

## What is Competency Based Interviewing?

Competency Based Interviewing is highly effective, particularly if you're looking to test one or more of a candidate's specific skills. CBI actually stands for **Circumstance, Behaviour and Impact**, which are the three key points to communicate when a candidate is answering questions in a **competency-based interview**.

Put simply, this is a style of interview designed to evaluate a candidate's competence.

Candidates are required to demonstrate they have a particular skill or 'key competency' by using situational examples from their life experiences. Competency interviews can also feature questions that probe a candidate's knowledge and understanding of the company and/or industry they have applied to.

The end goal of a competency-based interview is to test and rank candidates on predefined 'key competencies' that are vital to being successful in a particular role. Interview questions will be standardised for a role to ensure consistency and reliability of results

## The Benefits Of Competency Interviewing

There are a significant number of benefits to undertaking competency based interviewing including:

- Increased objectivity throughout the assessment process
- Ability to hone in on relevant and required specific skills
- Reduced risk of bias, discrimination, stereotypes or halo effect
- Real cases and behaviours investigated - not hypothetical scenarios
- Consistency in hiring decisions
- Improved consensus from multiple stakeholders

## How is it done?

- Select 5 key competencies (competency checklist) that you want to assess candidates on for the role and plot them in a matrix such as the example below
- Score each competency individually from 1-5 on level of importance to the role (5 = high importance)
- Allocate points for the different competency levels of response by candidates (1-5)
- Calculate the candidate's score for each competency – competency importance score x competency level score
- Tally up a total score for each candidate and rank.

## Example Matrix

Competency Importance Score	x	3	2	5	4	2	
Competency Levels of Response	5	Professional Relationship Builder	Understands and fits with culture	Remote / virtual teams	Professional business developer	Monitors ROI to improve	
	4	Natural Relationship Builder	Good fit and understanding	Team leader	Limited proactive experience	Sets basic measures	
	3	Competent Relationship Builder	Understanding but poor fit	Expert coach	Reactive experience only	Recommends and manages	
	2	Poor Relationship Builder	Poor fit and little understanding	Instruct	Very little experience	Technical support	
	1	None	Little or none	None	None	No experience	
Name		Relationship Building	Culture Fit	Leadership	Business Development	Marketing Experience	Total
Joe Bloggs		15	8	20	16	10	69
Jane Smith		9	6	15	4	6	40
Adam Jones		12	6	10	8	4	40
Julie Robinson		3	4	5	8	4	24
Tom Ryan		3	8	5	0	2	18

## Example Questions

It's really important to make sure you frame your questions in a way which elicits a competency based response.

Using the competencies within the matrix on the previous page, below are some example questions that could be asked. Note how they are framed around phrases such as "Tell me about a time when..." or "Describe a situation..." or "Can you give me an example of..."

All of these phrases lend themselves to forcing a candidate to give specific details that demonstrate their abilities against that competency.



Competency	Example Question
<b>Relationship Building</b>	"Tell me about a time when you relied on a contact in your network to help you with a work related task or problem."
<b>Culture Fit</b>	"What are the characteristics exhibited by the best boss you've ever had - or wish you'd ever had?"
<b>Leadership</b>	"Describe a situation where you had to ensure that your 'actions spoke louder than your words' to a team."
<b>Business Development</b>	"Can you give me an example of where your actions helped grow the business you were working for?"
<b>Marketing Experience</b>	"Describe a situation where you identified a new marketing opportunity for an organisation and what happened as a result."

## Example of a Competency Based Answer

### Example Question

*Can you provide an example of where your actions helped grow the business you were working for?*

- 1** The candidate should firstly set the scene. They should describe the *circumstances*. Starting with an overview, they should introduce facts and figures as early as possible.

*“Yes, last year, we undertook a review of our customer base and found out that over 50% of our business came from a small number of large customers. I decided that this made us too reliant on them, and that there were too many factors beyond our control - things that could therefore damage our business. We needed to generate new business from a larger number of smaller customers, without adversely affecting our relationships with major clients.”*

- 2** Next, the candidate should evidence their behaviour - by telling you what they did, how they did it, and the reasoning behind their actions.

*“I put a two day strategy meeting together with our commercial staff to discuss changing our sales and marketing approach to attract more, smaller customers. It was important to me that we had total buy-in from everyone. By investing the time to explain the new strategy and listening to their ideas, everyone was excited and bought in to delivering it.”*

- 3** Finally, the candidate should introduce the impact of their actions – the positive effect **THEY** had, personally, on the business - and then quantify the all-important results.

*“We decided to split the commercial team into two teams: one focusing on existing major accounts, and the other entirely focused on building new business with smaller clients. Results were impressive. Turnover increased by 30% over the last year. We also reached our target for 65% of business coming through the new business development team within the first year ”*