



Interviewer Tool Kit

On Competency-Based Interview Questions
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(Topics Covered)

Customer Service Orientation, Team Leadership, Planning, Teamwork, Assertiveness, Aspiration
Positive Attitude, Selling skills



Interviewer Tool Kit

On Competency-Based Interview Questions

Competency-based interviewing is used to examine how candidate previously reacted or behaved in specific situation. Because past behavior is a strong predictor of future behavior, competency-based questions are asked to solicit specific behavioral examples from the applicant's past experiences. Questions should be open-ended (that is, they cannot be answered with "yes" or "no") to allow the applicant to provide as much detail as possible.

Quick Tips:

1. Zero in on what seems significant.
2. Keep the candidate focused on actual past events (not hypothetical actions)
3. Keep the candidate focused on his/her role and away from regular references to "we". You want to learn about the candidate, not her/his colleagues.
4. Probe for thoughts or motivations behind actions.
5. Keep your responses to a minimum.
6. Keep track of time.

Examples of Probing Questions:

Further probing is used to get more information from a candidate in response to a specific question. Some example questions are given below:

- | | |
|---|--|
| What was the situation? | How did others react? How do you know this? |
| What was your reaction? | Can you explain what do you mean by ...? |
| Why had it happened? | Can you give me an example? |
| How was the situation resolved? | Tell me what happened exactly? |
| How did you identify the need? | What steps did you take? |
| How did you respond? | What was your involvement? |
| What steps did you take? | Can you tell me why you reacted that way? |
| Did you have any other option? | Did you have any other option? |
| Was the client satisfied with the outcome? | Can you tell me how you felt when it happened? |
| What event led up to the situation? | How do you think others felt when you did that? |
| What did you actually do? Say? | Can you talk me through the thoughts at the time you took that action? |
| What was your intent in doing so, saying that, etc? | What did you learn from the experience? |
| What were you thinking? Feeling? (explain your reaction to the situation) | Were you satisfied with the outcome? |
| What happened next? | Was satisfied with the outcome? |
| What was the outcome of doing this, or saying that? | |

Interview Evaluation:

It is very essential that we analyze or assess the interview answers very carefully in order to make appropriate decision. Since, behavioral interview is based on the past experience, we broadly observe following three parameters.

W.H.O.?

What was the situation/task?

- Applicant should describe a situation or task he/she encountered.

How was it handled?

- Applicant should give specifics about how they handled the situation or carried out the task.



Outcome of the situation/task?

- Applicant's action should demonstrate successful completion of situation/task and demonstration of competency sought.

However it's important that we also analyze the data provided. The data or information provide by the candidate should be judged on following parameters:

- a) **Specific, Realistic and convincing** - the data or information provided should be meaningful, backed by data and facts, have ready references.
- b) **Spoken with passion** – while providing information the candidate should sound enthusiastic, confident, show energy level, should reflect emotion.
- c) **Force of conviction** - When interviewing a future employee for a lateral role, based on his competencies and achievements, there should be a close observation of the conviction with which he states his successes and learnings.
- d) **Clarity of thought** – the presentation of data and information should be structured and arranged in parts in such a way that the interviewer and the interviewee himself can deal with each part or component separately.

An Example Question and Detailed Response

(Team Work)

Interviewer: "Please describe to me a situation when you have helped a colleague who was in trouble. What was the situation and how did you try to tackle it?"

On the face of it, it seems a fairly straightforward question to answer. However, a crafty interviewer could interrupt you at any point and follow up with all sorts of supplementary questions. Look at the following sample candidate's response. You will see certain underlined words and phrases, which indicate points at which the interviewer might want to interrupt to ask for further information.

The candidate's response might go along the lines of the following: "There was a time when James, the sales manager, came to me with a problem about his sales performance. He asked for some advice, so I tried to be supportive and make some suggestions. I also helped him on some site visits to customers. And, over the course of the next few months, he listened to my advice and managed to bring his performance up to satisfactory levels again."

So, supplementary questions (along with the candidate's responses) could include:

Time - "How recently did this happen?" The candidate responds: "This was three years ago, when I'd just moved from the sales department to being the marketing manager. When I left the sales department, they recruited a young sales manager to take over my role."

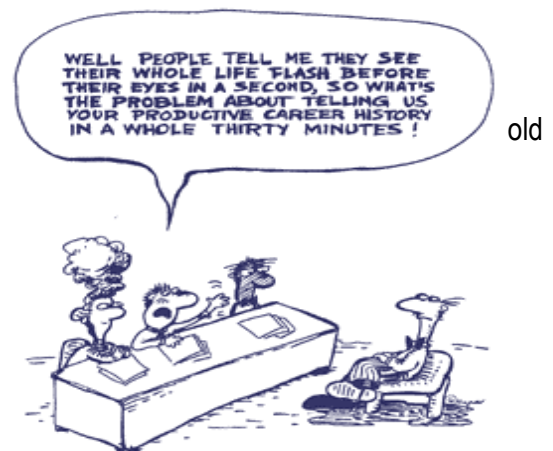
Came to me - "Why did he come to you?" The candidate responds: "He came to me because we'd already struck up a good working relationship by that point. It was a small company, so I always tried to meet with new colleagues and take them out for a drink and explain to them that I was there if they ever needed any help."

Problem - "And what was the sales manager's problem?" The candidate explains: "James wasn't hitting his sales targets. James was a really bright person - but didn't have that much sales experience."

Sales performance - "What exactly was wrong with his performance?" The candidate replies: "James had two major targets. His first target was that he had to cold call enough companies every month to set up five meetings with prospective clients. His other target was to convert 50% of prospective clients into real customers. He was failing on both of them."

Supportive - "How were you supportive?" The candidate explains: "James was on the verge of tears and really agitated about his poor performance because he was worried he was going to get fired. The first thing I did was to get him to calm down. I took him out of the office and bought him a coffee and tried to listen to him without judging him."

Suggestions - "So what were your suggestions?" The candidate responds: "After talking to him and understanding that he was failing to meet both of his targets, my first suggestion was that I might listen in on some of his cold calls. So I spent a few hours one morning listening in on his cold calls. I discovered that he was telephoning customers without first doing enough research on them. He called them up without knowing anything about their business needs. So I worked with James to think about the sorts of facts that he would need to collect before making a call."



Site visits - "Tell me a bit more about what you did on these site visits." The candidate responds: "I also talked James round to letting me attend a couple of sales meetings with him. I went along, observed him and gave him some constructive comments about what he was doing wrong. In particular, he was being a bit too aggressive in trying to get the customer to sign on the dotted line there and then. So I persuaded him to give customers more thinking time - which resulted in more of them signing up in the end."

As you can see, a candidate who did not actually experience that situation would have found it difficult to provide so much detail. From the initial question then, the interviewer could have asked any number of supplementary questions - all of which you would need to have good answers to.

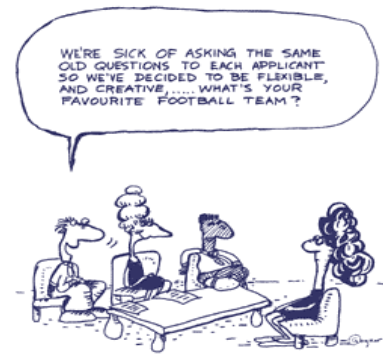
Competency-based interview questions

Competency Type: Customer Service Orientation

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.

Key Indicators

1. Acknowledges Customer.
2. Actively listens and seeks information from customer, displays empathy.
3. Identifies customer's need and checks for understanding.
4. Meets or surpasses the customer's need.
5. Confirms Satisfaction.



Interview Questions:

1. Give an example of how you provided service to a client/stakeholder beyond their expectations.
2. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a angry or upset customer or deal with client/stakeholder service issues.
3. Tell me about a time when you were unable to solve a customer's problem? i.e. The problem fell in someone else's jurisdiction or someone else had to approve.
4. Tell me about your relationship with a particular customer.
5. What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients in guiding and maintaining successful business relationships?

6. Give me examples of how you have made these work for you.

Competency Type: Team Leadership

Making active attempts to influence events to achieve goals; self-starting rather than accepting passively; taking action to achieve goals beyond what is required, being proactive. Using appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to inspire and guide individuals towards goal achievement.

Key Indicators

1. Uses appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to inspire and guide individuals towards goal achievement.
2. Able and willing to take on leadership role.
3. Motivates action in others.
4. Coaches.
5. Facilitates changes.
6. Sensitive to thoughts and feelings of other team members.
7. Persuasive and skilled negotiator.



Interview Questions

1. Tell me about a time when you had to lead a group to achieve a specific outcome
2. Give an example of a time when you have fostered motivation in your employees.
3. What leadership qualities do you think are important? How have you demonstrated these qualities?
4. Give me a specific example of how you have empowered your staff to make independent decisions.
5. Tell me about a time when you needed to have co-workers working on a project who normally have different work styles/ideas. How did you pull them together?

Competency Type: Planning

Establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal; planning proper assignments of personnel and appropriate allocation of resources. Assimilating and applying new job-related information and skills in a timely manner.



Key Indicators

1. Plans and prepares for future events.
2. Formulates a clear and structured plan.
3. Effectively coordinates priorities, tasks and resources to achieve work outcomes.
4. Establishes realistic milestones, reviews progress and adjusts accordingly.
5. Effectively manages resources (human, financial and physical) and time.
6. Is flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.

Interview Questions:

1. How do you determine priorities while scheduling your time?
2. Describe a time when you had several deadlines falling at the same time. How did you organize your time and get them all done?
3. Can you describe a large task or event that you have managed? What planning tools did you use?
4. How do you monitor the progress of projects or tasks?
5. Are you better at working on many things at a time, or are you better at working on and getting results on a few specific things?

Competency Type: Teamwork

Using appropriate methods and a flexible interpersonal style, actively contribute to a cohesive team; facilitating the completion of team goals.

Key Indicators:

1. Actively encourages a supportive team culture.
2. Encourages free exchange of information and ideas.
3. Encourages open, honest, constructive feedback.
4. Performs own team duties responsibly and effectively.



Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about things that you have done in your current role to improve the team environment?
2. Tell me about the team experience you found rewarding?
3. Tell me about the team experience you found disappointing?
4. Tell me about a Team Project in which you participated and your primary role.
5. Describe a time you helped resolve a conflict between co-workers or volunteers. What was the conflict and how did you resolve it?

Competency Type: Assertiveness

Assertiveness is the ability to formulate and communicate one's own thoughts, opinions and wishes in a clear, direct and non-aggressive way.

Interview Questions

1. Sometimes the customer isn't always right. If you've had a client who was acting unreasonably with you, tell me about how you dealt with the situation?
2. Sometimes our self-confidence gets in the way of getting a job done. Tell me about a time where your own self-confidence allowed you to succeed where others failed. What was the outcome?
3. What do you do if someone at work tries to pressure you to do something?

Competency Type: Aspiration

Aspiration is the strong desire, longing, or aim to achieve something.

Interview Questions

1. What sorts of things have you done to become better qualified for your career? What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?
2. What is more important to you: the money or the work?



3. Careers grow and develop just like people do. They are born, have a youth, prime, and mature period. Where do you see your career? Why? What are you doing to sustain it?

Competency Type: Positive Attitude

Interview Questions:

1. What steps do you personally take when work tasks are falling behind schedule?
2. How do you cope when unexpected obstacles hinder your work?
3. How do you handle yourself when you feel the world is against you?

Competency Type: Selling skills

Interview Questions:

1. Marketing strategy is constantly changing, what steps have you taken in the last three months to keep up with current trends?
2. Tell me about your most difficult sales experience.
3. How have your sales skills improved over the past three years?
4. As a sales professional, what do you see as your primary and secondary roles within a company?
5. What do you think are the most important skills in succeeding in sales?
6. How do you organize a presentation?

XXX Recruitment is a Sales function XXX