.

## COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Knowledge, skills, and attitude are linked together through competency-based interview questions. These particular skills questions will assess whether you have the right balance between great interpersonal skills, education or experience, and the right attitude for the role applying for.

- 1. Provide an example of how you handled conflict in the workplace. The interviewer will measure your adaptability and gauge the productiveness of your approach towards conflict, tension, and differences of opinion.**

The examples provided should emphasise the importance of your position in resolving issues.

- 2. Provide an example of how you overcame a challenge you faced in the workplace**

This question is directed towards your academic experiences if you are entering the workplace directly from school or university.

An ideal answer to this question would demonstrate your ability to display leadership skills, work in a team and how you handle pressure. Give an answer where you were given a task, using as many skills as possible.

- 3. What is your biggest achievement?**

The ideal answer would be to use a work-related example and emphasise exactly why you would this consider to be your biggest achievement.

If it is related to your personal life, use profitable references such as budget slashing, determination, commitment, and team work to communicate all the related positive aspects.

- 4. What made you realise that you wanted a change why would you want to work for us?**

Take the time to do extensive research on the company and position that you are applying for.

The answer provided should include your analysis of the company and role characteristics, along with variety of qualities you bring forth.

- 5. Provide an example of how your communication improved a situation.**

What will be assessed here is your ability to communicate effectively and sensitively. Tell them about a time where you were dealing with a difficult customer or friction in the office with colleagues. This will highlight your listening skills and communication skills.

- 6. Provide an example of change in the workplace and how you handled this.**

If you have managed change in the workplace, this is an ideal question to illustrate all your skills and abilities. If not, answer in a way which demonstrates your flexibility and the positive manner in which you meet challenges.

**7. Provide an example of a time you identified a new approach to a workplace problem.**

Your analytical skills will be tested here. Provide an example that illustrates analysis, problem solving, innovation and practicality.

**8. Provide an example where you have led a team in the past.**

Focus solely on your role as team leader. List the qualities you possess and conclude your answer by providing examples of lessons learnt along the way.

## **TECHNIQUES FOR ANSWERING COMPETENCY QUESTIONS**

### **STAR TECHNIQUE**

**Situation:** Describe the situation

**Task:** Describe what task was required of you

**Action:** Tell the interviewer what action you took

**Result:** Conclude by describing the result of that action

If you cannot think of good examples at the time, ask for a moment to think about it and give an answer. Do not make up an example and stay positive about your actions.

### **CAR APPROACH**

**Context:** Describe the situation task you faced

**Action:** Describe what action you took

**Result:** Describe what the result was

### **COMPETENCIES**

#### **Individual Competencies**

- Individual Competencies refer to decisiveness, tenacity, knowledge, independence, risk taking and personal integrity.

A typical question: *Tell me about a time when your work or your ideas were challenged.*

#### **Managerial Competencies**

- Managerial Competencies refer to your ability to your leadership skills, empowerment, strategic thinking, corporate sensitivity, project management and managerial control.

A typical question: *Tell me about a time you led a group to achieve an objective.*

#### **Analytical Competencies**

- Analytical Competencies refer to our decision-making abilities; innovation, analytical skills, problem solving, practical learning and attention to detail.

A typical question: *Tell me about a time when you identified a different approach to a problem.*

#### **Interpersonal Competencies**

- Interpersonal Competencies refer to your social competence.

A typical question: *Describe a situation where you managed to get others to work together.*

### **Motivational Competencies**

- Motivational Competencies refer to the things that drive you, resilience, motivation, result orientation, initiative, and quality focus.

A typical question: *When did you work the hardest and feel the greatest sense of achievement?*

Be yourself when answering competency questions. Use real life examples and relate them to your experience – how did you react and how did it make you feel? These are not trick questions; they are designed to create the best match between an individual and an organisation.

With a little bit of preparation, you will quickly realise that competency-based interviews represent an unprecedented opportunity to describe some of your finer moments to a captive audience.