

# COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

## Linking Competence with Performance

Competency based interviewing, sometimes known as Situational Interviewing, is a style of interviewing used so that a candidate can best show how they would demonstrate certain behaviours/skills in the work place; by answering questions about how they have reacted to and dealt with previous work place situations. This provides a strong connection between past behaviour and indications of future performance. This will:

- Eliminate misunderstandings
- Prevent personal impressions
- Reduce the candidate's ability to "fake"

You will be asked to give an example of a situation or task which led you to take a certain course of action. Probing questions will then be used to determine the course of action you took and what changes were created by those actions and the effects of those actions on others. This provides both the interviewer and interviewee a clear landscape of "Situation", "Action" and "Result(s)"

Traditional job descriptions are now quite out-dated. Most organisations will analyse a role by breaking it down into key competencies. Examples of competencies may include;

- Communication skills
- Negotiation
- Persuasiveness
- Teamwork
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Planning and organisation
- Coping with pressure

If an organisation uses this type of interviewing, it is very likely that your job will be defined on this basis and your performance in it will be managed through competencies. For example your appraisal may well be linked to evidence and real-life examples of having demonstrated these competencies.

## The Interview Structure:

The interviewer will ask you a series of questions along the lines of:

- Describe a situation when you .....
- Give an example of a time when you .....

When you have answered these, the interviewer may prompt you for further information. When you have exhausted one topic, the interviewer will move on to the next leaving little opportunity for discussion. At the end of the interview, there is often an opportunity for you to ask your own questions. This format may seem **rigid, unnatural and unfriendly** to many interviewees but, as well as providing evidence of competencies relevant to the job, it is also seen as a **fair and equitable** method of selection since all candidates are asked exactly the same questions.

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## Preparation:

- Read the employer's brochure and/or job description, and note the skills and competencies they require.
- Note down any examples you can think of when you have put these competencies into practice. (see "Personal Achievements log" and "Achievements core competency matrix")
- Compose a paragraph or so for each situation, outlining what happened, how you approached it and what the outcome was

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Situation: | What was the situation in which you found yourself? |
| Action:    | What action did you take?                           |
| Result:    | What was the outcome of your action?                |

The focus should be on you even if the situation involved a group, interviewers will want to know what your specific role was in achieving the desired result. Once you have done this, select the examples which you feel are the best illustrations of the required competence. These may be the ones that you choose to use on the application form, or else will be the first examples that you give in answer to the interview questions.

## During the interview:

Try and be as open as possible, the examples you give don't have to be high-level. Take time to give this thought and be comfortable with short silences. If you really can't think of anything, consider how vital that competence is to the employer. If there is only one area that is giving you problems of this type all may not be lost, provided that you are strong in other areas.