

# COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

## WHAT IS COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWING?

Behavioural or competency based interviews are a style of interviewing used so that a candidate can best show how they would demonstrate certain behaviours/skills in the workplace; by asking questions that will explore how a candidates may have reacted to and dealt with previous work place situations. The idea being that by looking at past experience a potential employer can predict future behaviour. A competency is something that can be measured and is now commonly used, not only interviews but in appraisals and training.

Interviews ask candidates to give an example of a situation or task that led them to take a certain course of action. Probing questions will then be used to determine the course of action they took and what changes were created by those actions and the effects of those actions on others.

For example, when interviewing for a Project Manager role, an organisation may be seeking to focus on the following types of competencies; planning and organising, communication, strategic thinking.

When interviewing using competency style questions it is best to adopt the **STAR model**, which will allow you to structure your questions in a logical and concise manner.

**SITUATION** – Ask the candidate to describe the situation/problem they were faced with and how they dealt with it.

**TASK** – Ask the candidate what tasks they had to conduct.

**ACTION** – Ask the candidate what action did they take and why. Were there any challenges/obstacles and how did they overcome them?

**RESULTS** – Ask the candidate to highlight the outcomes.

## COMMON COMPETENCIES

To help you we have listed below some of the most common competencies that many companies look for. Please note that these definitions may not be identical to those of all employers and are just to give you a few ideas.

### DRIVE FOR RESULTS

This competency is trying to assess personal motivation and how a candidate approaches challenges.

#### Example Questions:

- What achievement are you most proud of?
- Give me an example of a time when you have had to achieve a specific result
- What opportunities have you identified and used to achieve success?
- Tell me about a time when you have 'made things happen' for yourself/your team?

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## COMMUNICATION

This competency is looking to explore a candidates' ability to communicate effectively and to influence others to act and/or commit support to one's own goals or objectives. For many roles it is important to establish that a candidate understands the need to adapt their communication methods depending on the situation and individuals that they are facing.

Communication methods for example can include: 1-2-1 discussions (formal and informal), group presentations, telephone, email etc. Different 'audiences' may include peers, subordinates, senior management, customers, suppliers.

### Example Questions:

- Can you please give a specific example of when you have had to influence a colleague to your way of thinking?
- Tell me about a particularly difficult issue you had to communicate?

## PLANNING AND ORGANISING

This is looking to assess if and how a candidate plans activities and/or projects. It is relevant for all levels of roles, not just managerial positions. Often it may be looking to see how a candidate fits their plans into a larger project plan, for example.

### Example Questions:

- Describe a time when you have had to plan a large piece of work?
- How would you approach ensuring that you delivered results in your role?
- It's a busy day with conflicting priorities and deadlines, what do you do?

## CUSTOMER FOCUS

Individuals who display this competency understand and believe in the importance of customer focus. They listen to and understand the needs of external and internal customers. They meet and exceed customer needs to ensure satisfaction.

### Example Question:

- Can you give us an example of when you have dealt with an upset or angry customer in the past?

## INFLUENCING OR PERSUADING OTHERS

A candidate may have strong verbal skills but can they influence another person to change their thinking or take some action – perhaps a colleague follows their advice or a client decides to buy a service or product. At management level does the candidate have the skills to persuade and involve rather than coerce and punish? Are they ethical in their dealings with people?

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## Example Questions:

- Tell me about a time when you were able to change someone's viewpoint significantly?
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something that you disagreed with?

## INTERPERSONAL AND TEAM SKILLS

The desire to build and maintain relationships in and beyond the workplace is critical. Many workplaces function on the basis of project teams. Those who are highly collaborative and co-operative are most likely to thrive in this type of environment.

## Example Questions:

- What skills and personal qualities have you contributed to the teams you have been part of?
- Tell me about the most difficult person you have worked with.

## PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

How does a candidate come to a decision? What information do they utilise and how do they break that down and filter it to ensure their decisions are sound and valid? Are they able to make decisions independently or do they rely too heavily on others?

## Example Questions:

- Tell me about a difficult decision that you have made?
- Tell me about an unpopular decision you have made?

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