

UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI SEARCH COMMITTEE TOOL KIT SUPPLEMENT



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CHAPTER 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions can be informational, situational or behavioral. Informational questions can be used to ascertain the facts about a person's education and/or career. Situational questions ascertain a candidate's response to a hypothetical or real-life situation and also test a candidate's ability to analyze and solve a problem or make decisions. Behavioral questions ascertain the nature of the candidate's past behavior which may indicate future performance. The following sections provide examples from each category of interviews.

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell us a little more about your professional experiences, particularly those not mentioned on your resume.
2. Why are you interested in leaving your current assignment and why do you feel that this assignment would be better for you?
3. Do you feel this position is a promotion, a lateral move, a broadening of your professional experience, or just a change? Why do you think so?
4. How does this position fit into your overall career goals?
5. Describe the duties of your current job.
6. What do you dislike most about your current job?
7. What is your favorite part of your current job and why is it your favorite part?
8. What are the three college courses that best prepared you for your current job?
9. What qualities or experiences make you the best candidate for this position?
10. Describe two or three major trends in your profession today.
11. On the basis of the information you have received so far, what do you see as the major challenges of this position and how would you meet them?
12. Discuss the committees on which you have served and the impact of these committees on the organization where you currently work.
13. Why did you choose this profession/field?
14. What new skills have you learned over the past year?
15. Describe your teaching style.
16. Describe your teaching philosophy.
17. What technology applications have you utilized in the classroom?



18. Share your ideas about professional development.
19. In your opinion, how should the workload of a faculty member be split and into what areas?
20. What courses have you created or proposed in the past five years?
21. What do you think are the most important attributes of a good instructor?
22. Where would this position fit into your career development goals?

SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How have you worked with students and others to foster the creation of climates receptive to diversity in the classroom, in the curriculum, or in the department?
2. How have you mentored, supported, or encouraged students on your campus? What about minority students, women, or international students?
3. In what ways have you integrated multicultural issues as part of your professional development?
4. What new programs or services would you start if offered the position?
5. Please share with us your philosophy about customer service in an academic environment and give us some examples of service that would illustrate your views.
6. Tell us how you would learn your new job in the absence of a formal training program.
7. How would you characterize your level of computer literacy? What are some of the programs and applications with which you are familiar?
8. Think about a coworker from the present or past whom you admire. Why?
9. What are the characteristics that you prize most in an employee? What behaviors or characteristics do you find intolerable?
10. Can you share with us your ideas about professional development?
11. Describe some basic steps that you would take in implementing a new program?
12. What are some examples of your proudest professional accomplishments (Name two or three)?
13. Do you have any knowledge of the unique role of a two-year college or a liberal arts college or a research university (pick type of institution that is relevant to your specific institution)?



BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe a situation in which you did "all the right things" and were still unsuccessful. What did you learn from the experience?
2. Think about an instance when you were given an assignment that you thought you would not be able to complete. How did you accomplish the assignment?
3. Have you ever had a great idea but been told that you could not implement it? How did you react? What did you do?
4. Describe the best boss and the worse boss you have ever had.
5. Describe your ideal job.
6. What would your coworkers or your supervisor say about you?
7. Our college [or division or department] values diversity among its students, faculty, and staff, and we have made a commitment to promoting and increasing diversity. We believe that issues about teaching and leadership within a diverse environment are important, and we'd like to discuss your experience with and views about diversity.
8. Can you describe how you go about solving problems? Please give us some examples.
9. What is the biggest conflict you have ever been involved in at work? How did you handle that situation?
10. Provide an example of how you engage students, particularly in a course for non-majors?
11. Tell us how you involved your students in your research?

EXAMPLES OF SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL CONSTRUCTS

Behavioral questions ascertain the nature of the candidate's past behavior which may indicate future performance. This section provides more information on specific behavioral constructs and competencies to look for in potential candidates.

The information for this section was adapted from:
www.performanceSolutions.nc.gov/staffingInitiatives/selection/SelectionInterviewFormatsBehaviorBasedInterviewQuestions.pdf



Adaptability

Definition

Remaining effective while dealing with different people or in various situations, tasks and responsibilities. Many jobs in state government require employees to be effective in various situations. Some jobs involve a wide range of tasks while other jobs require work with clients and/or individuals who have different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds.

Possible Questions

1. Describe how you adjusted when priorities or procedures were changed.
2. Describe a work situation when you interacted with people from, different cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Were you effective? How?
3. How have you remained effective in your job when you experienced changes such as reorganization, a new supervisor, new procedures, legislative changes or conflicting priorities?
4. Have you ever had to move from one group to another? What adjustments did you have to make?
5. What strategies would you use in a small group meeting if there were divergent opinions or solutions proposed to solve a problem?
6. Have you ever had the primary mission of your job or a task change completely in a short period of time? What did you do?

Analysis

Definition

Relating and comparing data from different sources, identifying issues, getting relevant information and identifying other ways of doing things. All jobs call for some degree of analysis to evaluate a situation and find problems or opportunities or, to anticipate potential problems or opportunities. The people in these jobs must be able to do two things. First, they must gather and analyze the facts that will show the critical issues of a problem or opportunity. Second, they must find the most likely causes and possible solutions. There are many kinds of analysis: financial, quantitative, operational, organizational, staffing, and scientific. Each requires different ways of finding causes and solutions.

Possible Questions

1. All of us are surprised occasionally to discover that the services we are performing for clients are not working. What steps did you take to correct a situation like this?
2. Using accurate information obtained from expert sources is the best information. What sources of information do you use in your job?
3. Describe the sources of information you have used to accomplish a project within the last 12 months. What did you do with the information?
4. Describe a situation in which you had potential barriers to success in a project. How did you overcome the barriers? Did you succeed?
5. Recall a difficult work problem you have encountered within the last 12 months. Explain how you identified the critical issues. What solutions did you develop?



Attention to Detail

Definition

The thoroughness in accomplishing a task with concern for all the areas involved, no matter how small. Some jobs need people who can handle both the small and large parts of a task. Such individuals won't overlook what needs to be done and can be depended on to do each task accurately and completely.

Possible Questions

1. How do you insure that all parts of a task, both large and small, are accomplished without any of them being overlooked?
2. Give some instances when you found errors in your work. How did you find them? How did you correct them?
3. Describe a situation in which some aspect of a project or task was overlooked. What were the causes of the omission and what were the results? How did you correct the mistakes?
4. Describe a situation when a project you were working on did not meet established deadlines. What caused the delay(s)? What did you do?
5. How do you stay on track when you are constantly interrupted while working on a project?

Building Trust

Definition

Interacting with others in a way that gives them confidence in one's intentions and those of the organization.

Possible Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you had to win the trust of another person.

Coaching

Definition

Helping employees develop their knowledge and skills; providing timely feedback, guidance and training to help them reach goals. The effort into coaching will pay off for the employee, the supervisor, and the organization. Effective coaching helps avoid performance and work habit problems, while building the confidence, commitment and skills people need to handle their work and achieve their performance expectations. When people work more effectively, productivity increases and there is more time to complete the important aspects of the job.

Possible Questions

1. What steps do you take to correct your employees' performance or work habit problems?
2. What do you do to build employees' confidence, commitment and skills?
3. Describe some employees who have become more successful and productive as a result of your management.
4. Give some examples of delegating work to subordinates in order to provide them development opportunities. What happened?
5. Have you ever conducted an interim review with an employee? What steps did you take?



6. Have you ever had an employee who had difficulty completing tasks? What action did you take with that employee?
7. Giving negative feedback about job performance to an employee is very difficult. What methods of giving negative feedback have you used which seem successful?

Collaboration

Definition

Working effectively with others, outside the line of formal authority, to accomplish organization goals and to identify and resolve problems. Individuals often find themselves in the middle of challenging relationships that require great skill to handle. Because most activities outside of the immediate work unit involve a number of people, collaboration is important. Collaboration will make the best use of resources when no direct reporting relationship exists. Collaboration is different from teamwork because collaboration refers to working with other employees outside of your immediate work group. An employee might work with individuals in other units, divisions or agencies within or outside of the state, or the general public.

Possible Questions

1. Describe how you handled a problem relationship with someone from another work unit, division or agency.
2. Explain how you worked with someone outside your immediate work group to accomplish a common goal.
3. How have you identified and resolved a problem with others outside your normal line of authority?
4. Discuss a situation in which you were assigned to work in a group and had to share your knowledge, resources, etc. with the group and they had to share theirs with you.
5. Describe a situation in which you and another member of a work group had different opinions about a topic. What happened?

Continuous Improvements

Definition

Originating action to improve existing conditions and processes; using appropriate methods to identify opportunities, implement solutions and measure impact. Some jobs require employee to make continuous effort to improve delivery of services, business processes and the like.

Continuous Learning / Self Development

Definition

Identifying new areas for learning; regularly creating and taking advantage of learning opportunities; using newly gained knowledge and skill on the job and learning through their application.



Creativity / Innovation

Definition

Generating and/or recognizing imaginative or creative solutions in work related situations. Some jobs require creativity when handling tasks or solving problems. Creativity/ Innovation is often shown by an employee's support of creativity in others. (Creativity/Innovation in hobbies and non-job-related areas is not relevant)

Possible Questions

1. Describe the most innovative or creative thing you have done in your work experience.
2. Have you ever had a problem that the usual techniques could not resolve? What did you do to solve it?
3. Describe a positive change in your organization resulting from one of your original ideas.
4. How do you do things differently now than you did five (5) years ago?
5. What is the most unusual approach you undertook to resolve a problem?

Decisiveness

Definition

Readiness to make decisions, render judgments, take actions or commit oneself. In addition to analyzing problems, people often must reach a conclusion, make a recommendation or take action. With available information, individuals must make decisions on time and take action without waiting for more information or guidance. Decisiveness deals with the number of decisions made and the time it takes to reach conclusions. The quality of the decision or conclusion is covered by judgment and independent variable. A quick decision or action (high decisiveness) might be sound (good judgment) or unsound (poor judgment).

Possible Questions

1. Explain how you adjust your daily routine when priorities change.
2. Describe a difficult situation you have experienced within the last 12 months? What did you do?
3. Describe a project with critical deadlines to meet and how you met them.
4. Have you ever had to postpone action on a project to allow yourself more time to think? What happened?
5. Describe a situation where you rendered a snap decision based on available information and altered the course of action. What were the results? Were they positive or negative?

Delegation

Definition

Effective use of employees. Giving decision-making and other responsibilities to the appropriate employee. Supervisors must know about the need to delegate. Without this knowledge, they will overload themselves or refer matters that should be handled by them and their staff to higher levels. When supervisors delegate effectively, they give the employee decision-making authority and room for action; clearly state the tasks, responsibilities and controls; provide the necessary guidance and



resources; sell the employee on a task's importance and fit the task to the employee's skills and development needs. What is delegated (responsibility, authority or data gathering), how it is delegated (clarity of the delegation, information, resources suggested), and the targeted person's capabilities are important factors to consider in making these assignments.

Possible Questions

1. What work do you assign to subordinates? What steps do you follow to assign the work?
2. How do you decide what to delegate to subordinates? What factors do you consider?
3. Describe a situation where you had to involve your whole staff to accomplish a major project. Were you successful?
4. While you are out of the office, who is in charge of your unit? How do you select that person? How do you follow up when you return?
5. Have you ever had so many projects at once that you could not complete them all within specified deadlines? What did you do?

Development of Employees

Definition

Developing the skills of employees through development activities related to current and future jobs. Many jobs need people who care about making all employees as effective as possible and who can identify employee's weaknesses, design or locate the right development situations and motivate employees to develop themselves. Supervisors need to make sure they develop their staff in their current jobs. This behavior is closely linked to the dimensions of coaching or training. Development of employees focuses more on the long-range development of employees.

Possible Questions

1. If you or someone else in your work unit were to be absent for an extended period of time, how would their work be accomplished?
2. Have any of your subordinates ever been promoted to a position of more responsibility? Were they successful? Why?
3. Describe your least effective employee's weaknesses and what you have done to strengthen them.
4. Do you have a training program or a development plan for your employees? Describe it.
5. Give some examples of times when you delegated projects to employees to provide them with opportunities to develop additional skills. Did they develop them? Why or why not?

Energy

Definition

Maintaining a high activity level. Some jobs require employees to maintain the required activity level for an extended period of time, to sustain concentration or to pace the work throughout the work period.

Possible Questions

1. What work activities do you find most draining? Most exhilarating?



2. Describe a situation when you had to work long hours, possibly overtime, to achieve a goal. How effective were you?
3. After an extended absence from work, such as a vacation or a training session, how do you catch up on work that has accumulated?
4. Give some examples of instances where your attention was required for an extended period of time. How did you maintain your alertness?
5. During which part of the day do you feel most effective? Why do you accomplish the most then?

Equipment Operation

Definition

Use of specific equipment or machines to meet defined standards. Typewriter, word processing equipment, keypunch, copy machine, bulldozer, forklift, motor vehicles, medical equipment, lab equipment, kitchen appliances, laundry machines, electronic equipment and boilers -- all are examples of machines or equipment that might be required for a job. It is appropriate to define the level of operation required as part of the definition.

Possible Questions

1. What equipment are you trained to operate? How do you use it to accomplish your job?
2. Explain the safety precautions you use when you are operating your equipment.
3. Are you responsible for maintaining and repairing your equipment? How do you do it?
4. How do you maximize the usage of your equipment to achieve success?

Establishing Performance Goals

Definition

Mutually establishing and reviewing with employees the expectations that guide and motivate them toward objectives. Research indicates that setting challenging, attainable program goals that are accepted by management and employees leads to high performance. Establishing performance goals (objectives) will ensure that the performance of each employee contributes to your objectives and the plan of the organization. Goals help employees establish clear courses of action and remove any uncertainties about the job. Accomplishment of goals provides a sense of achievement.

Possible Questions

1. Have you ever conducted the initial or interim review of an annual work plan with subordinates? How did you do it?
2. How do you gain an employee's commitment to your organization's goals?
3. How do you monitor and review the progress of employees toward program goals?
4. Have you ever involved employees in establishing program goals? How did you do it? What were the results?
5. Have you ever supervised employees who did not achieve their program goals? What were the causes of their failures? What did you do?



Impact (Personal)

Definition

Creating a good impression, commanding attention and respect, showing an air of confidence. Many jobs require individuals who make favorable first impressions. This can be a highly desirable characteristic when there is no time to build an extensive relationship. Emphasis is placed on the “first impression” portion of the definition.

Possible Questions

1. How do you conduct yourself when meeting new clients for the first time?
2. Has anyone ever told you that you made a positive impression on them? What were the reasons for that impression?
3. Have you ever been involved in a situation where you had a very limited amount of time to persuade a new group of clients to take a specific course of action? How did you proceed?
4. When you find yourself in a new situation with strangers how do you respond?

Information Monitoring

Definition

Setting up on-going procedures to collect and review information necessary to manage projects or departments; taking action to monitor or regulate processes, tasks, or activities; keeping track of delegated assignments and projects. All managerial and some individual jobs need people who can track and control activities, assignments, tasks and projects. Monitoring devices include direct observation, requests for written or oral reports, and feedback and reporting systems. Information Monitoring is associated with delegation because it deals with following up delegations to track effectiveness and determine where help is needed. However, information monitoring also applies to activities beyond those of employees. Effective information monitoring systems prevent surprises and letdowns because progress, trends and changes are tracked, monitored and reported.

Possible Questions

1. How do you stay abreast of processes, tasks and activities in your workplace?
2. What types of monitoring devices do you use to track and control activities in your job?
3. How do you follow up on responsibilities you have delegated to employees?
4. Have you ever had an employee who needed help to accomplish tasks? How did you reach the conclusion that the employee needed help?
5. How do you track the effectiveness of your employees' efforts?

Initiative

Definition

Actively attempting to influence events to achieve goals; self-starting rather than passive acceptance. Taking action beyond what is necessarily called for in order to achieve goals; originating action. Most jobs require people who will take actions beyond their job responsibilities. The person high in initiative will originate actions rather than respond to the requests of others. Most people control their own and others' resources, activities and time. It's impossible for management to specify all that needs to be



done to achieve the job's goals. Thus, people must continually evaluate, select and act in different ways to meet their goals.

Possible Questions

1. List two or three suggestions or new ideas you have presented to your supervisor in the past 12 months. Why did you suggest each one? Were your ideas implemented?
2. Name some problems you have tried to solve before being instructed to do so.
3. What was the last difficult work problem you offered to help solve?
4. Describe some situations in which a project was accomplished primarily due to your actions. What actions did you take?
5. Give some examples of actions you took which were beyond what is normally expected from someone in your position. Why did you take those actions? What were the results?
6. Describe a new idea you have originated to improve work efficiency or make the job easier. How did you get that idea implemented?

Integrity

Definition

Maintaining social, ethical, and organizational norms in job-related activities. Most jobs demand that individuals do what is morally and ethically right. It might be possible at times to get away with something without being found out, but it is important that employees do what is morally and ethically right.

Possible Questions

1. Discuss an instance when you could not honor a commitment or had to renege on a promise? How did you notify affected persons? Did they understand?
2. Most regulations leave some leeway for interpretation. Discuss a few examples of when you had to stretch or bend the rules.
3. Describe a situation where you broke a rule or came close to breaking it. What were your reasons?
4. Have you ever had to confess or admit to a mistake in the workplace? Discuss the situation.
5. Describe some instances when you kept commitments to others even to your own detriment? Do you feel you did the right thing?
6. What action(s) have you taken when you observed others breaking the rules?

Judgment

Definition

Weighing alternative actions and making decisions that reflect the facts of a situation. Decisions are based upon logical assumptions that take into consideration the organization's resources. Many jobs require people to make decisions in several areas. Once all pertinent and available information has been analyzed and alternatives have been developed, individuals must consider the pros and cons of each alternative and select the best one. Judgment specifically deals with the quality of decisions based on given or available information. Judgment, therefore, is strongly related to analysis. If a poor decision was made because of inadequate information, evaluate analysis, not judgment. If the employee decided not to obtain or consider information and a poor decision resulted, look at judgment.



Possible Questions

1. Give two or three examples of good decisions you have made within the last 12 months. How do you know they were good?
2. Describe a difficult decision you have had to make within the last 12 months. What were some alternatives? Why did you choose the one you did?
3. Describe a situation in which you involved others in a decision making process. Why did you include the others?
4. Discuss the pros and cons of an important decision you made at work?
5. Have you ever made a decision that had a negative impact at work? What caused the negative results? Why?

Leadership / Influence

Definition

Using proper interpersonal styles and methods to guide individuals or groups to accomplish a task. Maintaining group cohesiveness and cooperation; helping group process and gaining agreement/commitment to ideas, plans, or courses of action. Supervisors must be able to influence and be influenced by others. In doing so they must accurately assess the skills, feelings, concerns and needs of others. They must explain government policies, procedures, and objectives. They must model the enthusiasm, hardworking attitude, competence, and commitment to quality and growth that they expect from others. With their own staff or groups, they must be able to build a cohesive and cooperative team while, at the same time, honestly confronting issues that occur at all levels of the organization.

Possible Questions

1. What did you do to gain the cooperation of a difficult group?
2. How did you gain employees' commitment to a new policy or procedure?
3. What do you do to maintain trust and unity among employees?
4. How do you accurately assess the skills, feelings, concerns and needs of others? What do you do with this information? How do you use this information to lead the group?
5. What do you do specifically to model energy, enthusiasm, competence, commitment and a hard working attitude for others?
6. Describe how you supervise other employees. What is your preferred style?
7. Do you have a unique approach to management or supervision? Please give an example that illustrates your approach.
8. Do you see yourself as more technical or more management oriented? Give an example.
9. Explain an instance when you used your leadership skills to solve a problem.
10. Explain how you have worked successfully with a team to achieve an important goal.
11. How closely have you supervised an employee who was having difficulty? What did you do? What was the outcome?
12. In what respects have you improved as a supervisor in the past few years?
13. What factors do you think have contributed to your effectiveness as a supervisor? Share examples.



Management Control

Definition

Establishing procedures to monitor one's own job activities and responsibilities or to monitor the tasks and activities of employees; taking action to monitor the results of delegated assignments or projects. Some jobs require the employees to track and control activities, assignments, tasks and projects. This can be done through direct observation, reports, systems, etc.

Possible Questions

1. How do you check to see that assignments are accomplished?
2. Describe procedures you use to monitor your own job activities and responsibilities or to monitor the tasks and activities of employees.
3. Do you keep minutes of your meetings or notes from discussions? What do you do with them?

Meeting Leadership

Definition

Using appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to guide a meeting toward its objectives; modifying behavior according to tasks involved and individuals present; keeping meetings on course; developing teamwork and cooperation. The key to successful meetings is in how they are conducted. The effective meeting leader uses skills to enhance those factors that improve productivity (creating more and better ideas, increasing team spirit and motivation) while reducing those that interfere (hidden agendas, destructive alliances). Successful meetings get the job done and enable people to work together constructively. Participants leave meetings willing to work with each other instead of feeling "sandbagged", "blind-sided", angry, or "run-over" -- feelings often expressed when the supervisor/leader mishandles relationships in a meeting.

Possible Questions

1. Have you ever had to lead a meeting? How did you do it?
2. During a meeting, how do you create a productive atmosphere and reduce those factors that interfere or inhibit productivity?
3. What methods do you use to encourage ideas from all members of the group in a meeting?
4. Have you ever led a meeting that drifted from its purpose? How did you get the meeting refocused on its objectives?
5. How do you determine if a meeting is necessary, who should attend and what items should be discussed?

Negotiation

Definition

Gaining mutual agreement on, or acceptance of, a decision or course of action from individuals with real or perceived conflicting interests. Some jobs require people who know when to give in on a point and when to stand firm. They know when to argue their case, raise questions and make compromises in the best interests of all parties. Negotiation can be between peers and co-workers, supervisors and employees, or involve citizens, suppliers, or other outside agencies. Though related to



leadership/influence, negotiation focuses on the ability to deal with actual differences of opinion and conflicting interests.

Possible Questions

1. Describe your most satisfying experience in gaining support for an action from a group who initially had a conflicting interest.
2. Discuss two instances where you had to compromise with other groups.
3. How do you handle co-workers, supervisors, employees, outside agencies or private citizens who have a different opinion than you do about an important issue involving your program?
4. Explain how you settled a disagreement or problem among opposing parties.
5. Describe your action when your ideas were challenged during a presentation.

Objectivity

Definition

Being aware that personal prejudices, biases and experiences can have an impact on making decisions. Guarding against allowing these factors to influence decisions. Most people draw from experience when making decisions. However, letting only experience dictate the approach to a decision can lead to problems. Personal biases also can adversely affect judgment. Objectivity ensures that relevant information is properly and thoroughly analyzed, leading to higher quality decisions.

Possible Questions

1. How do you ensure that you are making sound decisions?
2. What personal biases do you have and how do you keep them from influencing your decisions?
3. Describe a situation when strong personal feelings spurred you toward a course of action. What did you do? What were the results?
4. How do you know when to offer an opinion or a judgment on an issue?
5. What do you do to separate fact from rumor in the workplace?

Oral Communication

Definition

Expressing ideas effectively in individual and group situations (including nonverbal communication); adjusting language or terminology to the characteristics and needs of the audience. Many jobs require people who can speak effectively. The focus is on the form of the communication, not the content. Oral communication focuses more on informal day-to-day expression of thoughts, ideas and information. Oral presentation is more appropriate for jobs that require frequent formal and/or planned presentations.

Possible Questions

1. What steps do you take to insure adequate understanding of information by different audiences when you are communicating?
2. Give two examples of presentations you were required to give and how you accomplished them?
3. What different approaches do you use when talking to different groups of people?



4. Give three examples of incidents when you communicated information to a client and the client remarked that they did not understand it. What steps did you take to correct the situation?
5. All of us have had situations where we had difficulty explaining a subject over the phone. How have you corrected those situations when they occurred?
6. What complicated concepts, ideas, policies or practices have you had to explain?

Oral Presentation

Definition

Presenting ideas effectively to individuals or groups when given time for preparation (including nonverbal communication and use of visual aids); targeting presentations to the characteristics and needs of the audience.

Some employees must make prepared presentations. Generally such presentations are planned and can be given before large groups (business briefings) or individuals. The key to the presentation's success is that the speaker has time to prepare. The presentation must follow a logical sequence, develop issues and ideas succinctly, state needs and recommendations clearly, and address the listener's goals and levels of understanding.

Possible Questions

1. What steps do you take to prepare for a presentation?
2. How do you determine an audience's needs, interests, attitudes and level of awareness?
3. Describe a presentation you made within the last 12 months. What kind of feedback did you get?
4. Describe a situation when you tailored a presentation to fit the needs of the audience?
5. How do you handle difficult questions or check for clarity during public speaking?

Organizational Sensitivity

Definition

Understanding the impact and implications of decisions on the community and other departments. Individuals should be aware of how the decisions and actions of one department affect the rest of the organization and make decisions or requests for resources accordingly. This dimension is a subset of judgment; it deals with being aware of the needs of the community as well as the needs, expectations or viewpoints of others. It involves the ability to see things from the "other side of the fence."

Possible Questions

1. What do you do to promote a positive image of the organization's employees?
2. Describe a situation when you had to consider a proposed action's impact on others before implementing it.
3. How do the actions of your work unit affect other parts of the organization?
4. How do you insure other units' views are considered before you reach a decision and take action?



Performance Stability (Dependability)

Definition

Consistently meeting the day-to-day demands of the job. Before an employee can meet Key Responsibility/Result objectives, he or she must be able to meet the day-to-day demands of the job. The employee must come to work on time, work during working hours, and comply with personnel policies of the organization.

Possible Questions

1. Describe situations when you had to monitor operations (i.e. inmates, monitoring devices, dials or gauges) or perform repeated tasks for extended periods of time. How did you maintain consistency?
2. Explain the personnel policies governing leave in your agency.
3. Have you ever been late for work or a meeting? What caused your delay? How did it affect the work unit?
4. What is your attendance record? How much leave have you accrued?
5. Describe the day-to-day demands of your present job? What parts do you enjoy the most and what parts do you find the least interesting?

Planning and Organization

Definition

Establishing a course of action for self or others to accomplish a specific goal; planning proper assignments for personnel and appropriate allocation of resources. Many jobs require people who can plan and organize for themselves and others. This includes setting goals, budgeting time, setting priorities, allowing enough time for activities and being aware of how activities relate.

Possible Questions

1. What methods and tools do you use to schedule weekly activities for yourself and your staff?
2. Describe a period when your unit had a backlog of work. What circumstances caused the delays? What did you do?
3. How do you distinguish between what is urgent and what is not when setting priorities?
4. How far ahead do you schedule your time? What is your schedule for the next 4 weeks?
5. How did you plan last month's activities for your unit?
6. Do you manage a budget for your unit? If not, how do you obtain resources for projects?

Practical Learning

Definition

Understanding and applying new job-related information, of varying complexity, in a timely manner. Many jobs require individuals to learn the necessary job materials quickly and to grasp new information. Therefore, the person who can learn quickly, and with little help from others, will respond to changes with only a minor drop in performance.



Possible Questions

1. What new ways to do the job have you used? How did you discover them?
2. How do you stay abreast of new methods and technologies and apply them to your job?
3. Describe a period when you attended a training session to learn a new skill and then applied it in your work. How long did it take to become proficient? What assistance did you require?
4. Describe a situation when you had to learn a new skill without any help from others. What did you do?
5. What aspect of your job did you have the most difficulty grasping quickly?
6. How did you learn the technical aspects of your job?

Process Operation

Definition

Starting, controlling and ending a process or procedure. Some jobs require a person who can do all the steps in a specific process, such as laboratory work, medical work, economics, educational research, mechanical or physical production, and office/administrative work while maintaining consistency. This is important in maintaining quality control with any activity.

Possible Questions

1. How do you maintain quality control standards?
2. Review the step-by-step procedures to accomplish a task in your job.
3. Explain how to operate a piece of workplace equipment/machinery from start to finish.
4. How do you maintain consistency in each part of your job?

Resilience

Definition

Handling disappointment and/or rejection while still working well. Some jobs require people who can maintain motivation and professional standards despite long periods of disappointment, rejection of a point of view or failure of a major project. This is particularly important in health and human services and regulatory jobs.

Possible Questions

1. What has been your biggest disappointment in your job? How have you responded?
2. Explain how you have maintained your motivation and professional during a period of heavy workload and/or a reduced workforce?
3. How do you maintain your patience and stay cooperative when dealing with irate, uncooperative people?
4. Have you ever experienced the failure of a major project or the rejection of your point of view? How did you respond?
5. Describe how you continued to persevere in your job when you experienced a lack of adequate funding or suffered equipment breakdowns.



Safety Awareness

Definition

Being aware of conditions that affect health and a safe working environment. Some jobs require people who know safety laws and regulations and recognize unsafe working conditions. Some jobs require people willing to act quickly to correct unsafe work habits and dangerous equipment or conditions.

Possible Questions

1. Describe the safety and health regulations affecting you and your agency.
2. What do you do to ensure the safety of your employees and the safe operation of workplace equipment?
3. Describe a situation when you discovered a safety hazard and corrected it to prevent an injury to other employees.
4. Do you have a written employee safety program? How often do you check the operation of safety equipment? How do you teach new employees the safe way to do the job? How do you inform employees about safety and health information?
5. How do you identify safety hazards and correct them before someone is injured?

Selection / Promotion Decision Making

Definition

Using established criteria when making selection/promotion decisions; gathering information relative to those criteria through effective interviewing and other assessment techniques. The first step in maintaining a productive organization is employing top performing people. Later, the supervisor must train them, lead them, manage their work, and create a rewarding work environment. These responsibilities are very important, but they will fail if the first step is not taken. Effective selection/promotion of employees can result in more employee output, less training time, better use of supervisors' coaching time, less turnover and more time for the supervisor to manage. Employees want more responsibility and new opportunities. Successful supervisors develop skills and offer opportunities for career growth.

Possible Questions

1. How do you plan for an interview?
2. What criteria do you consider when making a selection/promotion decision?
3. Have you ever hired or promoted an employee? Explain the process you used.
4. What interviewing and assessment techniques do you use to objectively gather information about interviewees to make a sound selection/promotion decision?
5. What are the important requirements for an employee in the positions you supervise?
6. Explain what steps you take to comply with federal and state requirements when selecting/promoting staff?



Sensitivity

Definition

Considering the feelings and needs of others; being aware of how one's own behavior affects others. Many jobs require individuals to act based on their perceptions of the feelings, skills, competencies and needs of others. This dimension is not to be confused with sympathy, which is how an individual feels about a person or situation. It is closer to the definition of empathy, but involves acting on insights, not just having insights. It does not mean being sensitive in the sense of "feelings being easily hurt." More to the point, it is the ability to recognize and take into consideration the circumstances and needs of others.

Possible Questions

1. Describe a situation when you dealt with a frustrated or angry client.
2. How do you determine employees' or clients' feelings? What do you do then?
3. How do you show recognition of good work done by others?
4. Describe some situations when subordinates came to you to discuss problems. How did you resolve them?
5. Describe a situation where your actions caused a problem for someone else. What could you have done differently?
6. Have you ever been in a meeting and realized that your behavior was causing a problem? How did you handle this?

Service Orientation

Definition

Listening to and understanding the customer (both inside and outside government); anticipating customer needs; giving high priority to customer satisfaction. To most citizens, the contact person represents the organization. In their eyes, the organization is only as competent, knowledgeable, courteous and reliable as the person who represents it.

Possible Questions

1. How do you anticipate customer needs?
2. How do you check for customer satisfaction?
3. Describe a situation when you did not "pass the buck" but accepted responsibility for the outcome.
4. Relate some instances when you continued through a course of action or followed up afterwards to insure customer satisfaction.
5. Define empathy. How do empathize with customers?
6. Who are your internal customers? How do you interact successfully with them?

Strategic Analysis

Definition

Using many information sources (inside and outside the organization); understanding financial, economic and technical information to identify ways to improve effectiveness. Many employees must



understand broad issues and trends, deal with unfamiliar information and cope with unexpected changes. This requires them to use a wide general knowledge and to understand matters outside of their own professional or technical background. This is a high-level version of analysis, which emphasizes vision and the big picture of the organization and the outside environment.

Possible Questions

1. What sources do you use to stay abreast of national and international affairs affecting your field of expertise?
2. What are the latest trends in your field? Your organization?
3. Do you work with other professionals in long term planning for your agency? What are you currently working on?
4. What technical and professional knowledge do you use to prepare plans?
5. Describe two instances when you used technical information to improve efficiency in your organization?

Teamwork (Cooperation)

Definition

Active participation in, and facilitation of, team effectiveness; taking actions that demonstrate consideration for the feelings and needs of others; being aware of the effect of one's behaviors on others. Active cooperation by every member is vital to team success. Team members cannot sit back and observe or allow others to do the work; they must work proactively to achieve group goals and facilitate cohesiveness. Effective teams are not just collections of people. Rather, they are an entity that is greater than the sum of its parts. This means that team members must work together closely and make every effort to support and cooperate with each other. Teamwork involves a work group, such as the people composing a self-directed work team or all the people involved on a special project.

Possible Questions

1. Describe some team projects in which you participated.
2. Have you ever served on a team that had experienced problems? What happened? How did you solve the problem?
3. Have you ever served on a team and had a different opinion than the rest of the group? What kind of agreement did you finally reach? Did you support the final decision?
4. How do you introduce your suggestions, opinions and information to a team? How do you receive information from others?

Technical / Professional Knowledge

Definition

Having an understanding and ability to use technical/professional information; keeping up on developments and trends in one's field. State agencies need employees who stay current on methods/practices in order to maintain expertise in their field (e.g. engineering semiconductors, physiology).



Possible Questions

1. What are the market conditions and trends in your field?
2. What resources do you use to maintain your proficiency and expertise in your field? What seminars or workshops have you recently attended
3. What degrees, training, certifications, licenses or continuing education credits do you currently possess?
4. How up-to-date is your knowledge of the mechanical and/or technical aspects of this field? Are you comfortable with the state of the art technologies?
5. To which technical or professional organizations do you belong? To which magazines and newsletters do you subscribe?

Tenacity

Definition

Staying with a job or plan until the desired objective is achieved or is no longer reasonably attainable. Some jobs require people who, when faced with obstacles, keep trying to achieve their goals. Tenacity is indicated by the number of attempts to achieve the goal.

Possible Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you had some difficulties in achieving desired results. How did you succeed?
2. What is a major obstacle you have had to overcome in the past 12 months?
3. Describe a situation where you had inadequate resources to accomplish your objectives and how you overcame the deficiencies to succeed anyway.
4. Describe a situation when you suddenly discovered that the results you were getting would not meet desired expectations. What did you do to rectify the situation?

Tolerance for Stress

Definition

Working well under pressure and/or against opposition. Many jobs need people who can work well and stay positive in a stressful work environment. Stress can be caused by time pressure, opposing ideas, group pressures and/or task difficulty. If one or more of these sources of stress are normally part of the job, then tolerance for the specific stress is important.

Possible Questions

1. What parts of your current job do you find most stressful?
2. Describe a stressful situation you were involved in such as a project with time pressures, on extremely difficult projects, or dealing with an irate client.
3. Under what tight deadlines are you currently working?
4. Describe an emergency in which you were involved? How did you stay calm?
5. How do you reduce your own stress level on the job?



Training

Definition

Being able to instruct others, individually or in groups, on how to perform work processes. Some jobs require individuals who can teach new workers how to use machines, complete forms, etc. Training can take place in a classroom setting or it can be on the job on an individual basis. This dimension focuses on the ability to communicate technical information effectively.

Possible Questions

1. Describe how you trained another employee to use office machinery or to complete office forms.
2. How do you check for understanding when you are training someone?
3. If you train other employees, what is the typical level of education or experience of the participants? How do you use this information in the training?
4. What has been your most rewarding experience training someone? What has been the most frustrating?
5. What is the most difficult aspect of training for you? Why?

Work Standards

Definition

Setting high, personally derived goals or standards of performance for self and expecting similarly high goals and performance from others and the organization. Dissatisfied with average, near enough or second best. Most jobs require that people do a good job for the sake of a job well done and set high personal standards for themselves and their employees. These people will do more than what is required.

Possible Questions

1. What are the standard expectations for a good job in each aspect of your job? Do you meet or surpass them?
2. Describe situations in which your work was above standard expectations. Below expectations.
3. What expectations do you use when judging the performance of subordinates?
4. Have you ever dismissed or disciplined an employee for poor performance?
5. Have you ever disagreed with your supervisor during a performance evaluation? How did you handle it?
6. Do your personal standards exceed the expectations of your organization? If so, give three examples of how you exceeded the organization's expectations to give your "personal best."

Written Communication

Definition

Clear expression of ideas in writing; includes grammar, organization and structure. Varying levels of writing skills are required for different jobs. The ability to convey ideas is important. The extent to which proper grammar and form are important depends on both the job and the method of communication.



Possible Questions

1. When do you prefer written communication versus oral communication?
2. How do you evaluate and edit your own writing for grammar, spelling, style and content?
3. What types of reports have you written?
4. What has been your most difficult writing assignment and why? How do you ensure that the reader understands the message you are sending?



CHAPTER 2: REFERENCE INTERVIEWS

When conducting reference checking, there are a number of different questions that can be used to check references. It is important to consider a candidate's employment history, educational degree, and criminal and civil records when conducting reference checks. This section highlights the steps involved in reference checking and also provides information on specific reference questions to ask.

REFERENCE INTERVIEWS: COMPETENCY BASED EVALUATIONS

A number of sample questions are listed below regarding reference checking. You may tailor these questions to specific areas you'd like to probe about each candidate. The person offering the reference will be able to tailor his or her responses to what is most relevant if you first give a sense of the position and what would be expected of the candidate.

Given how important it is for your organization to make a good hiring decision, you may also want to look beyond gathering references and utilize other methods of screening candidates' backgrounds, including verification of:

- Employment history – dates, positions and actual responsibilities can be checked with the specific employers listed.
- Educational degree – you can call registrars at colleges and universities to check on diplomas, and you can verify some certifications (e.g., Certified Public Accountants) online.
- Criminal and civil records – there are both specialized investigative firms and web-based services that can help you conduct criminal and credit checks on a candidate. In all cases, candidates must be made aware ahead of time that their backgrounds are being checked and must acknowledge their consent in writing.

Though it is helpful to have some sample questions and other written prompts ready as necessary, reading directly from a list of questions may set an unnecessarily formal tone. Do your best to make the person giving a reference feel as though he or she is having a natural, flowing conversation. Identify yourself, your institution, your reason for calling, and the position for which the candidate is applying:

Candidates Name (and former names): _____

Person Called: _____ Person's Position: _____

Company's Name: _____

Opening the Conversation

1. What is/was your relationship to _____?
2. Please tell me a little bit about yourself and how you know _____ (How long, in what context; how often were you in contact, etc.)
3. From what month and year until what month and year did you work with _____?
4. Can you verify the position(s) that he or she held?



General Impressions

5. How would you characterize your experience working with _____?
6. Can you provide a general sketch of _____'s character?
7. Did you have the opportunity to observe _____ in his/her position as _____?
8. How would you describe his/her performance in this position?

Personal Attributes

9. What kinds of personal qualities come to mind when you think of _____?

Achievements

10. What impact has _____ had on the organization? In his/her department?
11. What are his/her biggest accomplishments or key contributions to the organization (examples)?
12. How does this person compare with other executives in similar positions in your organization or comparable organizations?
13. What kind of legacy did _____ leave?

Leadership Skills

14. How would you describe _____'s style of leadership?
15. How is he/she a visionary? Examples?
16. How has he/she been able to increase the visibility of the organization?
17. How creative is _____ in building resources and diversifying funding? Has he/she done fundraising?

Strategic Thinking Abilities

18. What involvement did _____ have in developing the strategic plan for the department or organization? What specifically did he/she contribute?
19. How has _____ demonstrated his/her strategic thinking ability? Examples?

Management Style

20. How would you characterize _____'s general management style? (e.g., authoritative, consultative, task-master, etc.)?
21. How does _____ go about managing up?
22. What type of work environment does he/she need to succeed?
23. How would _____'s direct reports describe his or her management style? Supervisors?
24. How does _____ go about making tough decisions? Is he/she inclusive? Fair? Abrupt? Random? Other?



Operational Effectiveness

25. Please describe his/her operational and (if relevant) financial management abilities.
26. What type of policies, procedures, or processes did _____ implement?

Emotional Intelligence

27. How does _____ deal with conflict? How rigid or flexible is he or she?
28. How did you see him/her grow while you were working together?
29. How well does _____ build consensus among constituents with differing opinions or interests? Examples?

Internal and External Communication Skills

30. How would you describe _____'s communication skills: verbal and written?
31. How well does _____ listen? How does she/he engage people?
32. How often and did _____ keep his or her supervisors, direct reports, peers, etc. updated? What methods did he or she use?
33. What do you consider _____'s strengths to be?

Areas for Development and Support

34. Given that no one is perfect and everyone has areas in which he or she can improve, can you describe any areas XX can or should continue to develop?
35. From what you have shared, can you tell me how this trait has impacted XX or the rest of the team? Do you see any liabilities or downsides to XX taking this position?
36. What have been XX's biggest professional challenges? How did she/he overcome them? Examples?
37. If you were to do an appraisal on XX, what would his/her development objectives be?
38. How would you compare the performance of _____ with that of others who have held the same job?
39. What would you see as the ideal position for him/her? Why?
40. Where does _____ need the most support?
41. Please describe _____'s work ethic in the context of tardiness, absenteeism, attitude, abuse of sick or vacation time, dependability, trustworthiness, or completion or assigned tasks.
42. In what sort of environment do you think that _____ would work best.

Closing

43. How would you summarize _____ as a candidate for this position?
44. Is there an experience that you have had with _____ that is particularly memorable to you?
45. Why did _____ leave the company? Was it his/her decision?
46. Would you hire or work with him/her again? If not, why not?



47. Is there anything else that I should know about before moving _____ forward in the process? (A MUST-ASK QUESTION!)
48. Is there anyone else you could recommend as a reference who might have seen _____ from a different angle?
49. Thank you so much for your help and insight. Do you mind if I contact you again in case I have additional questions?

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORAL COMPETENCY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REFERENCE CHECKING

Ability to Manage Teams, People and Organizations

What to Look for in Reference Answers:

1. Examples that demonstrate the candidate's ability to manage a diverse staff with examples of goals that were met by the team.
2. History of working with entry-level, mid-management, and senior executives to accomplish goals.
3. Candidate's ability to coach and mentor individuals throughout his or her career with detailed descriptions of what the candidate did for the mentees.

Possible Questions

1. Describe the types of individual team members [CANDIDATE NAME] has managed.
2. Tell me about [CANDIDATE NAME]'s stance on professional development for employees. What sorts of professional development programs, formal or informal, has [CANDIDATE NAME] led?

Ability to influence/motivate others

What to Look for in Reference Answers:

1. Concrete examples of having met goals that required action from individuals who did not report to the candidate; matrix management experience.
2. Style that complements your senior managers and that will resonate with staff members.

Possible Questions

1. What impact has [CANDIDATE NAME] had on the organization? In his or her department and outside of his or her department?
2. Can you describe a goal [CANDIDATE NAME] had to reach that required him or her to secure the help of individuals outside of his or her direct of control? How did s/he go about motivating people who were not direct reports?



Ability to work with Stakeholders

What to Look for in Reference Answers:

1. Demonstrated ability to build and leverage relationships with stakeholder groups and personal network.
2. A constructive style that encourages a diversity of views, collaboration, and consensus building.
3. Solid experience managing teams as a volunteer in a nonprofit, ideally as a committee chair for a defined effort where influencing peers has been necessary.

Possible Questions

1. Can you describe the relationships that [CANDIDATE NAME] has maintained with individuals outside his or her company in order to accomplish his or her work?
2. How does [CANDIDATE NAME] bring together the ideas of people with different frames of reference?
3. What can you tell me about [CANDIDATE NAME]'s work with individuals in the nonprofit sector, perhaps in a volunteer capacity?

Ability to collaborate and resolve conflict

What to Look for in Reference Answers:

1. Fit between candidate's ideal decision-making environment and that of your organization.
2. Fit between candidate's ideal relationships and existing personalities/styles of your team.
3. Positive approaches to interpersonal conflict.

Possible Questions

1. How would you describe [CANDIDATE NAME]'s ideal decision-making environment and why?
2. How would you describe [CANDIDATE NAME]'s ideal relationship with boss, colleagues, and direct report(s) and why?
3. How would you describe [CANDIDATE NAME]'s ability to resolve interpersonal conflict?

Ability to work in a resource-constrained environment

What to Look for in Reference Answers:

1. Evidence that the candidate can work in cash-/resource- constrained environments.
2. Creative approaches that have allowed the candidate to manage projects despite lack of resources.

Possible Questions

1. Describe the environment of your company with regard to resources. What was involved in securing resources, people, tools, materials, equipment, and supplies?
2. How has [CANDIDATE NAME] modified his or her approach because of limited resources and how was that approach different from past approaches?



Ability to share organization's core values

What to Look for in Reference Answers:

1. The candidate's clarity about what is and isn't ethical behavior; courage to speak and act appropriately.
2. Evidence of long-term involvement in a social sector organization or cause.

Possible Questions

1. Tell me about a time when [CANDIDATE NAME] managed an unethical action or situation.
2. Do you know if [CANDIDATE NAME] has any long-term commitments to an organization or cause?

Ability to fit into organization's culture

What to Look for in Reference Answers:

1. Alignment in the description that the reference gives of the company culture to the description that the candidate has given.
2. If there were cultural shifts, evidence that the candidate was able to adapt easily to the shift.

Possible Questions

1. Tell me about the culture of the company that you and [CANDIDATE NAME] worked/work in.
2. Did your company have any cultural shifts during the time that you and [CANDIDATE NAME] worked together? If so, how did [CANDIDATE NAME] respond to that shift?

For more information on interviewing applicants and performing reference checks, please go to the *University of Missouri Search Committee Tool Kit* Chapter 5 (Interviewing Applicants) and Chapter 6 (Background & Reference Checks). Chapter 5 includes information on preparing for the interview and conducting the interview, while Chapter 6 includes information on understanding the importance of verifying a candidates credentials and verifying background checks.

