



Behavioral Interview Guide and Sample Questions

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Why Companies Need Behavioral Interviews Now

Hiring high-quality candidates quickly is a priority for companies with turnover. The average rate of voluntary turnover (when the employee chooses to resign from the company) is 17.3% in the United States.¹ Organizations must fill these vacancies quickly to continue business operations. Unfortunately, not all hiring decisions pan out.

According to a recent study from Leadership IQ, nearly half (46%) of new hires will fail within their first 18 months.² With the rising cost of turnover and the tight labor market, making a bad hire is an expensive business mistake. In addition to turnover, a bad hire can hurt a company's success by:

- Increasing training costs;
 - Producing low-quality work or low output;
 - Driving interpersonal conflicts;
 - Putting more work on other employees, decreasing team morale;
- Losing clients;
 - Damaging the company's reputation and employer brand; and
 - Causing litigation.

On top of this, a single bad hire can produce a ripple effect whereby other employees resign because of poor workplace culture.

Fortunately, with the right strategies, organizations can avoid bad hires. About 20% of managers admitted that they made poor hiring decisions because they focused too heavily on technical skills when evaluating candidates.³ The Leadership IQ report also found that attitudes drive 89% of hiring failures, but technical skills only accounted for 11%.⁴ Organizations that use structured behavioral interviews that go beyond assessing technical skills can make more informed hiring decisions. Companies already know how to assess technical skills, but many struggle to evaluate criteria like interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence.

Hiring managers can get a better understanding of whether an employee will succeed in the role by focusing more on soft skills and competencies. To do this, hiring managers need to use competency-based interviews

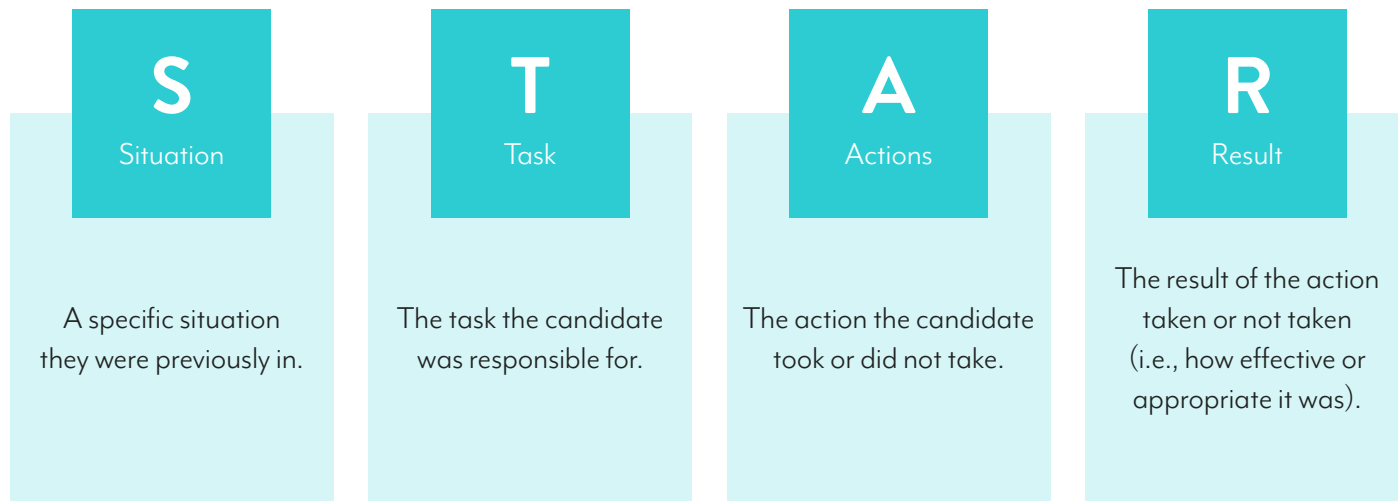


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What Are Competency-Based Interviews?

Competency-based interviews are designed to elicit information about the candidate's experience and accomplishments that relate to the competencies needed for the target job. The STAR model is a popular type of competency-based interview that uses past behavior as a predictor of future behavior. It works by asking the candidate to describe the:



To execute the STAR model, you must ask competency-based interview questions. For organizations that already have a competency framework, the steps are simple:

- 1 Review the competencies in the job description and identify the behaviors associated with them.
- 2 Consider what obstacles an incumbent of the job typically faces and develop questions about those situations that will show these behaviors.
- 3 Working backwards, turn the behaviors into a question or prompt. You can see a few examples of these at the end of this guide.

Organizations that don't have a competency framework can learn all about competencies and how to launch a project [in this article](#).



“If companies care about making good hiring decisions, they need to use competencies. Period.”

– Lorraine McKay, Co-founder, Chief Revenue Officer at HRSG

Sample Competency-Based Interview Questions

Among the fastest growing jobs are data scientists, information security analysts, and software developers.⁵ We have included a sample competency-based interview question for each of these positions below. Each question targets a specific competency at a certain proficiency level.

The following examples show the behavioral interview question structure that you can use as a guideline when creating your own interview questions for any role in the organization.

Data Scientist

Creativity and Innovation Level 3

Generating viable, new approaches and solutions.






“Describe the most complex problem that you were faced with and how you generated a new approach or explanation or solution.”

- What was the problem?
- What was complex about it?
- What new approach or explanation did you come up with?
- What was new about it?
- How did this benefit your work (or the work of others)?

What to look for:

- ✓ Identifies new approaches.
- ✓ Creates new ideas, solutions or approaches to ongoing challenges.
- ✓ Uses unconventional areas as sources of inspiration and insight into new options and solutions.
- ✓ Solves complex problems through developing new explanations or applications.

Rating Scale

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Well Below Standard | Below Standard | Meets Standard | Above Standard | Well Above Standard |

Competency name and definition

Job-specific question

Probes to help elicit more information from candidates

Behavioral indicators to look for the specific competency at the required level of proficiency

Information Security Specialist

Cybersecurity Incident Analysis and Response Level 3

Analyzing cybersecurity incidents and coordinating incident response activities to expedite remediation.






“Describe a situation where you contained a cybersecurity incident.”

- What was the situation?
- What did you do?
- What did you need to accomplish?
- What was the outcome?

What to look for:

- ✓ Applies the competency in the full range of typical situations, requiring guidance in only new or complex situations.
- ✓ Declares cybersecurity incidents after correctly removing false positives and identifying true positives.
- ✓ Provides support to junior incident analysts to help them identify true positives.
- ✓ Performs containment-related activities such as preventing attackers from getting deeper into impacted systems and conducting system backups.
- ✓ Determines how incidents were executed.
- ✓ Removes malicious software or impacted systems out of the network.
- ✓ Guides the team to restore operations after an incident.
- ✓ Coordinates the retrieval of artifacts needed by forensic specialists or law enforcement agencies.

Rating Scale

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| Well Below Standard | Below Standard | Meets Standard | Above Standard | Well Above Standard |

Competency name and definition

Job-specific question

Probes to help elicit more information from candidates

Behavioral indicators to look for the specific competency at the required level of proficiency

Software Developer

Application Development and Maintenance Level 3

Designing, defining, constructing, enhancing, and maintaining application software on one or more platforms.

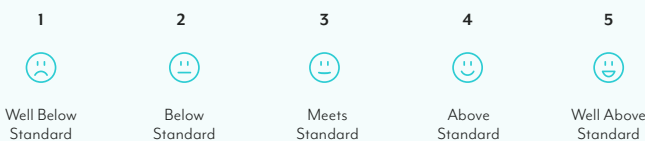
“Describe a situation where you developed a multi-module program.”

- What was the application?
- What did you need to accomplish?
- What did you do?
- What was the outcome?
- Were you able to complete your tasks within the scheduled time?

What to look for:

- ✓ Applies the competency in the full range of typical situations, requiring guidance in only new or complex situations.
- ✓ Works with several programming environments and hardware and software interfaces.
- ✓ Develops original multi-module or complex programs.
- ✓ Assists in the porting of software to other platforms and operating systems.
- ✓ Conducts impact analysis for proposed changes to or problems with the system.
- ✓ Creates detailed technical specifications.
- ✓ Tailors and deploys software tools, processes and metrics.

Rating Scale



Competency name and definition

Job-specific question

Probes to help elicit more information from candidates

Behavioral indicators to look for the specific competency at the required level of proficiency

Hire Better, Faster

For over 30 years, we have helped organizations perfect their competency frameworks to elevate their talent management practices. Our customers use Quinto competency-based software to accelerate the time-intensive processes of mapping competencies to job descriptions and creating standardized competency-based interviews.

How does it work?

Without Quinto

Leaders don't have up-to-date job descriptions that reflect the current expectations of the role they are hiring for.

Leaders spend hours designing and agreeing on the interview questions to ask candidates.

Hiring managers rely on gut feelings to make hiring decisions.

Interview questions do not reflect what it takes to be successful in the job.

Interviewers ask different questions to different candidates.

Interviewers do not tailor questions to the job level.

With Quinto

Leaders keep up-to-date job descriptions with a robust library of expert-curated content, streamlined editing tools, and review cycles.

Interview guides are created instantly based on the competency and proficiency levels outlined in the job description.

Hiring managers use objective and fair criteria to assess each candidate against.

Interview questions are based on the competencies the organization has agreed are critical to perform well in the position.

Interviewers use a standardized interview guide to accurately compare candidate performances.

Interview questions are designed to target the specific proficiency level of the job position.

– Erin B. from Metaprize Banking

“The database is big and you can grab all of the competencies you need. The variety of interview questions is fantastic.”



G2 rating

These organizations are hiring better with Quinto

checkr

 TRADITIONS BANK

 1Password

dun & bradstreet

 CREDIT UNION OF TEXAS

 Prove

 Clear Channel Outdoor

Work with the Experts

Schedule a 1:1 chat with one of Quinto's competency experts to get started.

Talk to Us

About Quinto

Quinto is a product by HRSG. Founded in 1989, HRSG is a world-renowned competency specialist serving a global clientele. Our mission is to put the career-defining power of competencies in the hands of every employee. HRSG launched Quinto to help HR professionals use technology to accelerate the time-intensive process of constructing competency frameworks and building detailed, accurate, unbiased, job descriptions.

For three decades, HRSG has helped startups, SMBs, NGOs, associations, and Fortune 500s to define talent needs, address skill deficiencies, and improve individual and organizational performance using competencies.

In addition to developing one of the world's largest libraries of multi-level, validated, behavioral competencies, the company provides consulting and delivers certified training to help talent professionals expand their knowledge of competency-based management.