

JOB HUNTING ADVICE

# COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS





## JOB HUNTING ADVICE

# COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

During an interview you're likely to be asked a series of questions designed to determine your behaviour when faced with specific scenarios. These are known as 'competency based' interview questions and our team of expert Stopgap consultants have written this handy guide on how best to answer them.

You need to prepare thoroughly for a competency-based interview for a marketing job, as it can be difficult to think on your feet and quickly come up with good examples in an interview scenario.

## Structuring your answer

When answering a competency-based question, follow the **STARS** approach to structuring your answer – this ensures that you don't waffle and that you give the interviewer the answers they are looking for.

- S** First describe the **Situation** you were in
- T** Describe the **Task** that was involved
- A** Next describe the **Action** you took (be certain to say 'I' not 'we' when explaining this – interviewers want to know what YOU did, not the wider team)
- R** Then explain what the **Result** was
- S** Describe the **Skills** you used in your achievements

You can use the questions below to come up with a number of examples that you can talk through confidently and concisely, using the structure outlined above.

Clients will sometimes be specific about what competencies they'll be looking to test you on, other times they will be less so – the ideal is to have a variety of examples prepared that you can adapt to any interview question they might ask.

## “BE PREPARED”

### Before you speak

- Take your time to think about your answer- ask for clarification if you need to
- Take a deep breath and a sip of water and try to speak slowly and calmly
- Answer the question, and when you've finished, stop talking - don't keep rambling!!

## Practice questions

Practicing on some example questions 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.

### Adaptability

- Tell me about a time when you changed your priorities to meet others' expectations.
- Describe a time when you altered your own behaviour to fit the situation.
- Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or plans to take into account new information or changing priorities.

### Client focus

- Give an example of how you provided a service to a client/stakeholder beyond their expectations. How do you identify the need? How do you respond?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a client/stakeholder service issue.
- Describe a situation in which you acted as an advocate within your organisation for your stakeholder's needs, where there was some organisational resistance to be overcome.

### Communication

- Describe a situation you were involved in that required a multi-dimensional communication strategy.
- Give an example of a difficult or sensitive situation that required extensive communication.
- Tell me about a time when you really had to pay attention to what someone else was saying, actively seeking to understand their message.

### Organisational Awareness

- Describe the culture of your organisation and give an example of how you work within this culture to achieve a goal.
- Describe the things you consider and the steps you take in assessing the viability of a new idea or initiative.
- Tell me about a time when you used your knowledge of the organisation to get what you needed.

**"HAVE A 'STOCK' OF  
SCENARIOS AND EXAMPLES"**

### **Problem Solving and Judgement**

- Tell me about a time when you had to identify the underlying causes to a problem.
- Describe a time when you had to analyse a problem and generate a solution.
- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a problem or make a decision that required careful thought. What did you do?

### **Results Orientation**

- Tell me about a time when you set and achieved a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you improved the way things were typically done on the job.
- Describe something you have done to maximise or improve the use of resources beyond your own work unit to achieve improved results.

### **Teamwork**

- Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as a member of a team.
- Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.
- 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?

### **Developing Others**

- Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their skills or job performance. What did you do?
- 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?

### **Impact and Influence**

- Describe a recent situation in which you convinced an individual or a group to do something.
- Describe a time when you went through a series of steps to influence an individual or a group on an important issue.
- Describe a situation in which you needed to influence different stakeholders with differing perspectives.

**“GET USED TO THE SOUND  
OF YOUR OWN VOICE”**

### **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.
- Tell me about a recent problem in which old solutions wouldn't work. How did you solve the problem?

### **Leadership**

- Tell me about a time when you had to lead a group to achieve an objective.
- Describe a situation where you had to ensure that your "actions spoke louder than your words" to a team.
- Describe a situation where you inspired others to meet a common goal.

### **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.
- Give me an example of a time when you deliberately attempted to build rapport with a co-worker or customer.

### **Resource Management**

- 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?
- Describe a situation in which you took a creative approach to resourcing to achieve a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a particular resource management issue regarding people, materials or assets.
- Describe the options you would consider to resource a project or goal if you did not have the available resources within your own span of control.
- Describe a situation in which you established a partnership with another organisation or stakeholder to achieve a mutual goal. What steps did you take to ensure the partnership was effective?

**"EXAMPLES CAN BE ADAPTED  
TO ANY QUESTION"**

### **Self-Management**

- Describe the level of stress in your job and what you do to manage it.
- Describe a time when you were in a high-pressure situation.
- Describe a time when things didn't turn out as you had planned and you had to analyse the situation to address the issue.

### **Strategic Thinking**

- Describe a challenge or opportunity you identified based on your industry knowledge, and how you developed a strategy to respond to it.
- Describe a time you created a strategy to achieve a longer-term business objective.
- Describe a time when you used your business knowledge to understand a specific business situation.

**Best of Luck - and remember, the more you prepare and practice, the easier it'll be.**



There are loads more helpful guides, hints and tips for your job search in the candidate area of our website, and our blog. You'll find it all at

**[www.stopgap.co.uk](http://www.stopgap.co.uk)**