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Preparing For Competency Based Questions

When you are asked competency based questions, the interviewer is looking for specific details in your answers.



We've looked at six common examples of questions and what the employer might be looking for, within the answers.



And in this download, we've also given some tips and advice on how to prepare the answers, so you are interview-ready.

Q1: “Give me a situation where you have worked within a team to achieve a goal?”

What they’re looking for:

Don’t describe a situation and leave it at that. You need to connect the example directly to the skills you have that enabled you to achieve a goal.

Demonstrate your abilities. Give evidence of planning, interacting closely with other people, negotiation, diplomacy, great communication and analysis, explain how you managed to solve problems.

You want to be identified as pro-active, someone who can make a valuable contribution. Show them you care about the work you do for companies.



An example of what you might say:

“Our goal was to attract entry level talent to the company. I created a jobs fair event at a central hotel in the city, designed and printed flyers and gave them to students at the local colleges and Universities. I had to create a planner and timetable leading up to the event, as well as a registration system to record who was coming. When they arrived at the event, I needed a way to track who was interested in new roles at the company so I had an i-pad to take names and contact details.

I had a company job information pack made to promote the benefits of working for the company.”

Q2: “Explain where you overcame a problem, what you might do differently if you were faced with it again?”

What they’re looking for:

Your ability to solve problems.

They want to know that you can analyse a situation, learn – and come up with the best solutions to implement.

This is not about how well you performed. This is about being able to learn from experience and to recognise there’s always a way to refine and improve, with a little thought and intelligence. Demonstrate that you are always thinking about better ways to do things, even when you have done well in the first place.



An example of what you might say:

“I was asked to organise a way to ensure everyone in the office had an idea of what the others were doing on any given day. We used a piece of software that shared information between staff and it worked to a point, but not everybody was invested or used the system so some people were invisible to others.

“If I had to rethink this I would ensure in the morning, after emails were read, that we stood around in a circle in a short ten minute meeting and explained what we were working on that day. That way, no one would hide from view and everyone could explain issues they had or if they needed something, that would present an opportunity to make a request.”

Q3: “Describe a big achievement you have accomplished. What was challenging about it?”

What they’re likely looking for:

They want to know what motivates you, what you aim for and what you value.

The scale of your achievement will show your level of work experience but don’t panic if you have not won any big industry awards, achievements come in all kinds of shapes and sizes.

If you do not want to go into details about work achievements, you can use examples in your private life – for instance, if you have run a marathon or are involved in a charity.

Q4: “What is the biggest change you have dealt with in work? How did you adjust to it?”

What they’re probably looking for:

It’s important that people can deal with change in a business – as it is inevitable.

You should be able to demonstrate you can adapt to new systems, ways of working, challenging situations and different environments – as the more able you are to be flexible to change – the quicker you will be able to make progress after change.

Change management comes to all companies in growth, so the people who are of real value are the ones that embrace change and try to see the value in it, rather than grumble and fold their arms when they are told it’s going to be different in the office.

Q5: “Was there ever a time you went against company policy? If so, why did you and how did you manage it?”

What they’re searching for:

They might be trying to find out simply if you can stick to company rules but it’s not usually that simple. When someone answers this question and shows that by disregarding a rule they benefited the company, then that says a lot about the individual’s drive for the company.

What they will be looking for is that if you do go against the rules – that you do it in a very professional way and for the right reasons. If you can demonstrate skills like negotiation, communication and analysis in this answer then all the better.

Sometimes bending a rule might be the makings of great leadership – but if you just do it because you didn’t like the rule – that’s really not something you ought to bring up.

Q6: *“Tell us about an incident where you had to deal with a conflict in a team?”*

What they will be looking for:

Can you keep a team together, even when there is in-fighting and stress? This is about stepping outside yourself to manage the bigger picture and also about keeping a team cohesive and focused in the right direction. Demonstrate your powers of diplomacy, emotional intelligence, the ability to manage a conflict and promote a good outcome.

They might be wanting to see what you are made of. Are you the sort of person who hides away from the conflicts or do you rise to the challenge of finding resolutions and calming situations down, so people are being reasonable and more communicative?

01

By thinking about your answers and practicing them before hand, you will be able to dazzle the interviewer by demonstrating your experience. It would be a great shame to miss out on selection simply because you did not give an interviewer enough of the right information about your skills. Consider your competencies ahead of time and you will be fully prepared.

02

If you want to find a great job that's perfect for your skills or you would like more advice on a role you have seen advertised by CMD, contact one of our friendly Consultants, who will be happy to help you.

Final Advice