

## What Is a Competency-Based Interview?

Chances are your next interview will be a competency based one. Many Fortune 500 companies, as well as public and private firms of all sizes, consider competency based interviewing to be the most accurate predictor of a candidate's potential for job success. Here's what you need to know to get past your next competency-based interview and get the job.

Competency-based interviewing is a standardized method designed to elicit information from a job candidate about relevant past behaviour and performance. It is based on the premise that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour.

During a competency based interview, you will be asked a series of standardized questions. With each answer, you'll be expected to describe examples of behaviours, which the interviewer will use to assess your proficiency in one or more job-related competencies. These competencies can include anything from adaptability to leadership to problem solving.

The interviewer will also observe, but not question, your impact or physical presence and communication skills (both verbal and non).

### Questions You Should Expect

You will be asked to describe specific situations that demonstrate your abilities in a requisite competency. Here are some examples of typical competency based questions and the competencies they demonstrate:

- Describe a difficult problem that you tried to solve. How did you identify the problem? How did you go about trying to solve it? (Demonstrates problem solving)
- Describe a time when you tried to persuade another person to do something that he/she was not very willing to do. (Demonstrates leadership)
- Describe a time when you decided on your own that something needed to be done, and you took on the task to get it done. (Demonstrates initiative)

### How to Answer the Questions

A good answer should have three parts. Think of it as a "STAR" response.

- 1. ST: Situation or Task.** Describe the context in which the behaviour or action took place.
- 2. A: Action.** Logically take the interviewer through the steps you took to handle the situation or resolve the problem. Keep your answer clear and concise.
- 3. R: Results.** Explain your results Even if you weren't as successful as you'd hoped, it's important to make it clear that you understand the implications of the outcome and why it happened.

### Preparing for a Competency based Interview

- 1. Know your resume.** This might seem obvious, but your resume is often the basis for many questions. Identify the competencies that your resume demonstrates.
- 2. Be able to draw from a variety of experiences** that demonstrate your skills and abilities. Volunteer activities, military experience, clubs and organizations, and school and educational endeavours are all fair game.
- 3. Be familiar with the job** for which you're interviewing. Discern the competencies that are required for success in the job and think of the components of your experience that best

exemplify your abilities in those competencies. Remember that different companies and industries may require different competencies, even for the same position. For example, “self-managing” can mean very different things to a dot com than to an old-line Fortune 500 firm.

**4. Develop a coherent and articulate STAR narrative** for each competency that you think you will be questioned. You should prepare at least one STAR response for each bullet point on your resume.