

# Competency Based Interview Questions

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**Huntress**

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## 1. Introduction

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Competency based interviews are designed to gather detailed behavioural evidence from an individual's past experience, in relation to a number of pre-determined competencies.

The competencies mentioned within this guide have been identified as key to effective performance within a given role. All the questions are designed to prompt specific evidence of a candidate's past performance in relation to these.

This enhanced form of interviewing will ensure applicants selected can demonstrate they have the right behaviour and skill set to integrate with your team and your organisation's environment.

## 2. Team skills

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Are they socially competent? Do they have the desire to build and maintain relationships in and beyond the workplace? Are they able to cope with short-term team project work? Are they able to work with other people constructively to improve the effectiveness of the team?

### Suggested questions

1. Tell me about the last time that you had to work as part of a team to achieve a specific outcome?
2. Has there ever been a time where you witnessed conflict while part of a team?
3. Describe a time when a colleague or friend has annoyed you?
4. Have you ever had to modify your approach to take account of someone else's views?
5. Can you recall a time where you needed to offer constructive feedback to a friend or colleague?
6. What skills and personal qualities have you contributed to the teams you have been part of?
7. Tell me about a time when you used tact and diplomacy?
8. Tell me about the last time you had a disagreement with someone?
9. Tell me about the most difficult person you have worked with?
10. What have you disliked in your past positions?
11. What characteristics frustrate you in others?
12. What qualities do you admire most in others?

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## 3. Customer service

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Do they have attention to detail and take time to understand the needs of customers? Do they go out of their way to deliver that extra service and take personal responsibility to ensure the highest levels of customer satisfaction?

### Suggested questions

1. What do you dislike most about dealing with people or customers?
2. Has there ever been a time that you have dealt with personal criticism relating to a service that you have delivered?
3. Describe an instance where you have delivered more than is expected of you?
4. Have you received praise relating to the levels of service that you have delivered?
5. Have you ever adapted your approach to suit the person you were dealing with?
6. Tell me about a difficult customer or a customer complaint that you have dealt with?
7. Have you ever anticipated a difficult situation before it arose? Describe the situation, the action you took and the outcome?

## 4. Professional knowledge & judgement

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Used for candidates that have an extensive knowledge of his/her own field or department; understands the business and uses this to provide credible advice. But do they know enough about this work area and the organisation to be clear about how their skills fit into it?

### Suggested questions

1. Have you made any poor decisions in the past 6 months? Tell me about it/them?
2. How do you gather information on clients?
3. How have you used that information to influence a client or candidate?
4. When did a client last ask you for advice?
5. How would you measure your success or failure in this job?
6. What skills and personal qualities are essential for success in this role?
7. How do you plan to keep up with developments in your field?
8. What do you know about our industry?
9. What do you know about our organisation?
10. Which three of the competencies required for this position would you prioritise?
11. Can you work well to deadlines and under pressure?
12. Do you know the location of our Head Office?
13. What interests you about our product/services? How would you improve them?

## 5. Leadership

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Takes control of situations and events; recognises and rewards others performance; motivates; coaches and develops others. Ability to persuade and involve rather than coerce and punish. Are they ethical in dealings with people?

### Suggested questions

1. When was the last time you disciplined a member of staff?
  - How did you handle the situation?
  - What was the outcome?
2. Describe a time when you have set goals for an individual or for your team?
  - How did you go about it?
  - Were they achieved?
3. Tell me about a sensitive or difficult staffing issue you have dealt with?
  - What did you find most difficult about it?
  - Why was this so?
  - What was the outcome?
4. How have you introduced change to your team?
5. How did you ensure your team gets feedback on its performance?
6. Describe a situation in which you coached a team member?
7. Tell me about a difficult member of your team?
  - Why were they difficult?
  - What did you do to resolve the situation with them?
8. What do you do when your team or team member complains about the organisation?
9. How did you resolve conflict in the teams you have managed?
10. How would you resolve a dispute?

## 6. Planning & organising

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Prioritises; sets stretching but realistic targets and deadlines; plans ahead and has a structured approach to the work.

### Suggested questions

1. When was the last time that you had to take on extra work at short notice?
2. How do you manage your own time and objectives?
3. When was the last time that you had to work to a particularly tight deadline?
4. How do you determine your priorities?
5. How do you monitor the progress of projects or tasks?
6. Describe a project you have managed/been responsible for?
  - How did you plan yours and your team's time?
  - How did you deal with obstacles?
7. Have you ever managed a project, which you knew would run over the timescale?
  - What did you do?
  - What could you do differently next time?
8. In your current job, how do you schedule your time and set priorities?
9. How did you prepare for this interview?



## 7. Communication

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Being able to listen to all types of communication in an open way. Are they an active listener, do they really listen and do they hear what is actually said? Are they able to read the non-verbal messages that other communicate? Do they communicate in an engaging and convincing way?

### Suggested questions

1. Tell me about a time when you were successful in getting crucial information from another person.
2. Tell me about a time when someone misunderstood what you were attempting to communicate to them.
3. What do you think are the three most important things about communication?
4. Tell me about a time when you worked with people from a culture unlike your own?
5. What did you do to overcome any perceived barriers to communication?

## 8. Adaptability, energy & resilience

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How quickly and how positively will they adapt to changes in work practices, work roles and work environments and the general flux of the modern workplace? How do they manage or avoid stress?

### Suggested questions

1. Tell me about a time when your work or an idea was criticised?
2. Tell me about a time when you felt under pressure?
3. Tell me about a time when you felt frustrated by your work?
4. How would you respond if a project you had been working on was re-assigned to someone else or shelved?
5. What do you do for enjoyment in your leisure time?
6. What makes you laugh?
7. Describe something creative that you've done?
8. What has been your most satisfying/disappointing experience?

## 9. Self-management, self-motivation & self-knowledge

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Do they strive to achieve a standard of excellence, use initiative at the appropriate time and show persistence in pursuing goals? Accurate self-assessment skills allow them to be objective and critical in evaluating their strengths and weaknesses. How will their personality and temperament affect the existing team or work group?

### Suggested questions

1. Tell me about a time when you acted over and above the expectations?
2. What have you done that shows initiative and willingness to work?
3. How would you describe yourself?
4. How do you think a close friend who knows you well would describe you?
5. How do you think an enemy would describe you?
6. How would you describe your management style?
7. What are the two most significant accomplishments in your career so far?
8. What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
9. Why do you want to work for us?
10. What does "success" mean to you?
11. What does "failure" mean to you?
12. In the past year, what have you been dissatisfied about in your performance?
13. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
14. What are you passionate about?
15. What are your interests outside work?
16. Tell me about a major problem you have encountered and how you dealt with it?
17. What have you learned from your mistakes?
18. How do you cope with routine work?
19. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
20. Which is more important to you, the money or the type of job?

## 10. Problem solving & decision making

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What is their problem solving style? Do they manage the activities to minimise or avoid them? How do they behave in a crisis?

### Suggested questions

1. Tell me about a difficult decision that you have made?
2. Tell me about an unpopular decision you have made?
3. What significant problems have you faced in the last year?
4. How do you work under pressure?
5. Tell me about a time when you had to make a quick decision. What were the circumstances and what did you do?
6. How would you motivate an employee who was performing poorly?
7. Tell me a situation where you achieved a satisfactory outcome to a problem that others thought couldn't be solved. What did you do and what was the outcome?
8. Tell me about a time when you had conflicting priorities and what you did to resolve them?
9. What kind of problems do you handle best?

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## 11. Conflict management & ethics

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How do they behave in a crisis? What does it take to shake their poise or self-confidence? What approach do they take to problem solving?

### Suggested questions

1. Tell me about a significant crisis you have faced?
2. Tell me about a difficult customer or a customer complaint that you have dealt with?
3. How do you resolve conflict in the groups or teams that you have managed?
4. How would you resolve a dispute?
5. Have you ever anticipated a difficult situation before it arose? Describe the situation, the action you took and the outcome?
6. What would you do if your colleagues were complaining to you about the organisation?
7. Tell me about a time when you bent the rules? When is it okay to do so?

## 12. Personal & career objectives

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Is their personal and career objective in line with ours? Are there any areas of conflict?

### Suggested questions

1. What are your short and long-term goals?
2. When and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
3. What do you see yourself doing 5 years from now?
4. What are the most important things you are seeking in a career?
5. Describe your ideal job?
6. What person do you admire most and why?
7. Why do you want this position?

## 13. Ability, competence & achievement

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What inspires and motivates them to achieve and whether they prefer to work alone or in a team?

### Suggested questions

1. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
2. Describe a time when you led or motivated others?
3. What do you feel qualifies you for this position?
4. Tell us about a time when you had more to do than you could complete in the time allocated? What did you do and what was the outcome?

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