

Competency-based Interviews

Competency-based interviews are an integral part of the HART selection process. So what is a competency-based interview? And how, as an applicant, might you best approach one?

Introduction

Competency-based interviews (CBI) are based on the idea that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. Accordingly, the interviewer's goal is to obtain specific examples of when and how you demonstrated particular behaviours.

Interview questions are carefully designed to probe specific skills, competencies and characteristics which are relevant to job success for the position in question. All candidates are asked the same questions and notes are taken in order to evaluate candidates.

The word competency is widely used and refers to the behaviours that are necessary for effective individual and organisational performance. A competency is also something you can measure and lists of competencies form a common language for describing how people perform in different situations. Every job can be described in terms of key competencies. This means that competencies can be used for all forms of assessment, including appraisals, training needs analysis and, of course, selection.

This short document has been produced to help you prepare for the HART competency based interview. The core competencies for HART are shown over the page. It is therefore well worth preparing for this type of interview by, for

example, being familiar with the competencies, thinking about possible questions and practicing how you would answer them.

Competencies Critical For HART

Because the HART programme is new, there is a great deal of work being carried out to try and understand the core competencies identified as critical for the various HART roles (i.e. Operative (OP) and Team Leader (TL)).

11 Competencies have been identified as important for effective HART performance. For practical reasons, only 6 core competencies will be assessed during the interview process. The competencies that will be explored during the interview are highlighted in green and marked with an 'I' for Operatives (OP) and Team Leaders (TL).

COMPETENCY TITLE	BROAD DESCRIPTION	TL	OP
Team Orientation & Development	Ability to work as part of a team and being supportive of others	I	I
Self Discipline & Regulation	Being self-disciplined and conscientious		I
Communication	Ability to communicate with people at all levels	I	I
Adaptability	Open to change, flexible and adaptable	I	I
Capability (Confidence)	Being self confident and ability to develop self, motivate others and instill capability	I	I
Planning Orientation	Ability to establish efficiently an appropriate course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a goal	I	I
Decision Making	Ability to make effective judgements and decisions	I	

Examples of competency questions

Adaptability

How quickly and how positively will you adapt to changes in work practices, work roles and work environments?

Q. Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or your plans to take into account new information or changing priorities.

Communication

As a HART member you will need to communicate in an engaging and convincing way both to your Service work colleagues as well as to other multi-agency partners?

Q. Tell me about a time when you really had to pay attention to what someone else was saying, actively seeking to understand their message.

Team orientation & development

The success of HART is dependent upon staff working well together in teams. Being socially competent and able to build and maintain relationships in and beyond the workplace is critical.

Q. 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?

Preparing for competency-based

Interviews

To prepare for competency-based interviews, first review the recruitment information (i.e. job description, person specification, etc.) carefully. The person specification will outline the skills and competencies required for the HART role.

Next, identify the situations and experiences that you will refer to in the interview to demonstrate these skills and traits.

Competency-focused, well-structured answers are extremely powerful and will impress the interviewer.

To support your preparation for the interview you should also consider revisit the **self-assessment questionnaire** that was contained within the recruitment pack. Looking through the questionnaire will help you to think in a way that is needed for competency interviews. It will also help you to practice your answers.

When considering your answers think carefully about how you can structure your response to give the interviewer the best possible chance to learn about you, your knowledge, skills and abilities.

The CBI model will provide a structure to support your answers:

Circumstance - describe the circumstance (e.g. situation, task, problem, etc.) that you have encountered

Behaviour - describe the action you took, obstacles that you had to overcome, etc.

Impact - highlight outcomes achieved or any important learning as a direct consequence of your actions

Example interview question

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?

Describe the **Circumstance** (e.g. situation, task, problem, etc) briefly. Most of your answers should focus on your **Behaviour** – that is what you actually did and the **Impact** (or results,

consequences or learning) of your actions. It is important to keep remembering that the interviewer(s) are interested to hear about you, your behaviour, and your contributions. This is your opportunity to highlight and demonstrate to the panel your core skills and your qualities.

When answering the various competency questions during the interview it will also prove invaluable to try to think about and reflect upon different examples or experiences. This will help to demonstrate the breadth and depth of your core skills it will also help to make your descriptions more interesting.

Possible good answer

I was working on a high profile project with a number of other colleagues. The aim of the project was to develop a new web-based tool to support the UK research community. One member of the team developed a reputation for being quite negative about everything the project team was trying to achieve. For example, anytime someone would come up with a suggestion of how to overcome a problem they would quickly find a problem with the suggestion. Other members of the team were finding it difficult to interact with this person and even started leaving him out of general (email) communications. I decided to speak to him in private and give him some feedback on what the general opinion in the team was. I did this in a diplomatic way, asking him if he needed more guidance or if he was having trouble at all. He opened up to me saying that he was not aware of how he was seen by the team. He said that he sometimes felt that his ideas or views were not being listened to and that he felt undervalued. He put this down to the fact that he had not been working in the organisation for as long as all the other team members. He also mentioned that he felt he had the right technical experience and skills to really help the project along but if

the team didn't value this experience he didn't feel like he could contribute a great deal. I took this on board and agreed with my colleague that I would raise this with the project manager, who was independent from the group. I asked my colleague to produce a short document outlining their core technical skills and what this can bring to the project. I felt that the project team was just not aware of how much of asset he could be to this project. I also spoke to my senior colleagues and asked them to be aware of more junior staff concerns. His work improved and colleagues began to actively listen to him and he felt much happier being part of the team.

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