

Competency Based Interviewing Skills



Participant Guide

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A Supervisor's Guide to Competency Based Interviewing Skills

Due to the recent increase of retiring staff and high turnovers, it's very important as supervisors to make sure you understand the importance of hiring the right person. During interviews, supervisors should think about who will make the best hire; whether or not the applicants are looking at the job as a stepping stone or long term; and what skills they offer that will add to the unit as a whole. This course is designed to guide you through the beginning of the interview process until the follow-up after the interview.

Learning Objectives:

- *Identify the three-step process of interviewing.*
- *Identify the five main competencies.*
- *Develop Competency Based Interviewing Questions.*
- *Identify interviewers' common mistakes.*

Agenda:

Welcome

Types of Interviews

Interview Preparation

Competencies

Question Types

Break

During the Interview

First Impressions

Top Interviewer's Mistakes

Barriers to Interviewing

After the Interview

Handout 1: Competencies

What are Competencies?

Competencies are defined as behavioral skills combined with technical knowledge required to successfully achieve an accepted performance level in a job. Organizations use competencies because it:

- Helps them assess how selections for vacancies are made.
- Reduces the cost of hiring someone not capable of performing to the job specifications.
- Can be used to evaluate the applicant's qualities and ability to make effective contributions to the organization.

There are five types of competencies:

1. **Individual** competencies are your personal attributes: flexibility, independence, tenacity, and personal integrity.
2. **Managerial** competencies are a person's ability to manage others and focus on leadership, strategic planning, and management control.
3. **Analytical** competencies are a person's cognitive attributes. For example: analytical skills, resilience, initiative, and commitment.
4. **Interpersonal** competencies are a person's ability to deal with other people as far as communication, persuasiveness, teamwork and personal awareness.
5. **Motivational** competencies are the things that drive you and the qualities that will be required to be successful in the position. For example: self-motivation, initiative, commitment, and service orientation.

What are competency-based interviews?

Competency based interviews are the most effective method of interviewing and can be used in all types of interviews. They focus on the past behavior and can be used to predict future behavior. Incorporating competencies of the job in the interviewing process can help you to discover the applicant's understanding and ability to relate learning from experience to the position in question. The interview in general will consist of the following:

- Introductions
- Brief summary of the job
- Competency based questions
- Validation of technical/functional skills
- Time for interviewee's to ask questions
- Close/selection process

Even though competency interviews seem different in certain ways, always remember that normal interview etiquette is applicable and appropriate.

Handout 2: Organizational Orientations Assessment

Organizational Orientations are trait-like ways that people approach work in contemporary organizations. The measures reported below are designed to measure the degree to which an individual employs one or more of these orientations in their own work environment. In research to date, these orientations appear to be related to organizational communication behaviors of employees associated with job satisfaction. There are three orientations. While any of these can be measured alone, that will not give a complete picture of the orientations. The measures are randomly provided below.

Instructions: Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements below by recording your response in the space before each item. Use the following response options:

**5 = Strongly Agree 4 = Agree 3 = Undecided 2 = Disagree
1 = Strongly Disagree**

- _____ 1. I generally try my best to do what an organization I work for wants me to do.
- _____ 2. Other than a paycheck, the organizations I have worked for have little to offer me.
- _____ 3. My life begins when I get off work.
- _____ 4. If I had a choice, I would take a promotion over the acceptance of my peers any time.
- _____ 5. The product / service produced by organizations where I have worked are of very low quality.
- _____ 6. If I were offered a job that paid better, I would take it in a “New York Minute.”
- _____ 7. One of my goals is to get a good job and excel at it.
- _____ 8. I have generally been quite satisfied with jobs I have had.
- _____ 9. A job is a job – everyone has to work somewhere.
- _____ 10. Eventually, I would like to be the “big boss” in an organization.
- _____ 11. The organizations I have worked for couldn’t care less whether I live or die – and I feel the same way about them.
- _____ 12. I am generally indifferent to where I work. One job is about the same as another.
- _____ 13. I really dislike the rules and regulations I am forced to live with in organizations.

- _____ 14. I firmly believe that if I work hard enough, one day I will be right up at the top.
- _____ 15. I am good at my job and I love it.
- _____ 16. Generally, I just do as much as is required by my job.
- _____ 17. Most of all, I really want to be recognized for the excellent work I do.
- _____ 18. I am usually unhappy wherever I work.
- _____ 19. Since I am entitled to them, I take all of my sick days whether I am sick or not.
- _____ 20. I don't much care where I work, so long as the pay is good.
- _____ 21. "I think moving up in an organization is not worth all the work you have to do."
- _____ 22. Wherever I work, I wish I were working somewhere, almost anywhere, else than where I am.
- _____ 23. Everywhere I have worked, I have had an incompetent supervisor.
- _____ 24. When work is over, life begins.
- _____ 25. Sometimes I think I am a "workaholic."
- _____ 26. The procedures and regulations of organizations I have worked for have generally been quite reasonable.
- _____ 27. One job is pretty much like any other job.
- _____ 28. I find it difficult to adapt to the demands of most organizations.
- _____ 29. I want a job where what I do really counts for something.
- _____ 30. Generally, I don't like the rules that organizations make me follow.
- _____ 31. I don't really like most of the people I have worked with.
- _____ 32. Everyone tells me that I am a really good worker.
- _____ 33. "I have worked for really good organizations."
- _____ 34. Most organizations have unreasonable expectations for workers like me.
- _____ 35. I want work which has a lot of non-monetary rewards.
- _____ 36. Most of the time, a half-hearted effort is all I feel I need to give to a job.

- _____37. Ordinarily, I feel really good about what I have accomplished when I am done with my day's work.
- _____38. I really hate most organizations I have worked for.
- _____39. If I found the organization I worked for was in trouble, I would quickly look for job in another organization.
- _____40. I would be willing to work hard to be the top person in an organization.
- _____41. One supervisor is about like any other, a pain in the backside.
- _____42. Work is something I have to do, not something I want to do.
- _____43. Since I am really good at what I do, I will move up in the organization.
- _____44. What I want most in a job is to be left alone.
- _____45. What I want most in a job is the possibility of really doing something important.
- _____46. Frankly, I am smarter than most people I have worked for.
- _____47. When it comes to choosing a job, "show me the money."
- _____48. I have been unhappy just about everywhere I have worked.
- _____49. Any job worth doing is worth doing as well as I can.
- _____50. I am a very creative worker.

ORGANIZATIONAL ORIENTATIONS SCORING INFORMATION

Scoring: Step 1. Add the scores for the following items: 1, 4, 7, 10, 14, 15, 17, 21, 25, 29, 32, 35, 37, 40, 43, 45, 49, 50. This is your Upwardly Mobile Orientation score.

Step 2. Add the scores for the following items: 2, 5, 8, 11, 13, 18, 22, 23, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, 38, 41, 44, 46, 48. This is your Ambivalent Orientation score.

Step 3. Add the scores for the following items: 3, 6, 9, 12, 16, 19, 20, 24, 27, 39, 42, 47. This is your Indifferent Orientation score.

Your Upwardly Mobile score will fall between 0 – 90, therefore if your score is an 82, for instance, this would be a strong Upwardly Mobile orientation score.

Your Ambivalent score will fall between 0 – 100, so a score of 50 would be considered a moderate Ambivalent score and score of 95 would be a high score.

Your Indifferent score will fall between 0 – 60, so a score of 30 would be moderate, a score of 15 would be low, and a 50 would be a moderately high score.

Handout 3: Competency Based Example Questions

In order to create your questions you must first determine what competencies are required for the job by doing a job analysis. Try to group the competencies in large categories such as technology and communicational skills. Create your questions for each competency which are important to successfully complete the job. Three main categories of sample competency questions are:

Intellectual Competencies:

1. Tell me about a task that tested your analytical abilities.
2. You're faced with an employee not producing or pulling his/her weight in a team project, describe your decision-making approach. Are you quick and decisive, but in some cases too fast or more thorough and too slow?
3. What were some of the most important lessons you have learned throughout your career? (Please give specifics of what, when, and where etc...)
4. With previous positions, what were your most and least successful jobs?
5. Describe a situation that didn't go as planned. What would you have done differently?

Interpersonal Competencies:

1. Think about a specific occasion where you met the needs of a customer. What steps did you take? What was the outcome?
2. Describe a disagreement in a team-oriented task where you felt the others were wrong and you were right. What methods did you use to come up with a solution?
3. Describe a situation in which you were most effective selling an idea or yourself.
4. How "hands on" a manager are you?
5. How effective have your methods been for following up on tasks you assign to your employees?

Leadership Competencies:

1. What is your vision for your present job and how was it developed?
2. Give examples of when employees might have followed your lead and when they did not.
3. Describe a situation in which you have prevented or resolved conflicts.
4. What are examples of the biggest challenges you have faced and overcome?
5. Describe the pace at which you work (fast, slow, or moderate) and the circumstances under which it varies.

Motivational Competencies:

1. What is it about this job opportunity that interests you?
2. What is it about your current position you enjoy the most?
3. Tell me about a time where you have gone the “extra mile” for your current organization.
4. Have you ever been excited about a major project and learned that it was canceled? What did you do?
5. Describe when you worked the hardest and felt the greatest sense of achievement.

Personal Competencies:

1. What was the last major problem you were faced with? What action did you take?
2. Provide an example when you had to adapt your approach due to shifting priorities.
3. Describe a situation where you successfully overcame a setback in order to achieve an objective or meet a deadline.
4. What are the limits of your authority in your job? Have you ever gone over those limits?
5. Describe a situation where you demonstrated confidence in your viewpoint despite opposition.

Handout 4: Question Examples

Interviews are used to gather information about the interviewee in a way that stimulates flowing conversations. Since interviews are not natural conversations, it's necessary to rely on the most basic tool for creating conversations – using questions. Using questions effectively, you can elicit the information needed while keeping the interviewee at ease during the interview. Listed below are eight types of interviewing questions:

Eight Types of Interviewing Questions

Closed Questions

Closed questions produce very little information. Usually, the responses to closed questions are often small, if not predictable. If closed questions are used properly it can clarify information the interviewee has said or done.

Examples:

- When did you graduate from college?
- How many years did you work in your previous position?
- Which do you find more interesting - working in the office or out in the field?

Open Questions

Open questions increase the number of possible responses and it's up to the interviewee to choose the appropriate response. These types of questions give the interviewer the opportunity to make judgments solely on the interviewee's response.

Examples:

- What did you like about your last position?
- How did you learn to operate that particular road equipment?
- Why do you like engineering?

Probing Questions

Probing questions are usually followed after an open-ended question. The interviewer uses these types of questions to emphasize and learn more about a specific response the interviewee has given.

Examples:

- Tell me more of why you feel more qualified to use that equipment.
- So, in that position you said managing employees is difficult. Can you explain the reason why?
- You stated you love engineering. Can you give me two examples why you love it?

Leading Questions

Leading questions are meant to have the interviewee answer in a certain way. These questions are usually geared to what the interviewer would prefer to hear and not necessarily what the interviewee would answer if using open questions. Since these questions are geared toward what the interviewer wants to hear, they are usually deemed undesirable during job interviews.

Examples:

- Having crew meetings is a waste of time, don't you think?
- Can I take it you've had no problems supervising all your employees?
- I think that it's important to write an employee up after their first offense. What do you think?

Multiple Questions

Multiple questions are a consolidation of two or more questions asked all together before the interviewee can answer. This type of questioning is not encouraged because it may confuse the interviewee and he may not remember or answer all the questions completely.

Example:

- How do you think a supervisor's role fits in with a decentralized organization structure and what are the pros and cons of introducing self-managing teams as opposed to line management?

Marathon Questions

Marathon questions are usually the kind that take you in no real direction. They tend to be long-winded and the interviewee will find them difficult to follow.

Example:

- What is your opinion on EPA's? I mean, do you think that employees should be compensated with pay from their scores or where do you see EPA's importance for staff?

Trick Questions

It's important to understand when asking the interviewee questions that you must retrieve as much information as possible. When the interviewer uses trick questions he is just playing games with the interviewee. These types of questions would be irrelevant to use during an interview.

Example:

- What about cell phones?
- What about meetings?

Multiple Choice Questions

Multiple Choice questions give you a choice of answer in which the interviewee is expected to choose. They are very difficult to design and should be used in appropriate situations. For example, if the interviewees need to take an exam as a part of the interview. As you look at the example below, you can see that this question forces them to choose an answer.

Multiple Choice questions don't give the interviewee a chance to explain his answer if his choice is different from the answers below.

Example:

- Why are you interested in this post?
 - A. Choose one from the following options:
 1. The salary and benefits
 2. An opportunity to enhance your career
 3. To move into this field of operation

Handout 5: Competency Based Interviews

Interviews are used as a formal selection process where applicants are screened or ranked based on scores. Another reason interviews are important is to verify an applicant's qualifications after he has been rated using other assessments prior to the hiring decision. There are several types of interviews, but the two main interviews are a) structured and b) unstructured.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews follow a very strict process. They can ensure that applicants have an equal opportunity to provide information and are viewed consistently and accurately. Structured Interviews also ask the same questions in the same order to each applicant. Applicants are evaluated based on a common rating scale and the interviewers are in agreement on what answers are acceptable for each question.

The advantages of a structured interview are:

- Demonstrate a high standard of reliability, validity, and legal defensibility
- Reduce the risk of legal challenges
- Reduce the costs by hiring the best applicant for the job the first time around

The disadvantages of a structured interview are:

- Require a sufficient number of applicants to start comparing them.
- Time consuming when it comes to specific question design and interview preparation.
- Sometimes can overlook the communication skills of the applicant because you focus on the answers collected.

Unstructured Interviews

Unstructured interviews have an informal or conversational flow to the interview. This type of interview is very subjective. It can reduce the amount of accuracy and consistency. This type of interview can be subjected to legal challenges when hiring decisions are made. Applicants are asked different questions and the interviewers are not in agreement with what answer is acceptable. In unstructured interviews there isn't a standard rating system and they are best used when you want to gain information about the person's knowledge about a subject.

The advantages of an unstructured interview are:

- Provides flexibility in the interviewing process
- Provides a large amount of information
- Reveals more about the applicant

The disadvantages of an unstructured interview are:

- Requires a large amount of time to collect the information
- The interview can veer off in several directions so there isn't any control of the conversation.
- Since the questions are not repetitive throughout the interview, analyzing the information can be very difficult.

Behavioral Interviews:

Behavioral interviews evaluate the applicant's experiences and behaviors in order to assess his potential for success in the agency. This type of interview looks at the past performance of the applicant to determine his future behavior. Behavioral interviews evaluate the following attributes:

- Integrity, Leadership, Initiative
- Communication, Problem Solving and Interpersonal Skills
- Adaptability

Situational Interviews:

Situational interviews focus on what an applicant would do in a specific situation. The interview questions are usually based on real life, or job-related hypothetical situations. This type of interview is very useful when dealing with less experienced applicants. Situational Interviews can also be used to enhance a traditional or behavioral interview.

Types of Interviews are:

Panel/Committee Interviews

This type of interview involves using a group of three to ten people to ask questions and evaluate the applicants.

Case Interviews

Case interviews measure the applicant's ability to solve problems. The applicant is given a situation or case study and then must be able to come up with a logical plan to solve the issue.

Telephone Interviews

Interviewers will use this process when there is a large group of applicants or for those that live far away from the job site. This type of interview can be a pre-screening process before the actual face-to-face interview.

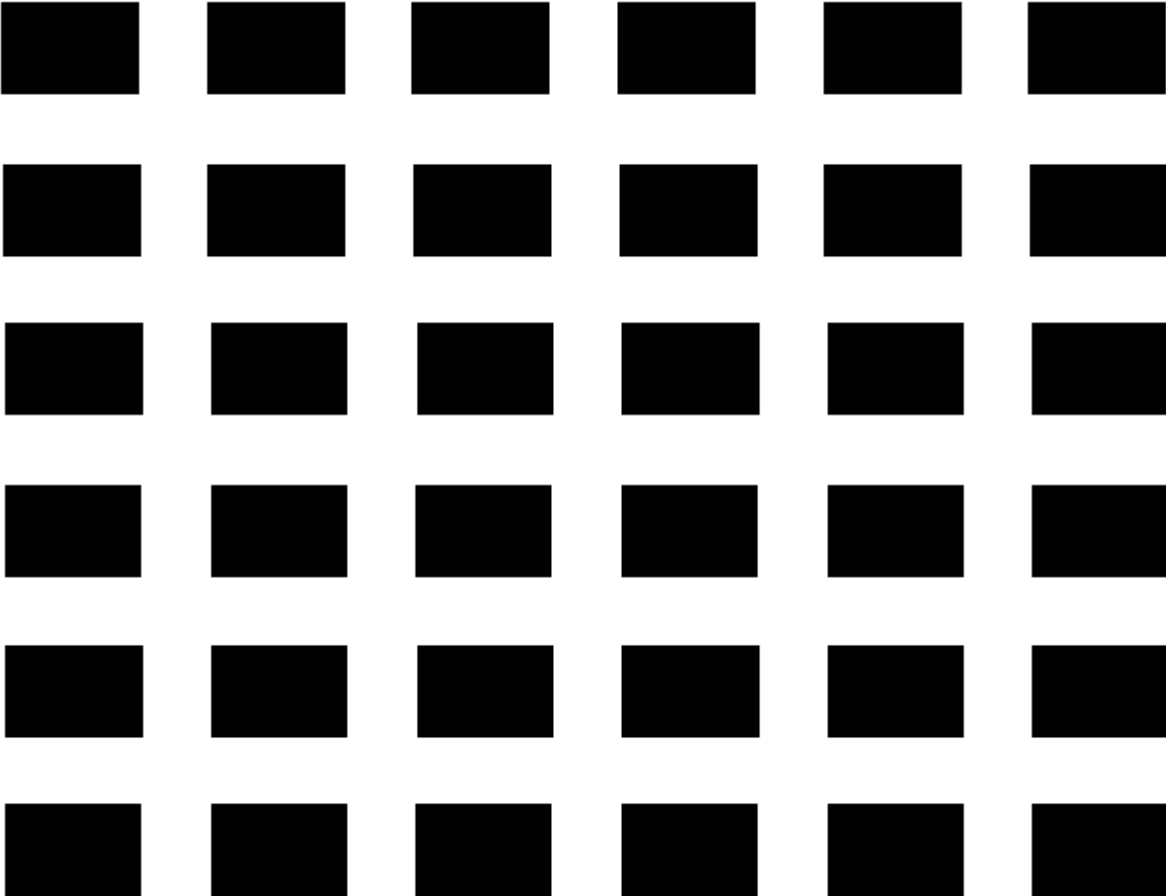
Lunch/Dinner Interviews

Meal interviews are done when the job deals with clients outside of the normal working environment. These types of interviews are not only done to evaluate your answers but your etiquette and composure under pressure.

Stress Interviews

Stress interviews are very popular when interviewing for a sales position. The main objective is to see how the applicant handles pressure and under what situations the applicant will give up.

Handout 6: The Herman Grid



Handout 7: Do's and Don'ts for Interviews

Do's:

- Do make sure you take the time to put the interviewee at ease.
- Do prepare a list of questions to ask each interviewee.
- Do make special questions for those interviewees you want to learn more about their knowledge and experience.
- Do make sure you keep notes on each interviewee so that you can compare at the end of the interview.
- Do ask questions that are open-ended.
- Do ask questions that will show a person's attitude.
- Do focus on learning about the interviewee's ability, experience, and qualities that will affect how he will do the job.

Don'ts

- Don't speak too much during the interview because this is a time to listen to the interviewee.
- Don't try to make a decision early. You must listen to all interviewees first before deciding.
- Don't worry about whether the interviewee is nervous unless it pertains to him being able to do the job.
- Don't ask questions that are leading, because it refers to what you want to hear versus how the interviewee wants to respond.
- Don't use stress interviews, because they are created to see if the interviewee will become upset or angry.
- Don't compare interviewees to each other. Rather compare each one individually against the competencies.

Handout 8: Interviewer's Checklist

- Is there a clear objective for the interview?
- Do you have up-to-date job descriptions, selection criteria, or competency frameworks available?
- Do you know who will be interviewing with you and are they clear on their roles during the interview?
- Adequate time to prepare? Have you had time to review each applicant prior to the interview?
- Do you have enough appropriate open-ended competency based questions?
- Is the interview schedule allowing enough time to explore information thoroughly and for note-taking immediately following interview?
- Is the room you are using free from all outside distractions?
- Are there enough applicant packets with the job description and information on about the agency?
- Do you have interview forms for interview notes, evaluations and final decisions?
- Do you provide feedback on the outcome of the decision?

Handout 9: Top 10 Hiring Mistakes

1. **Not looking into candidates' backgrounds.** No matter what the applicant puts on his resume always do a background check and call his references. This especially goes for those candidates you're interested in.
2. **The interviewer is overly influenced by advanced degrees.** Don't always base your decision just by how many degrees they have. There can be no replacement for real life experience.
3. **Not having a long-range plan.** Unless you're filling a temporary vacancy, try to have a long-term plan for the employee you are about to hire. Think of how you can develop that employee and how he best fits the organization's long-term plans.
4. **Making promises you cannot keep.** Make sure you know ahead of time what you can offer the applicant. It can be very costly to the organization to make promises you cannot keep.
5. **Hiring a person for all the wrong reasons.** This is a common mistake. Make sure you focus on the best applicant for the job and not to impress family or friends.
6. **Not conducting a good interview.** Interviewing is a skill and not many people possess it. You must ask the right questions to determine if the applicant is the best fit for the job.
7. **Not looking for a good fit.** Hiring someone that doesn't fit with the team can be detrimental and cause unnecessary problems in the future.
8. **Not giving employees offer letters.** This type of letter is used to inform the applicant he has been hired, the starting salary, start date and benefit information.
9. **Not being prepared.** Know the questions you want to ask and the type of applicant you want ahead of time. Make sure you understand your organization and about the position for when the applicant asks questions.
10. **Expecting way too much.** Narrow your focus to the most important aspects of the position. Try not to hire someone that can do a little of everything and does not excel in key areas, because it will cause future problems.

Source: <http://www.allbusiness.com/human-resources/workforce-management-hiring/3995-1.html#ixzz24IRZYyZC>