



COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

Increasingly, companies are using competency based interviewing techniques to add value to the selection process and these notes give a brief insight into this style of interviewing.

Introduction to Competencies

Competencies are those behaviours that people demonstrate at work that make them effective in the job they are employed to do. They are a mix of skills, know-how, motivation and personality traits. In demonstrating competence in specific areas to the interviewer, people are able to display the skills and the background knowledge needed to perform a particular task or job effectively. Every job can be described in terms of key competencies.

Competency based interviews are based on the concept that the best prediction of how someone will perform in a new job is to closely examine past performance and past behaviour in similar work situations. Accordingly, the interviewer's goal is to obtain specific examples of when and how particular behaviours have been demonstrated. Interview questions are therefore carefully designed to probe specific skills and characteristics which are relevant in order to be successful in the job being interviewed for.

Common Competencies

Each job will have its own set of competencies dependant upon the type, seniority and responsibility for people supervision. Competencies therefore can be categorised into broad groupings including analytical, motivational and leadership competencies. Within each grouping, a company may be able to identify perhaps 6 – 8 key competencies required to perform a specific role effectively.

There are however a number of common competencies which are applicable to most roles. Typically these would include:

- Planning and Organisation
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making
- Use of Initiative
- Communication Ability
- Time Management
- Negotiation Skills
- Persuasiveness
- Teamwork
- Relationship Building
- Stress Tolerance
- Conflict Resolution

Competency Based Interviews

In a competency based interview, all candidates are asked the same questions and the results are then compared and analysed. The objective is simply to extract information about the match between the candidate's competencies and those defined as being essential for the effective execution of the job. The questions will focus on key competencies required in the job and the prospective candidate will need to demonstrate from their past experiences that they have direct and relevant experience in the competency areas highlighted for scrutiny. This allows the interviewer to assess how each candidate would potentially perform in the role being interviewed for.

Interview Preparation

It is very important to prepare for this type interview and fortunately it is possible to undertake some preparatory work in advance. By understanding the concept of competency based interviewing it is relatively easy to self-generate a range of questions and practice how these would be answered. Some companies include a Key Competency section within their Job/Person Specification making the task much easier. In either case, the process is to identify what are considered to be the key competencies required for the effective execution of the job and to then identify situations and experiences from your employment history that you can refer to in the interview to demonstrate these skills. Well structured answers backed up by strong relevant examples are extremely powerful and will impress the interviewer.

Sample Competency Questions

Problem Solving	What do you feel is the biggest problem you have ever solved? How did you approach it? How was the solution implemented?
Conflict Resolution	Can you describe a work situation where you had had to resolve conflict between members of your own team?
Persuasion	Can you tell me about an event where, without your personal involvement and persuasion, the end result would not have been successful?
Planning and Organisation	Can you describe a large task or event you have managed? What planning tools did you use?