

Competencies and Corresponding Interview Questions

STAR	Competency	Questions
	Adaptability/Flexibility	 Tell me about a situation in which you had to adjust to a change over which you had no control. Sometimes we all have to work with people whose style differs from our own. Tell me about the time when you had to adjust to a colleague's work style to finish an important project. Tell me about a time when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation. Describe the most demanding manager you've ever worked for, and tell me how you adapted to his or her style. Sometimes we have jobs or projects that change midstream. Tell me about the time when this happened to you and how you dealt with it.
	Analysis	 Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a decision. Tell me about an analytical project that you took on that was not in your job description. Why did you do it? How do you use numbers to measure business performance? Give me an example. Describe one of your most difficult analyses. What made it difficult? Could you have done anything to make it easier? What was the result? What steps do you take to study a problem before making a decision? Use an example to illustrate this. Tell me about a time when you had to analyze something without existing guidelines or examples. How did you approach the problems? What were the results?
	Assertiveness	 Give me an example when your self-confidence allowed you to take action when others might have avoided doing so. Have you ever held back from doing something that you felt should be done? Tell me about a time when you felt like a "fish out of water." What did you do to increase your comfort level? Describe a situation in which you had to give your manager some unwelcome news. Tell me about a time when you were assertive on someone else's behalf. Describe a recent experience when you were faced with poor service or unacceptable quality. What did you do about it? What was the result?



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	Attention to Detail	 Tell me about the time when you found errors in your work. What caused them? What did you do about them? Give me some examples of times when you knew things were not going well with a particular project, process, or activity. How did you know? What did you do to correct the problems? Tell me about a time when your attention to detail benefited your company. We've all experienced something 'slipping through the cracks." Tell me about a time when this happened to you, what you did about it, and what, if anything, you did to prevent it from happening again. Describe a recent situation in which attention to detail was critical to success. How did you contribute? In many projects, it's essential to keep track of details while balancing the big picture. Tell me about a project where you did this effectively. How did you make sure everything got done? How did you stay focused on the larger goals?
	Collaboration	 How do you stay informed about what is happening in other departments of your company? Be specific. What do you do when you are faced with problems you can't solve within your team? Share an example. Have you built a resource network outside your company? Tell me about a time when this network paid off for you and your company. Tell me about a time when you collaborated with someone who had a very different style from yours. Was this a problem or a bonus? How? Describe a situation in which you worked collaboratively with people at very different levels from yourself either higher or lower or both.
	Commitment to Task	 Tell me about the time when you overcame very difficult challenges to get the job done. In the last year, what project or initiative did you abandon? Why? How could you have saved it? When have you been a "champion" for something you considered important? What did that entail? We all become discouraged from time to time. Think about a recent situation when you felt discouraged about not being able to complete a task. What happened? Share a story about a project that dragged out much longer than anticipated. What did you do to be sure it was completed? What prevents you from completing tasks you've been assigned? Give me two specific examples.



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	Conflict Management	 Have you ever worked with someone you did not get along with? How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome? Describe a recent situation in which you have had to work with someone who clearly did not like you. How did that make you feel? What did you do about it? Tell me about a situation in which you successfully resolved a conflict with another person. What was the outcome? Can you tell me about a time when your actions had a negative effect on others? Tell me about a time when you resolved a conflict with a customer. <i>For Managers</i>: How do you handle conflict among your staff members? Describe a recent situation you faced and how you dealt with it.
	Control	 Tell me about the systems you use to keep track of tasks and important events. Give me an example of a time when these systems failed and how you dealt with it. What ideas have you come up with that have given you better information with which to make decisions? How do you track your progress on a key project or long-range goal? Illustrate using a recent project. Share an example of a time when you had to document a sequence of events after the fact. How accurate were you? <i>For Managers</i>: Walk me through your process for keeping track of what your direct reports are doing. Be specific. <i>For Managers</i>: What process do you use to document your employees' performance? Give me an example of this process in action.
	Creativity/Innovation	 In your last position, what good idea did you come up with that was implemented? Think about a time when someone brought you an idea that was odd or unusual. What did you do about it? Tell me about the most creative work-related project that you have completed. Give an example of a time when you came up with a cost-cutting idea. What do you do differently from others who have held your job? Why? How has this benefited your company? Be specific. Do you think of yourself as an "out-of-the-box" thinker? Can you give me a specific example of a creative solution that you came up with? What is the biggest contribution you have made to the profitability of a business?
	Crisis Management	 Crises usually require us to act quickly. In retrospect, how would you have handled a recent crisis differently, if you had been given more time to think before acting? Tell me about a crisis you could have prevented. Did you do anything differently after the crisis had passed? Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a crisis at work. What was the situation, and what did you do to mitigate it? For Managers: Tell me how you resolve crises by deploying your team members. Give me a specific example. For Managers: What do you do to keep team spirits up during a crisis situation? Give me a recent example.



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	Customer Service Focus	O Tell me about the most difficult customer situation you have ever handled. What did you do, and what was the outcome?
		O What do you do when a customer is irate? Give me a specific example.
		O Describe a recent customer complaint that you handled. What was the complaint? How did you learn about it? How did it turn out?
		O What lessons have you learned about keeping the customer satisfied? Give me an example of how you learned one of these lessons.
		O Can you think of a time when your loyalty was divided between the customer and the company? Tell me about it. What did you do?
	Deadline Responsiveness	O Tell me about a time when you missed an important deadline. How could you have avoided this?
		O How do you ensure that you keep projects on-schedule and complete tasks on-time? Describe your process using a recent example.
		O Give me example of when you beat an "impossible" deadline. How did that make you feel?
		O What do you do when you are faced with an inflexible deadline and not enough time or resources to complete the task? Give me a specific example.
		O When deadlines loom, sometimes something has to give. Tell me about a time when you compromised quality or skimped on a process to meet a deadline.
	Dealing with Change	O Tell me about a time when you were surprised by a change at work. How did you deal with it?
		O What was your most challenging career transition? What did you do to make it successful?
		O Tell me about a time when you did not deal well with a change. What prevented you? What could you have done differently? What was the outcome?



STAR	Competency	Questions
	Decision Making/	O What is the most difficult business decision you have had to make? How did you arrive at your decision?
	Decisiveness	O Describe a situation in which you had to make a decision without having all the information you needed. How did you make this decision?
		O We don't always have the luxury of time when making decisions. Can you give me an example of a decision you had to make in a hurry?
		O Tell me about a complex decision you made recently. How did you make the decision and what were the key elements you considered? What was the outcome?
		O Tell me about the last time you made a decision when the instructions you were given were unclear or contradictory. How did you decide what to do? What alternatives did you consider? How did the decision work out?
		O Tell me about a decision you made that turned out badly. In hindsight, what would you have done differently?
		O Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
		O <i>For Managers</i> : Do you include your subordinates in your decision-making process? Give me an example in which their input was critical and an example in which you overrode their recommendations.
	Delegation	O Tell me about your biggest mistake in delegating. Why did you make this mistake?
		O Give me an example of a time when you required help from your staff to deal with a major problem. How much authority did you delegate to them?
		O Tell me about a time when you should have delegated work to another person but did not. What were the repercussions?
		O Tell me about an instance when you delegated work to another person who didn't get the job done. Why did it happen? What did you do about it?
		O How do you determine which staff members should handle which assignments? Illustrate with some examples.
	Fact Finding	O Tell me about a time when you had to review detailed reports or documents to identify a problem.
		O When you are given a new assignment, what is your procedure for gathering background information? Give me an example.
		O Describe a situation that required you to interview several people to obtain some critical information. How did you know what to ask?
		O Give an example that illustrates how you use fact-finding skills to gather information to solve a problem.
		O Think of a time when the information you gathered was used to make a critical business decision. Was your information accurate and complete? How did the decision work out?
		O Give me an example of a time when you made a poor decision because the facts you gathered were incorrect or incomplete. What was the outcome?



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	Follow up	O Tell me about the systems and processes that you use to ensure good follow-up. Walk me through the follow- up steps of a recent project.
		O Describe a situation in which your follow-up was credited for capturing a business opportunity.
		O We've all experienced times when we have forgotten to follow up. Tell me about one of those times. What did you learn from this that you used later? How did you use it?
	Goal Setting	O Tell me about a recent goal you set and achieved. Walk me through your thinking and planning process.
		O Give an example of a goal that you did not reach. How did you feel about that? What could you have done differently?
		O Think of a job you held where your goals were not clearly defined. What did you do about it?
	Independence	O Tell me about some on-the-job rules or policies you did not agree with. What did you do about it?
		O What do you do in your job that isn't covered in your job description?
		O Tell me about a situation in which you took matters in your own hands, even though it should have been handled by your manager. What was the outcome?
		O Think about a boss who has given you the most independence. How did you respond? What problems did you encounter?
		O Can you share an example of a situation in which you had to go against the general feelings or policies to achieve a goal?
		O In your current job, what constraints make it difficult to get things done? What do you do about them?
	Initiative	O Sometimes opportunities come disguised as problems. Can you tell me about a time when you realized an opportunity? What did you do? What were the results?
		O How did you get your job at [company]?
		O Describe some ways in which you changed your job at [company]. What were the results?
		O What do you do that is different from others in your profession? Give me an example of how that has worked out well for your employer.
		O Tell me about a project that you initiated. What did you do? Why? What was the outcome?
		O For Managers: Describe some ways you have found to make your employees' jobs easier. What have been the benefits?



STAR	Competency	Questions
Ţ	Integrity	O Think about a time when your integrity was challenged. How did you handle it?
		O Tell me about a business situation in which you felt it was best not to be honest. What did you do?
		O Describe a company policy that you conformed to but did not agree with. Why?
		O Tell me about a situation in which your manager asked you to do something you didn't agree with. How did you handle the situation?
		O Tell me about a time when you saw someone bend too far, making you question their integrity. What did you do?
	Interpersonal Skills	O Give me a specific example of when you had to work with a difficult customer.
		O Describe some situations in which you wished you'd acted differently with someone. What did you do? What happened?
		O Most of us have worked with people with whom we don't get along very well. How have you handled this in the past? Give me a specific example.
		O For Managers: All managers must deal with problem employees from time to time. Give me a recent example when you had to deal with an employee who was causing a problem. What did you say? What did you do?
	Leadership	O Describe a recent initiative that you led. What obstacles did you face in reaching your goals? How did you overcome them?
		O Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? Did it work?
		O Tell me about at situation in which you had to coordinate several people to achieve a goal. What prompted you to take the lead? How did you go about coordinating and leading the group? How did the group members respond to your leadership?
		O Have you ever had to step in midstream to rescue a project that was failing? What did you do, and what were the results? How did you gain support of your team?
		O Describe a recent project you led that fell short of its goals. What were your obstacles? Why were they difficult? How could you have made them easier?
		O Describe a recent situation that illustrates your style in taking charge and leading others to achieve a goal.
		O What are some of the most difficult one-on-one meetings you've had with employees? Why were they difficult? How could you have made them easier?
		O Describe a group you led whose members work didn't well together. What did you do to improve teamwork?
		O How do you communicate change to your group? Share some examples.
		O Tell me about a time when you had to get extra effort from your group. What did you do to motivate them? How did they respond?
		O One of the most difficult leadership challenges is getting results from people over whom you have no direct authority. Can you give me any examples of how you've done that?



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	Listening	O We've all had times when we've misinterpreted something that someone told us. Give me an example of when this happened to you and what you did about it.
		O Tell me about a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you — maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.
	Logic	O Tell me about a complex problem that you solved recently. How did you decide what to do? What were the key elements that you considered? What was the outcome?
		O Give me an example of when you used instinct instead of logic to solve a problem. What was the result? How did you feel about it?
		O Describe your thought process when analyzing data to come to a decision. Share an example.
	Negotiation	O Tell me about your most creative negotiation.
		O Tell me about a time when you had to work hard to rescue a stalled negotiation. What did you do? What was the result?
		O Give me an example of a time when you had to compromise to reach an agreement with someone. Did you feel the resolution was fair?
		O Tell me about one of your negotiations that was unsuccessful. What was the fallout? What could have been done differently?
		O What information do you gather before a negotiation? How do you use this information during the negotiating process? Share some specific examples.
	Oral Communication	O Tell me about an instance in which you were unable to get your point across to someone on the telephone. How could you have avoided this problem?
		O Tell me about a time when you had to be assertive to get across a point that was important to you.
		O Give me an example of a time when you had to communicate bad news to someone. How did you know you were successful in getting your point across?
		O Describe a time when you were able to gain support for an unpopular decision. What communication strategies did you use?
		O Describe any formal or informal experience you have had in training someone else. How successful were you?



STAR		Questions
	Persistence/Tenacity	O Have you ever been accused of giving up too soon? What was the situation?
		O Tell me about a long-range goal that you achieved recently. How did you ensure that you were making progress over many weeks or months?
		O Describe a situation in which you were able to reach a goal because you refused to give up. How long did you persist?
		O What are some big obstacles that you've had to overcome to get where you are today? How did you overcome them?
	Persuasiveness	O Relate an experience in which you were able to get others to follow your lead.
		O How successful are you at getting people to do what you want them to do? What approach do you take? Give me two examples.
		O What is the best idea you have sold to your boss? What was your approach?
		O Describe a situation in which you were able to convince someone to see things your way.
		O Tell me about a time when you were unable to sell an idea or plan that you thought was the best approach. Why were you unsuccessful? What could you have done differently?
		O Do you consider yourself a "natural salesperson"? Share some stories that illustrate this.
		O Tell me about a time when you were able to turn someone's opinion completely around. How did you convince that person?
	Planning/Organization	O Give me a specific example of a project that you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks? Tell me about your action plan.
		O Tell me about a time when you organized an event that was very successful.
		O Give me an example of an event or project that you planned on very short notice.
		O Recall a time when you were assigned a complex project. What steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What ONE step would you have done differently?
		O Describe a project you led that involved many team members. How did you make the best use of your resources?
		O Tell me about a time when lack of organization caused you to miss an opportunity or a deadline. What did you do to prevent that from happening again?
	Presentation	O Tell me about a recent successful experience making a speech or giving a presentation.
		O When you are preparing and giving an oral presentation, how do you take your audience's needs into consideration? Give me an example.
		O Have you ever been appointed spokesperson for a group? Tell me about it.
		O Tell me about a time when you gave a presentation to a challenging audience. How did you deal with that audience? What was the outcome?



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	Priority Setting	O What do you do when you have too many tasks to accomplish in the time allowed? Give me an example.
		O Describe a situation that required you to do a number of things at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
		O We have all faced short deadlines for important projects. How do you decide what to do first? Give me an example.
		O How do you make sure you are spending your time on projects that are important but not necessarily urgent?
	Problem Solving	O Tell me about the most perplexing problem you have faced in the last year.
		O We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a big problem. Give me an example of when you have done this.
		O Describe a situation in which your manager was not available and a problem arose that needed immediate attention. How did you handle it?
		O What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
		O Tell me about a time when you came up with a solution to a problem that others had not been able to solve for quite a while.
		O In your last job, what problems did you identify that had previously been overlooked? What did you do about them?
		O What kinds of problems do you deal with in your current job? How do you address them? Share some examples.
		O Give me an example of a business problem you solved on your own, and one you solved with a group. How did your process differ?
	Rapport Building	O Tell me about a time when you built rapport with a difficult customer.
		O Describe a situation in which you were a new member of an existing team. How did you build rapport with your team members?
		O Tell me about a business situation in which you found it difficult to establish rapport with someone. What was the outcome?
	Resilience	O We all experience disappointments in life. Can you give me an example of how you coped with a work-related disappointment?
		O Describe a recent situation that tested your coping skills.
		O Tell me about an idea of yours that you could not implement. What happened, and how did that make you feel?
		O What kind of obstacles have you faced to get where you are today?



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	Resourcefulness	O Tell me about a problem that you've solved in an unusual way.
		O How did you build your network of resources at your current job?
		O Describe a situation in which you were blocked from reaching a goal. What did you do?
		O Describe an instance in which you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a problem?
		O Have you ever been given an assignment to do but not the resources to do it? How did you handle it? Please describe the situation.
	Risk Taking	O Tell me about a risky move you made at work and why you made it.
		O Describe a situation in which you made a decision without having all the necessary information. How did you decide?
		O Give me an example of a time when you decided not to take action, even though you were pressured to do so. How did you evaluate the situation? What was the result?
	Sensitivity to Others	O When you are dealing with individuals or groups, how do you know when you are pushing too hard? What do you do about it? Share an example.
		O Have you ever found it necessary to change your actions or behaviors to respond to the needs of another person? What was the situation?
		O Discuss a time when you worked to understand a perspective different from your own. What was the outcome?
	Staff Development	O For Managers: Tell me about a person you managed who has advanced in his or her career. What role did you play?
		O <i>For Managers</i> : Tell me about the last person you hired who just didn't work out. What was the problem? How did you try to correct it? What was the outcome?
		O <i>For Managers</i> : Give me a specific example of how you have been empowered by your staff to make independent decisions.
		O <i>For Managers</i> : Describe a training program you implemented for your staff. How did you identify the need? How did you select the solutions? What were the results?



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	Strategic Planning	 O Describe a situation in which you anticipated the future and made changes to current products/services to meet future customer needs.
		O Describe a time when there were competitive threats in your marketplace and you developed actions to compete.
		O Give me a specific example of when you identified and assessed a new business opportunity.
		O Have you ever recognized a problem before your manager or others in the organization recognized it? Tell me about it.
		O Tell me about an idea or project you conceived recently. How did you know it was needed? How did you know it would work? What was the outcome?
	Team Building	O Describe a situation in which you developed a group into a strong working team.
		O Tell me about an instance in which you were able to build team spirit in a time of low morale.
		O Tell me about the most challenging team project you have led. What did you do to ensure its success?
		O Tell me some ways in which you have contributed to team effectiveness when you were not a designated team leader.
	Teamwork	O Tell me about the most successful team you have ever been on. What made it work?
		O Describe a time when team members had to arrive at a compromise to get the job done. What was your role in making that happen?
		O Tell me about a specific time when a team member wasn't contributing to a project you were working on. What was the situation, and what steps did you take to resolve the problems? What was the outcome?
		O Tell me about the time when your team did not agree with your ideas. How did you deal with the situation?
		O Not all teams are compatible. Think of a team you worked on with whose members did not get along. What happened?
		O How have you handled conflict or criticism within a team you've been on? What was the outcome?
	Time Management	O What do you do when your time schedule is disrupted by unforeseen circumstances? Share a specific example.
		O How do you manage your schedule so you have time for important projects as well as day-today responsibilities? Please share a specific example.
		O What prevents you from completing daily tasks? Walk me through a recent day on the job.
		O Tell me about a time when you had to work overtime or extra hours to get an important job done. In retrospect, what could you have done differently to reduce your overtime hours?



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	Tolerance for Stress	O How do you deal with pressure in your job? Give me specific examples.
		 O Tell me about an unexpectedly stressful situation you experienced at work. How did you handle it? O Have you ever had a feeling of frustration and impatience when dealing with a customer? What was the situation?
		O Give me some examples of when your ideas were strongly opposed in a meeting. How did you react?
		O What are the highest-pressure situations that you've faced in recent years? How did you cope?
		O Think of your most productive work experience. What stress levels were you under? Did that add to or hinder your productivity?
	Versatility	O Tell me about a time when you were working on several projects at once. How did you make the transition from one to the next over the course of a day?
		O Tell me about a time when your manager called on you to take on a special project outside your usual area of activity. Why were you selected? What was the outcome?
		O Share a situation where you were required to change the way you normally work and found it difficult to do so.
	Work Standards	O Tell me about a time when you were required to turn in what you felt was not your best work. What was the situation? How did it make you feel?
		O Give me two examples of things you've done in previous jobs that show your willingness to work hard.
		O Have you disagreed with a manager's evaluation of your performance? How did you handle the situation?
		O Share an example of when you were not very pleased with your work performance. What did you do about it?
		O In your current position, how do you define doing a good job? Give examples of when your definition was met or not met and what you did about it.
		O Describe a time when your results did not meet the manager's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?
		O Consider times when you did your best work and other times when you didn't. Give me an example of each time. What made the difference?
		O <i>For Managers</i> : How do you judge the performance of your employees? What distinguishes "good" from "average" and how you helped an employee become "good"?



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