

Examples of Behavioral-Based Interview Questions

1. COMMUNICATION

- Definition: Use of words to effectively impart information or ideas.
- Behaviors: Expresses ideas and thoughts verbally and in written form, exhibits good listening and comprehension, selects and uses appropriate communication methods, keeps other adequately informed.

Sample Behavioral- Based Interview Questions:

1. What techniques have you found effective to convey a technical message to a non-technical person? How do you test to ensure the message you conveyed was the message received?
2. Describe a time when you did not listen effectively. What was the result?
3. Tell me about a time you thought you met the needs of your _____ (teammate, supervisor, other department, etc.) only to find later that you did not fulfill the requirement. What did you learn from this situation? What would you do differently in the future?
4. Give me an example of a time you needed to solicit input to effectively do your job. Who did you go to?
5. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
6. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
7. How do you encourage the sharing of best practices with other areas?
8. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
9. Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
10. Tell me about a difficult situation were you had to build credibility with peers.
11. Tell me about a time you had to gain the support of people that you did not manage.

2. CREATIVITY

- Definition: Ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods and interpretations.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Describe an idea you took from inception to completion.
2. Describe how you improved the productivity/profitability of your work unit. How did you identify these opportunities for improvement?
3. Tell me about a creative idea you had to improve one of your company's products or services.
4. Tell me about a time you inherited a broken down process that you had to fix in a hurry. Describe how you handled it.
5. Describe a time when you had to organize and implement a system or process.
6. In your current position, what have you done differently than your predecessors? Why? What has been the advantage of the change?
7. Tell me about an effective decision that you made.
8. Give me an example of the business impact of a recent decision or project.
9. Describe a time when you were able to achieve results when others could not.

3. DECISEVENESS

- Definition: Use of words to effectively impart information or ideas.
- Behaviors: Expresses ideas and thoughts verbally and in written form, exhibits good listening and comprehension, selects and uses appropriate communication methods, keeps other adequately informed.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Explain a time when you had to make a decision in less time that you felt was warranted. How did you compensate for the lack of time?
2. Describe the process you find effective when faced with a large or critical decision.

3. Tell me about a difficult decision you had to make in the past year.
4. Tell me about a situation where the technology looked interesting but was not a good business investment. How did you come to that decision?

4. ENERGY

- Definition: Maintains a high activity level.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Describe some time in your work at _____ when you felt most tired. What caused this?
2. In your work at _____, describe the amount of physical effort you put out and what you have/had to do in a typical day.
3. In your experience at _____, describe the most tiring duties.
4. There are days or times of day for everyone where energy level may be a bit low. Can you think of a situation where your energy level was low and you were able to re-fuel?
5. Tell me about a time you had to revitalize a stagnant team? What techniques did you find particularly successful?

5. EXTRA- ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS

- Definition: Use of knowledge of changing societal and governmental pressures outside the organization to identify potential organizational problems or opportunities.

Sample Behavioral- Based Interview Questions:

1. Can you give me an example of a time when you have had to keep abreast of external factors that could have affected your organization? How did you use the knowledge gained?
2. Give me an example of a problem that you became aware of that was caused by external factors affecting your organization. How did you handle the problem?

6. FINANCIAL ANALYTICAL ABILITY

- Definition: Ability to understand and analyze specific types of financial data.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Can you think of an example of a difficult financial report that you prepared in your job? What did it contain?
2. Can you think of an example of when you have been involved in your organization's financial decisions? What was your role? What kinds of data did you use in making the decisions?
3. Can you think of an example of the toughest financial analysis problem that you have faced on the job? How did you go about solving it?
4. Give me an example of a time when you had to prepare the budget for your unit. What information did you use in preparing the budget? What information was lacking?
5. Can you think of the biggest financial mistake that you have made in analyzing financial data? How did you discover the mistake?

7. FLEXIBILITY

- Definition: Ability to adapt to change. Ability to change style or methods to achieve a goal.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Give me an example of an unexpected change that occurred in your past employment. How did you handle this?
2. Describe your experience with an organization or department that was in the midst of significant change. What role did you play?
3. Can you think of an example of an obstacle that prevented you from completing projects. Describe the obstacle and what you did to get around it.
4. Describe a situation in which your first attempt to sell an idea to your (boss, subordinate, etc.) failed. Did you try again? What approach did you use the second (third, fourth) time?

5. Describe a situation in which your initial attempt to gain someone's support or cooperation failed. Did you try again? What approach did you use the second (third, fourth) time?
6. Give me an example of an occasion when you had to approach several individuals for support, cooperation, etc. whom you considered quite different from one another.
7. Think of an example of when you have handled your best employee and your worst employee. Did you manage them differently? If so, how?

8. INITIATIVE

- Definition: Attempts to influence events to achieve goals; takes action to achieve goals beyond what is necessarily called for; originating action.
- Behaviors: Volunteers readily, undertakes self-developmental activities, seeks increased responsibilities, takes independent actions and calculated risks, looks for and takes advantage of opportunities, solicits feedback to improve processes or actions.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Can you think of a specific example of what you have done to show your employer that you are more than an average employee?
2. Tell me about a time you went above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
3. Give me an example of a time you showed initiative and took the lead.
4. Describe a situation in which you saw a problem and took action to correct it?
5. What has been your biggest achievement at _____? What steps did you take to achieve it?
6. Describe some ways you changed your job at _____? What prompted you to make those changes?

9. JUDGEMENT

- Definition: Makes rational and realistic decisions which are based on logical assumptions, reflects factual information and shows consideration of organizational resources.

- Behaviors: Supports and explains reasoning for decisions, includes appropriate people in decision making process.

Sample Behavioral-Based interview Questions:

1. We have all had to bend or break the rules sometimes. Give me an example of a time when you had to do this in order to accomplish a goal.
2. Tell me about a time that you had to make an “executive” decision on your own, when you typically would be able to ask your manager.
3. Tell me about a time that you wished you had handled a situation differently.
4. Tell me about a situation where you felt it was appropriate to go outside of the policy.
5. Describe a situation where you included subordinates in your decision making. To what extent did you incorporate their input?
6. Can you think of an example of a decision that was difficult to make. What was the decision? Why was it so difficult?

10. LEADERSHIP

- Definition: Uses appropriate interpersonal styles and methods in guiding individuals or groups toward an belief or accomplishment.
- Behaviors: Delegates work assignments, matches the responsibility to the person, gives authority to work independently, sets expectations and monitors delegated activities, provides recognition for results. Motivates others, exhibits confidence in self, inspires respect and trust, shows courage to take action. Provides direction and gains compliance, includes subordinates in planning, takes responsibility for subordinates' actions, provides regular performance feedback, is approachable, develops subordinates' skills and encourages growth.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about the toughest group you had to get cooperation from. What did you do?
2. What is the most difficult on-on-one meeting that you have had with a subordinate? Why was it difficult?

3. Tell me about a new policy or idea that you recently implemented which was considerably different from the standard procedure. What approach did you take to get your employees to go along with it?
4. Can you think of an example where you had to lead a task force, committee or group that didn't report to you, but from whom you had to get work? What did you do to get what you wanted from the group? What were the satisfactions and disappointments?
5. Can you think of a recent example of a problem that you have had in which you included your subordinates in arriving at solutions or approaches? What approach did you take to get them to accomplish the task?
6. Can you think of an example of when you have had problems getting your subordinates to accept your ideas or department goals? What approach did you use (look for involvement of subordinates in decision making)? How effective was it?
7. Can you think of an example where two subordinates did not work well together? What did you do in order to get them to do so?
8. Can you think of an example of a subordinate that you have had with a performance problem? What did you do to get them to correct the problem?
9. Can you think of examples of certain things that you have done in the past to set an example for your subordinates?

11. LEARNING

- Definition: Acquires knowledge of or skill in by study, instruction, or experience. Assimilates and applies new information.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about the most difficult task that you had to learn in one of your jobs in the past. What steps did you take to ensure you overcame this challenge?
2. Give me three reasons for the success you have achieved in your career and an example of how you have demonstrated each area.
3. Give me an example of a situation that challenged your analytical skills.
4. Describe the job related areas in which you feel technically competent. Which areas do you feel you require more training or exposure?

5. Even though we all try to be an expert in our area of work, it's impossible to know and understand everything. Tell me what aspect of your work/technical field you are still working to master.
6. Describe a project/situation that challenged your skills as a/an _____.
7. Give me an example of a project that demonstrates your technical expertise in _____.
8. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
9. What are 1-2 trends you see in your functional group? In educational institutions? How do you see these trends impacting you?
10. Tell me about a project (submission) that was very challenging.

12. MANAGEMENT STYLE

1. Tell me about the best manager you've worked for. Why was he or she a good manager? What would your ideal boss look like?
2. What was your least favorite manager like? How did you handle the things you didn't like about him?
3. Tell me about a disagreement you and a previous boss had. How did you resolve it?
4. If I were your boss, what would be the most important thing for me to say or do to support you?

13. PLANNING AND ORGANIZING

- Definition: Establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal: planning proper assignments of personnel and appropriate allocation of resources.
- Behaviors: Prioritizes and plans work activities, uses time efficiently, plans for additional resources, integrates changes smoothly, sets goals and objectives, works in an organized manner and meets commitments.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
2. What procedures have you used to keep track of items that need your attention?
3. Everyone at one time or another is too busy to plan for future activities. Tell me about a time when you were so busy you just reacted to situations rather than planned for them.
4. Give me some examples of different things you do to prepare for a successful day in the office.
5. It is challenging to know how to prioritize projects/responsibilities. Tell me about the last time you incorrectly prioritized a project. What happened?
6. Walk me through yesterday (or last week) and tell me how you planned the day's activities.
7. We've all have had occasions in which we were working on something and overlooked a small detail. Describe a time that happened to you.
8. Tell me about a time the details of something you were doing were especially important. How did you attend to them?
9. Tell me about a time you thought you completed a project but your manager/supervisor returned it to you for additional work.
10. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
11. Give me an example of a goal set that was not achieved.
12. Tell me about a goal that you set for yourself last year. What steps did you put in place to ensure that goal would be achieved? What measures did you put in place to check your progress? What was your outcome?

14. PROBLEM SOLVING

- Definition: Ability to define a problem, and efficiently and effectively work to a successful resolution.

- Behaviors: Identifies problems in a timely manner, gathers and analyzes information skillfully, develops alternative solutions, resolves problems in early stages.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Give me an example of a creative solution to a difficult problem.
2. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
3. Give me an example of a time when you used your fact finding skills to solve a problem.
4. Tell me about a time you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
5. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
6. Describe a problem you were recently asked to solve. What did you do? What alternatives did you consider?

15. PROJECT MANAGEMENT SKILLS

1. Describe a project that you effectively managed. Why was the project successful?
2. Tell me about a time that a team member/project partner did not contribute as needed. What did you do?
3. Describe how you set up a project management process when you have been assigned to head up a project.
4. Describe a project that did not have the positive outcome you expected. What would you have done differently given the chance.
5. Give me a specific example of how you've approached a large project. What was your role? What were the biggest challenges? How did the project turn out?
6. Tell me about 1-2 changes you have made in your project/time management approaches based on feedback you received from peers, customers or you manager?
7. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems on a project and developed preventative measures.

8. Tell me about a time you delegated a project effectively.
9. Tell me about a time a team member did not contribute as needed. What did you do?

16. SENSITIVITY

- Definition: Demonstrates appreciation, understanding and consideration for the feelings and needs of others. Perceives the impact and the implications of decisions.
- Behaviors: Displays courtesy and an understanding of other's needs, responds in a timely manner to other's needs, ability to handle emotional situations.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. From time to time all of us are confronted by someone who wastes our time at work. Can you tell me about a specific situation like that?
2. Can you think of a situation where you wish that you would have acted differently with someone at work. What did you do? What happened? What would you have done differently if you could do it over again?
3. We have all tried different ways of showing consideration for others. Can you think of a specific situation where you have done so?
4. Can you think of an unpopular decision that you have made in the past? How did your subordinates/peers respond? How did you make them feel?
5. Can you think of a specific problem that a subordinate/subordinates have brought to you recently? How did you handle the problem?
6. Describe your most recent discussion with one of your subordinates who was having or causing problems. How did you get involved? How did it turn out?

17. SERVICE FOCUSED (external and internal)

- Definition: Proactively develops customer relationships by making efforts to listen to and understand the customer (both internal and external)
- Behaviors: Anticipates and provides solutions to customer needs, gives high priority to customer satisfaction.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. What type of customers have you interacted with (i.e. mostly internal, external?)
2. How many different customers do you take direction from on a regular basis? What is the most challenging aspect of taking direction from multiple sources? How do you overcome this challenge? Give a specific example of a customer who took a period of time before a solid relationship was formed.
3. Tell me about a time you went above and beyond for a customer. What motivated you to do this?
4. Tell me about a recent time you handled a customer interaction in a less than optimal manner.
5. Tell me about a time you thought you had met a customer's need, but learned later that you did not. How did you make this realization? What did you do?
6. Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer.
7. Even though we may do everything possible to satisfy a customer, it always seems that some will complain about how they were treated. Tell me about the last customer who complained about the service you provided.

18. STRESS TOLERANCE

- Definition: Demonstrates stability of performance under pressure and/or opposition. Ability to cope with uncertainty, change and performance demands.
- Behaviors: Maintains effectiveness with a variety of people in varying environments, tasks or responsibilities.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
2. Can you think of an example of when your ideas were strongly opposed in a discussion. How did you react?
3. Can you think of a time in the past when you have been upset with yourself? What was the situation? What was the outcome?
4. Can you think of a time in the past when you have been upset with someone else? What was the situation? What was the outcome?

5. Can you think of a time when a subordinate or team member lost his or her temper or became irritated? How did you handle the situation?

19. TEAM PLAYER

- Definition: Works willingly in cooperation with others.
- Behaviors: Establishes and maintains effective relations, exhibits tact and consideration, displays positive outlook and pleasant manner, offers assistance and support to co-workers, works cooperatively in group situations, works actively to resolve conflicts.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to help out a peer or team member? What motivated you to do so?
2. Tell me about an experience with someone you've worked with who was less cooperative than you needed him or her to be. How did you handle the situation?
3. Tell me about a situation in which a peer/team member strongly disagreed with your ideas or actions? How did you handle the situation?
4. From time to time, all of us have had to deal with a person who wastes our time at work. Tell me about a similar situation you've had.
5. In dealing with team members (or a group), it's difficult to know when you are being overly demanding. Tell me about a time you might have been overly demanding with teammates.
6. Tell me about an effective team you were a part of? Why was it effective? Did you play any role in its effectiveness?

20. VERBAL FACT FINDING & LISTENING

- Definition: Uses of information extracted from verbal communications. Gathers information for decision making through questioning.
- Behaviors: Asks questions effectively. Follows-up on answers. Clarifies ambiguities and gathers relevant information. Checks for understanding.

Sample Behavioral-Based Interview Questions:

1. Can you think of an example of when you had to rely on information given to you orally to get the job done. Did you have any problems?
2. We've all had situations where we misinterpreted something that someone told us. Can you think of an example of when this happened to you and why you think it happened?
3. Tell me about the most important decisions you have made which were based largely on data you got by asking questions?
4. Describe a tough or tricky situation in which you had to talk to people to get information you needed to make an important decision or recommendation.
5. Walk me through a situation in which you had to get information by asking a lot of questions of a number of people. What were their reactions to the questions? When did you have to go back and rephrase your questions?

OTHER LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS:

A. Coaching/counseling:

Facilitating the development of others' knowledge and skills, providing timely feedback and guidance to help them reach goals.

1. Tell me about a direct report/team member that became more successful as a result of your assistance/coaching.
2. Give me an example of a situation in which you successfully reinforced the performance of someone who worked for you.
3. We've all had a time when our coaching efforts weren't successful. Tell me about a time you worked with someone, but that person failed to improve.
4. Describe how you coached two different people to accomplish the same task. What were the similarities and differences in your approaches?
5. Tell me about a time you had to manage a difficult employee who did not think they needed help.
6. Tell me about a situation in which you had to step in on a decision of one of your managers.
7. Tell me about your strategy to manage a strong performer. How did you ensure you were stretching them to their fullest potential?

8. Tell me about a low performer you managed. What was the plan to improve performance?

B. Strategy/vision:

Anticipates long-term opportunities, defines a desired future state, communicates direction of vision and values.

1. Tell me about a time you had a “vision” for your group that you needed to get senior management buy in. What were the challenges/benefits? What was the end result?
2. Describe the role that your staff plays in the strategic planning process of your organization. What is the most effective way you identify strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities when planning?
3. It’s often hard to know exactly when to discontinue or redirect a product or service. Tell me about a time your organization waited too long to make this type of change.
4. Tell me about a recent strategic action you took that was beneficial for your team or organization.
5. Tell me about a time when you weren’t satisfied with the outcome of a situation or project. Why? What steps did you take?
6. Tell me about a creative solution to a difficult problem.
7. Tell me about a business impact of a key decision or project.

C. Managing for Growth:

Incorporates long-term goals into tangible results and day to day activities, reinforces with team

1. Describe a situation when you had to quickly change direction to capitalize on a growth opportunity.
2. What steps do you take to inform and teach your direct reports about changing markets, opportunities for growth and measurements against results?
3. Describe the process your company uses to measure your contribution to goals set for the department, company, etc.
4. How often do you measure the results of your staff against their goals? What tools do you use?
5. Tell me about a situation in which you had to build a team.

D. Global Perspective (internal and external):

1. Give me an example of how your knowledge of your organization's culture helped you make a decision.
2. It's impossible to always anticipate the potential implications of your group/team's actions on other parts of the organization. Tell me about a time when your group took action that adversely affected another part of the organization.
3. How do you stay abreast of global activities and trends that may affect your business?
4. Describe a difficult political situation and how it was resolved. What was your role?
5. Describe the most difficult situation you have encountered dealing with an international customer/colleague.
6. What type of international travel have you done? What preparation took place for potential cultural differences?

E. Developing Others/Maximizing Performance:

Establishing performance/development goals, providing training and evaluating performance:

1. Tell me about a recent performance plan you developed for both a high performer and a low performer. What sources of information did you use?
2. Give me an example of a project/assignment you gave to a direct report so he or she could develop a specific skill.
3. Tell me about the direct report that you are most proud of having a positive impact in their career development.
4. What metrics are most valuable in assessing performance? How have you incorporated metrics into performance planning?
5. Describe how you have set effective goals for you team. What results were achieved?
6. Tell me about an employee who disagreed with your performance feedback. How did you handle this situation?

7. Describe the hiring process for you. Tell me about your worst hire. What did you learn from that experience?
8. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.

F. General Management:

1. Describe a time when you had to manage a team who knew more than you did. How did you go about gaining their confidence?
2. Tell me about a difficult team to build because of personality issues?
3. What techniques have you found effective to promote honest responses without hard feelings within the group. Describe a time when you delivered bad news well. Describe a time when you delivered “bad news” that you felt you should have handled better or differently.
4. Describe a time when you had to fight to keep a program or project going that you truly believed in.
5. Describe what you have done to get results, build a team without staff burn out.
6. Describe a time when you had to provide candid feedback to a superior.
7. Describe a time when you had to terminate an employee.
8. What new ideas have you championed in the face of controversy?