Behavioral Based Interview Guide

Behavioral-based questions are based on the premise that the best predictor of a candidate's future job performance is his or her past job behavior. By gaining insight into a candidate's past experiences, you will develop a reliable indicator of how that individual most likely will perform in the future.

While it is true that using this technique may take more time than traditional hypothetical ("how would you handle …") or open-ended questions ("tell us about your experience…"), the payoff with behavioral-based questions is that you can make a more informed decision and have a better chance of selecting the best-fit candidate.

> *Why it matters?*
>
> *One of the most important tasks a manager undertakes is the recruitment of new employees. Bad hiring decisions can affect everyone on the team and within the organization. When you make the right hiring decision you increase productivity and boost the morale of your team.*

Behavioral Based Interview Questions by Leadership Competency

Advocacy

- Describe a time when you implemented an idea that was unpopular, but you felt it would improve the organization. How did you champion your idea?

- Give us an example when you had to be a champion for an idea or action about which you were not fully supportive. What did you do to ensure your success?

- Please tell us a time when you encountered conflicting interests from various stakeholders or teams. How did you approach the situation in order to meet the needs of these stakeholders?

- Tell me about a time when a request or idea from your faculty or staff conflicted with organizational objectives. How did you balance these competing interests?

- Tell us how you have encouraged and supported continuous professional development for your faculty or staff. What have you done?

- Give an example of a time when you realized one of your direct reports was overburdened with work. What did you do? What was the outcome of the situation?

- Tell me about a time when you were responsible for motivating others. Were you able to? What did you do? What was the outcome?

- Tell me about a time that you had to stand up for one of your employees. What were the circumstances? What was the outcome?

Emotional Intelligence

- Describe a time when you were able to turn your negative emotions about a situation into positive actions.

- Describe a time when your awareness of your own emotions prevented you from responding to a situation in a way that you would regret. What was the situation and how did you react?

- Give an example of time when you noticed another person's feelings – and this allowed you to better respond to their issue.

- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stress at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a coworker. How did you approach the situation?

- Please tell us about a time when you had to give negative feedback to another person. How did you handle it and what was the result?

- Describe the impact of your work style on others. How do you adjust your style to achieve your objectives? Give an example.

- When undertaking a change, how do you predict various reactions? What plans do you make to address them? Give an example.

Humility

- Describe a time when you were able to turn your negative emotions about a situation into positive actions.

- Describe a time when your awareness of your own emotions prevented you from responding to a situation in a way that you would regret. What was the situation and how did you react?

- Give an example of time when you noticed another person's feelings – and this allowed you to better respond to their issues or concerns.

- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stress at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

- Tell me about a time when you had a conflict with a coworker. How did you approach the situation?

- Give an example of a time you had to sacrifice a personal goal for an organizational goal.

- What was the last work-related mistake you made? What did you learn from it?

- When was the last time you shared credit for a successful project or event? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Role Model

- Describe a time when you went "above and beyond" your job responsibilities.

- Give me an example of a time when you showed initiative and took the lead.

- How do you stay current with ongoing changes in your profession? Give an example of a time when you responded to one of these changes.

- Tell me about a time when a co-worker or subordinate approached you for guidance on a work-related issue. What was the issue and how did you respond?

- What performance standards have you set for yourself? How do you ensure that you meet your own standards?

- Tell me about a time that you had conflicting commitments. What did you do? What was the outcome?

- Describe what you have done in the last six months to stay current in your profession.

- Give an example of a time that you used one of your strengths to help an employee or a team to succeed.

Integrity

- Describe some instances when you kept commitments to others even to your own detriment. Do you feel you did the right thing?

- Give an example of a situation where you felt an honest answer would be inappropriate. How did you handle the situation?

- Tell me about a time when you took responsibility for a mistake. What was the mistake and how did you fix it?

- Tell us how you handle sensitive information in the workplace. What strategies do you utilize to maintain confidentiality when pressured by others?

- Give an example of a situation in which it was imperative that you maintain confidentiality, yet someone asked you to release the confidential information. What did you do?

- Have you ever been in a situation where your manager or leader asked you to do something that you did not think was appropriate? What did you do?

- Provide an example of a time when you had to build trust with a work associate. What were the circumstances? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Transparency

- Tell me about a time when you had to communicate an unpopular decision that you made to your team. How did you explain your decision? How was it received?

- Describe a situation in which you elicited feedback from team members to ensure that your decision and motives were understood. If confusion existed, how did you clarify your message?

- What actions have you have taken to foster open communication with your colleagues or clients?

- When tasked with communicating a policy or procedural change within your organization, how do you decide how much information to share and with whom?

- Describe a time when you utilized transparency to create an effective and trusting work environment.

- Tell me about a time when you took responsibility for a mistake that had been made before anyone realized that you had made a mistake.

- Give an example of a time when you were slow to share information with your team and this had a negative impact on them.

Communication

- Describe a time when you had difficulty communicating an idea to another person or group. What was the message and how did you successfully convey it?

- What is the most difficult idea or process you have ever had to explain? How did you approach this and were you successful?

- Tell me about a time when you used written communication to express an idea that should have been communicated verbally (or vice versa).

- Have you ever had to communicate with an individual who you felt did not value your opinion? Were you successful?

- Tell me about a time when your opinion of someone (either positive or negative) affected your ability to communicate with him or her.

- Describe a time when you had to adjust your communication style based on the audience. Specifically what did you do and how did it help?

- Describe a time when you had to explain something you knew well to someone who had difficulty understanding the subject. How did you do it and what was the outcome?

Problem Solving

- Give an example of time when you underestimated the severity of a problem. What did you do once you realized the problem was more serious than you had originally thought?

- Describe a time when you had to solve a problem with little to no guidance. What did you do and were you successful?

- Tell me about a time when you recognized a potential problem before it became serious. What steps did you take to correct it?

- Describe a time when you identified more than one solution to a problem. What resources did you use?

- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.

- Describe a situation when a subordinate (or peer) came to you to discuss a problem. How did you resolve it?

- Describe a difficult work-related problem that required you to come up with a creative solution. Tell me the steps you took and why.

- Give an example of a problem with a customer, client, or patient. How did you deal with it? What were the steps you took and what was the outcome?

- Tell me about a process/procedure that you implemented that did not solve the problem. What did you learn from this?

Political Savvy

- Tell me about a time when workplace politics affected your job. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome?

- Give an example of a time when you used your knowledge of workplace politics to your advantage.

- Describe a time when you unknowingly made a political misstep. Were you able to resolve your mistake and how did you do it?

- Tell me about a time when you were able to leverage your connection with a colleague or leader of your organization to accomplish a goal.

- Describe a situation in which workplace politics stalled or thwarted an initiative of yours. How did you handle this resistance?

- Give me an example of how your knowledge of your organization's culture helped you make a decision.

- Tell me what steps you took to go about learning how your current organization works.

- Describe a time when you agreed to implement someone else's idea over your own. How did you approach the situation? What was the outcome of this decision?

Strategic Thinking

- Give an example of a strategy you developed to achieve a business or organizational goal or objective. Was it successful?

- Tell me about a time when you did something completely different from the plan and/or assignment. Why did you change tactics? What was the end result?

- Are you more detailed oriented or more conceptual in your thought process when working on an assignment? Give an example.

- Give me an example of a time when you suggested a better way to do a task to make work easier or save money.

- Describe what steps/methods you have used to define/identify a vision for your unit/position.

- In your current or former position, what were your long- and short-term goals?

- What have you done to help your team align their work with your organization's vision? What were the benefits?

- Give examples of what you have done to help your team think like visionaries.

- Describe the process you have used to measure progress towards the organization's vision. What was the outcome?

Execution

- Tell me about a time when you were the lead on a project or task. How did you organize the workload and set objectives to ensure the success of the project?

- Describe a situation in which you had some difficulties in achieving desired results. How did you succeed?

- Think of a time when you had both large and small projects to complete. How did you go about setting priorities and completing those projects? What challenges did that present?

- What have you done to improve the short-term strength of your work unit? What have you done to strengthen the long-term stability of your work unit?

- Describe a time when you missed a deadline. What were the circumstances and impact of this?

- Tell me about the process you use for establishing goals. Describe what resources and actions that you took to meet a recent goal.

- Give an example of a time when you took a known risk in order to achieve a work goal or objective. What were the results?

Accountability

- Give an example of a time when you made a mistake. What was it and how did you fix it?

- How have you handled special responsibilities or assignments given to you in the past that may not have been part of your routine?

- Think back to a time when setting a positive example had the most beneficial impact on staff. How did you determine that a strong example was needed?

- Tell us about a time when you set performance standards for your team. Give an example and explain how you communicated these standards.

- Share an example of a time when you had many demands placed on your time. How did you ensure that you were available to meet the needs of your customers, as well as your coworkers, supervisors, and subordinates?

- Describe a time when you were unable to follow through on a commitment you made. What happened? How did you explain this to the other party?

- Discuss a time when your department was not meeting established goals. What did you do to redirect the department so that the goals could be achieved?

Judgment

- Please tell us about a time when you had to make a decision when there were no existing policies or procedures to guide you through it. Please describe the situation and how you arrived at your decision.

- Describe to us a time when you had to make a difficult decision. Why did you arrive at the decision and take the actions that you did.

- Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

- Give an example of a time when you were faced with a complex work-related matter and you could not decide on the best course of action. What did you do?

- Tell me about a time that you had to make an "executive" decision on your own, when you typically would be able to ask your leader.

- Give an example of a work-related decision you had to make. Please describe how you made that decision. What were the steps you went through to make the decision? Did you involve others? Why or why not?

- Provide an example of a decision you made that did not turn out as you had expected. What were the implications of the decision? What did you learn?

- Describe a time when you put off making a decision. What was the reason for the procrastination? What was the outcome?

Financial Management

- Can you think of an example of when you have been involved in your organization's financial decisions? What was your role? What kinds of data did you use in making the decisions?

- Think of time when your department's needs exceeded your allowed budget. How did you prioritize these needs and what was the end result?

- Have you ever had to prepare the budget for your department? How did you approach the task?

- Tell me about your financial management responsibilities and give an example of your success in this area.

- Give an example of time when you had to manage a situation that involved severe financial outcomes. How did you use policies and procedures to ensure your effectiveness?

- Can you describe a time when you used financial data to make a key decision regarding your department/ organization?

- Give an example of a situation when, by recognizing and considering the financial implications of a decision, you decided to do something different than what you had planned.

- Tell me about a time that you miscalculated the cost of a project. What was the outcome as a result of this?

Fair and Legal Management

- Describe a time when you had to follow through with a policy or procedure that you did not agree with. What was it and how did you handle it?

- Tell me about a time when you knowingly disregarded a policy. Why did you do this and what was the outcome?

- Give an example of time when you treated all of your employees equally, even though you were tempted to show preferential treatment to certain members of your team. What changed your mind?

- Tell us about a time when you were pressured by others to bend (or break) the rules. Explain the situation and how you handled it.

- Give a specific example of how you have ensured your department's compliance with relevant laws.

- Describe to me what you have done to increase your awareness and understanding of university/state/federal requirements.

- Tell me about a time when you had to handle a situation involving others with differing beliefs, values, and ideas.

- Describe to me what you have done to create a work environment where differences are valued, encouraged, and supported.

Resolve

- Describe a time when you had a difficult decision to make. What was it and what did you do?

- Tell me about a time when you had to help two peers settle a dispute. How did you identify the issues? What did you do? What was the result?

- Tell us about a time when you had to address a difficult or uncomfortable subject with an employee. How did you address the situation and what was the outcome?

- Tell us about a time when you were successful (or unsuccessful) in resolving a problem that had a department or organizational impact.

- Tell us about a time when you had to resolve a difficult situation when there were not established policies or resources to assist you. How did you approach the situation and did the outcome meet your expectation?

- Describe a time when you led an unpopular assignment or project and pushed ahead because you knew it was the "right" thing to do. What was the outcome?

- Tell me about a time when you had to give constructive feedback that you believed would not be well received. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?

- Tell me about a time when you had to provide constructive feedback to a peer, co-worker, supervisor, or direct report. What were the circumstances? What was the outcome?

Talent Selection

- Give an example of time when you were responsible for hiring a new employee. How did you approach the task?

- What was your biggest mistake in hiring someone? What happened? How did you handle the situation?

- What is your philosophy when it comes to hiring an employee and how has it guided you in your recruiting/hiring process in the past?

- What is your experience in managing or supervising a diverse group of employees with varied backgrounds and skills? How have you ensured the best fit of employees for each job?

- Tell me about someone you hired who didn't work out as well as you had hoped. What were the reasons for this? How did this change your future hiring process?

- Give an example of when an employee left your department. How did you determine what skill sets were needed in a replacement? What other things did you consider? Who else did you involve?

- What are your criteria for selecting a person who is a good fit for the position and department? How do you determine what is a good fit?

Coaching/Mentoring

- Provide an example of a time when you had to give negative feedback to a co-worker, subordinate, or even your leadership team. How did you approach the situation and what was the outcome?

- Have you ever had a subordinate (or a co-worker/teammate) who had difficulty completing tasks? What action did you take?

- Tell me about a time when you inspired someone to do a good job. How did you motivate this person?

- Give an example of time when you taught someone a new skill. What methods did you use to teach him or her and were you successful?

- Have you ever had a subordinate whose work was always marginal? How did you deal with that person? What happened?

- Describe a time when your use of positive reinforcement changed someone's behavior and/or improved his or her performance.

- Describe a time when you did not provide the necessary coaching to achieve desired behaviors and results. What did you learn from this experience and what would you have done differently?

- Describe for me what you do when coaching a peer or colleague. Give an example.

Collaboration

- Explain how you worked with someone outside your immediate work group to accomplish a common goal.

- Describe a time when you led a team that did not agree on one or more aspect(s) of a project or task. How did you encourage everyone to work together? Were you successful?

- Tell me about a time when you recognized your team's achievements. What did you do?

- Describe a situation when others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

- Describe how you contributed to the success of a team of which you were a member. Provide specific examples.

- To what extent does your position require you to work across department or functional line? Describe some of the networks/relationships you developed and how you developed them.

- Describe the actions you take to encourage team members to feel comfortable sharing their opinions, even if they are different from your own. Provide a specific example.

- Interacting with others can be challenging at times. Have you ever had difficulty getting along with a peer, co-worker, direct report, supervisor, or others at work? How did you handle the situation?

Facilitative Decision-making

- Give an example of a time when you had to make an unpopular decision. What was the result?

- Tell me about a time when you sought advice from your peers when faced with a difficult decision.

- Give me an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place. What was the outcome?

- Describe a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision. Do you feel you made the right decision?

- Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision about something that you would have preferred having more information about. What did you do?

- Tell us about a time when you were in a group or leading a group and the group could not reach consensus on a decision. Please tell us step-by-step what actions you took and the outcome.

- How do you determine when to involve your employees/co-workers regarding a decision? Give an example.

Behavioral Based Interviewing in Action

Using behavioral based interview questions is the best way to discover crucial insight into how a candidate will perform on the job. So much is dependent on choosing the best-fit candidate—productivity, morale, maintaining a healthy work environment. If you are looking for a way to avoid making a bad hiring decision and find your next star employee—the behavioral based interview process is your answer for accomplishing that.

Additional Resources

To assist you with the UF hiring process please consult the appropriate recruitment checklist. These checklists serve as a tool to assist hiring managers, department administrators and search committees when recruiting candidates for positions in alignment with the UF recruitment policies and procedures along with federal guidelines and statutes.