

# A Guide to Competency Based Interviews

Sesame Bankhall Group

## Recruitment Methods

SBG uses a variety of recruitment methods when selecting the right person for a particular role. This allows us to assess a broad range of skills in a variety of situations; helping us to place the right people in the right roles.

The exact methods we use will vary depending upon the specific requirements of each vacancy. All candidates will be required to have a competency based interview, you may also be asked to participate in other assessment methods such as:

- Role Play Scenarios – simulating a real-life working incident which could be over the telephone or face to face.
- Case Studies, In Tray Exercises and Written Tests – used to test your ability to review written material and draw out important points.
- Presentations – would usually include a brief to prepare a short presentation in advance to be delivered on the day of your interview.
- Technical Assessments – used to test your ability to use certain systems or to assess technical knowledge

## Competency Based Interviews

Competency based interviews use questions which aim to find out how you have used specific skills in your previous experience and how you approach problems, tasks or challenges. All our interviews are competency-based.

Here we will explain a few features of competency-based interviewing and giving you some 'hints and tips' on how to prepare yourself.

### What is a Competency?

A competency is simply a description of the behaviours you display when performing a role effectively. If your role involved being able to organise your work effectively, the competency for this might be *Organisational Skills*.

### What is a Competency Based Interview?

The interview panel is usually made up of two SBG managers who will have a set of questions to ask you that have been prepared in advance. They will read these questions to you from their page almost like a script – the reason for this is that they will be asking the same questions of each candidate applying for the role, to ensure fairness and consistency.

The interviewers will have chosen to ask you about the competencies that most closely link to the role.

Competency based questions are often situational. The interviewers are looking for examples of real life scenarios that you can talk in a fair bit of detail about. There may also be follow up questions based on the answer that you give. Below is an example of a typical competency based question:

*Interviewer: Tell me about a time when you had to answer the phone to an angry customer.*

*You: You will need to tell them of a time when this happened, then go on to explain exactly what you did and how you went about handling the situation.*

*Bear in mind, they will want to hear specifically what you did. If others were involved you can mention that but remember to give a clear picture of the part you actually played in the example.*

*It's important to remember to tell them what the outcome was. If the outcome wasn't quite what you had hoped for this is still useful information for the interviewer but let them know what you learned from the situation.*

The interviewer is expecting to hear a description of the Situation, Task, Action and Result.

### **What will the Competencies be?**

SBG has a behavioural framework, which all roles are measured against. These are the behaviours that we require from our staff in order to drive our company values; Community, Expertise and Passion. Your competency interview will be based on a number of behaviours that are translated into competency questions.

The competencies are:

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Commercially Focussed
- Technical
- Developing Yourself & Others
- Service Excellence
- Embracing Change
- Managing & Leading Yourself & Others

### **Where do I get all my examples from?**

There are many areas you should consider when gathering examples including:

- Projects you've been involved in, whether work or education based
- Challenges or problems you've faced
- Relationships with customers, managers, peers and/or colleagues
- Times you've influenced a decision
- Negotiations and deals you may have been involved in
- Successes you've had surrounding work completed

Ideally your examples should be from your last two or three years work/study experience but you can go further back if you need to.

### **What about my technical knowledge?**

Technical questions will be covered under the competency for Technical Competence, there may be some additional technical questions added to some of the competency-based questions.

Interviewers, in this situation, will be asking questions designed to check what level of technical knowledge you have and how you have applied it in the past.

### **Hints & Tips**

- Rehearse your examples in your mind

- Find a friend or colleague to rehearse with (this one's handy because they can give you some valuable and constructive feedback)
- The interviewers are there to help you give off your best – they are not aiming to trip you up or trick you
- Pace yourself with slow, even breathing
- Answer in a clear, logical manner that the interviewers can easily follow
- Pause for thought when you need to, the interviewers won't think badly of that
- Keep your language specific, positive and above all sound interested!
- Make sure you get across specifically what you as an individual did
- Bring brief notes in with you to refer to – the interview is not a memory test!

It's over to you now. The key to a successful interview will be the preparation you put in beforehand. Rehearse if you can, in your mind or with someone else and remember that everyone involved in the process will be there to help you give off your best.

**Good Luck!**