

Behavioral Interview Guide

— WORKBOOK —



STERLING
life sciences



Get a 9x interview success rate by asking the right questions.

This is your guide to a great interview based on the best practices of behavioral interviewing. To [improve your chances at landing the best candidate](#), remember three simple things:

1. SELL YOUR COMPANY:

While you're evaluating the candidate, they're also evaluating you. The best candidates have more than one option and being fair, open, positive, and respectful goes a long way to making sure they will want to work for you.

2. CONSISTENCY:

Ask everyone the same questions. This makes it easier to compare your candidates.

3. ASK FOLLOW UPS:

For every printed question, ask a few follow-ups to get the *real* information you're looking for. Remember to use *Who/What/When/Where/Why* and *How*, or the *STAR* technique:

Situation – tell me about a special situation where you used this skill or behavior.

Task – what task were you responsible for in this project?

Action – what action did you take to move the project forward or resolve the conflict?

Result – what were the results of the actions you took?

Preparing for your Interview:

GOAL:

Prepare yourself, and your candidate, for the interview.

DIRECTIONS:

Provide your candidate with directions to your location, and any other important information they should know, e.g.,

- parking
- building access
- where reception is located
- who they can ask for when they come in

PREPARE THE SPACE:

Ensure you have a private, quiet, and distraction-free area where you can conduct your interview.

READ & PRINT DOCUMENTS

Read through and print copies of the interview guide, candidate's resume, cover letter, and any other submitted documents (transcripts, work samples, test results, etc.) for you and your co-interviewers.

Now, you're ready to go.

Introductions

GOAL:

Make the candidate feel comfortable when they arrive.

THANKS:

Thank the candidate for coming.

COMFORT:

Make sure the candidate is comfortable – offer them a drink, ask if there is any way you can accommodate them to fully participate in the interview.

INTRODUCTIONS

Introduce every person participating in the interviews.

AGENDA

Explain what you'll be covering at the interview.

ENCOURAGEMENT

“Interviews can make people nervous, and that’s ok. Our goal today is the same as yours, to figure out if this job is a great fit for you.”

Resume Review

GOAL:

Discover the candidate's story, and how they make decisions.

QUESTION 1:

Tell me how you think this position with our company will be different from previous experiences you've had?

QUESTION 2:

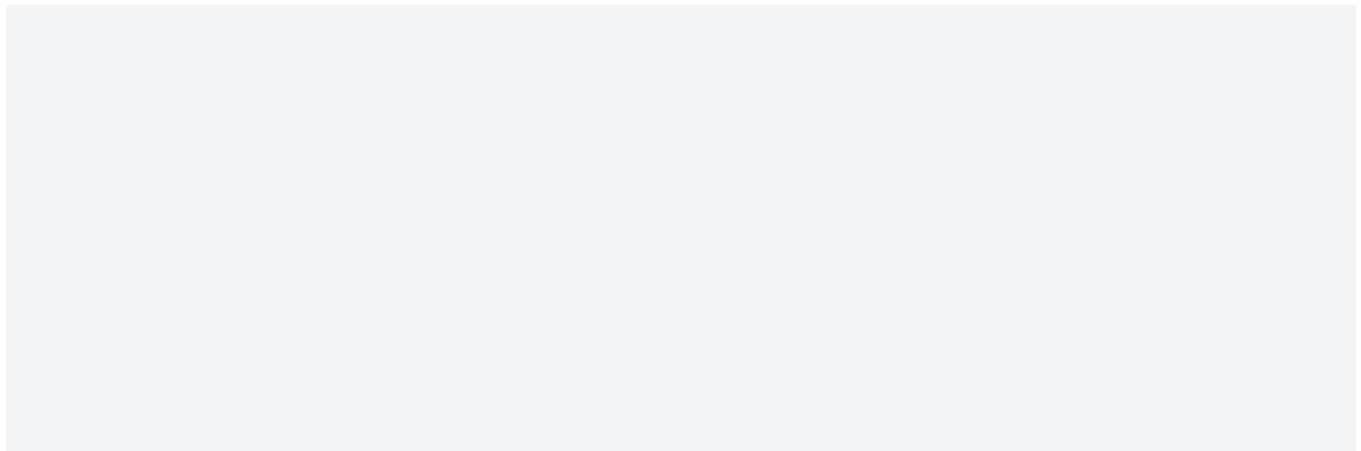
In two or three sentences, tell me what the story of your career is, and how this role is the next logical chapter.

FOLLOW UPS:

For their last two positions ask the following questions:

- Why did you take this job?
- What were you accountable or responsible for?
- What did you learn in this job that will help you here?
- Why did you leave this job?

NOTES:



Skills, Experience & Qualifications

GOAL:

Discover if the candidate has the ability do the job.

To understand if the candidate can do the job, ask questions about times they've used these skills in the past. Here are some examples. Remember to ask follow-up questions to dig into the details.

- *Tell me about a time you _____.*
- *Do you have experience with _____? Tell me about this.*

SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:

QUALIFICATIONS:

Competencies

GOAL:

Discover if the candidate has the traits to do the job well.

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION:

- Pick the top **three to five competencies** that match your job.
- Highlight **one to three questions** to ask for each of your chosen competencies, for a *maximum* of 15 questions.

PERSONAL COMPETENCIES - FOR ALL JOBS:**INTELLIGENCE****ABILITY TO LEARN QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY**

- What is a really difficult problem that you have solved?
- Tell us about a complex situation in which you had to learn a lot, quickly. How did you go about learning and what was the outcome?
- What have you been reading and learning lately?
- What have you done to upgrade your skills in the past five years?

DECISION MAKING**USES OBJECTIVE PROCESS FOR DECISIONS**

- What is a difficult decision you've had to make at work? How did you arrive at your decision? What was the result?
- Give me an example of a work decision you made that you ultimately regretted.
- What analytical or decision-making tools or approaches do you use?
- What kinds of work decisions do you find yourself delaying or putting off?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision with incomplete information. What did you do?

ADAPTABILITY**DEALS WITH CHANGE AND AMBIGUITY WELL**

- Tell me about a situation in which you have had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives.
- Tell us about a time when you have had to alter your behaviour to fit the situation.
- In what ways have people at work encouraged you to change your behaviour?
- Tell us about a time when you have altered your priorities to meet others' expectations

CREATIVITY**ABILITY TO GENERATE NEW APPROACHES AND INNOVATION**

- When was the last time you thought "outside the box" - why was this needed?
- Tell me about your most creative achievement at work.
- Tell me about a recurring problem that you've solved in a unique or unusual way.
- When have you brought an innovative idea to your team? How was it received?
- Are you better at creating a vision, or implementing one?

HONESTY / INTEGRITY**DOESN'T CUT CORNERS ETHICALLY, DOES WHAT IS RIGHT - NOT WHAT IS EASY**

- Tell me about a time when you were penalized for doing what is right.
- Tell me about a business situation when you felt honesty was inappropriate. Why?
- Give an example of a policy you conformed to but didn't agree with. Why?
- Have you ever confronted unethical behaviour? What happened?
- When have you 'taken a stand' with an unpopular point of view?

RESOURCEFULNESS**FINDS WAYS AROUND OBSTACLES OR LACK OF RESOURCES**

- Share a task where you faced a seemingly impossible obstacle and you found a way to succeed.
- What is a major challenge you have faced that required resourcefulness?
- Describe a situation in which you saw a potential problem as an opportunity.
- Tell us about a project or task where things deteriorated quickly. What did you do?
- Tell us about one of your biggest failures. What did you learn?

ORGANIZATION / TIME MANAGEMENT**EFFECTIVELY PRIORITIZES. PLANS, ORGANIZES, BUDGETS, IN AN EFFICIENT MANNER**

- Describe how you organize your work day. How do you prioritize your activities?
- Tell me about a project that you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks?
- When has a project or event you organized not gone according to plan? What happened?
- Describe a situation that required you to do a number of things at the same time. How did you handle it?
- When was the last time you missed a deadline? What happened?

SELF-AWARENESS**DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR OWN STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND BIASES**

- How do you want to develop and grow in your next job?
- In past jobs, what did you like to do least? Most? How did you realize this?
- What is your greatest regret? Greatest achievement?
- In what ways are you trying to change your behavior? Why?
- What qualifications do you lack for this job? What will be the hardest things for you?
- What would you consider your best characteristic and why?

INTERNAL DRIVE & URGENCY**STRONG DESIRE TO ACHIEVE. BIASED TOWARDS ACTION**

- Tell me about a time when you were extremely driven to succeed. Why?
- What motivates you at work? What are you passionate about?
- Describe a project or idea that you worked on well above the call of duty.
- How would you describe the pace at which you work? What would others say is your level of urgency?
- When have you found yourself in a competitive situation? How did you handle it?
- Would you consider yourself a self-motivated person? Can you provide an example of when your self-motivation made a difference?

PERSISTENCE & RESILIENCE**CONTINUES TO MOVE FORWARD WHEN THINGS GET DIFFICULT**

- Tell me about a major work-related setback you have faced and overcome.
- When have you seen your tenacity or resilience at work really pay off?
- Tell me about a time when you refused to give up when most would have.
- Describe a project that you had to work on for an extended period of time, and how you stayed engaged.
- Tell me about a time when you turned a dream into a reality.

SELF-INITIATIVE

ABILITY TO SET THEIR OWN PRIORITIES RELATED TO THE ORGANIZATION'S GOALS WITHOUT DIRECTION FROM OTHERS

- What is one of the best ideas you have come up with in your professional career?
- Describe ways you have found to make your job more efficient in the past.
- Tell me about a project that you proactively initiated and delivered.
- Describe when you found yourself working with a team that is not motivated.
- Tell me about a time when your initiative caused a big change to occur.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

ABILITY TO STAY CALM, FIND SOLUTIONS, AND REACH OBJECTIVE DECISIONS IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

- What have you done in the past to prevent a situation from becoming too stressful for you or your colleagues to handle?
- What has been the most stressful situation you have ever found yourself in at work? How did you handle it?
- Give me an example of a high stress situation which required you to keep a positive attitude?
- Can you describe a time when your stress resulted in making errors at work?

ATTENTION TO DETAIL

DOESN'T MISS IMPORTANT DETAILS EVEN WHEN THEY'RE BUSY

- Tell me about a situation that required great precision to complete the task.
- Give me a good example of when you discovered an error that was overlooked.
- When have you found it valuable to use a detailed checklist or procedure list to reduce potential errors on the job?
- How do you ensure that you get the right details from a customer or colleague?
- Describe a situation when you coordinated several things at the same time.

ANALYTICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

ANALYZES PEOPLE AND PROBLEMS IN-DEPTH AND SEES ROOT CAUSES

- Describe a time when you had to solve a difficult problem, but didn't have all the necessary information at hand – what did you do?
- Give me an example of a time when you actively defined several solutions to a single problem.
- Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities.
- Tell me about a situation where you had to analyze information to solve a difficult and complex problem. What information did you research and how did you use it?
- Give us an example of where you dug more deeply for facts than was expected.

STRATEGIC THINKING

SEES TRENDS, AND HOW DECISIONS RELATE TO THE BIG PICTURE

- Give me an example of how you reached a strategic business decision by an organized review of the facts and weighing of options.
 - What are you doing to remain knowledgeable about your industry/vocation?
 - What are the biggest future opportunities in your industry/vocation?
 - Tell me about a time when you used good judgment in solving a strategic problem.
 - In what ways have you contributed to strategic planning in your previous work?
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INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES - FOR JOBS THAT INVOLVE REGULAR INTERACTION WITH OTHER PEOPLE:

LISTENING

ACCURATELY UNDERSTANDS OPINIONS AND FEELING OF OTHER PEOPLE AND CAN VERBALIZE THIS

- Describe a time you had to deal with an angry customer or co-worker.
- Give me an example of when your listening skills proved crucial to an outcome.
- Are you familiar with the term 'active listening'? How would others rate you on this? What tricks do you employ to do it well?
- Tell me a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you.
- What are the situations you have been in where it was critical that you listened well?

INITIATING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

OFTEN ASKS FOR FEEDBACK, LISTENS CALMLY, AND USES NEW INSIGHT FOR GROWTH

- What constructive feedback have you received? What have you done about it?
- How often do you ask for constructive feedback from people?
- What have been the most difficult criticisms for you to accept? What was your reaction to those criticisms?
- What are things you are working on that are a direct result of feedback?
- Describe a time when someone shared feedback with you that was hard and courageous for them to provide.

TEAM PLAYER**PRIORITIZES TEAM OVER SELF. WORKS WELL WITH PEERS AND SUPERVISORS**

- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise.
- Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team that did not get along.
- Describe the most difficult person with whom you have had to work with.

COMMUNICATION**COMMUNICATES CLEARLY 1:1, WITH THE TEAM, AND WITH CUSTOMERS. PROACTIVE TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE IS INFORMED**

- Give me an example of a difficult situation that required careful communication.
- Tell me about a recent experience in making a speech, pitch or presentation.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a time when you taught someone something.
- What feedback have you received regarding your writing skills?

PERSUASION & NEGOTIATION**ABLE TO CONVINCE OTHERS TO PURSUE A COURSE OF ACTION**

- What are the key principles you follow when you want to be persuasive?
- Describe a time when your persuasion skills proved effective. Ineffective?
- What do you observe in others as effective ways to persuade people?
- What was the most stressful professional negotiation you have been involved in?
- Describe a situation in which your negotiation skills proved effective. Ineffective?

**LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES - FOR JOBS THAT INVOLVE
GUIDING ANY SIZE OF TEAM:****ASSERTIVENESS****PRESENTS CLEAR & STRONG OPINION WHILE BEING OPEN TO OTHER IDEAS**

- How would your coworkers describe your level of assertiveness?
- Some of the best business ideas come from an individual's ability to challenge others' ways of thinking in a mature way. Tell me about a time when you were successful in challenging others' ideas. What does this say about your ability to be assertive?
- When there is a difference of opinion, do you tend to confront people directly, indirectly or just let the situation resolve itself?
- Give us a couple examples in which you were highly assertive. One example when the outcome was favourable and the other when it was not.
- Please provide an example of a time when you informed a superior you were unable to do something they asked. What did you say?
- Describe a time you took a stand on an unpopular decision you made.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**ENCOURAGES HEALTHY CONFLICT THAT LEADS TO BETTER DECISIONS**

- Describe a situation in which you prevented conflict.
- Tell me about a time when you resolved a conflict.
- Describe a situation where you eliminated silos or barriers to teamwork.
- Describe a situation where conflict had a negative outcome. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome?
- Describe the last time you confronted a peer about something they did that bothered you. What were the circumstances? After realizing the problem, how long did you wait to confront the peer? What did you do? How did you feel about it afterwards?

ABILITY TO INSPIRE**ABILITY TO MOTIVATE TEAMS TO BETTER ENGAGEMENT AND RESULTS**

- Give us some examples when you displayed leadership.
- Describe a situation where you needed to inspire a team. What challenges did you face, what did you do, what were the results?
- What methods have you used to get reluctant people to follow your lead?
- Has poor motivation on someone else's part ever damaged anything you were trying to accomplish?

LEADING CHANGE

KNOWS HOW TO PLAN FOR AND INSPIRE A TEAM THROUGH SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS

- In what ways have you helped change your organization?
- Describe the things you consider and the steps you take when you want to initiate a new idea.
- Tell me about a time when you had to convince senior management or a team that change was necessary.
- What are the key principles someone should follow when making significant changes in an organization? Tell me about a time you used them.
- What is your approach to communicating changes?

COACHING & DEVELOPMENT

A PEOPLE BUILDER. COACHES PEOPLE TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE, AND PREPARES THEM FOR FUTURE ROLES

- Describe your coaching philosophy.
- Tell me about your most difficult coaching challenge & most successful example.
- Tell me about your delivery of performance reviews. How would your direct reports describe them?
- Tell me about a time when you coached someone to help them improve their performance.
- How would your previous direct reports rate you on the benefit they received from your coaching?

EMPOWERMENT

INCREASES ENGAGEMENT BY PUSHING DECISIONS TO THE LOWEST LEVEL AND PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES FOR TEAMMATES TO SUCCEED.

- How do you decide what to delegate? How hands on are you?
- How often do you feel frustrated because people on your team expect you to make decisions they should make?
- How much do you empower people, and what are the benefits and risks of empowering them?
- Give us some examples of projects where you have made the best use of delegation.
- Tell us about a time you delegated something that didn't go well. How did you respond? What did you learn from this?

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

CREATES HIGH LEVEL OF ACCOUNTABILITY. GIVES DESERVED PRAISE AND CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

- Tell me about the performance management system or philosophy you use. What happens when your people fail to perform?
- Give me an example of when you gave negative feedback. Positive feedback.
- What approaches have you used with low performers? High performers?
- What have you done to improve teamwork in teams reporting to you?
- How do you motivate your teams?

Closing

GOAL:

Leave the candidate with a good impression of your organization.

QUESTIONS:

Ask the candidate if they have any questions.

REVIEW:

Go over the details of the job and ask if these still work for them, e.g.,

- salary,
- benefits,
- start date

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES:

Ask how they view this in light of any other offers or opportunities they are pursuing.

CANDIDATE FEEDBACK:

Let the candidate know how the interview went.

NEXT STEPS:

Be specific about where you are at in your process, how many other candidates you're interviewing, and when they should hear back from you. Offer them a way to follow up if you don't get back to them by the date you proposed.

APPRECIATION:

Thank them for coming.

Scorecard

Each interviewer should complete a separate score card after the interview. Multi-interviewer discussions of the candidate should compare scores and reasoning in an attempt to come to an objective conclusion on the candidate’s suitability.

RATING SCALE: 1 = NONEXISTENT 2 = VERY LITTLE 3 = ACCEPTABLE 4 = VERY GOOD 5 = EXCEPTIONAL

SKILLS	SCORE (1-5)	REASONING
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
COMPETENCIES		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES		
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

TOTAL SCORE: _____

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION: NO MAYBE YES