

## How to Competency Based Interview

Competency Based Interviewing is the most effective form of interviewing as it focuses on gathering evidence of required skills, experience and personal qualities, known collectively as competencies.

To perform a Competency Based Interview will take around two to three hours of planning but hopefully you will notice that your interview are more worthwhile and have greater structure.

Combining a competency interview technique with the Fixed Price Recruitment psychometric profile and bespoke interview questions will help you make your hiring decisions based upon gathered evidence rather than 'gut feeling'.

The aim is to obtain information about candidates past behaviour or experience within certain situations.

In essence it's a long and rather grand term for what effectively is an interview with questions that are in essence "give me an example of...." rather than "what would you do if....". For example, "give me an example of when you've.....?" and "when have you not completed a project in time, what happened?"

Competency based interviews should be structured and before you begin to conduct a competency based interview, or CBI, you must first make a list of the required competencies to succeed in your vacancy.

They should relate directly to the essential criteria/ competencies required to be successful in the role. Examples that we use to hire Senior Recruitment Consultants are as follows: Meeting Goals, Sales Planning, Leadership in Adversity, Positive Mental Attitude, Communication, Perseverance, Ethics/Values, Goals/Ambitions.

In truth this probably two or three too many competencies as the meeting takes around two hours but hopefully this will give you some 'food for thought'.

Once you've got the list give each competency a score out of five (or ten but this will mean more work and is not entirely necessary if you are strict with yourself on the criteria required to reach each score).

To keep it simple I will detail one as the lowest score (or did not provide evidence of any description for this competency) and five the highest (or gave highly satisfactory evidence of high levels of this skill/experience/quality)

Then for each mark detail the evidence required to score that particular mark. For example:

### Leadership in Adversity

- 1 – Gave no evidence of leading in difficult situations
- 2 – Demonstrated some leadership qualities in a difficult situation
- 3 – Adequately led in a difficult situation
- 4 – Kept a level head in a difficult situation and demonstrated practical solutions to the problem
- 5 – Competently and effectively led the team during a difficult situation creatively solved issues and kept the team together with a level head.

To gather the information required to score a candidate against this competency you therefore need a question that teases out the scenario, or event. You then need a list of questions, or themes, that ladder from the answers.

This laddering technique probes into the detail allowing you to gather the required evidence. I appreciate that this may appear daunting at first but the more use this 'laddering' technique the more it will flow naturally. Going back to the 'Leadership in Adversity' scenario example questions could be as follows:

Tell us about a crisis or unplanned event that happened and the response of your team?

What specifically was the situation?

What made this incident a real crisis?

What were your first thoughts?

What specifically were you able to do to contribute to resolving the event?

How did you co-ordinate the team?

What was the mood of the team?

Were there any difficult team members in this situation and how did you handle them?

Who were you communicating to?

How did you go about it?

What was the outcome?

Were you happy with the outcome?

In hindsight would you have handled the situation differently?

From the answers given you can then score each candidate effectively against the competency. Build up this questioning process for all of the required competencies and you now have an incredibly effective interviewing tool against which you can benchmark and select.

Added benefits in competency interviewing are:

- You can effectively communicate your hiring reasoning within your organisation,
- The technique often teases out development areas
- It makes constructive feedback for unsuccessful candidates easier to communicate.
- You have on record and on the candidate's personnel record the data behind your hiring decisions

### **Examples of competency interview questions**

How are you a self-starter? Give me examples to demonstrate this?

Tell us about a time recently when you have had to deal with a difficult situation at work? What was the situation? Who were you communicating to? How did you go about it? What was the outcome?

Give an example of when you have made a decision that you didn't want to make? What happened? What was the message? Who were you communicating to? How did you go about it? What was the outcome?

Tell us about a crisis or unplanned event that happened and the response of your team? What made this incident a real crisis? What were your first thoughts? What specifically were you able to do to contribute to resolving the event?

Tell us about a training session you have designed and delivered. What preparation did you do? How did you decide on the content? How did you deliver the training? What was the result? How did you measure the impact of your training?

Tell us about a time when you have had to set standards? What standards did you set? What areas did you consider when setting the standards? What impact did the standards have on your business and/or relationships?

Tell us about a time when you have been a role model to the team. How did you set an example to others? What impact did you have on others as a result of setting the example? What was others perception of you as a role model?

What behaviour will you have to change to succeed in this role? Why do you need to change this behaviour? How will you ensure you don't slip back into adopting this behaviour?

Tell us about a recent occasion when you were under pressure and handled it successfully. What caused it to be a pressurised situation? How did you approach it? What did you do specifically to ensure success? What have you learnt about handling pressurised situations?

Give me an example of when you've lied in the interests of your job? Would you do this again? What did you learn from the experience? Would you encourage others under you to lie in the interests of their job?

What were you selling? Who were you selling to? Describe the sales cycle and the value of your sale. What objectives and targets have been set in the last two years? What was your actual performance? What were your greatest achievements in this position? What did you like and dislike about this position? What have you learnt from this position and why?

Describe how you plan. How do you stick to the plan? What can possibly distract you from sticking to the plan?

How do you measure your own performance? How do you motivate and develop yourself? Give examples of how you lead when you personally are not successful? How did you maintain enthusiasm and energy?

How have you coped when you have felt anger at work or been in a conflict situation?

How have you handled criticism from one of your team members? How have you coped with a conflict situation with someone who reports into you?

What example can you give me of when you have been out of your depth? How did you cope?

How competitive would you say you are? Give me an example of your competitive nature? What other factors have motivated you to succeed?

When did you last experience a low point in your sales career? Describe what happened and how you overcame this challenge?

Give a recent example of when you've had to make a quick decision in response to a client problem? Who did you consult? Were you pleased with the final decision that you reached? Could you have made the decision yourself?

What initiatives have you deployed to ensure that your team meets their objectives and targets? How did you measure your team to ensure they meet the objectives and targets?

**Good luck with your competency based interviewing and we hope that this short overview helps you to make the right hiring decisions.**