

Behavioral Interview Questions

To accurately predict the future performance of a candidate, it is useful to see how the candidate handled a similar situation in the past. In behavioural interviews, the employer determines which job competencies or skills are important to the position and asks questions directly related to those areas.

The best responses to these types of questions will follow the **STAR** Method:

Situation or

Task: A specific situation or task that needed to be accomplished.

Action: Description of what the candidate did.

Result: What happened? How did the event end? What did the candidate accomplish?
What did the candidate learn?

Below, are some common job competencies and sample questions to assess the candidate:

Analytical Skills/Problem Solving

1. Tell me about a situation in a past job where you were able to identify a problem. Then explain what you did about it.
2. Tell me about a time when you didn't have everything you needed to complete a task.
3. Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something and you didn't know how to do it.
4. Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. What did you do? What was your thought process? What was the outcome? What do you wish you had done differently?
5. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
6. Tell me about a problem that you've solved in a unique or unusual way. What was the outcome? Were you happy or satisfied with it?

Attention to Detail

1. Please give me an example of something you have done in a previous job that demonstrated your ability to pay attention to detail. What resulted from your actions?
2. Please give me an example of where you may have found an error in some aspect of work that others may have overlooked. What was the error, how did you find out, what actions did you take, and what resulted from your actions?
3. Tell about a time when you needed to develop and use a detailed procedure to successfully complete a project.
4. Tell me about a job or setting where great precision to detail was required to complete a task. How did you handle that situation?
5. Some people consider themselves to be "big picture people" and others are "detail oriented". Which are you? Give an example of a time when you displayed this.
6. Describe a situation where you had the option to leave the details to others or you could take care of them yourself.



Communication – Oral

1. Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
2. Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your co-workers or group? How did you do it? Did they "buy" it?
3. How do you ensure that someone understands what you are saying?
4. Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others?
5. Give me an example of a time when you were successful in communicating with a difficult person(s) or circumstance?
6. Tell me about a time when you had to be very careful in communicating delicate information. What was the possible risk involved and how did you go about it?

Communication – Written

1. Describe the most significant written document or report which you had to complete.
2. Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get across an important point.
3. How have you persuaded people through a document you prepared?
4. What are the most challenging documents you have prepared? What kinds of proposals have you written?
5. What kinds of writing have you done? How do you prepare written communications?

Conflict Management

1. We all have to work with people – bosses, coworkers or customers who are difficult. Would you describe for me one of the most difficult people or situations you've had to deal with, and specifically, how you handled that person or situation?
2. Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a coworker.
3. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
4. Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How/why was this person difficult? How did you handle it? How did the relationship progress?
5. Tell me about a time when you were criticized by your boss. Did you think it was fair? How did you handle it?
6. Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your boss. What was the nature of the disagreement, and what did you do about it?
7. We're all sometimes faced with tough choices when a boss expects us to do something and it conflicts with plans or demands in our personal lives. Can you describe a time on a previous job when you had to make such a choice and what you learned from it?

Continuous Learning

1. Tell me how you keep your job knowledge current with the ongoing changes in the industry.
2. What sorts of things have you done to become better qualified for your career?



3. What was the best idea that you came up with in your career? How did you apply it?
4. What have you done to further your own professional development in the past 5 years?
5. When you have been made aware of, or have discovered for yourself, a problem in your work performance, what was your course of action? Can you give an example?

Customer Service

1. Tell of the most difficult customer service experience that you have ever had to handle - perhaps an angry or irate customer (or employee). Be specific and tell what you did and what the outcome was.
2. Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer (or employee).
3. Tell me about a time when you demonstrated exceptional customer service/helping others.
4. How do you handle problems with customers (or employees)? Give an example.
5. How do you go about establishing a rapport with a customer (or employee)? What have you done to gain their confidence? Give an example.
6. What have you done to improve relations with your customers (or employees)?

Decision Making

1. Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision without all the information you needed. How did you handle it? Were you happy with the outcome?
2. How do you involve your manager and/or others when you make a decision?
3. In a current job task, what steps do you go through to ensure your decisions are correct/effective?
4. Tell me about a time you had to defend a decision you made even though other important people were opposed to your decision.
5. Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
6. Describe a situation where you have had to overcome a problem or obstacle in order to move forward with something. What did you do?
7. What is the riskiest decision you have made? What was the situation? What happened?

Flexibility

1. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
2. Describe a major change that occurred in a job that you held. How did you adapt to this change?
3. Tell us about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
4. Tell me about a time that you had to adapt to a difficult situation.
5. What do you do when priorities change quickly? Give one example of when this happened.
6. How have you adjusted your style when it was not meeting the objectives and/or people were not responding correctly?
7. Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist them? What was the result?

Independence

1. Do you prefer to work independently or on a team?
2. There are times when we work without close supervision or support to get the job done. Tell me about a time when you found yourself in such a situation and how things turned out.
3. Describe the occasions when you feel you must consult your superior before taking action.
4. Describe an incident in which you took matters into your own hands although it should have been handled by your boss.
5. What kinds of decisions do you make in your present job? Give some examples of major decisions.
6. Give an example of a project or idea you have accomplished in spite of considerable opposition or organizational constraint.
7. What are the limits of your authority in your job? Have you ever gone over those limits?

Initiative

1. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures or influenced a new direction.
2. Give an example of a project or task that you started on your own.
3. How did you get work assignments at your most recent employer?
4. What changes did you develop at your most recent employer?
5. What sorts of projects did you generate that required you to go beyond your job description?
6. Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
7. What was the best idea you came up with during your professional or academic career? How did you apply it?

Interpersonal Skills

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How/why was this person difficult? How did you handle it? How did the relationship progress?
3. Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively “read” another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their needs and values.
4. Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you’ve ever had to work with, and how you managed to work with them.
5. Describe a recent unpopular decision you made and what the result was.

Leadership

1. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
2. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
3. Tell me about a team project when you had to take the lead or take charge of the project? What did you do? How did you do it? What was the result?



4. Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? Did it work?
5. Have you ever been a member of a group where two of the members did not work well together? What did you get them to do?
6. How do you deal with people whose work exceeds your expectations?
7. How do you get subordinates to produce at a high level? Give an example.
8. Describe your leadership style and give an example of a situation when you successfully led a group.
9. Have you ever been a project leader? Give an example of a problem you experienced and how you reacted.

Motivation

1. Tell me about something that you are proud of.
2. Give an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
3. How would you define “success” for someone in your chosen career?
4. Tell me about an important goal that you set in the past. Were you successful? Why?

Planning and Organization/Time Management

1. Describe a time when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
2. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
3. How do you prioritize projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.
4. Give me an example of how you were able to meet a deadline.
5. We all occasionally miss deadlines. I’m interested in hearing about a time when this happened to you. What happened and how did you handle the fallout?
6. Describe a situation when you were faced with conflicting priorities. How did you determine what was important and the order in which you would get each done?

Presentation Skills

1. What has been your experience in giving presentations to small or large groups?
2. What has been your most successful experience in speech making?
3. Describe the most significant presentation which you had to complete.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
5. Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information.
6. Tell me about a time when you were particularly effective in a talk you gave or a seminar you taught.

Stress Management

1. Things can get stressful around here as they do in most businesses. Can you give me an example of how you were able to work successfully when things got very stressful on your current or past job?



2. How did you react when faced with constant time pressure? Give an example.
3. People react differently when job demands are constantly changing; how do you react?
4. What kinds of events cause you stress on the job?
5. What was the most stressful situation you have faced? How did you deal with it?

Teamwork

1. Describe how in a previous job situation you worked as a member of a team and how you were specifically able to contribute to a project's success.
2. Describe the types of team you've been involved with. What were your roles?
3. Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
4. Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise. What was your role? What steps did you take? What was the end result?
5. Describe a team experience you found disappointing. What could you have done to prevent this?
6. Describe a team experience you found rewarding.
7. When working on a team project have you ever had an experience where there was strong disagreement among team members? What did you do?

Training

1. Tell me about a time when you trained a new hire.
2. Tell me about a time when you retrained someone who was struggling in their job.
3. Tell me when you trained a superior.
4. Tell me about a time when you taught a group in a seminar.
5. Tell me about a time when you overcame disruptive behavior from a seminar participant.
6. Tell me about a time you had to train a group on a topic you were not an expert in.
7. Tell me about a time when you identified a training need in an organization that had been unmet.
8. Tell me about a time when the training you delivered resulted in significant bottom line results in the organization.
9. Tell me how you would train me to do... (insert a common task or topic in your industry).