

Competency Based Interview Tips

Where some interviewers may be more interested in your experience or previous qualifications, what a competency based interviewer really wants to know is whether you have the right skills to take the position on. Competency Based Interviewing is a style of interviewing that determines how relevant your competencies are to a role. By asking the candidate to give examples of his or her behaviour in work-related, real-life situations, the candidate will demonstrate where their given competencies are, indicating how suited they are to the job.

What are key competencies?

They are skills that employers look for when recruiting. Some key competencies include Teamwork, Responsibility, Communication Skills, Decision Making, Leadership, Problem-solving and Organisation.

Competency based questions

Although the type of questions you are asked will vary they will be based on you recounting real situations that demonstrate the competencies needed for the job.

Examples include:

Tell me about a time when...

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

Describe a way in which you...

These may be followed up with supplementary questions to assist you in providing the information required, for example, *What objections did you encounter? How did you manage these?*

Essentially, the interviewer is looking for practical examples of some key competencies, i.e. *describe a way in which you demonstrated excellent leadership?*

Preparation

Pick out some of the key competencies from 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 scenario in which you've demonstrated this. Use examples from work, networking groups, education or daily life.

How to answer competency-based interview questions

Now you know what the employer is looking for you need to demonstrate these competencies at the interview.

- Answer the question that is asked of you, it won't work giving your best example if it is not relevant.
- Use real examples and avoid the temptation to exaggerate.
- Be specific, do not answer with general examples
- If in doubt use the STAR approach, it will allow you to give a full and succinct answer

What is the STAR approach?

The STAR model is a useful way of communicating key points clearly and concisely. STAR is an acronym for 'Situation', 'Task', 'Action' and 'Result'.

Situation

Describe the situation as this gives a frame of reference for the example.

Task

What needed to be accomplished? Set the scene with all relevant information.

Action

This is the key area to demonstrate the competencies that the interviewer is looking for. Explain what you did, how you did it and why you did it. Stay away from irrelevant or complex information but go in to specific detail so that the interviewer understands how this played out and your thought processes. This is where you can sell yourself and differentiate your experience from the other applicants.

Result

What was the outcome? How did you feel and what did you learn? The result need not be perfect for it to be an effective example and this is a good area to demonstrate your ability to learn and outline what you might do differently in the future.

Top Tips Summary

- Before you go to the interview pick out the key skills highlighted in the job description
- For each one, have a pre-prepared example of how you've displayed that attribute
- Use a wide variety of examples where possible

Remember your languagematters consultant will always be on hand for any client specific tips and advice.

Good luck!