

## Competency based interviews

### What is a competency based interview?

Competency based interviews work on the principal that your past performance is a likely indicator of your future performance. The interviewer therefore looks for evidence of past performance against defined competencies.

### What are competencies?

They define the characteristics or behaviours of people who do a job well. They typically include things such as the ability to work on your own initiative, working as part of a team, customer-orientation, flexibility and adaptability. Many role profiles and job specifications list the 'key competencies' for the position so you can expect to be asked questions surrounding the key competencies.

### What sort of questions will I be asked?

As an example, under the competency "putting the customer first", you might be asked:

**"Describe an occasion when you have had to deal with a difficult customer"**

To help the interviewer understand the situation, they may also ask additional questions such as:

**"Why was the customer difficult?"**

**"How did you handle the situation?"**

**"What action did you take as a result?"**

**"What was the final outcome?"**

They might then ask:

**"Tell us about a time when you received some negative feedback from a customer"** and will question you further around this subject.

Once they are satisfied they have enough information around the competency "putting the customer first" the interviewer will move onto the next competency.

### Will I be asked specific questions about my technical skills and experience?

The competency based approach concentrates on what you do or have done rather than what you know about technical aspects of the job. In asking for examples of what you have done, your interviewer is likely to be looking for evidence of how you have applied your technical skills and knowledge.

### **I am quite new in the job market. How can I have a chance against more experienced candidates?**

Whilst it may be easier for candidates with more experience in a particular role to meet the requirements of the job, the competency based approach means those with less experience also have the opportunity to demonstrate they have the required transferable skills, perhaps gained in work experience or a part time job.

The competency based approach means that interviewers can fairly assess people's skills at all levels.

### **How can I prepare for my interview?**

To prepare, study the required competencies (normally shown on the role profile provided) and think of examples (two or three if possible) of occasions when you have demonstrated them. The interview is not a test of memory, so by all means take any notes you wish to use and any facts or figures which may support your answers.

Remember if you have any queries whatsoever, we're here to help.

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