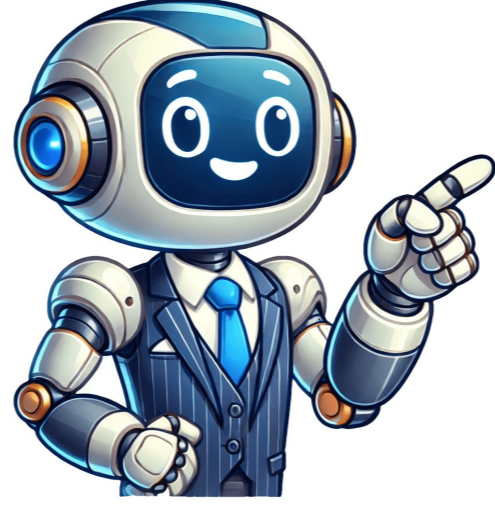


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Competence based interviews

Competency-based interview questions are one of the most common questions asked of job candidates. Competency questions are usually situational questions designed to test your soft skills and core competencies by learning about your past experience. When a hiring manager asks this type of question, they want to hear about specific skills and real-life examples of your key competencies. Let's look at how to use the STAR Method to answer competency interview questions, followed by 25 common questions and sample answers. 5 Tips for Your Answer Here are five tips to show you will be a good fit for any company. Be positive throughout the hiring process. Focus on how your personal attributes and technical skills contributed to the positive outcome. Use the job description and selection criteria for the specific role you are applying for to predict possible interview questions. Use the STAR technique and provide examples of situations where you demonstrated each core competency. Be prepared for follow-up questions. 5 Mistakes to Avoid Avoiding these mistakes will show you are the best candidate for the job. Don't criticize your last job or colleagues in your situation examples. Don't be desperate. Avoid saying things like "I'll do anything!" Avoid clichés like "I have initiative." Instead, provide an example of when you demonstrated the desired skillset. Avoid answering with "I don't know." Always refer to your past behavior or experiences. Don't ask what the company does or if it is a good company. This shows a lack of research and awareness. How to Answer: STAR Format The STAR approach is the best way to demonstrate your core competencies as they apply to a specific situation. Give an example of a time when you approached a specific task, outlining the actions you took and what the results were. Here's when the STAR acronym means: S: Situation - Begin by describing a situation where you demonstrated the target competency. T: Task - Explain a difficult task that had to be completed. A: Action - State what actions you took to complete the task. R: Results - Describe the outcome resulting from your action. 25 Most Asked Competency Based Interview Questions and Answers (by Competency Competency: Commitment to Development #1. Describe a time you were given negative feedback. S: In my previous role, I received negative feedback during a performance review. T: I had to improve my performance by 20%, or I would not be eligible for a raise that year. A: I asked my manager to arrange a week of mentoring for me with a senior colleague, during which I took notes and asked them questions about things they did differently from me. R: I was able to improve my numbers by 18% for my next review. Even though I hadn't improved by the full 20%, I received a raise and agreed on steps that would help my continued improvement. #2. Have you ever had to learn a lot of information in a new role? S: When I started my last job, there was a lot of job-specific information to learn. T: There was a two-week training period and an exam. To be hired, I had to score over 80%. A: I did indeed surpass by increasing my chance of success. I managed my time to make sure I slept well and was rested each day. I took thorough notes and asked appropriate questions. And I quizzed myself each night to consolidate what I had learned. R: The exam was challenging, but I passed with a 96% and successfully started the position. Competency: Results Driven #3. Describe how you ensure you remain one of the top performers in your field. S: It's important to continually improve and stay ahead of new developments in any job. T: I am dedicated to lifelong learning because I know that the value I provide is my knowledge. A: I do three things to ensure I remain a top performer. First, I subscribe to and read industry journals. Second, I regularly dedicate time to developing professional skills, such as through attending professional development courses. Third, I obtain at least one new industry certification each year. R: As a result, I have never found myself in a position where I faced a challenge that I wasn't at least aware of how to solve. #4. Describe a time when you achieved exceptional results. S: In a previous sales role, bonus commissions were announced for the top three salespeople during the holiday period. T: I needed to make sure that I consistently performed in the top five each day to average into the top three. A: I contacted my extensive diary of warm leads and offered competitive deals if they signed a contract that month. I also balanced excellent service with speaking to as many new customers as possible to get leads. I then worked after hours to write offers to these customers, allowing me to sell to more customers overall. R: The end result was that I came in first overall, and I have continued to use a similar approach in my sales career. Competency: Problem Solving #5. Have you ever had to solve a problem as part of a team? S: In a previous role, we were hosting an event when our caterer canceled, and no others could help at 24 hours' notice. T: Our team had to decide how we would provide refreshments to attendees. A: We broke the task into individual responsibilities. I was responsible for sandwiches and snacks, others were responsible for various other duties, and we agreed to meet several hours beforehand to set up for the event. R: We successfully hosted the event and received positive feedback from clients. #6. Provide an example of when you used a new approach to solve a problem. S: In one role, I was part of a team that updated important data. The data was recorded manually and then transferred manually to another system. T: I wanted to remove the duplicate work, but we couldn't record the data directly to the second system. A: One system exported CSV files, and the other imported excel documents. I wrote a macro that automated creating the excel sheet from the CSV file. R: This saved us 12 hours a week, and it only took me 2-3 hours to create. Competency: Leadership #7. Provide an example of your management style in small team environments. S: I managed a team where accuracy was critical. We were a small team, and any conflict would have an impact. T: I had to maintain the quality of work and even workloads without creating tension. A: I used an empowering approach and recognized positive performance to encourage personal responsibility and motivation. When issues arose, I addressed them privately and ensured the team worked together to fix any errors. R: The result was that when people made mistakes, they would speak up, and we could work to resolve them and ensure consistent output from the team. #8. Give an example of how you managed a team and overall performance was dependent on each person's contributions. T: I had to address a team member who was frequently underperforming. I took them aside and reminded them of their duties. They explained they worked hard but couldn't complete tasks as quickly as others. I arranged for coaching from another staff member and checked there weren't any external issues they needed help with. R: After the mentoring experience, they identified areas of inefficiency and improved their work practices. This increased the team's performance back to acceptable levels. Competency: Openness to Change #9. Tell us about a time you faced a significant change in your role. S: I worked in a role where my tasks were interrelated with others' tasks. Our manager was the team coordinator. The company restructured, and we were placed in a large team without close management support. T: We had to maintain the quality of our work without any collaborative structure. A: I began to start and end each day with an emailed work diary to colleagues so we could coordinate deliverables. R: We maintained a similar quality of output despite the lack of management support. #10. Describe a time you had to learn a new company culture. S: When I began my previous job, they explained that the environment was quite rigid. T: I knew I had to quickly learn how to fit in and meet expectations to be successful. A: I'm a "big picture" person, and I like to know why things are done a certain way. I asked my trainer to explain to me the reasons for various rules and what unspoken expectations existed. R: By asking questions and observing the culture around me, I was able to assimilate rapidly and become a productive member of the team. Competency: Responsibility and Trustworthiness #11. Have you ever had to deliver work without much supervision? S: In one job I had, we worked remotely with little management interaction. T: Because the work was complex, it was difficult to catch up if you fell behind. A: I managed my workload by being early each day so that I could stay on top of emails, and I completed all my tasks before I went home each day. I changed each day I could focus intently on that day's duties. #12. Describe a time when you delivered exceptional results. S: I was responsible for delivering a key report to a client. The report was due late one day. T: I had to ensure the report was delivered on time. A: I immediately dialed IT security's after-hours number, and while I was on hold, I meant all my passwords, even those I hadn't breached. I then emailed IT security with a report I had drafted about the incident and copied my manager. R: It turned out the event was a test, but I was commended for following all security procedures correctly. Competency: Safety Conscious #13. Have you ever had to respond to an emergency at work? S: I was once managing a gas station at a busy time when the spill alarm sounded. T: I had to implement safety protocols quickly and contain the hazard. A: I turned off the electrical power and guided our irritated customers to the evacuation area. While I did this, I called our emergency line to dispatch specialists and alert local emergency services. I explained to customers that we had evacuation requirements that we were legally obligated to follow and that re-entry to the site was illegal. I then returned to the facility to begin containment procedures. R: The result was that no one was injured, and the emergency did not escalate because procedures were followed correctly. Competency: Stress Management #14. In your current position, what is the biggest challenge you have overcome? S: I was told by my manager one morning that my coworker was away, and I would have to complete both roles for two weeks. T: I knew their duties, but I had to manage the stress of two workloads. A: I cleared both my work and personal calendars to remove any unnecessary stressors. While I am a healthy person, I took extra care to manage my sleep pattern and planned my days around regular overtime. R: By approaching the situation methodically, I was able to avoid being negatively impacted by the stress and completed both our duties. Competency: Teamwork #15. Have you ever worked as part of a team when a colleague was not doing their job duties? S: I previously worked on a team where one member was not completing their share of the workload. T: I decided someone should talk to them and try to find out what the problem was. A: I approached them privately to ask if they needed help because their output had fallen. They revealed they were going through personal issues and were demotivated. I suggested they seek HR support and that I would help to complete their duties during this time. R: With support from myself and HR, they were able to overcome their home issues, and their productivity returned to normal levels. #16. Describe a time when you helped a new member of the team to integrate into the workplace. S: In a previous role, I was a senior staff member and was asked to train a new junior for my department. T: I was responsible for training them in basic duties and getting them settled in. A: I wanted to make sure they were confident, so I slowly walked them through a normal day from signing in to signing out and everything in between. I encouraged them to ask lots of questions and introduced them to other members of the team. R: They were able to successfully learn the job quickly, and by knowing all our names and who we were, they were comfortable in asking questions as needed. Competency: Conflict Resolution #17. Describe a time you had to work with a difficult coworker. S: I was working unsupervised with a coworker who was known for deliberately underperforming. T: We had to complete a time-sensitive task, and I needed their help to complete it. A: I have an adaptive conflict management style, so instead of arguing, I explained the less work they do, the longer tasks take. Being lazy doesn't remove work. It makes the work pile up, unless you get fired and end up unemployed. R: The result was that they realized they could quit or work, and around me, they always worked from then on. #18. Provide an example of when you have used your communication skills to deal with a difficult person. S: I was working on a team and a colleague refused to follow procedures because they thought they were unimportant. T: I explained to them that we didn't make the rules, but we had to follow them. I did not have the option to follow them or not. A: I broke the issue down to make it relatable. I explained that safety affects everyone and suggested how another's actions could injure them. They hated this idea. I also explained that insurance only covers them when following company policy. R: By making the issue relatable and relevant, they agreed to follow the procedure in the future. Competency: Communication #19. Have you ever had to present a complex idea to a group of people? S: In a technical role, I developed an import/export file structure based on government regulations. T: I had to explain the requirements and how they related to regulation to our multi-lingual team. A: I drew a series of picture metaphors for the data the file had to contain and another series for the receiving process. I provided a presentation with only pictures and simple language and then opened the floor to questions. R: The project was delivered, and the system that integrated with the government regulator passed their audit. Competency: Organization #20. Provide an example of your ability to deliver high-quality work under pressure. S: My manager asked me one afternoon to assist with end-of-month reporting because one of my colleagues was on leave. T: It was three days of work with three days to complete, and I still had my usual tasks to complete. A: I cleared my diary and arranged with my manager to reduce my usual deliverables. I set aside blocks of time and isolated myself from others during this work so I could focus intently on the task at hand. R: I was able to produce a report that was above the standard of the usual one and was asked to produce the report every month from then on. #21. Describe a time you had to manage competing priorities. S: I was working in a matrix-team structure, reporting to separate team and functional managers. T: I had to deliver various tasks for both managers concurrently. A: I explained to each that I wanted to deliver high-quality work and that both duties were important to the company. I asked them to help me by providing as much warning as possible for tasks. I kept an accurate diary and always worked from a prioritized to-do list each day. R: By remaining organized, I was able to deliver most tasks on time. When I wouldn't be able to, I provided my managers with advanced warning. Competency: Customer Service #22. Tell me about a time when you provided excellent customer service. S: I was working in a sales role assisting a customer in selecting a product. T: It was my job to provide great customer service and increase retention and repeat business. A: The customer was looking at an expensive product, but after talking to them, I believed that it wasn't the right fit for them. I explained that a cheaper product we carried would better fit their needs. R: I made a good impression because the customer took my advice, left great feedback, and came back frequently and asked for me by name. #23. Describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult customer. S: I was working as an acting store manager when a customer requested to speak to me. T: The customer believed the store had falsely advertised a product and demanded I fix it. A: I looked at the advertisement and explained the photo clearly stated the product might vary in color and design. I offered to discount another product, but the customer would still end up paying double and we would be making a loss. It was a lose-lose situation. The customer angrily told us that they would sue us for false advertising and left. R: The company investigated the customer's complaint and I was commended for following store procedures, even though the customer left upset. Competency: Decision Making #24. Describe a time you had to make a difficult decision. S: In a previous job, I noticed that customer feedback on a particular supplier's products had consistently become negative. T: I had to decide if we would engage a new supplier. A: In my thought process, I weighed the cost-benefit analysis of changing suppliers because they all were more expensive. I decided that our priority was our customers and the quality of our products. R: After changing suppliers, customer feedback became positive again, and the average customer's spending increased, offsetting the higher cost. #25. Have you ever had to make an unpopular decision? S: I was working in a company when the fire alarm sounded. I got up to leave, but everyone else stayed seated. T: I knew that company policy was to evacuate, and I would be unpopular insisting we leave. A: I loudly announced that everyone had to leave. A colleague refused and explained that the alarm malfunctions a lot. I replied it was policy, and they would regret it if it was an actual fire. R: Eventually, everyone agreed to leave. As it turned out, there was a minor fire in a kitchen, and it was put out safely. I would never hesitate to make an unpopular decision again. Conclusion Competency-based interviews are a form of the structured interview process that is designed to find good candidates by identifying applicants whose past performance demonstrates specific competencies. The most important thing to remember when answering these types of questions is to deliver your answer using the STAR structure. This is a good way to deliver situational examples of times when you have demonstrated the skills and attributes that the job requires. Author Biography Keith Miller has over 25 years of experience as a CEO and serial entrepreneur. As an entrepreneur, he has founded several multi-million dollar companies. As a writer, Keith's work has been mentioned in CIO Magazine, Workable, BizTech, and The Charlotte Observer. If you have any questions about the content of this blog post, then please send our content editing team a message here. --- This May Help Someone Land A Job, Please Share! You've landed the interview for your dream job—congratulations! But there's a catch: It's a competency-based interview, and your success depends on providing specific, detailed examples of your past performance that predict your future value. In today's competitive job market, 85% of companies now use competency-based interviews to separate truly qualified candidates from those who merely interview well. Unlike traditional interviews that focus on hypothetical scenarios or general qualifications, competency-based interviews (also called behavioral or situational interviews) require you to provide concrete examples from your past experience. The challenge? Most candidates approach these interviews with vague stories, theoretical responses, or worst of all—completely unprepared. But not you. Not after reading this guide. By the time you finish this article, you'll have a systematic approach to mastering competency-based interviews that will set you apart from other candidates. You'll learn how to identify key competencies, craft compelling stories using our superior SOAR method, and deliver answers that showcase your exact fit for the role. Want to know which questions you're most likely to face? Check out our comprehensive guide to Top 10 Behavioral Interview Questions or preview our new eBook, "The Competency-Based Interview: Proven Strategies for Success." This guide is your key to conquering SOAR-based interviews and excelling in the hiring process. It's the longest-running and most comprehensive guide on the internet for navigating competency-based interviews. It allows employers to move beyond resume claims and assess how you've actually handled real-world situations. What makes these interviews different? Traditional interviews might ask, "How would you handle a difficult client?" (inviting theoretical, idealized responses), while a competency-based question asks, "Tell me about a time when you dealt with a challenging customer. 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In reality, interviewers are looking for thoughtful, structured responses that demonstrate your competencies in everyday professional scenarios. According to VidCruiter's comprehensive guide on competency-based questions, the most effective competency frameworks are customized to both the organization's values and the specific requirements of the role you're applying for. While you may have heard of the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result), top performers in 2025 are using the more powerful SOAR approach: Situation, Obstacle, Action, Result. The SOAR method creates more compelling narratives because it emphasizes the challenge (obstacle) rather than just the task, creating tension that makes your story more engaging and memorable to interviewers. Here's how to implement each component: Set the scene concisely with relevant context. Include: Your role and when this occurred. The goal or project you were working on. 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