

Strategic Interviewing

Today, many interviews for professional positions are “competency-based interviews.” That is, the questions are designed to elicit behavioral information (what you have done in the past in a particular situation) and situational information (what you would do in a hypothetical future situation).

The four main competencies managers need have been categorized this way:*

1. Planning (sequencing and making things happen)
2. Problem solving (using your analytical skills)
3. Interpersonal skills (emotional stability affecting ability to get things done through others)
4. Attitudes, interests, and motivation (what drives you)

A good rule of thumb is to be prepared to discuss at least two positive examples of each of these core competencies in an interview.

Interview Exercise: Form into groups of three: one person will be the interviewer, one the interviewee, and the third an observer. Chose one of the following three role plays:

Student A: You are interviewing for a position as an intern with a large consulting firm in Boston. The firm is seeking people with particular strengths in one of several business areas: strategic management, finance, IT, or marketing. The position requires someone with experience in teamwork who can do research. The ideal candidate would have: strong problem-solving skills; a broad (but, at this stage, general) understanding of business and technology; and excellent personal qualities (e.g, likeability, confidence, communication skills, and integrity).

Student B: You are Director of Human Resources for a large consulting firm in Boston. You seek a candidate with: strong problem-solving skills; a broad (but, at this stage, general) understanding of business and technology; and excellent personal qualities (e.g, likeability, confidence, communication skills, and integrity). Some suggested questions are on the next page.

Student C: You are the observer. Consider the following questions and prepare to provide your partners with feedback about their interviewing techniques.

1. What did she/he do well?
2. Did he/she identify skills and support them with concrete examples?
3. Did she/he speaking positively?
4. Did he/she demonstrate effective nonverbal communication?

As a trio, discuss what kind of information the interview questions were designed to elicit.

* Joyce Lain Kennedy, “Job Interviews: Win with Fundamental Four Competency Categories.”

<http://www.sunfeatures.com/columns.php>. Retrieved December 15, 2001.

Suggested Questions

What goals have you set for yourself and how are you planning to achieve them?	Who or what has had the greatest influence in the development of your career interest?
Describe a situation in which you had to persuade someone to see things your way.	What was the biggest challenge you encountered in freshman year? How did you handle it?
Describe a time when a team member came to you for help. What was the situation? How did you respond?	Tell me about a time when you had to deal with someone whose personality was different from yours.
Have you ever been in a situation where someone regarded you as a threat? Describe the situation and tell how you handled this.	Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
Describe a time when you had to carry out a directive you did not agree with.	How are you conducting your job search and how will you go about making your decision?
What types of situations put you under pressure and how do you handle them?	Tell me about an accomplishment of which you are especially proud.
What is the most important lesson you have learned in or out of school?	Describe a time when you had to go beyond the call of duty to get the job done.
Describe a time when you saw a problem and took action to correct it, rather than waiting for someone else to do so.	Give me examples to convince me that you can adopt to a wide variety of situations, people, and environments.
What makes you the best person for this job?	Tell me about a leadership role you had in an extra curricular activity. How did you lead?
Tell me about your most successful presentation and what made it so.	Describe a time when it was especially important to make a good impression on someone. How did you go about doing it?
Describe a time when you took a risk that you later regretted.	Describe a time when you took a risk and were glad you did.
What did you enjoy most about your last position? Least?	Give an example of a situation where you provided a solution to an employer.
Have you every done any volunteer work? What kind?	How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?
If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?	Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
Describe your ideal job.	Define success. Define failure.
Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?	Why did you choose to interview with this organization?
Tell me about a time you were less successful than you hoped to be. How did you handle it?	What was the toughest academic decision you have had to make? How did you make that decision?

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