The Park Guide to:

Competency Based Interviews

The likelihood is that it will follow a competency based model so whether you are not sure what to expect or just need a helping hand with your preparation then the Park guide is here to help.

What is a competency based interview?

Competency based interviews (otherwise known as situational or behavioural based interviews) are built on the idea that your past behaviour is the best predictor of your future behaviour. So the interviewer's goal is to obtain specific examples of when and how you have demonstrated particular competencies or skills (the behaviours that they require to adequately fulfil the job!).

What competencies/skills will they be looking for?

The list of skills and competencies that will be tested will change depending on the job that you are applying for. A Manager may be questioned on their ability to influence, negotiate and lead, whilst a Receptionist may be assessed for communication and organisational abilities. The list of competencies that the interviewer is looking for evidence of will most likely be listed on the job description or person specification.

How do I answer competency based questions?

A good way to structure your answer is to use the well-known STAR model:

Situation
Describe the situation you are talking about.

Task
Explain what it is you had to achieve.

Action
Tell the interviewer what you did to achieve the objective.

Result
What was the outcome of your actions and your evaluation of your actions?

The interviewer may then want to know what you learnt from your experience, particularly how you might have done things differently, so be prepared to reflect on your performance.

Preparation!

We can't reinforce this enough, not only will good preparation give you more confidence but it also provides you with the opportunity to choose the examples that will really make you shine and prove that you are the stand out candidate for the role.

Remember that nerves are natural and the interviewer knows that - if you have done your preparation and have all your examples ready you have nothing to fear.

Practice, practice, practice...
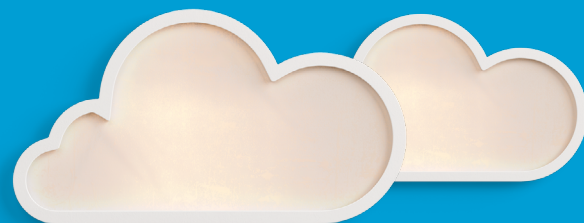
Practicing on some example questions, like the ones below, will really help you structure your thinking about certain areas of competency and have a 'stock' of scenarios and examples that can be adapted to pretty much any question. Practice out loud so you get used to the sound of your own voice.

Team Working

- Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as a member of a team.
- Describe a situation in which you were a member (not a leader) of a team, and a conflict arose within the team. What did you do?
- How do you build relationships with other members of your team?
- Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.

Problem Solving & Judgement

- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a problem or make a decision that required careful thought.
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a quick decision. What were the circumstances and what did you do?

Integrity

- Tell me about a time when you showed integrity and professionalism.
- Tell us about a time when someone asked you to do something that you objected to. How did you handle the situation?

Planning & Organisation

- Describe a time when you have had to plan a large piece of work.
- Tell me about a time when you haven't managed to meet a deadline. What did you do?
- It's a busy day with conflicting priorities and deadlines, what do you do?

Developing Others

- Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their skills or job performance.
- Describe a time when you provided feedback to someone about their performance.
- Give me an example of a time when you recognised that a member of your team had a performance difficulty/deficiency. What did you do?

Results Orientation

- Tell me about a time when you set and achieved a goal.
- What achievement are you most proud of?

Adaptability

- Describe a situation where you had to change your approach half-way through a project or task following new input into the project.
- Describe a situation where one of your projects suffered a setback due to an unexpected change in circumstances.
- Tell me about a time when you changed your priorities to meet others' expectations.

Leadership

- Tell me about a time when you had to lead a group to achieve an objective.
- Provide an example of where you had to drive a team through change. How did you achieve this?
- Tell us about a time when you faced reluctance from your team to accept the direction that you were setting.

Innovation

- Describe something you have done that was new and different for your organisation that improved performance and/or productivity.
- Tell me about a time when you identified a new, unusual or different approach for addressing a problem or task.

Communication

- Describe a situation where you had to explain something complex to a colleague or a client. What problems did you encounter and how did you deal with them?
- Demonstrate how you vary your communication approach according to the audience that you are addressing.
- Describe a situation when you had to communicate a message to someone, knowing that you were right and that they were wrong and reluctant to accept your point of view.
- Give us an example of where your listening skills proved crucial to an outcome.

Relationship Building

- Describe a situation in which you developed an effective win/win relationship with a stakeholder or client. How did you go about building the relationship?
- Tell me about a time when you relied on a contact in your network to help you with a work-related task or problem?

Influencing

- Describe a recent situation in which you convinced an individual or a group to do something.
- Describe a situation in which you needed to influence different stakeholders with differing perspectives.

Gathering Information

- Describe a project or assignment where you had to gather or evaluate large amounts of data.
- How do you approach a complex problem so that you ensure you get the best solution?

One final tip ... use 'I' not 'we'

When thinking about your answers to these questions, remember the interviewer is looking for evidence of where you have demonstrated these competencies, so use 'I' instead of 'we' wherever possible. If the examples you are giving are from a team environment, think about the role you played in that team, what actions you took and how your actions affected the outcome.

Good Luck!

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Work Happy :)