

# Sample Interview Questions

The sample interview questions are categorized by several typically required skills, essential functions, or competencies, and meet requirements for allowable interview questions. We suggest you begin by choosing categories pertinent to the position based on the position announcement and job description.

When adapting or rephrasing the questions to the specifics of the position, remember to

- focus on job-related criteria
- keep questions open-ended (requiring more than a yes/no response), and
- ask behaviorally specific questions (asking the candidate to describe a time when they demonstrated this skill, function or competency instead of using hypothetical situations).

Human Resources can provide additional sample questions in other skill, function, or competency areas.

### Overall Job Performance

1. Tell me about a professional goal that you consider your greatest accomplishment. Tell me why that was important to you.
2. Describe what you would say if asked to talk about yourself in a group of 15 people.
3. What strengths did you rely on in your last position to make you successful in your work?
4. How do you typically handle yourself in a fast-paced environment? Please provide a specific example.
5. How have you handled a heavy workload with many deadlines?
6. In all jobs there are heavy periods and light periods. What do you do to manage your work in either of these periods?
7. You are given several rush projects to be completed in a short period of time. How do you go about establishing priorities? Why?
8. How would you describe your organizational abilities?
9. How would your current supervisor describe your attendance and punctuality habits? How would your current supervisor describe your work habits? How would you describe your own performance standards?

### Teamwork

1. Describe for me the kinds of things you've done in previous jobs to build teamwork with your peers.
2. It can be challenging to build relationships with people you haven't worked with before. Give me an example of how you've dealt with this situation in the past.
3. Tell me about a time when you used your enthusiasm to motivate a team to finish a project or assignment.
4. What's the key to making a team work? (Follow-up) Tell me about a time when you helped to orchestrate that "key" as a member of a team.
5. What role on a team do you find yourself playing most often? Tell me about a specific instance when you found yourself in that role.
6. Describe your most recent participation in a significant group effort.
7. Give me an example of when you felt you were able to build motivation in your coworkers or employees who reported to you.
8. How often do you attend meetings with your peers (or group)? What role did you play in the last meeting?

9. Give me a specific example of what you did in your last/current position to contribute toward an effective teamwork environment.
10. Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.
11. Describe a situation in which others within your organization depended on you.
12. Tell me about a situation when you had to work as part of a team that was not functioning well and how you dealt with it.
13. If someone asked you for assistance with a matter that is outside the parameters of your job description, what would you do? If you've experienced that in past jobs, how have you dealt with that?
14. Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. How did you handle the situation?
15. Tell me about a time when you were a part of a great team. What was your part in making the team effective?

### **Initiative/Creativity/Innovation**

1. What ideas did you contribute to your organization or work unit in your last/current job? What were the results?
2. Give an example of something you recommended that was adopted.
3. What have you done to make your job more interesting, easier, or more efficient?
4. Give an example of a project you were responsible for starting. What did you do? How did it work out?
5. What kind of and how much information do you need to get started on a new project or assignment?
6. When have you had to produce results, without sufficient guidelines or information, what did you do?
7. What is the most creative thing you have done in a past job? How did it occur?
8. In the last year, what innovative ideas have you had at work? Were you able to implement them? How were they innovative?

### **Ability to Learn**

1. Give an example of a situation at your previous employer when you have had to keep up with changes in technology, terminology, and information specific to your field.
2. Think of a time when you have learned new processes for a job? What did you have to learn? How quickly were you able to learn it?
3. How soon do you think could you learn this job well enough to become productive? Why do you give that estimate?
4. If time did not permit a training period on a new job, how would you go about learning the things expected or required of you?
5. Give three examples of when you've demonstrated adaptability in a professional situation.
6. Describe the most recent formal learning experience you've had.
7. What are your long-term professional goals? How do the duties and responsibilities in this position relate to that goal?

### **Diversity**

1. What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own?
2. Tell me about a time you had to alter your work style to meet a diversity need or challenge?
3. What have you done to further your knowledge about diversity? Have you included diversity in your professional development? How have you demonstrated what you have learned?

4. If you observed a co-worker who made inappropriate sexual or racial remarks to another employee, and it was obvious to you that the situation was creating an uncomfortable environment, what would you do?

### **Quality**

1. Tell me the steps you take to ensure the quality of your work. Tell me about a time when this system worked well, and a time when it failed you. How did you adjust?
2. Have you ever contacted a customer with the sole purpose of seeking feedback about a product or service you delivered? What did you learn? What did you change?
3. Describe a time you received unsolicited feedback from a customer about your work. What did you do? What improvements/changes were suggested or made?
4. Tell me how the quality of your work impacts others around you. Give an example.
5. How do you decide when something is “good enough” or when it needs to be as close to perfect as possible?

### **Analytical Skills**

1. Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem. Then tell me how you analyzed the information and came to a decision, if applicable.
2. Give me an example of a project you have completed, focusing on the analytical component.
3. What tools do you currently use on the job to aid you in quantitative analysis?
4. What is the percentage of time you currently spend on the job dealing with analytical reports, analyses, and comparisons? Tell me about a recent project that was primarily numbers-oriented. Walk me through your procedure and thought processes.
5. Give me an example of a project you completed that relied heavily on quantitative analysis.
6. Describe a specific accomplishment that demonstrates your analytical skills.
7. Give me an example that demonstrates your ability to use a variety of approaches in your work.
8. Let’s assume that you are given an assignment that requires a different methodology than you typically use. Have you ever experienced this type of situation? How did you go about completing your work?
9. Tell me about a difficult problem you solved for a customer or other stakeholder.
10. Tell me about an assignment for which you had little or no previous experience. What strategy did you adopt to complete the assignment?
11. Give me an example of a work project or product that demonstrates your ability to manage budgets.
12. Give me an example of a project that demonstrates your ability to work within budgetary constraints, either those of your own organization or your client/customer’s.

### **Decision Making and Risk Taking**

1. Sometimes you have to make a decision even when others believe that it may be premature. Can you tell me about a time when you made a decision even when others were not ready to do so?
2. While planning ahead is usually important, there are time when being spontaneous can lead to success, too. Tell me about a time on the job when you were able to be spontaneous with good results.
3. Describe an experience that demonstrates your ability to evaluate a situation on the spot.
4. Describe an important decision you made that affected the course of a project or an activity.
5. Tell me about a time when you made a decision that at the time was risky.
6. Describe a situation in which you had to defend your actions or recommendations because they were challenged by others.
7. What was the most difficult work decision you made in the last six months? What made it so difficult?

8. What was the biggest obstacle you had to overcome in order to incorporate a new idea or process in your work? Why was it an obstacle? How did you overcome it?
9. Give me an example of a time when you had to analyze another person or a situation carefully in order to be effective in guiding your action or decision.
10. Describe a situation when you were told by two different people how to handle a project two different ways. What did you do and how did you arrive at a decision?
11. Give me an example of when you've demonstrated the ability to make quick and accurate job-related decisions.
12. Tell me about a time when an upper-level decision (such as an organization-wide or policy change) held up your work. How did you handle this obstacle?
13. Give me an example of a time when you stuck to policy or procedure when it may have been easier to go around the policy or procedure.
14. Give me an example of a situation when you were not successful in dealing with a tough decision you had to make.
15. Tell me about an experience when you had a limited amount of time to make a difficult decision.
16. Tell me about a decision that you made while under a lot of pressure.
17. Describe a situation where you heard of some new technology and implemented it.
18. Describe a situation where you were not supported in performing a task and how you dealt with it.
19. Do you think of yourself as an internal entrepreneur and why?
20. How do you determine if a plan is worth the risk of rocking the boat?
21. If it were apparent that there was little support for something you felt strongly about, would you try it anyway? Why?
22. Describe a time when you weighed the pros and cons of a risk and decided to take it?
23. Describe a time when you were criticized for taking a risk. What was your reaction to the criticism?
24. Do you believe in the concept of calculated risk and what does it mean to you?
25. Describe a time when you seemed to be on the wrong side of an issue and what you did or did not do.
26. Describe a specific time on any job that you've held when you were faced with issues that tested your problem-solving skills. What did you do?
27. Give an example of a time when you had to keep from speaking or not finish a task because you did not have enough information to come to a good decision. Be specific.
28. Give an example of a time when you had to use your fact-finding skills to get information to solve a problem. Then describe how you analyzed the information to come to a decision.
29. Give an example of a problem you faced on a job and describe how you solved it.
30. Describe your most stressful work-related situation and how you handled it.
31. Describe a difficult situation you encountered with a supervisor or co-worker and how you handled it.
32. What are some examples of important types of decisions or recommendations you are called upon to make in your past/present position?
33. Most of us can think of an important decision we'd make quite differently if we could do it over. What example would you share from your experience?
34. Give an example of a difficult decision you had to make at your last job. How did you solve it? Follow-up: Why did you choose that method instead of another solution?
35. What has been a stubborn or recurring problem area you would have liked to solve in your current job, but haven't yet?
36. What process do you follow in solving problems? Give an example of when this process worked well, and a time when it didn't.
37. What methods do you use to make decisions? Please give an example of your approach.

38. In your current/last position, what kinds of decisions did you have authority over? Which ones did you have to check with your manager before making?
39. What information or technical support has helped you succeed on the job?
40. Have you ever had to make a decision before you had all the data you wanted? Give an example. What did you do?
41. Suppose your supervisor asked you to get information for them that you know is confidential and he/she should not have access to. What would you do?
42. Give me an example of a time in your career when you knew you were right and your boss disagreed with you.

### **Interpersonal and Communications Skills**

1. Think of a time when you were a committee or a team member and disagreed with another's point or decision. How did you respond?
2. Success on the job, in part, depends on having good work relationships. Tell me about a time when you were able to get the job done because you had such a relationship with another person.
3. Describe a situation in which your success depended upon communicating with people from different backgrounds and levels.
4. Tell me about a time on the job when you had to handle a sensitive situation.
5. Describe a situation when you were a relative newcomer and saw people doing things in ways you considered ineffective or inefficient. How did you handle the situation?
6. Tell me about how you dealt with a person who was inflexible. Give me specific examples of tactics you employed.
7. Describe a situation in which you had to decide the best way to summarize, organize and present complex information.
8. When working with people, we often find that one style doesn't always work for every person. Describe a situation when you had to vary your style in order to work effectively with a particular individual.
9. Defending your point of view may not always be a popular position to take. Tell me about a time when you had to do that.
10. Has there been a time when you thought you had a better idea than that of your supervisor(s)? How did you handle the situation?
11. Tell me about a time when you had a miscommunication with a client or coworker and how you resolved it.
12. Describe a time when you had to communicate something unpleasant to a supervisor.
13. At one time or another, we all have had problems getting our point across. Give me an example of when this happened to you and how you handled it.
14. Tell me about a time when you didn't communicate something unpleasant but should have. What were the consequences?
15. Gaining the cooperation of others can be difficult. Give a specific example of when you had to do that.
16. What is your definition of effective communication?
17. Tell me about a job experience when you had to speak up in order to be sure that others knew what you thought or felt.
18. Describe a time when you had to convince your boss or a person in leadership to grant you funds for a project or initiative you wished to implement .
19. Describe some projects you worked on that required strong writing skills. What was the level of your responsibility? Who was the primary audience?
20. How would you characterize your written and oral communication skills?
21. How would you define effective communication? What skills do you have that make you a good communicator? Give an example of a time you used those skills effectively.

22. How do you choose which medium/media to use to reach your various audiences? What are the strengths and weaknesses associated with each medium?
23. What are some of the strategies you have used to communicate technical information to a wide variety of people with differing levels of expertise?
24. How often in your professional experience have you encountered conflict between yourself and the subject of your story? Describe one such example.
25. Give an example of a time you were frustrated in the workplace and how you communicate your frustration.
26. Give an example of a time when someone told you that you had made an error. Describe how you reacted and what you said in your defense.

### **Leadership Abilities or Potential**

1. What do you consider to be important attributes of a supervisor?
2. What kind of supervisor have you enjoyed working for most? Least?
3. Give me a specific example of when you had to motivate a group of people to get an important job done.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to “rally the troops” to complete a difficult assignment. What did you do and what were the results?
5. How do you balance the need to supervise your team without doing the work yourself?
6. Describe a situation when you had to mobilize others to take action toward a specific goal.
7. If you had to describe your leadership style, what would it be? (Follow-up) Tell me about how you have exhibited that style on the job.
8. Give me an example of when you had to exert your authority to get something accomplished. (Follow-up) What were the consequences?
9. Project managers or leaders are expected to give feedback to team members. Describe a time when you’ve given feedback to someone who is not contributing quality work. Describe a time when you’ve given such feedback to someone who did not report to you.
10. Describe a situation in which you were responsible for a project and at least one of your team members had more experience or expertise than you did in one area. How did you handle this while leading the project?
11. Understanding how other people process information is often a part of being a leader on a project. Describe an incident that you’ve experienced where understanding other people’s behavioral styles was key to the project’s success.
12. Give me an example of a time when you’ve been instrumental in empowering a person or a group to accomplish something.
13. At times, a situation arises when we can really “make our mark” on the project/business we’re working on. Tell me about a time when you were involved in that kind of situation and how you took advantage of it.
14. How frequently do you meet with the employees under your direct supervision as a group? What do you do in preparation? At the meeting? After the meeting?
15. Describe a recent problem you had for which you involved your staff to arrive at a solution? What approach did you take to get them to accomplish the task?
16. Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough morale problem.
17. Tell me about a time when you had to tell a staff member that you were dissatisfied with his/her work.
18. Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution to a problem between two employees.
19. Describe how you communicate priority projects to your staff without making them feel overwhelmed.
20. How have you made sure that your employees are accountable?
21. What do you typically do when you hear of a problem in your area of responsibility?

22. How useful have you found written procedures and guidelines in helping you manage your area?
23. Do you believe that the chain of command is important? Why? When do you think it might inhibit organizational effectiveness?

### **Management Aptitude/Style**

1. How would you describe your management philosophy and style? Give an example that illustrates this.
2. Have you ever had to initiate corrective action for an employee? If so, what steps did you take to implement this action?
3. What has been effective in your approach to dealing with subordinates? What hasn't worked as well?
4. Some managers keep a very close check on their organization. Others use a loose rein. Give an example that shows what patterns you follow? How has it changed during the last few years?
5. How would you describe your standards for performance? What would your staff say? What would your supervisor say?
6. How have you dealt with an employee who was not doing his or her job properly?
7. What philosophy and techniques do you use in motivating your staff and energizing them?
8. How have you dealt with an employee who was not measuring up to the increasing demands of a job?
9. How would your staff describe your delegation style?
10. How have you encouraged your employees (or others) to follow you? Give an example.
11. How have you used your power or authority to achieve your goals? Give an example.
12. Give an example of how you delegated responsibility for a recent assignment; for instance, what steps you took to delegate the assignment, and what you did to monitor it.

### **Ability to Manage Change**

1. Describe the part you played in implementing a new system and/or technology in your organization.
2. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with someone who expressed the sentiment, "Why change when we have always done it this way?"
3. What new technologies are available that you would like to implement to improve your workplace/role/position/efficiency? Why?
4. How have you encouraged people to adopt new techniques or technologies?
5. How have you instilled ownership in people when new ways of doing things are introduced?
6. Give an example of a time when you were trying to meet a deadline, you were interrupted, and did not make the deadline. How did you respond?
7. Describe a time when you performed a task outside your perceived responsibilities. What was the task? Why did you perceive it to be outside your responsibilities? What was the outcome?

### **Planning and Organizational Skills**

1. Describe a project that you worked on. Tell me about how you managed the project to assure that all deadlines were met.
2. Talk me through a project you've done on the job.
3. Describe a situation when you had to juggle several projects at the same time.
4. Tell me about how you typically schedule your day. What is your approach to time management?
5. Describe a time when you had to adjust your plans due to changing circumstances.
6. Tell me about a situation in which you were responsible for formulating plans for a large project.
7. There are times on the job when you have to develop a plan and stick to it, despite the obstacles. Can you tell me about a time when that was true for you?

8. Seeing a new way of doing a job can many times lead to greater productivity. Give me an example of when you were able to see and implement a new way of getting the job done.
9. Tell me about a time when you were responsible for an aspect of a job that was particularly uninteresting. How did you deal with it?
10. Tell me about your technique/method/system for keeping track of matters requiring your attention.
11. Have you worked in a situation in which there were constant surprises or unanticipated events? How did you manage responsibilities?
12. Describe a time when your supervisor placed excessive demands on you and how you handled it.
13. Tell me about a suggestion you made on the job to improve the way things worked. What was the result?
14. Describe a project that you were responsible for that required a large amount of energy over a long period of time.
15. It's 4:30 on a Friday afternoon. Your supervisor gives you an assignment that needs to be finished by 8:00 Monday morning. You have already made plans to be away the entire weekend. Have you ever been in this situation? What did you do?
16. Tell me about a situation you wish that you had handled differently based on the outcome. What was the situation? What would you do differently if faced with a similar situation?

### **Problem Solving and Strategic Thinking**

1. Describe a time when you developed an innovative approach or solution that resulted in the implementation of a new idea.
2. Describe a time when you developed a creative solution to a problem or designed an enhancement to a plan.
3. Give me an example of a time when you identified a key strategy that had positive results.
4. Tell me specifically what experience you have had in defining strategies to position new services or another organizational change.
5. Give me an example of a time when you demonstrated "out-of-the-box" thinking.
6. Tell me about one of the recent challenges you've faced strategically in your current job.
7. Give me an example of how you were able to take some theoretical principles that you have studied and transfer them to your job.
8. Give me an example of a time when you were able to look at a challenge with a new perspective that resulted in an innovative solution, strategy, or approach.
9. Tell me about a time when you designed an innovative approach that had a dramatic and positive impact.
10. Describe a time when you successfully implemented an idea that led to better results.
11. Give me an example of an accomplishment, idea, or strategy that illustrates you were not governed by traditional rules or ways of thinking.
12. Describe a situation that demonstrates your ability to apply creativity and innovation to solving a problem.

### **Technical Skills**

1. Tell me about your expertise in [insert field].
2. I see you have worked with [insert technology]. Tell me about its features and benefits.
3. What experience have you had working with (insert technology)?
4. Give me examples of your use of [insert technology] and how you adopted it for your last organization.
5. This position requires a variety of skills. Describe your absolute strengths applicable to the position.
6. Tell me how you stay current in your field on new or evolving [insert technologies or programs].