

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ACCOUNTABILITY/DEPENDABILITY

Provide a specific example that best illustrates your ability to be "counted on".

Tell us about a time when you took responsibility for an error and were held personally accountable.

Tell us about a time that other's actions negatively impacted a project for which you were responsible. What did you do?

Give me an example of when you were responsible for an error or mistake. What was the outcome? What, if anything, would you do differently?

ADAPTABILITY/FLEXIBILITY

Describe a major change that occurred in a job that you held. How did you adapt to this change?

Tell us about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?

What do you do when you are faced with an obstacle to an important project? Give an example.

Give an example in which you effectively modified your thinking, feelings, and behaviors at work in response to ambiguity, new information, changing conditions or unexpected obstacles.

Describe a situation in which you willingly and effectively embraced a new system, process, technology, or idea introduced at work even though the change was a major departure from the old way of doing things.

ANALYTICAL THINKING/PROBLEM SOLVING

Describe the project or situation which best demonstrates your analytical abilities. What was your role?

Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem; then tell me how you analyzed the information and came to a decision.

Have you ever had a situation where you had a number of alternatives to choose from? How did you go about choosing one?

Describe a situation in which you were able to clearly frame a problem, identify and collect the necessary data, and make recommendations for solving the problem.

Sometimes even though we study the data from all sides, we make errors in interpretation of the data. Tell me about a time that happened to you.

COLLABORATION/BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

It is very important to build good relationships at work but sometimes it doesn't always work. If you can, tell about a time when you were not able to build a successful relationship with a difficult person.

Give me an example of a group decision you were involved with recently. What part did you play in helping the group develop the final decision?

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about a time when you were successful in interacting with an uncooperative coworker at work in order to achieve a business objective requiring both of you to work effectively together.

Describe for me a situation when you had to build and maintain a new relationship in order to accomplish a business goal.

Building rapport with some people can be challenging. Give an example of a time when you were able to build rapport quickly with someone in your organization, even though the situation was a difficult one.

COMMUNICATION – VERBAL

Tell me about a time when you had to use your spoken communication skills in order to get an important point across.

Give me an example of a time when you were able to communicate successfully with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you.

Give an example of a time when you made a mistake because you did not listen well to what someone had to say.

Tell us about the most effective presentation you have made. What was the topic? What made it difficult? How did you handle it?

Give an example of when you effectively facilitated a group discussion in order to clarify issues and establish direction.

COMMUNICATION – WRITTEN

Describe an example of significant written document, report, or presentation that you've completed.

Tell us me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.

Give an example of when you effectively conveyed in writing complex ideas in logical sequence that others could understand.

Tell me of a time when you used written communications effectively because you adapted the content, style, and form to suit the needs of the targeted audience.

COMMUNICATION – WRITTEN AND VERBAL

Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively "read" another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values.

Describe a situation where you felt you had not communicated well. How did you correct the situation?

Describe a time when you were able to effectively communicate a difficult or unpleasant idea to a superior.

Tell us about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you ensure that the other person understood?

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Describe a situation in which you consistently delivered accurate, clear, and concise messages orally and in writing to effectively inform a targeted audience to take appropriate action.

Describe an example in which you clearly conveyed information and ideas through a variety of media to groups or individuals in a manner that engaged the listener, helped them understand and retain the message, and invited responses and feedback.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Describe a time when you took personal accountability for a conflict and initiated contact with the individual(s) involved to explain your actions.

Describe a time when you facilitated a creative solution to a problem between two employees.

Give an example of when you "went to the source" to address a conflict. Do you feel trust levels were improved as a result?

Problems occur in almost all work relationships. Describe a time when you had to cope with the resentment or hostility of a subordinate or co-worker.

Sometimes the only way to resolve a defense or conflict is through negotiation and compromise. Tell about a time when you were able to resolve a difficult situation by finding some common ground.

Describe the most difficult working relationship you've had with an individual. What specific actions did you take to improve the relationship? What was the outcome?

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Tell me about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes or operations worked. What was the result?

Give an example of when you questioned "the way things have always been done" to ensure that a process continued to be relevant and add value. What was the outcome?

Tell me about one of your workplace improvements that another department now uses. In your last or current job, what problems did you identify that had previously been overlooked? Were changes made? Who supported the changes as a result of your ideas?

Tell me about something new or different that you did in your department that improved customer service, productivity, quality, teamwork, or performance.

CREATIVITY/INNOVATION

Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed.

Describe a situation where innovation was required at work? What did you do in this situation?

Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution/idea/project/report to a problem in your past work.

Give me an example of when you took a risk to achieve a goal. What was the outcome?

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Sometimes it is essential that we break out of the routine, standardized way of doing things in order to complete the task. Give an example of when you were able to successfully develop such a new approach.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Describe a time when you felt it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.

How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer?

Describe for me something you did to established a "customer first" mentality in your department or team.

Tell me about a customer whose needs you spent considerable time learning about. What was the result of the time investment?

Describe the process or method you used in a particular situation to develop an understanding of your internal/external customer's viewpoints and needs.

Give me an example of a time when you acted as an advocate for a customer in the face of resistance from a person or the organization as a whole.

DECISION MAKING/JUDGMENT

What are some of the major decisions you have made over the past (6, 12, 18) months?

What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you? Describe a specific situation in which this was the case.

Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to an important decision.

How do you involve your manager and/or others when you make a decision?

Tell us about a time when you had to defend a decision you made even though other important people were opposed to your decision.

Tell me about the worst on-the-job decision you've ever made.

DELEGATION

Do you consider yourself a macro or micro manager? Provide a specific that illustrates your management style.

How do you make the decision to delegate work? Tell us of a specific example to illustrate how you go about delegating work?

Describe a specific example how you keep track of what your subordinates are doing.

Tell me about a task or project that you unsuccessfully delegated. What happened? What did you learn? How did you apply what you learned to other situations?

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Describe a time you had to delegate parts of a large project or assignment to some of your direct reports. How did you decide what tasks to delegate to which people? How did the project or assignment turn out?

DEVELOPING OTHERS

Tell me about a situation in which you effectively coached an employee in completing a new assignment.

Tell me about a time you had to take disciplinary action with one of your direct reports.

Tell me about a specific developmental plan that you created and carried out with one or more of your direct reports who was not performing up to expectations. What were the components of the developmental plan? What was the timeframe? What was the outcome?

Tell me about a time you had to provide constructive feedback to an employee who was not meeting performance expectations.

Tell me about a time you coached or mentored someone to a higher level of performance or a higher level position.

DIVERSITY

Give a specific example of how you have helped create an environment where differences are valued, encouraged and supported.

Tell us about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting/understanding their perspective.

What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity? How have you demonstrated your learning? Describe a specific example.

What measures have you taken to make someone feel comfortable in an environment that was obviously uncomfortable with his or her presence? Give a specific example.

Give me an example of a time when a person's cultural background affected your approach to a work situation.

ENFORCEMENT

Tell me about a specific occasion when you conformed to a policy even though you did not agree with it.

Describe a situation at work in which you found that employee(s) were not complying with organizational rules & regulations and had to take appropriate steps to ensure compliance in the future.

Tell us about a time when you had to make certain that organizational (and/or governmental) policies and procedures were properly followed by employees in order to ensure effective compliance.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

ETHICS/INTEGRITY

Describe the most significant ethical challenge you have ever faced on the job.

On occasion we are confronted by dishonesty in the workplace. Tell about such an occurrence and how you handled it.

Describe a situation in which you identified and considered different ethical aspects of a situation when you had to make a decision.

Give me an example of when you were asked to divulge confidential information, such as an upcoming personnel or organizational change, or to do something else that you thought was unethical. How did you handle the matter?

Tell me about a time you saw someone at work stretch or bend the rules beyond what you felt was acceptable. What did you do? Why did you take that action?

Give me an example of a time when you didn't bend on a policy, procedure, or operation, and later wished you had.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Tell us about a time when you developed and implemented processes and procedures to ensure the effective management of revenues and expenditures in order to maintain the fiscal stability of an organizational unit assigned to you.

Give us an example of a time when you analyzed financial data to identify trends and issues that were important to the business, interpreted the results of the analyses, and made recommendations for how they should be addressed. What was the outcome of your efforts?

Tell me about a time you handled a complex financial project with a tight deadline that required precise data collection and analysis.

Take me through your latest budget preparation.

Describe the criteria you use for evaluating the reliability of the financial information you receive.

FORWARD THINKING

Describe a time when you demonstrated the ability to think progressively and look beyond the present situation and developed a plan that led to future success.

Tell of a time when you exhibited forward thinking & questioned the "status quo" in order to make improvements on the job.

Tell me about a long-term (or short-term) plan you developed for your department.

INITIATIVE

When have you had to produce results without sufficient guidelines? Give an example.

Give an example of an important goal that you set in the past. Tell about your success in reaching it.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell us about a time when you were particularly effective in prioritizing tasks and completing a project on schedule.

Tell us about the last time that you undertook a project that demanded a lot of initiative.

Describe a significant project idea you initiated in the last year. How did you know it was needed? Was it used? How did it work?

LEADERSHIP

Give an example of a time in which you felt you were able to build motivation in your coworkers or subordinates at work.

How do you get subordinates to produce at a high level? Give an example.

Describe a leadership situation you would handle differently if you could do it over again.

Give me an example of a time you needed to give constructive feedback to one of your peers or someone higher in the organization about his behavior.

Describe a time when you utilized your leadership ability to gain support for something that was initially strongly opposed by others.

Tell me about a time you found it necessary to tactfully, but forcefully, say things that others did not want to hear.

Describe for me the most unpopular stand you have taken in your job.

LEADING AND MANAGING CHANGE

Have you ever had to introduce a policy change to your work group? How did you do it?

Tell me about the most difficult change you have had to make in your professional career. How did you manage the change?

Give me an example of a time when you missed the early signs of employee resistance to an organizational change.

Describe a time when you felt that a planned change was inappropriate. What did you do? What were the results?

Tell me about a time you led a change effort.

Describe a time a change effort you were involved in was not as successful as you or the organization would have liked.

NEGOTIATION/INFLUENCE

Describe the most challenging negotiation in which you were involved. What did you do? What were the results for you? What were the results for the other party?

Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.

Tell me how you persuaded someone to support an unpopular project or idea.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Describe a time when you had to influence a number of different constituents with differing interests. What kind of influencing techniques did you use? How were the techniques you used different from one group/person to another?

Give me an example of a time you had to convince others to conform to a policy, practice, or procedure you didn't believe in.

ORGANIZATIONAL SAVVY

Tell me about a time you used your political savvy to have a major policy, practice or procedure either approved or eliminated.

Describe a time when politics at work affected your job. How did you handle the situation? Were you successful?

Tell me about a time when you misread an organization's culture.

Describe a time when you capitalizes on both formal channels and informal networks at work in order to achieve goals.

Describe a time when you formed partnerships at work with key players in order to get meet an important objective.

PLANNING/ORGANIZING

How do you decide what gets top priority when scheduling your time?

Give me an example of a change you saw coming and how you planned for that change.

Tell me about your current top priorities. How did you determine that they should be your top priorities?

Give me an example of a time when you were effective in doing away with the "constant emergencies" and "surprises" in your work environment.

Think about the assignments you completed over the past few months. Tell me about the one that required the greatest amount of effort with regard to planning and organizing.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Tell us about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.

Using a specific example of a project, tell how you kept those involved informed of the progress.

Walk me through a recent project or assignment you completed and tell me the process you used to ensure it was complete and accurate.

Tell me about a significant project that you managed, focusing on how you made sure that everything was getting done correctly and on time.

Tell me about a situation where you found a way to get the job done faster and better at a lower cost.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

QUALITY ORIENTATION/ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Do you prefer to work with the "big picture" or the "details" of a situation? Give me an example of an experience that illustrates your preference.

Relate a specific instance when you found it necessary to be precise in your in order to complete the job.

Developing and using a detailed procedure is often very important in a job. Tell about a time when you needed to develop and use a detailed procedure to successfully complete a project.

Tell me about a time when you had to sacrifice quality to meet a deadline. How did you handle it?

Tell us about a job or setting where great precision to detail was required to complete a task.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Describe a time when you effectively and efficiently used organizational resources and assets (financial, human, physical and information) to accomplish an important work objective.

Give an example of when you planned how to eliminate unnecessary activities and procedures in order to improve efficiency and make better use of resources. What was the outcome of your efforts?

Give me an example of a time where you underestimated a resource you needed to get a task or project done, but managed to overcome the shortage and be successful.

We have all faced situations where the resources we needed to be successful were not within our span of control. Tell me about a project or goal where this was true for you.

Sometimes the only way people or departments can accomplish their individual goals is to form a partnership. Tell me about a time where you did this.

RESULTS ORIENTATION/FOLLOW THROUGH

Tell us of a time when you maintained focus and commitment to achieving important goals despite major obstacles and frustrations.

Give me an example of an important goal you have had and about your success in achieving it.

Describe a time when, against all odds, you were able to get a project or task completed within the defined parameters.

Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a difficult assignment and the odds were against you. What did you learn from the experience?

Tell me about a time you had to pay close attention to the tiny details in order to be successful.

SELF DEVELOPMENT

What was the most useful criticism you ever received?

What have you done to further your own professional development in the past 5 years?

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

When you have been made aware of, or have discovered for yourself, a problem in your work performance, what was your course of action?

Describe a situation in which you learned something significant from a mistake you made at work and what you learned from the experience that later contributed to your overall professional development.

Give an example of when you have taken ownership of your own professional development.

SENSITIVITY

Give me an example of a time when a company policy or action hurt people. What, if anything, did you do to mitigate the negative consequences?

Tell me about a time you feel you mismanaged an emotionally charged situation.

Give me an example of a time you were particularly perceptive regarding a person's or group's feelings and needs.

Give me an example of a time you had to put a critical task or project you were working on aside to attend to the needs of a direct report.

Tell me about a time when your failure to show compassion to someone at work was a costly oversight on your part.

Tell me about a time when you needed to give feedback to an emotional or sensitive employee.

STRESS TOLERANCE

Describe a time in which you were faced with problems or stresses which tested your coping skills. What did you do?

What was the most stressful situation at work that you have faced? How did you deal with it?

Describe for me a time when your team was under a fair amount of stress. What did you do to help them through this? Were you successful?

Tell me about a time you did not handle a stressful situation well.

There are times we each feel overwhelmed with a task or project. Tell me about a time this happened to you.

TEAMWORK/COOPERATION

Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise. What was your role? What steps did you take? What was the end result?

Describe a team experience you found rewarding.

Give an example of how you have been successful at empowering a group of people in accomplishing a task.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Please give your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal. What was the goal or objective? To what extent did you interact with others on this project?

Some people work best as part of a group - others prefer the role of individual contributor. How would you describe yourself? Give an example of a situation where you felt you were most effective.

Tell us about a time that you had to work on a team that did not get along. What happened? What role did you take? What was the result?

TENACITY RESILIENCE

What has been your most significant work related disappointment? What happened and what did you do?

What is the most competitive situation you have experienced? How did you handle it? What was the result?

Describe a time when you stayed with a plan of action at work until the desired objective was achieved.

Tell me about a time when you stayed with an idea or project for longer than anyone expected you to.

Describe a time when you were asked to complete a difficult task or project where the odds were against you. Were you successful? What did you learn from the experience?

VISION AND STRATEGIC THINKING

Describe what steps you have used to identify or define a vision for your organization.

Tell us about a time when you anticipated the future and made changes to current responsibilities/operations to meet future needs.

Give an example of when you had to communicate the organization's vision, values, and strategic plan with conviction, translate the organization's strategy into meaningful plans for the future and connect them to employee's daily work.

Describe a time when you had to significantly modify work procedures to align them with new strategic directives.

Tell me about a time you lost track of the vision/mission/purpose of your team and the subsequent repercussions.