

Choosing Behavioural Interview Questions

Many Hiring Managers choose to assess behavioural competencies during an interview process.

A behavioural interview question typically consists of a lead question, followed by a number of subsequent probing questions.

To develop behavioural questions, follow these steps:

- From your list of selection criteria, choose the specific behavioural competencies you'd like to cover in the interview. (4 to 5 questions is the recommended maximum number)
- For each competency, create an appropriate question that would ask the applicant to provide some factual information about past behaviour dealing with a similar situation or problem. You could choose one from the list below, or create one based on the style of these questions.
- For each lead question, choose two or three probing questions from the list further on in this document. During the interview, you may also choose to ask additional probing questions, as needed, to get a complete understanding of the example the applicant is providing.

An example would be;

For the competency "Impact and influence":

Tell me about the most difficult time you have had getting people to agree with you.

- *What was the situation? Why was this challenging? What steps did you take to try to obtain agreement? What was the outcome?*

Sample Lead Questions

As above, you'll need a lead question for each competency that you are assessing. The lead question sets the context and the stage for subsequent probing questions. Use these samples "as is" or use their format in order to develop your own unique questions.

- Tell me about the last time a new idea of yours helped an organization or group work better.
- What was the worst on-the job crisis you faced and what was your role in solving it?
- Tell me about the most difficult presentation you ever had to make to a group of five or more people.
- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you ensure that you were understood?
- Tell me about the most difficult time you have had getting people to agree with you.
- Describe a situation where you were able to successfully convince or persuade someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about the most recent time you experienced a personality conflict with someone you worked with.
- Tell me about a time when you felt it was necessary to talk to an employee about the need for improvement in his or her performance.
- Describe a time when, despite your best efforts, you were unable to resolve a difficult supervisor / employee related situation or problem?
- Tell us about the most difficult or irate client you have had to handle.
- Please describe an example of a time when, despite your best efforts, you were unable to satisfy a demanding customer or client.
- Please provide an example of a time when it was really critical that you establish an effective working relationship with an individual or group outside your branch to complete an assignment or deliver a service.

- Give us an example of when using your organizational skills really paid off. Tell us about techniques you use to keep yourself and your work organized.
- Describe a situation when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time.
- Describe a recent situation that required a number of urgent things to be done at the same time.
- Give an example of a time in which you have to be relatively quick in coming to a decision and taking action.
- Tell me about the last time you missed a deadline because you were not well organized.
- Describe a time when, despite your best efforts, you were unable to solve a problem.
- Tell us about the implementation of a new [service / program / hardware / software / system] that you experienced in your last position.

Sample Probing Questions

Following are a series of sample probing questions that will assist in exploring the level of depth and understanding about the applicant's experience and the related competencies; and the actions taken specifically by the applicant, what lead to the actions, the results of the actions taken and what was learned from the experience. These questions elicit specific details about the who, when, where, what, why and how of the applicant's experience.

Who:

- Who else was involved?
- Who else helped you with this situation?

When:

- How long ago did this happen?
- When did all this take place?

Where

- Where did this take place?

What:

- What was the [situation / issue / problem]?
- What were the [results / outcomes]?
- What actions did you decide to take, and when?
- What was your role?
- What part did you play in making the decision to _____ ?
- What did you say, or do that [did / didn't] work?
- What did they do?
- What was the presentation about?
- What was the message you were trying to get across?
- What were you trying to convince or persuade them of?
- What options were available?
- What steps did you take to ensure you met deadlines?
- What techniques did you use to keep yourself and your work organized?

- What did you do when your work started to get behind?
- What steps did you take to get them all done?
- What was the deadline?
- What were the consequences of missing the deadline?
- What actions did you take to ensure you met the deadline?
- What needed organizing?
- What improvements did you hope to see?
- What did you learn from this experience?
- What would you do differently if [you were asked to do it /happened] again?

Why:

- Why was this situation a particular challenge?
- Why was it important to convince or persuade them?
- Why was this person difficult?
- Why did you take that approach?
- Why was it important to meet the deadline?

How:

- How did you develop this idea?
- How did you convince your supervisor to adopt it?
- How did it help the organization?
- How did you prepare for it?
- How did you handle [it / that person]?
- How did you size up the situation?
- How was the problem finally solved?
- How did you determine priorities in scheduling your time?
- How well did this meet the needs of the business?

Other:

- In the past [6 months / 1 year], how often have you been called upon to do this?
- In the past year, how often have experienced this type of difficulty?
- Did you receive any feedback on your actions? If yes, from whom? What was said?