

Show off
your skills!

The Blusource I&C
Guide to
**Competency
Based Questions**



Past performance is the best predictor of future performance...

Competency based questions have become a very popular tool used in interviews. This is because: PAST PERFORMANCE IS THE BEST PREDICTOR OF FUTURE PERFORMANCE.

Essentially the interviewer will ask you to describe a situation you have been in, which demonstrate abilities relevant to the role you are interviewing for. It allows the interviewer the ability to get more detail than in a traditional one-to-one interview.

The key to getting this right is being able to give the right balance of information whilst keeping to the point and not waffling!

Preparation is vital and you will need to be armed with a number of relevant examples you can use before going to the interview.

The “CAR” Approach

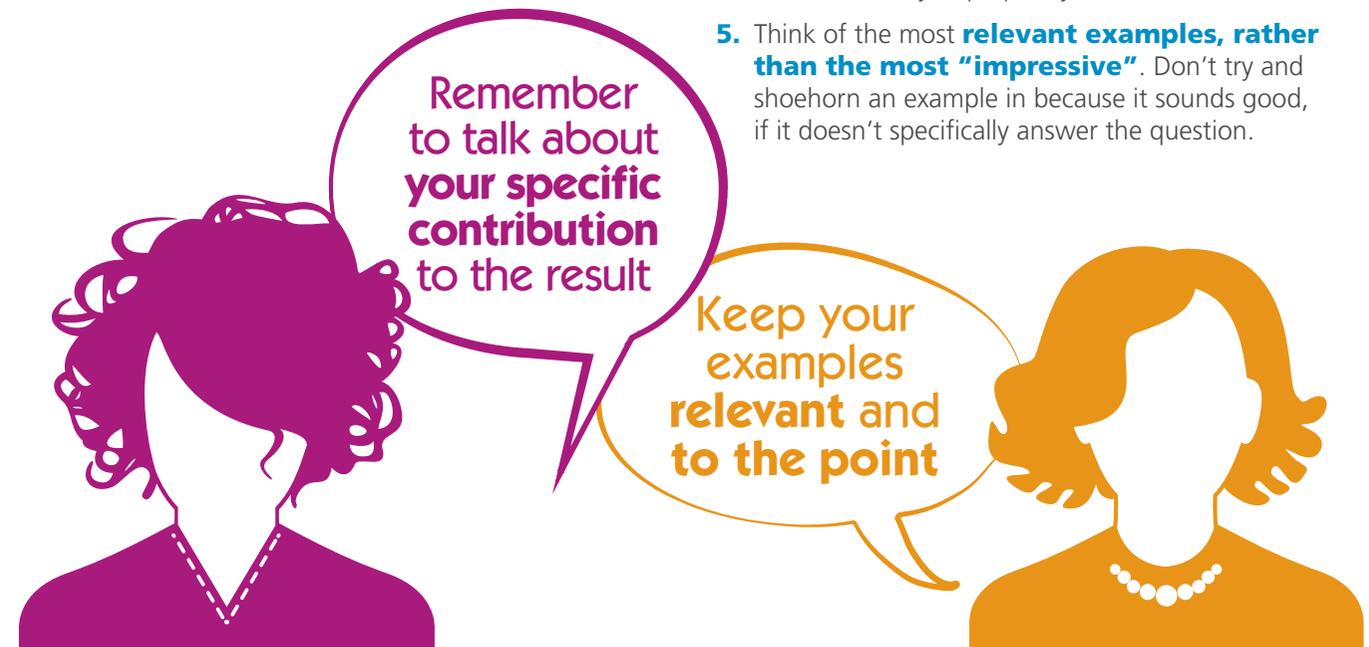
Blusource I&C would recommend using the CAR approach as a good way of dealing with this type of question.

CAR stands for **Context, Action, and Result**. It helps you to structure how you give your answer, to give the most impact.

- **C - The CONTEXT** forms an introduction, describing the scenario you faced, where and when it was and the issues that needed to be resolved.
- **A - The ACTION** forms the main body and should be the longest part. How did you approach it? What action did **YOU** take? Sometimes people focus on what the group did without mentioning their individual contribution, but the interviewer will want to understand your input specifically.
- **R - The RESULT** is the conclusion, and, like the introduction, should be quite short. What did you achieve? What conclusions were reached? What did you learn from the experience?

When Answering...

1. Try and give **quantifiable results** if possible. If you have saved money for a company, how much? If you have implemented new systems and processes which have saved time, how much time?
2. **If the result was negative**, then say what you learned from the experience and what you would do differently next time. Sometimes interviewers will ask you about a situation where you were unsuccessful. This is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate how well you learn lessons from failure, but also to demonstrate qualities such as resilience; determination and strength of character.
3. You can use examples from **work, study or personal life** – and using a variety of these can be good. However, where possible **specific work related** examples which correspond directly to the job you are going for would be deemed more appropriate.
4. Don't go into too much background detail - **keep to the point!** Often there isn't enough room to use the CAR approach, but it's still worth keeping in mind when you prepare your draft answer.
5. Think of the most **relevant examples, rather than the most “impressive”**. Don't try and shoehorn an example in because it sounds good, if it doesn't specifically answer the question.



Preparation

Many companies put their competencies on their website and you should always research the company before your interview.

Preparation is made a bit easier thanks to the fact that ALL competency frameworks boil down to three broad headings:

Task competencies - how you get things done. Think of examples of when you have planned something and delivered a final result.

People competencies - how you communicate, influence, coach etc. Think of examples of when you have had to persuade someone, times when you have had to deal with a difficult conversation or situations where you had to motivate an individual or team.

Thought competencies - how you solve problems, analyse, show creativity etc. Think of examples of how you have analysed information, reached decisions, shown creativity and solved problems.

Example Questions

1. Tell me a time where you have achieved an objective by leading a group of people?

This is a question designed to understand your management and leadership capabilities. Most employers will be looking for you to demonstrate some of the following with your answer: Empowerment of individuals, strategic thinking, coaching where appropriate, delegation, project management and leadership.

2. Can you give me an example of a particularly difficult customer you had to deal with and how you used your skills to successfully overcome the problem they had?

Here the interviewer is likely to want to see how you handle difficult situations and have an indication of the strength of your communication skills. An example demonstrating your ability to listen, understand the real issues of the customer, be able to confirm your understanding to the customer and your ability to stay calm under pressure would all be beneficial. You will also show how you took responsibility, came up with solutions for the customer and hopefully resolved their problem successfully.

Example Question and Answer

Question: "Team work is very important in our organisation. What evidence do you have to prove that you are a good team player?"

Answer: "I have a number of examples I could share with you. In one instance, when I was working as a business analyst at ABC Organisation, the sales team were pulling together a bid for a large piece of work and the analyst that normally helps them out with their IT information was on leave. I offered to help them and worked late every night for two weeks to ensure they had all the information they needed. They took on my suggestions regarding technology. As it turned out we won the bid and I was promoted as a result."

Conclusion

Often people find this form of interviewing a bit rigid, maybe unnatural and not as friendly as "having a chat and talking through your CV".

However, as well as providing evidence of competencies relevant to the job, it is also seen as a fair method of selection since all candidates are asked exactly the same questions.

With a little preparation you will quickly realise that competency based questions offer an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your abilities and the best side of you to your prospective employers, making it easier for you to sell yourself to them!



Think about **what questions** you may be asked beforehand, and possible answers



Don't forget to **demonstrate your abilities** through your answers

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