

Competency Interview Questions

What are they?

Competency (sometimes known as behavioural) interview questions differ from normal interview questions in that they are designed to seek evidence from a candidate of a specific skill, knowledge or attitude according to the requirements of the job (normally outlined in the Job Description or provided by your Consultant).

Examples of Competencies.

General or core competencies include adaptability; communication; dealing with conflict; initiative; resilience; tenacity; influencing; teamwork, decision making; motivation; problem solving; integrity; creativity and innovation; decisiveness; delegation; leadership; working in unstructured environments; work standards; reliability.

How do I know which competencies are key to the success of the position being interviewed for?

Use some common sense and ask yourself which behaviours you would look for in candidates if you were the hiring manager and read the Person Skills or Profile in the Job Description. List situations or tasks in which you have demonstrated each of these competencies.

For each situation or task, write down and describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished.

Next, describe the actions you took to address the situation or task (highlighting the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing) and finally the outcome or results of your actions (see our guide to using the "STAR" method of answering competency interview questions for more insight).

How will I spot one a competency based interview question?

Once the employer decides which competencies are key to the success of the position being interviewed for, they then structure very pointed questions to seek examples of the desired competency.

They tend to be open questions and lead with phrases such as:

"Provide an example of a situation where..."

"Tell us about a time when..."

For example:

- 1 Tell us about a time when you had to manage conflict or differences of opinion at work?
- 2 Give an example of working in cross functional teams and with multiple stakeholders?
- 3 Describe a situation where you had to work in an unstructured environment?
- 4 Tell us about a time when somebody challenged your ideas - what you did; how you reacted and the outcome?
- 5 Give an example of where you dealt with a difficult client?
- 6 Describe a situation where you took the initiative?
- 7 Give me an example of a time when you needed to handle multiple priorities and deliver on all of them?
- 8 Give me an example of a time when you helped your team contribute to the success of your business unit or department?