



**Show off
your skills!**

Competency Based Questions

blusource

Past performance is the best predictor of future performance...

Competency based questions have become a very popular tool used in interviews. This is because: PAST PERFORMANCE IS THE BEST PREDICTOR OF FUTURE PERFORMANCE.

Essentially the interviewer will ask you to describe a situation you have been in, which demonstrate abilities relevant to the role you are interviewing for. It allows the interviewer the ability to get more detail than in a traditional one-to-one interview.

The key to getting this right is being able to give the right balance of information whilst keeping to the point and not waffling!

Preparation is vital and you will need to be armed with a number of relevant examples you can use before going to the interview.

The “STAR” technique

Blusource recommends using the STAR technique when answering these questions:

- 1. Understand the STAR Technique:** The STAR technique is a structured approach used to respond to competency-based interview questions. It stands for Situation, Task, Action, and Result. Each component helps you provide a comprehensive answer by outlining the context, your role, the actions you took, and the outcomes achieved.
- 2. Identify Relevant Competencies:** Before the interview, review the job description and identify the key competencies required for the role. Common competencies include teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, communication, adaptability, and decision-making. Prepare examples from your past experiences that demonstrate these competencies.
- 3. Situation:** Start by setting the stage and providing context for your example. Describe a specific situation or challenge you encountered. Explain the background, including the company, project, or team involved. Be concise and focus on the essential details.
- 4. Task:** Outline the specific task or goal you needed to accomplish within the given situation. Be clear about what was expected of you. Highlight any challenges or constraints you faced, such as tight deadlines, limited resources, or conflicting priorities. Emphasize the importance of the task to demonstrate its relevance and impact.
- 5. Action:** Describe the actions you took to address the situation or complete the task. Focus on your own role and highlight the skills or competencies you utilized. Be specific and provide concrete examples of what you did. Discuss the steps you took, any obstacles you overcame, and the strategies you employed. Use action verbs to demonstrate your proactivity and initiative.
- 6. Result:** Discuss the outcomes and results of your actions. Explain how your efforts positively impacted the situation, task, or project. Quantify the results wherever possible, such as increased sales, cost savings, or improved customer satisfaction. Highlight any recognition or positive feedback you received. If the outcome was not entirely positive, discuss any lessons learned and how you would approach a similar situation in the future.



7. **Practice and Prepare Examples:** Review the competencies and examples you've identified, and practice articulating them using the STAR technique. Anticipate a variety of competency-based questions and develop multiple examples to draw from. This will help you feel more confident and ensure you can adapt your responses to different scenarios.
8. **Active Listening:** During the interview, actively listen to the question and take a moment to gather your thoughts before responding. Focus on the specific competency being assessed and tailor your answer accordingly. If you need clarification, don't hesitate to ask for it.
9. **Structure Your Response:** When answering, structure your response using the STAR technique. Begin by briefly explaining the situation, then discuss the task, describe your actions, and conclude with the results achieved. Aim for a well-rounded response that covers each component in a balanced manner.
10. **Be Concise and Relevant:** While providing details is important, be mindful of the interview time constraints. Keep your responses concise, focused, and relevant to the question at hand. Stay on track and avoid going off on tangents.

Remember, the STAR technique helps you provide **structured and comprehensive answers**, showcasing your **skills and experiences effectively**.

With **practice and preparation**, you'll be well-equipped to handle competency-based interview questions.

Example

Here's an example of a competency-based question for an accountancy position and a sample answer using the STAR technique:

Question: "Tell me about a time when you had to analyse financial data to identify cost-saving opportunities. What steps did you take, and what was the outcome?"

Sample Answer using the STAR Technique:

Situation: In my previous role as an accountant at XYZ Company, I was tasked with analysing financial data to identify cost-saving opportunities. The company was experiencing increasing expenses, and there was a need to streamline operations and improve profitability.

Task: My main task was to assess the company's expenditures and identify areas where cost savings could be achieved without compromising the quality of products or services. The management had set a goal to reduce expenses by 10% within the next fiscal year.

Action: To begin, I gathered financial statements, invoices, and expense reports from various departments within the company. I used spreadsheet software to organize and analyse the data, categorizing expenses by department and type. I then conducted a detailed review of each expenditure category, looking for patterns, inefficiencies, and potential cost-saving opportunities.

During this process, I proactively sought input from department heads and managers to gain a deeper understanding of their operations and any specific challenges they were facing. This collaborative approach allowed me to identify areas where costs could be reduced, such as renegotiating vendor contracts, consolidating purchasing processes, and implementing more efficient inventory management systems.

I presented my findings and recommendations to the management team, emphasizing the potential cost savings and the feasibility of implementing the proposed changes. I worked closely with the relevant stakeholders

to develop action plans, track progress, and ensure successful implementation of the cost-saving initiatives.

Result: As a result of these efforts, the company achieved significant cost savings. Within the first six months, we were able to reduce overall expenses by 15%, surpassing the initial target of 10%. This improvement directly contributed to the company's profitability and financial stability. Additionally, the implemented changes improved operational efficiency and streamlined processes, benefiting the entire organization. The management team recognized my contributions and commended my ability to analyse financial data, collaborate with stakeholders, and drive meaningful results. This experience solidified my understanding of cost management principles and further enhanced my analytical skills.

By using the STAR technique in your response, you effectively demonstrated the situation, task, action, and result of your experience. This structured approach allows the interviewer to understand the context, your role, the actions you took, and the positive outcome you achieved. Remember to tailor your answer to highlight the specific competencies sought in the accountant position, such as financial analysis, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Conclusion

Often people find this form of interviewing a bit rigid, maybe unnatural and not as friendly as "having a chat and talking through your CV".

However, as well as providing evidence of competencies relevant to the job, it is also seen as a fair method of selection since all candidates are asked exactly the same questions.

With a little preparation you will quickly realise that competency based questions offer an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your abilities and the best side of you to your prospective employers, making it easier for you to sell yourself to them!

If you would like any further advice or a chat please get in touch.

If not then good luck!

 people@blusource.co.uk

 0115 981 6075

