

Managing Competency Based Interview Questions

During an interview you're likely to be asked a series of questions designed to determine your behaviour when faced with specific scenarios. These are known as 'competency based' interview questions.

Do prepare thoroughly as it can be difficult to think on your feet and come up with good examples quickly.

Before you speak

- Take your time to think about your answer - ask for clarification of the question if you need to
- Take a deep breath and a sip of water and try to speak slowly and calmly
- Make sure you answer the question, and when you've finished, stop talking - don't keep rambling

Structuring your answer

When answering a competency-based question, follow the **STARS** approach to structuring your answer – this ensures that you don't waffle and that you give the interviewer the answers they are looking for.

- S** First describe the **Situation** you were in
- T** Describe the **Task** that was involved
- A** Next describe the **Action** you took (say 'I' not 'we' – interviewers want to know what YOU did, not the wider team)
- R** Then explain what the **Result** was
- S** Describe the **Skills** you used in your achievement

Practice questions

Practicing on some example questions will really help you structure your answers. Do have a 'stock' of scenarios and examples that can be adapted to any question. Practice out loud so you get used to the sound of your own voice.

Adaptability

- Tell me about a time when you changed your priorities to meet others' expectations.
- Describe a time when you altered your own behaviour or changed your point of view to fit the situation.

Client focus

- Give an example of how you provided a service to a client/stakeholder beyond their expectations.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a client/stakeholder issue.
- Describe a situation in which you had to overcome organisational resistance.

Communication

- Give an example of a difficult or sensitive situation that required extensive communication.
- Tell me about a time when you really had to pay close attention to what someone else was saying, actively seeking to understand their message.

Organisational Awareness

- Describe the culture of your organisation and give an example of how you work to achieve a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you used your knowledge of the organisation to get what you needed.

Problem Solving and Judgement

- Tell me about a time when you had to identify the underlying causes to a problem.
- Describe a time or a situation when you had to analyse a problem and generate a solution.
- Tell me about a situation that required careful thought. What did you do?

Results Orientation

- Tell me about a time when you set and achieved a goal or improved the way things were typically done.
- Describe how you improved the use of resources beyond your own work unit to achieve improved results.

Teamwork

- Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as a member of a team.
- Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.
- Describe a situation in which managed conflict within a team in which you were a member (not a leader).

Developing Others

- Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their skills or job performance. What did you do?
- Give me an example of a time when you recognised that a member of your team had a performance difficulty/deficiency. What did you do?

Impact and Influence

- Describe a recent situation and the steps you took to convince an individual or a group to do something.
- Describe a situation in which you needed to influence different stakeholders with differing perspectives.

Innovation

- Describe something you have done that was new and different for your organisation that improved performance and/or productivity.
- Tell me about a recent problem in which old solutions wouldn't work. How did you solve the problem?
- Describe the things you consider and the steps you take in assessing the viability of a new idea or initiative.

Leadership

- Tell me about a time when you had to lead a group to achieve an objective.
- Describe a situation where you had to ensure that your "actions spoke louder than your words" to a team.
- Describe a situation where you inspired others to meet a common goal.

Relationship Building

- Describe a situation and how did you go about developing or building an effective win/win relationship with a stakeholder or client.
- Give me an example of a time when you deliberately attempted to build rapport with a co-worker or customer.

Resource Management

- Describe a situation in which you took a creative approach to resourcing to achieve a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a particular resource management issue regarding people, materials or assets.

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- Describe a situation and steps you took to establish a partnership with another organisation / stakeholder to achieve a mutual goal.

Self-Management

- Describe the level of stress in your job and what you do to manage it.
- Describe a time when you were in a high-pressure situation.
- Describe a time when things didn't turn out as you had planned, what did you do to, how did you address the issue?

Strategic Thinking

- Describe a challenge or opportunity you identified and how you developed a strategy to respond to it.
- Describe a time you created a strategy to achieve a longer-term business objective.
- Describe a time when you used your business knowledge to understand a specific business situation.

Good luck and remember, the more you prepare and practice, the easier it'll be.

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