



## Interviewing Strategies

**Interviewing begins at the door.** Don't make the mistake of thinking that the interview only begins when you sit down on the other side of the interviewer's desk. You are being evaluated the moment you arrive for your interview. Be cordial to the receptionist. Strive to be flexible if asked to wait or fill out paperwork. Your reactions are often used to gauge your personality. Remember, one of the key aims of an interview is trying to establish (after a necessary consideration of your skills) how well you would fit into the company mix. If you insult the receptionist, or become inflexible over filling in an application form, your career hopes with that company are likely to be short-lived.

**Competency-based interviewing**, also known as behavioral interviewing, requires you to draw on past experience and describe specific examples of incidents that demonstrate your competence in a particular area. The most effective way of answering these questions is to use the "STAR" technique:

- Situation** — briefly describe the background to the situation
- Task** — specifically describe your responsibility
- Action** — describe what you did
- Result** — describe the outcome of your actions.

Here is an excellent answer to a competency-based question that is testing teamwork as a competence:

**Question:** "Team work is very important in our organization. What evidence do you have to prove that you are a good team player?"

**Answer:** "I have a number of examples I could share with you. In one instance, when I was working as a financial analyst at ABC Company, the sales team was pulling together a bid for a large piece of work and the analyst that normally helps them was on leave. I offered to help them and worked late every night for two weeks to ensure they had all the information they needed. They took on my suggestions regarding pricing and also some creative ideas I had on formatting the proposal. As it turned out we won the bid and I was promoted as a result."

**Interviewing well is a skill** and requires experience. One way to tell if an interview is going well is to look at it as a conversation. You need to develop a rapport with the interviewer as soon as the interview begins. At the end of the interview, assess your experience in order to improve upon it next time. Did the questions and answers flow easily? Did you feel comfortable talking or did you feel like you were being interrogated? Remember what the interviewer is really trying to establish: 1) Is this person qualified for the position. 2) Is this person trainable? 3) (And most important) is this person somebody I could work with?

You may be required to provide between one and three real-life examples to validate one particular competence.

**Be prepared with answers** and supporting examples to standard HR questions such as:

- ✚ What are your career aspirations?
- ✚ Why do you want to work for our company?

- ✚ What interests you about our product/service?
- ✚ Of your previous jobs, which did you enjoy most and why?
- ✚ How have you managed conflict in the past?
- ✚ Describe what you have done in your career that shows your initiative.
- ✚ What are your weaknesses? Your strengths?
- ✚ What does teamwork mean to you?
- ✚ What style of management gets the best results from you?
- ✚ What have been your major achievements to date?

Remember that you are being interviewed because the interviewer wants to hire somebody — not because he wants to trip you up or embarrass you. He will be searching out your strong and weak points, evaluating you on your qualifications, skills and intellectual qualities and he/she will probably probe deeply to determine your attitudes, aptitudes, stability, motivation and maturity.

**When an interviewer asks** what your greatest weakness is, it's tempting to respond with something like, "Well, I'm a perfectionist" or "I'm compulsively on time". Avoid giving a pat answer - - they've heard them all before and they ceased to be amusing after the hundredth time. Instead, come up with examples that illustrate how you've been able to overcome past difficulties on the job. Perhaps you've been challenged delegating and have, as a result, become more stressed than you needed to be. Explain how you were able to enlist the resources of your co-workers in order to complete projects, giving everyone a sense of ownership, while alleviating your own stress.

If you can, find a weakness that is double-edged, i.e. you tend to be overly critical of yourself but this also means you push yourself to do the best job possible at all times. Bottom-line: pick a genuine weakness and turn it into a strong interview response.

**Questioning the interviewer** gives you the opportunity to find out more about the company and clear up doubts about the suitability of the job. A good question also telegraphs a clear message to the interviewer that you are a smart individual genuinely interested in the job you're applying for.

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- ✚ What would a normal day in this role look like?
- ✚ Why is the position available?
- ✚ How would you describe your organizational culture?
- ✚ What induction and training programs does the organization offer?
- ✚ What sort of people have done well in this team/organization?
- ✚ How is the company positioned against its competitors?
- ✚ What is your vision for the future? What are the plans, if any, for growth or expansion?
- ✚ What are the three things that would make someone an outstanding success in this role?
- ✚ How well do you think I match the requirements of the role?
- ✚ What is the next step in the process?