

VANRATH™

COMPETENCY INTERVIEW GUIDANCE NOTES

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Preparing for your interview

Before the Interview

Remember, making a strong first impression is crucial. Here are some valuable tips to ensure you're ready:

- **Thorough Research:** Explore the company's website and relevant industry publications. Demonstrating knowledge and interest in their business showcases your motivation.
- **Know Your CV:** Familiarise yourself thoroughly with the details on your CV, and prepare specific examples that support your experiences.

During the Interview

Here's how to make the most of your interview opportunity:

- **Punctuality Matters:** Arrive early to compose yourself. Consider a trial run if you're uncertain about the route.
- **Appropriate Attire:** Dress in smart, professional attire.
- **Professional Etiquette:** Treat every interaction, including reception and staff, with respect.
- **First Impressions:** Display confidence and politeness. Maintain eye contact and offer a firm handshake.
- **Active Listening:** Focus on the questions and don't hesitate to seek clarification if needed.
- **Honest Responses:** Provide honest and direct answers, maintaining eye contact throughout.
- **Express Interest:** Ensure your enthusiasm for the position is evident.
- **Express Gratitude:** Thank the interviewer for their time at the end of the interview.

Questions you may be asked

You may encounter various questions, including:

- Tell me about yourself?
- What are your current duties and responsibilities?
- Where do you see yourself in three years?
- And more...

Posing Questions

It's an opportunity to seek information too. Consider asking:

- Primary tasks expected in the role?
- Colleagues you'll closely collaborate with?
- How your skills align with the role requirements?

Mastering the Competency Interview

Understanding Competency-Based Interviews

Competency-based interviews are increasingly used to gauge a candidate's potential performance. These interviews focus on behavioural questions, prompting you to narrate instances that showcase your skills relevant to the job. Remember, the interviewer's knowledge about your background is based solely on the information you provide.

Preparing for the Interview

Key elements to consider:

- **Job Description Relevance:** Anticipate questions aligned with competencies listed in the job description.
- **Tailored Examples:** Prepare detailed examples for each competency, ensuring flexibility to address diverse question angles.
- **Adaptable Responses:** Focus your responses to match the interviewer's specific competency focus.

During the Interview

Essential steps to excel:

- **Understanding the Competencies:** Expect the interviewer to introduce each evaluated competency.
- **Answer Alignment:** Ensure your responses directly correlate with the prompted competency.
- **Situational Selection:** Identify fitting scenarios to illustrate your skillset in alignment with each competency.
- **Detail and Structure:** Craft articulate, thorough responses to vividly showcase your depth and breadth of experience relevant to the role.

Answering competency based questions

Answers to competency based questions are very structured but also tell a story with a start, middle and end. For this purpose, we suggest employing the STAR technique:

Situation

- Describe a situation or problem that you have encountered

Task

- Describe the task that the situation required and why it was important

Action

- Describe the action(s) you took, obstacles that you had to overcome

Results

- Highlight outcomes achieved and how success was measured

Remember "I" not "We"!

In an interview, the focus is on your individual capacity to perform the role you're being interviewed for. Questions often begin with prompts like 'Tell me about a time when **YOU**...' or 'Give me an example where **YOU**...' When providing a specific example, it's crucial to narrate a situation using 'I' to indicate your personal contribution and responsibility. Using 'we' might unintentionally imply shared responsibility, which could dilute the focus on your role in the scenario."

Highlight Tangible Achievements

Whenever feasible, emphasise quantifiable successes. Whether it's a 30% cost reduction, a 20% efficiency enhancement, or receiving 100% positive feedback from stakeholders, these metrics speak volumes about your capabilities.

Match the Example's Relevance to the Role

Tailor your examples to align with the job's level and requirements. Using recent, comparable role-related instances resonates better than unrelated experiences from the past.

Stay Authentic

Present authentic and relevant examples that tie directly to the competencies being assessed. Craft your responses as stories: outline the situation, your role, actions taken, and the outcomes achieved. Don't shy away from explaining your successes and contributions.

Preparation is Key

Understand the competencies sought for the role and prepare robust examples that showcase your diverse experiences. Aim to showcase a variety of scenarios that highlight your skills.

It's Not a Test, It's a Conversation

Approach competency questions as opportunities to illustrate your fit for the role. Remember, the interviewers want to see your success, so present your experiences confidently and clearly."

The Competency Interview and Sample Questions

In addition to the primary competency questions, the interviewer might delve deeper into different aspects of the competency, seeking a comprehensive understanding of your experiences. Consider these examples of competency-based questions, which could serve as a starting point, with further exploration during the interview:

Communication Challenges:

Share an instance where you navigated a difficult communication. Explain the situation, the recipient, the complexity, your approach, the outcome, and the measures of success.

Problem Solving:

Problem Solving:

Narrate a challenging problem-solving experience. Describe the situation, the problem's nature, involved parties, your approach to the issue, implemented solutions, outcomes, and lessons learned.

Change Management:

Change Management:

Detail a successful multi-stage change project. Describe the change, involved stakeholders, your approach, affected workstreams, outcomes, and key takeaways.

Leadership Demonstrations:

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Explain a project where you showcased leadership within a group setting. Elaborate on your involvement, leadership role, outcomes, and personal insights.

Professionalism Display:

Professionalism Display:

Discuss a time demonstrating professionalism and setting an example. Outline the situation, your professional conduct, outcomes, and insights gained.

Project Solution Identification and Communication:

Project Solution Identification and Communication:

Describe a scenario where you identified and communicated an agreed project solution. Detail the situation, your approach to solution identification and communication, actions taken, outcomes, and key learnings.

Alignment with Business Strategy:

Discuss a project where your awareness of the business strategy influenced the project's direction. Explain the situation, information gathering, strategy's impact, outcomes, and learnings.

Project Requirements and Management:

Project Requirements and Management:

Provide an outline of how you'd define and manage project requirements from inception to completion. Address project scope determination, stakeholder involvement, project life cycle, and communication strategy.

These questions offer a platform to showcase your experience and competencies. Craft your responses to effectively convey your skills and suitability for the role.