

Competency Interview Questions

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PROACTIVITY

- How have you found ways to overcome problems/difficulties in your work?
- Give me an example of doing more than required in your job.
- Describe a project or work activity you have initiated and planned recently.
 - Probe 1: What were the measures of success
 - Probe 2: How do you cope when faced with deadlines?
 - Probe 3: What do you do to ensure that the deadlines can be met?
- Give me an example of where you have driven a change through other people?
 - What prompted you to make the change?
 - Probe 1: How did you gain their support?
 - Probe 2: What were the factors critical to the success of this change?
- To what extent do you prepare for the future in terms of problems or opportunities?

CONCEPTUAL THINKING

- Can you give me an example of where you had to deal with a situation that you had not experienced before? What did you do? How did you know that you were taking the appropriate action?
- To what extent is your current job governed by procedure?
- How can you demonstrate your ability to think outside of and challenge commonly held procedures/principles?
- Give me an example of where you have challenged the status quo – what did you do?

EFFICIENCY / RESULTS ORIENTATION

- What standards/ goals are you expected to meet in your work – how do you ensure that you meet these?
- How often have you missed deadlines? What were the causes of each?
- What particular activity are you proud of and why?
- How have you found ways of improving things to achieve better results?
- How do you believe you have an impact on the business?
- Can you give me an example of where you have achieved a result in spite of resistance?

ABILITY TO LEARN

- What part of your existing role challenged your skills? What did you have to learn to be effective? How long did it take you? What parts took the most time? Why? Which parts were hardest?
- What tricks or techniques have you learned to make your job easier or yourself more effective? How did you learn that?
- What is the main thing that your current/previous role has taught you?

PLANNING & ORGANISATION

- Describe a typical day. A typical week. (Listen for planning)
- How often is your time schedule upset by unforeseen circumstances? Give me a recent example. What do you do then?
- What are some recurring problems in your areas of responsibility? What have you done about them?

- How have you determined what constitutes top priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.
- How do you keep track of all the things that need your attention?
- What requirement is there to plan the work of others – how do you do this to ensure clear direction and review?
- What project/ piece of work has significantly challenged your organisation skills?

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

- What kind of evidence can you give me of your attention to detail?
- Why is accuracy important within your job?
- How has your attention to detail had a positive impact on your job/organisation?
- How do you ensure your attention to detail does not impede your ability to retain focus of your wider objectives?
- How do you ensure accuracy in the work of others?

INFORMATION SEEKING

- Give me an example of something you have worked on from scratch and how you went about gathering information.
- How do you keep track of what is new externally in the market/your line of work?
- How do you use the information you collect to help you prepare for the future or be more effective for the now?
- How do you use sources all around you internally to keep abreast of the status of the business for the benefit of your work?
- Can you give an example of a time when you failed to have sufficient information for your needs?

Probe 1: What were the consequences?

Probe 2: What did you learn from the experience?

SERVICE ORIENTATION

- What does collaboration mean in your current job and what are the challenges to this – what are you doing about it?
- Who are your customers internally and externally?
- What lessons have you learnt about keeping the customer satisfied? Give me an example.
- How do you try to understand what is expected by your customers?
- Give me an example of where you have worked with your customer to achieve a mutually beneficial result?
- Tell me about a difficult customer that you have dealt with? Why were they difficult and how did you overcome it?
- Describe an example of working with departments to help deliver a quality service to customers (internal or external)

Probe 1: Why was this important?

Probe 2: How successfully did this help to maintain quality standards?

INTERPERSONAL UNDERSTANDING / COMMUNICATION

- How do you know you are being understood? Give me an example.
- What levels of the organisation do you deal with on a daily basis?
- What techniques do you use to ensure you are communicating effectively at different levels?
- What is your natural style when presenting ideas to others?

Probe 1: How do you go about getting your message across?

- How do you handle communicating with a very specialist audience?

Probe 1: What can you do to win them over?

- Tell me about a time when you had to establish a business relationship quickly
Probe 1: What did you do?
Probe 2: What was the outcome?
Probe 3: What did you learn from this?

ORGANISATIONAL AWARENESS

- How have you kept up to date with what is going on?
- How does the organisation impact on what you do?
- What are the key issues in your organisation at the moment?

PERSUASIVENESS

- Give me an example of where you affected the way people thought about something.
- How do you go about getting agreement?
- Can you give me an example of how you had adapted your style/tactics to win an argument or influence someone?
- How have you worked effectively through others (who are not your direct reports) to achieve action?
- What influence do you have on others/the business within your job?
- What is the most important thing you have been able to persuade someone else to do?
Probe 1: How was this achieved?
- How well do you think you are equipped to win the hearts and minds of others to what you want to do?
Probe 1: What is your approach to doing this

TEAMWORK

- How would you demonstrate your ability to work effectively within a team?
- What actions have you taken within your job to encourage and develop a team culture?
- What is the most successful team you have worked in and why?
- What role do you usually take within the team?
- Tell me about a particularly effective team you have worked in:
Probe 1: What was your role?
Probe 2: How did you work with the other people in the team?
Probe 3: How did you contribute to making the team successful?

TEAM LEADERSHIP

- How would you demonstrate your ability to treat people within your team fairly and consistently?
- Give me an example of how you generate enthusiasm and commitment within your department/ subordinates?
- How have you ensured a clear direction for people in your team?
- Give me an example of how you engender teamwork?
- Tell me about a time when you had to take control of a group of people in order to achieve an important outcome
Probe 1: How would other people describe your leadership style in this situation?
Probe 2: How effective was your leadership style on this occasion?
- How do you ensure that your team/colleagues are involved in the achievement of team goals or objectives?
Probe 1: Can you give me an actual example?

- How have you built capability within your team?
- How do you empower people in your team?
Probe 1: Delegation
Probe 2: Monitor and advise
Probe 3: Performance review

DIRECTIVENESS

- How do you co-ordinate the activities of others?
- How do you make sure employees do what you want them to do?
- How do you advise your employees of what is required?
- Give me an example of how you have performance managed someone?

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

- What are your responsibilities with regard to employee development within your department?
- How are the development needs identified in your department?
- How are employees encouraged to improve their own performance?
- How are employee's requests for training handled in your department?
- How have you actively managed the development of your employees during the past year (this could be through on the job training or of the job – internal/ external training)?
- How do you encourage self-development to add to the effectiveness/ efficiency of your department?
- How do you think your approach to employee development is viewed within your department?

- What if any, improvements could you make to the development of your employees?

ANALYTICAL THINKING

- Have you ever recognised a problem before your boss or others in the organisation? Explain.
- Can you give me an example of when you have been able to identify a small problem before it becomes big?
- What steps do you follow to study a problem before making any decisions?
- Give me an example of the best decision you have made which has the most impact on the organisation.
- Tell me about a time you had to analyse sizeable amounts of data or information
Probe 1: What sort of analysis was involved?
Probe 2: How successful was your analysis?

PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

- How do you ensure your professional skills are kept up to date?
- How have your professional skills added value to your effectiveness?
- Give me an example of where you have used your professional expertise to offer advice/ guidance to others?

SELF-CONFIDENCE

- Can you give me an example of the last time you were asked to tackle something that was completely new and slightly out of the scope of your existing experience and how you went about it?

- Can you talk us through a project/ proposal of yours that went wrong at work, what happened and how did you deal with it?
- We all occasionally face situations at work that are very demoralising. Can you give me an example of when this has happened to you?

SELF-CONTROL

- What techniques do you use to maintain calm during pressurised situations?
- Give me an example of where you based a decision on logical linking rather than acting on an impulsive emotional response?
- Give me an example of where you have successfully controlled the emotions of others in a

ADAPTABILITY

- When was the last time you disagreed with a new policy or procedure instituted by management? Why? What did you do?
- Tell me about some situations in your job where you had to abruptly change what you were doing. What did you do? How did it affect you?
- What have been the main changes in your organisation and what has been the impact on you?
Probe 1: aligning and supporting the change or blocking

ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

- What do you know about how your job fits in to the rest of your department?
What about your company?
- What do you think are the responsibilities of a (JOB TITLE)?

- Give me an example of where you have yielded own or departmental short-term interests for the long term good of the organisation as a whole.
- How do you publicly align your activities with the goals/ priorities of the organisation?
- Give me an example of an unpopular or controversial issue that you managed?