A Guide to Conducting Behavioral Interviews with Early Career Job Candidates

Table of Contents

Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide HR professionals and hiring managers with additional practical information about how to conduct effective behavioral interviews along with specific competency-based, behavioral interview questions. This guide is divided into three sections:

- The first section "*Why and How to Conduct a Behavioral Interview*" starts with a reminder of why interviewing is important, why behavioral interviewing in particular can be a valuable tool for organizations, and how to prepare for and conduct behavioral interviews.
- The second section "*Sample Behavioral Interview Questions*" provides samples of competency-based, structured behavioral interview questions with associated behaviorally anchored rating scales (BARS) that HR professionals and hiring managers can use to assess job candidates at the **early** career level.
- The final section "*What to do After Conducting a Behavioral Interview*" provides information about what to do after a behavioral interview, including evaluating candidates, conducting a debriefing meeting, and making a hiring decision.

In addition to the sections listed above, this guide includes two appendices. Appendix A contains a template for creating your own structured behavioral interview questions and BARS, including space for capturing candidates' responses. Appendix B includes additional behavioral competency questions that you may want to consider for your organization.

Section 1: Why and How to Conduct a Behavioral Interview

Why is Interviewing Important?

Interviewing is an important step in the employee selection and succession planning processes for most organizations. Interviews offer several benefits to those organizations, including:

- Serving as an employer's initial opportunity to meet with job candidates.
- Providing time for HR, hiring managers and others to interact with candidates to gain insights into their experience, skills, knowledge, behaviors, and more, beyond what can be found in a recommendation, resume or application.
- Enabling the employer to determine if a candidate's skills, experience and personality meet the job's requirements.
- Helping the employer to assess whether an applicant would likely fit in with the corporate and/or team culture.

Accordingly, the goal of interviews is to identify and select a candidate whose skill set and behaviors match that which are needed for a particular role and whose personality, interests and values match the culture and mission of the organization. To find this ideal candidate, Human Resource professionals and hiring managers must be well informed on how to conduct interviews effectively.

Why use Behavioral Interviewing?

In implementing accurate and fair selection methods that include interviewing, employers can select from a variety of interviewing techniques. It is important to choose the right kind of interviewing technique that matches the performance and retention needs of the organization and position as well as the culture of the organization/team. This guide focuses on *behavioral interviewing*, considered by many to be the most effective type of interviewing technique in nearly any type of organization. For more information on other techniques, see shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/interviewingcandidatesforemployment.aspx.

Behavioral interviewing focuses on a candidate's past experiences by asking candidates to provide specific examples of how they have demonstrated certain behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities. Answers to behavioral interview questions should provide verifiable, concrete evidence as to how a

candidate has dealt with issues in the past. This information often reveals a candidate's actual level of experience and his or her potential to handle similar situations in your organization. Behavioral interview questions tend to be pointed, probing and specific.

In addition, the behavioral interviewing method falls under the category of *structured interviews*. The main purpose of structured interviewing is to objectively match candidates to and compare candidates for positions by asking a specific set of job-relevant questions and using the same set of pre-determined rating scales to evaluate all candidates. This straightforward approach limits the amount of discretion for each individual interviewer, making it easier for the employer to evaluate and compare applicants fairly because all applicants are asked the same questions and evaluated using the same criteria. Thus, structured interviewing is not only effective for making a hiring decision, it can be crucial in defending against allegations of discrimination in hiring and selection.

Beyond their structured approach, there are additional benefits to using behavioral interviews. Because behavioral interviews are based on an analysis of job duties and requirements of the job, bias and ambiguity are reduced because candidates are evaluated on job-related questions. In addition, job-relatedness and consistency of the interview process may increase the perception of fairness among candidates. The job-related questions may also help candidates obtain a realistic perspective of the job.

The following is an example of a behavioral interview question:

- Describe a situation in which you used persuasion to convince someone to see things your way.

If answers seem to be thin on detail, the interviewer can ask follow-up questions:

- Can you tell me a little more about the situation?
- What exactly did you do?
- What was your specific role in this?
- How did this turn out?
- What other challenges did you come across? What did you do to address those?

The premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. To evaluate this most effectively and fairly, the main interview questions are delivered to every job candidate with the same wording, in the same order, and using the same scoring system. Because of this, the behavioral interviewing technique can take a great deal of effort and planning before an interview can ever take place.

What Should We Be Looking for in Candidates?

In using any method for hiring new employees, one of the first things that an employer needs to determine is what exactly it is looking for in candidates. This can sometimes be challenging; however, behavioral interviewing is specifically designed to make that decision more straightforward.

When we think about the behavioral interviewing process, we typically start by asking the question,

"What knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) are most critical for success in this position?"

You might also ask,

"What behaviors are important or strategically critical to my organization?"

You can then decide:

"What competencies (i.e., clusters of KSAOs) are most strategically important to my organization when evaluating candidates?"

Accordingly, behavioral interviewing typically lends itself to a competency-based approach for identifying the requirements of a job. *Competencies* are specific employee behaviors that relate to an organization's strategic goals, are correlated with job performance and can be measured and strategically leveraged across multiple HR and other business systems to improve overall performance. There are several benefits to using a competency-based approach to behavioral interviewing:

- *Competencies provide direction.* Competencies provide organizations with a way to define—in behavioral terms—what it is that people need to do to produce the results the organization desires, in a way that is in keeping with its culture.
- *Competencies are measurable.* Competencies enable organizations to evaluate the extent to which employees demonstrate the behaviors that are critical for success and are critical for strengthening an organization's capacity to meet strategic objectives.
- *Competencies can be learned.* Unlike personality traits, competencies are characteristics of individuals that can be developed and improved.
- *Competencies can distinguish and differentiate the organization.* Competencies represent a behavioral dimension on which organizations can distinguish and differentiate themselves.
- *Competencies can integrate management practices.* Competencies can provide a structured model that can be used to integrate and align management practices (e.g., recruiting, performance management, training and development, reward and recognition) throughout the organization.

By interviewing for job and organizational fit based on competencies, employers can gather important information regarding whether a job candidate is capable of successfully performing all the necessary requirements for that job while also being a good fit for the organization.

You may already have identified the competencies critical for success in your organization. If not, you can learn about the steps for developing competencies here: shrm.org/ResourcesAndTools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/Pages/leveragingemployeecompetencies.aspx. Once you have identified the core competencies for your organization and have determined what qualities and behaviors you are seeking in a candidate, you are ready to create your behavioral interview questions.

How do I Write Behavioral Interview Questions?

The questions for behavioral interviews should be written to elicit details about a candidate's past experience that would reflect the identified job-related competencies. These questions should be clear and concise and should encourage candidates to share openly about their typical behaviors that demonstrate the job-related competencies in question. To help you in developing your interview questions, we have provided a list of sample questions at the end of this guide (see **_Appendix B_**).

Using the STAR Model

One particularly useful and popular approach to developing behavioral interview questions is the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Results) model. The STAR model helps candidates frame their responses to behavioral questions by encouraging them to respond with a story about a past behavior.

An example framework for developing a structured, behavioral interview question using the STAR model is presented below.

- **S**ituation: What was the situation the candidate was in?
  - e.g., *"Tell me about a time…"*

- **T**ask: What was the task the candidate needed to accomplish?
  - e.g., *"where you were faced with multiple competing deadlines."*

- **A**ction: What were the actions the candidate took to accomplish this task?
  - e.g., *"What did you do and…"*

- **R**esults: What were the results of these actions?
  - e.g., *"how did it turn out?"*

Thus, the complete behavioral interview question presented to the candidate would read, *"Tell me about a time where you were faced with multiple competing deadlines. What did you do and how did it turn out?"*

Once preliminary lead questions are developed in association with your competencies, it is recommended that you test their performance by interviewing position incumbents or employees who apply similar competencies in their daily work. This will help to evaluate the appropriateness of questions and will also help to develop potential probing questions to gain more insight about the candidate's behaviors.

How do I Create Rating Scales?

Once you have developed or identified your behavioral interview questions, you need to create an appropriate rating scale for your questions. A rating scale is the basis on which all candidates are

evaluated. The rating scale should be well defined so that all interviewers can easily understand the scale being used and the meaning of each rating on the scale.

A rating scale could be relatively simple and only include anchors such as "satisfactory" or "unacceptable." A rating scale of this kind can be useful in that it simplifies the rating process by making it a "yes or no" type of decision, reducing variance and the need for much more deliberation by interviewers. The disadvantage to these kinds of scales is that it reduces variance in the results, meaning that you may end up with all of you candidates either "satisfactory" or "unacceptable."

Rating scales can also be more complex, for example with multi-point Likert-type scales (e.g., a scale of 1-5). The advantages of a more complex scale are that they allow for more variance in the results, providing more nuanced comparisons between candidates and the ability to use other factors other than just interview responses to drive decisions. The disadvantage to more complex scales is that it increases the need to look more closely at the differences between each candidate.

In general, it is better to go with more variance than less when conducting behavioral interviews. However, the number of ratings in the scale is not nearly as important as how those ratings are defined. A generic example of a rating scale might look like this:

- **Far Exceeds Requirements:** Perfect answer. Demonstrates competency accurately, consistently, and independently. All points relevant. All good examples.
- **Exceeds Requirements:** Demonstrates competency accurately and consistently in most situations with minimal guidance. Many good examples.
- **Meets Requirements:** Demonstrates competency accurately and consistently on familiar procedures and needs supervisor guidance for new skills. Some good examples.
- **Below Requirements:** Demonstrates competency inconsistently, even with repeated instruction or guidance. Few good examples.
- **Significant Gap:** Fails to demonstrate competency regardless of guidance provided. No good examples.

Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS)

For behavioral interviews, rating scales should include criteria for tying suggested answers to each point in the scale based on the key behaviors that each question supports. This form of rating scale is referred to as a *Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale (BARS)*. BARS differs from more generic rating scales in that they focus on the behaviors that are determined to be key to performing the job properly rather than evaluating more general candidate characteristics, such as personality or experience.

For example, a superior response should look like X behavior, a satisfactory response should look like Y behavior, and an unsatisfactory response should look like Z behavior. The best representation of the most desired job-related behaviors should be tied to a top rating, whereas the weakest representation of job-related behaviors should be tied to the lowest rating. Using a BARS approach for standardizing the criterion used helps the interviewer rate candidates' responses more equitably and improves rating consistency among interviewers.

BARS rating scales are used to evaluate the quality of a job candidate's responses to competency-based behavioral questions; thus the questions and rating scales will typically be developed in tandem. The *critical incidents technique* is one effective method for creating a BARS scale. The critical incident technique involves asking current job incumbents to provide examples of effective and ineffective behaviors that lead to positive and negative outcomes related to particular situations (i.e., incidents) one might encounter on the job. Interview developers then review this information to determine whether it should be used as the "anchors" in the scale.

How Do I Conduct a Behavioral Interview?

Once you have created your behavioral interview questions and their associated rating scales, it is time to prepare for and conduct your interviews. In addition to having a detailed understanding of the position, behavioral competencies necessary for success, questions and rating scale, it is critical that interviewers are clear on what is expected of them in the interviewer role. The first step, however, is determining who will conduct the behavioral interviews.

Selecting Interviewers

When selecting interviewers, do not base your selection decision solely on convenient schedules of the potential interviewers. It is imperative that you think strategically about the responsibility of conducting fair and effective interviews to ensure that the interviewers you have selected are the right people for that role.

You will want to involve interviewers who:

- Represent a strategic need in serving as an interviewer (e.g., hiring manager, key member of the team, informal supervisor, important organizational stakeholder).
- Have a thorough knowledge of the job and can assess for the job's critical behavioral and technical competencies.
- Can hold a comfortable discussion with potential candidates, rather than an interrogation. Can assess for fit team and organizational culture fit.

If possible, always use the same stakeholders to conduct all the interviews for a single position to help ensure consistency in ratings.

Once you have selected your interviewer or interviewers be sure they receive behavioral interviewing training, if they have not already. A good best practice when there is more than one interviewer is to have all interviewers review the behavioral interview questions and rating scale, then discuss the questions and scale as a group to ensure that everyone is on the same page in terms of overall approach to the interviews and ways to interpret answers. Either way, every interviewer must thoroughly review the interview questions and rating scale prior to the interview.

Opening the Interview

The manner in which HR professionals and hiring managers interview applicants can be pivotal in identifying and retaining the top candidates for a job. A successful and effective interview is one in which both the interviewer and the interviewee receive comprehensive and accurate information in order to make informed decisions about the applicant's suitability for the job.

The interview process can be stressful for both the interviewer and the interviewee. It is normal for an applicant to be nervous, so interviewers should try to put the person at ease from the moment he or she enters the room. Displaying a calm, confident and friendly demeanor through good body language is particularly important. It is important as well that the interview be conducted in a setting that is quiet and free of distractions so that both the interviewer and interviewee can stay relaxed and focused.

Before commencing with prepared questions, the interviewer should first introduce his or her self and his or her role in the organization. He or she should then describe the interview process to the applicant and ask if he or she has any questions before the interview begins. (It may be helpful for the interviewer to also let the candidate know that during the interview he or she may pause while writing down their notes.) At this point the interviewer will want to recap the position and what it entails. This helps the applicant to answer questions more knowledgeably and to consider again whether he or she is genuinely interested in the job.

The interviewer can ease tensions further by encouraging the applicant to talk about a particular interest—perhaps something on the person's resume. To gain as much information as possible from an applicant, the interviewer should create an atmosphere that promotes communication.

Some examples of appropriate opening questions include:

- Tell me a bit about your work background, and then give me a description of how you think it relates to our current opening.
- Tell me about your present or last job. Why did you choose it? Why did you, or why do you, want to leave?
- After learning about this opportunity, what made you take the next step and apply for the job?
- What do you like most about the [name of profession]? What do you like least, and what do you find the most challenging?
- What are your short- and long-term career goals? Tell me about two work accomplishments that were very successful or you are the most proud of.
- What three things are most important to you in a position?

Once the interviewer has finished introducing his or herself, described the interview and put the applicant at ease, he or she can now dive into the behavioral interview questions.

Asking Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral interviews gain part of their strength from being standardized—the same group of lead questions are asked in the same order to each candidate. Thus, it is important that interviewers be

consistent in the way that they ask questions across candidates. In addition, when asking behavioral interview questions, the interviewer must listen closely and take clear and accurate notes without making the interviewee uncomfortable (see more about this in the subsequent section, ***Taking Notes***).

When asked a behavioral question, candidates are expected to provide information, in the form of a short story, not just on *what* tasks and activities they have accomplished, but *how* they accomplished them. The interviewer should encourage candidates to provide specific details when responding, asking questions that pull evidence about the candidate's achievements, how they responded to challenges, and how they differentiated themselves. In addition, candidates should answer questions in terms of what they as individuals specifically did, not what was accomplished as a team (e.g., "when X happened, **I** did Y to complete the goal" rather than "when X happened, **we** did Y to complete the goal").

Although structured, behavioral interviews can be a bit flexible as well. The individual conducting a behavioral interview should use probing questions to dig deeper into a candidate's responses, based on verbal and non-verbal cues. Typically a behavioral question will trigger 3-4 probing questions based on the candidate's initial response.

Probing questions are follow-up questions asked of candidates when:

- Initial answers are vague, ambiguous, evasive, or do not fully address the lead question.
- The candidate's tone changes drastically or word choice becomes negative.
- The candidate seems to have difficulty forming an answer or takes extensive pauses.

Probing questions are not developed in advance of a behavioral interview; they are based on triggers that are prompted through the candidate's responses to lead questions. These types of questions are grounded heavily on an interviewer's use of active listening and observation as a candidate relates facts and experiences about how they have behaved in the past. These questions should be open-ended and should not direct a candidate towards a desired response. Here are a few examples:

- I'm not quite sure I understood. Could you please tell me more about that?
- I'm not certain what you mean by . . . Could you give me some examples?
- You mentioned . . . Could you tell me more about that? What stands out in your mind about that?
- This is what I thought I heard . . . Did I understand you correctly?
- Can you give me an example of . . . ?
- You just told me about . . . I'd also like to know about . . .

Taking Notes

Note taking is key to your ability to revisit and remember your candidates' responses; yet, too much note-taking may unnerve a candidate or could detract from one's ability to connect with a candidate on a personal level. Solid note-taking, however, may be your legal defense against litigation, so taking notes is a critical part to your interview documentation.

Finding the right balance can often be challenging for interviewers, since candidates may speak at different paces, with different tones of voice, or even with different accents. It is critical, however, that

the interviewer maintain focus and follow along as closely as possible to ensure minimal loss of information. As noted earlier, it is a good practice to let the candidate know at the beginning that you are taking notes and that there may be pauses, to minimize this as a disruption to the interview flow.

There is basic information that every interviewer should record on their interview form or at the beginning of their notes, such as the date, time, and length of the interview and the name and job title of the interviewer. In addition to that information, however, the interviewer should note the responses to each question, highlighting key pieces of information that will help in evaluating each candidate according to each competency. Because there is so much information to record during a behavioral interview, below are some key tips for taking effective notes:

- Use short-hand or key phrases to summarize the content and delivery of responses.
- Balance your note taking with maintaining eye contact and engaging in conversation (try taking notes without breaking eye contact with the candidate).
- Avoid writing down judgments of your candidate in your notes.
- Avoid rating a candidate's response until they have left the interview (but rate the candidate responses for yourself as soon as possible after the interview).
- Ensure that your notes support or justify your ratings (list actual answers along with how these answers apply to the competency being rated).

Closing the Interview

A popular method of closing the interview is to say the interview is ending and to offer the candidate the opportunity to ask questions. This will enable the candidate to gain clarification on aspects of the position and on employment conditions such as hours, salary and benefits. The interviewer should answer the candidate's questions as frankly as possible. If it is not an appropriate time to discuss compensation—perhaps others are present—the interviewer can suggest a follow-up discussion. Interviewers should be prepared to provide documents describing the company and its benefits.

In closing an interview, the interviewer may want to:

- Ask if the candidate is interested in the job based on the information provided during the interview.
- Ask about availability.
- Ask for a list of people who can be contacted for references.
- Explain the time frame for the rest of the interviews, the subsequent steps in the process and when a decision is likely to be made.
- Explain how to get in touch with the interviewer and when to expect to hear from him or her.
- Walk the candidate to the door and thank the person for the interview.

Such steps can ensure the applicant is left with a positive impression of the interviewer and the organization.

Section 2: Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

On the following pages are sample behavioral interview questions that your organization can consider using for conducting competency-based behavioral interviews. These questions can be used as is, however, we recommend that you use the steps outlined above for developing behavioral interview questions to consider whether additional modifications be made prior to their use, including the potential addition of other questions.

Targeted Competency: Ethical Practice

Definition: The ability to integrate core values, integrity and accountability throughout all organizational and business practices.

Question: Describe a situation when you too action, based on your awareness of ethics laws, standards, legislation, and trends, that impacted your organizational practice.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **not** be up to date on the organization's ethical policies.

To be familiar with organizational policies and communicate them to other employees.

To demonstrate knowledge and application of relevant laws and policies.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give me an example of a time when you had to support your organization's HR policies, procedures, and guidelines. What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To **fail** to enforce the policy/procedure /guideline.		To speak with employees individually to ensure that they understand the policies, procedures, and guidelines.		To provide training on organization policy, including its rationale, expectations for employees, and feedback and corrective action for those who are not following it.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Walk me through the steps you have taken when following a specific policy at work.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To ignore a policy.

To demonstrate familiarity with a policy.

To follow a step-by-step process based on best practices when following the policy.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think of a time when you were new to an organization. What steps did you take to establish yourself as a credible and trustworthy source for employees to voice concerns?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To post a notice that s/he is available, along with a picture of him/herself.

To post an intro/bio of him/herself so that employees could get to know his/her background.

To follow up with any employee question or concern in a timely manner.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give me an example of how you have used a specific process to document and escalate reports of unethical behavior to management?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To **fail** to accurately report and/or escalate reports of unethical behavior to management.		To send an e-mail to his/her boss.		To ask probing questions, document all information and responses, and share this information with his/her manager.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you made a mistake at work. How did you deal with this situation and what was the outcome?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To **fail** to inform stakeholders of the error.		To fix the mistake and ask a co-worker to check his/her work to spot future mistakes before work is submitted.		To explain the error and present possible solutions to his/her manager prior to executing the best solution to correct the issue.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a process you have dealt with in the past that required employee confidentiality. What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To leave confidential forms and information where others can view it.		To keep confidential forms in locked drawers or secured electronic files.		To go over key points of the confidentiality policy with employees, including consequences, and obtain commitment to abiding by the policy.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think about a time when management made a difficult decision. What was the situation? How did you behave?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To complain about the decision to others.

To accept the decision and maintain a professional demeanor.

To support management's final decision and explain to employees why the decision had been made.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time when you encountered a fellow employee behaving unethically. How did you respond?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1

2

3

4

5

To ignore or **fail** to report unethical behavior.

To follow the organization's policy.

To report the behavior to the appropriate source (manager, confidential point of contact, etc.).

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time when you encountered a conflict of interest. What was the scenario? What did you do?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To ignore the
conflict.

To attempt to
mediate the
conflict.

To report the
incident to
management.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Targeted Competency: Leadership & Navigation

Definition: The ability to direct and contribute to initiatives and processes within the organization.

Question: Describe a time when you needed to work as part of a team on a project or initiative. What was your role on the team and what actions did you take to contribute to the team in that role?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to offer information about his/her part on the team.

To offer advice on various pieces of the project or initiative.

To discuss contributions with the team and come to a consensus on the best approach to meet all needs.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Consider a time when you were new to an organization. How did you familiarize yourself with internal policies and procedures?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to review policies and procedures.

To schedule a meeting with his/her supervisor to ask questions regarding policies and procedures.

To initiate conversations with peers and leaders regarding the purpose, practical application, and outcomes of organizational policies and procedures.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when an employee approached you with concerns. How did you handle the situation?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to address the problem.

To ask questions and make suggestions for action.

To follow up with the employee after meeting with an HR supervisor to discuss/share findings and potential corrective actions.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give an example of a time when you had to quickly change project priorities. What steps did you take to initiate change?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To be too busy to initiate change.		To change what s/he was doing to address the immediate need.		To seek out relevant stakeholders to assist in change initiation and priority ordering.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you had to represent your organization to an external party. How did you act in order to represent your organization's culture?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

To not identify him/herself or who s/he represented.

To follow up with the external party to confirm commitments.

To positively demonstrate the organization's unique culture through appearance and demeanor.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time when you had to provide detail-oriented support in the administration of organizational programs and initiatives.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1

2

3

4

5

To assume that employees will be able to figure things out on their own.

To create a presentation including relevant details.

To highlight new/different features in the program/ initiative, as compared to previous programs/ initiatives.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think of a time when you had to build credibility with stakeholders. What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to take action.

To answer stakeholder questions and provide background information.

To identify and assist in implementing solutions to help the organization become more effective.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think of a time when you had to make a transactional decision. How did you respond?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To **fail** to follow up with a supervisor.		To follow and communicate basic policies.		To ask clarifying questions to determine the correct policies to apply to the situation.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Walk me through the specific steps you have taken when implementing an organization-wide process or initiative.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To implement program without following a change process.

To assist in aligning project needs with organizational needs.

To help educate the organization concerning needs.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time when you have responded to a transactional issue. What steps did you take to see its resolution?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1

2

3

4

5

To **fail** to report the transactional issue.

To research previous precedents (similar cases).

To investigate and properly document the incident.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think about a time when you have encountered an ineffective process or transaction. What steps did you take following this discovery?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1
To ignore the problem.

2

3
To analyze the process internally.

4

5
To investigate and make recommendations based on industry standards.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Targeted Competency: Business Acumen

Definition: The ability to understand and apply information to contribute to the organization's strategic plan.

Question: Think back to a time when you had to solve a problem at work. What sources of data and information did you use? How did you identify relevant information?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to identify appropriate information.

To conduct internet research on similar solutions.

To contact relevant support staff, identify relevant internal and external information, and use this information to prevent the problem from occurring again in the future.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a situation in which you needed to make a business decision. What specific steps led you to your conclusion?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To make an
uninformed
decision.

To consider
budget
constraints.

To research best
practices.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe how you have used data in the past to make a decision or to solve a problem. How did you use data as an aid in your decision making?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5

To **fail** to identify the data available and the appropriate data needed.

To identify the data available and the appropriate data needed.

To identify the impact that the data had on the decision.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time when you made interpretations based on statistical analyses. What analyses did you use to arrive at your interpretations?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To misinterpret and/or **fail** to understand data findings.

To use analyses to identify necessary onboarding initiatives.

To establish a pay scale.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe the data collection techniques you have used in the past.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to utilize   To utilize   To utilize focus
data collection   interviews.   groups.
techniques, such
as surveys.

Notes:

Targeted Competency: Consultation

Definition: The ability to provide guidance to organizational stakeholders.

Question: Think of a time when you had to work on multiple projects simultaneously. How did you manage your time?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To **fail** to seek supervisory guidance and/or ask for help on prioritizing projects.		To occasionally or when prompted seek assistance from his/her supervisor.		To regularly or proactively advise his/her supervisor and stakeholders of progress and any project plan deviations.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give me an example of a time when you had to summarize information to be presented to mid and senior-level leaders. How did you decide which facts to include?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

◔ 1 ◔ 2 ◑ 3 ◑ 4 ◑ 5

To **fail** to consult with his/her supervisor or include all facts.

To include all facts to ensure nothing was missed.

To independently compile basic facts, consult with his/her supervisor to share a draft, and highlight facts left out to identify if information is complete or if anything is missing.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe the actions you have taken when conducting initial investigations of employee-related transactions. What approach did you use?

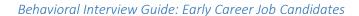**Rating Scale:** Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1 2 3 4 5

To **fail** to properly document the incident.

To report any problems to his/her manager.

To research previous precedents (similar cases).

Notes:

Question: Tell me about a time when you encountered a business problem. How did you develop a solution?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to examine the data to determine the underlying issue.

To document the problem and the process.

To reach out to subject matter experts to gather additional information.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Targeted Competency: Critical Evaluation

Definition: The ability to interpret information to make business decisions and recommendations.

Question: Consider a time when you were new to an organization. How did you gather knowledge about your business unit and your organization's business practices?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To learn passively.		To do personal reading and research on his/her new organization, relying primarily on the organization's website.		To schedule meet and greets with managers and key stakeholders to get to know their positions and responsibilities within the organization.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you used your knowledge of metrics to work on a project at work.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To be unaware of where to obtain data.		To complete basic quantitative analyses and report the data to his/her manager.		To complete quantitative and qualitative analyses and make suggestions for future action based on the results.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think of a time when you were unfamiliar with a business term or acronym. What did you do to learn its meaning?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1 2 3 4 5

To **not** ask for an explanation.

To ask his/her colleague and/or manager about its meaning.

To search for the term on the internet, find its definition, and confirm his/her understanding with a manager.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give me an example of a time when you had to carry out an assigned task. What information did you access to complete the task and how did you access that information?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5

To be unaware of how to access data needed to carry out the task.

To possess the operational/proce ssing knowledge needed to carry out an assigned task.

To carry out an assigned task and then write a report including findings, conclusions, and recommendations for his/her supervisor.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe for me a time when you have utilized your understanding of cost-benefit analysis. How did you use the analysis?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **lack** knowledge of where to locate data.

To interpret data.

To prepare a report based on his/her findings (data analyses).

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give me an example of a time when you needed to learn more about competitor organizations. What was the situation? What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

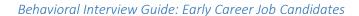| 1	2	3	4	5
To **lack** understanding on how to obtain information about competitors.		To look at survey data and websites available online.		To compare competitor best practices and provide recommendations based on analyses.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time you were asked to prepare a report on metrics or trends. What actions did you take to complete the task?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to use best practices to obtain the metrics and/or trends.

To identify and clarify critical metrics and/or trends.

To analyze the data, describe trends found, and identify the impact of the data on the organization.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: In your previous positions, what methods have you used to learn about your organization's lines of business or products and services?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1

2

3

4

5

To **fail** to conduct research around products/services and/or the business line.

To conduct research around products/services and/or the business line.

To participate in walking tours with managers and/or shadow managers.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: In your previous positions, what methods have helped you learn the most about your organization's HR function and best practices?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To rely on hearsay and make assumptions about the organization without confirmation.		To research online and via the organization's intranet.		To follow and consult with business leaders.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Consider a time when you worked directly with a customer. What steps did you take to learn about the customer and his/her needs?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to get to know the customer and **fail** to listen to customer concerns.

To gather background information on the customer.

To meet with customers, listen to customers, and identify customer needs.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time you identified inefficiencies within a process you needed to follow. How did you react? What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to demonstrate ownership in helping solve the problem.

To make recommendations on how to improve the process.

To initiate follow through to create change.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Targeted Competency: Communication

Definition: The ability to effectively exchange information with stakeholders.

Question: Tell me about a time when you had to communicate organizational policies, procedures, and culture to a new or existing employee. What steps did you take to ensure successful communication of your message?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

 1   2   3   4   5

To tell the
employee to
review the
handbook.

To cite examples
of good/bad
conduct.

To help the
employee
understand what
is expected of
him/her.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think of a time when you had to respond to stakeholder concerns via written, verbal, or electronic communication. What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…
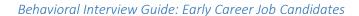
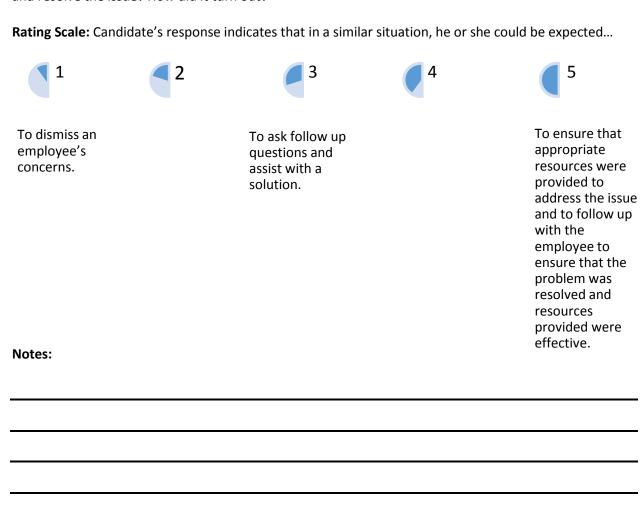| 1	2	3	4	5
To explain that there was nothing s/he could do to address the concern.		To send stakeholders a follow up memo with details surrounding the concern and the outcome.		To investigate and resolve the matter and follow up with stakeholders regarding the investigation and resolution.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Consider a time when an employee approached you with a problem. What did you do to try and resolve the issue? How did it turn out?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To dismiss an employee's concerns.		To ask follow up questions and assist with a solution.		To ensure that appropriate resources were provided to address the issue and to follow up with the employee to ensure that the problem was resolved and resources provided were effective.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give an example of a time when you were faced with a problem at work. What specific steps did you take to notify upper management of issues or concerns?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to communicate the problem.

To document the incident in writing, share it with his/her manager, and follow up on the problem.

To thoroughly research the problem, find the root cause, and identify the best solution before notifying his/her manager.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you supported organizational initiatives in communication with stakeholders. What approach did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To project a negative attitude toward the initiative in communication with other employees.		To support an initiative by communicating its benefits to employees.		To express support for and ownership of initiatives as part of the team, and provide additional resources if available.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Walk me through the steps you have taken to communicate a message to your department. To what elements of your message did you pay specific attention?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To **not** proofread messages.		To verify that the message is clearly written.		To send an e-mail to the department with the message, an explanation, and a reiteration of policy.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time when you had to use discretion in communicating sensitive information. How did you handle the situation?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To share more information than necessary.

To maintain employee anonymity where necessary and inform other employees that they should keep information confidential.

To communicate sensitive information to a manager in person, in private, and to coach him/her on how to respond to employee inquiries on the subject.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Targeted Competency: Global & Cultural Effectiveness

Definition: The ability to value and consider the perspectives and backgrounds of all parties.

Question: Tell me about a time when you had to apply your understanding of cultural differences at work. What actions did you take as a result of your understanding?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5

To **fail** to respect cultural differences.

To recognize cultural differences, but **fail** to advocate for cultural diversity.

To research cultural differences to ensure understanding prior to communicating with an employee.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think of a time when you were new to an organization. What steps did you take to develop your knowledge of your organization's global policies and initiatives? What information did you seek out?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to find information on global policies.

To search the organization intranet to find global initiatives and policies.

To proactively seek out relevant information and learning from various sources, including his/her supervisor.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give me an example of a time when you applied your organization's policy and philosophy toward diversity and inclusiveness.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **not** understand his/her organization's policy.

To support the development of a diversity training program.

To proactively communicate the policy throughout the organization.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you interacted with a culturally diverse group of individuals at a transactional level when trying to meet a difficult goal. What did you do to take the group's diversity into account?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To **fail** to take into account cultural differences.		To take the individuals' native language proficiency (or lack thereof) into account when preparing materials.		To demonstrate understanding of and sensitivity toward cultural differences and make decisions accordingly.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: In the past, what steps have you taken to learn more about your organization's business environment?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **not** read the organization's website.

To gather information via blogs, news, internet research, and social media.

To read annual reports.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time when you've assisted in the implementation of a new local program. What steps did you take to launch the initiative?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To help
implement the
program without
following a
change process.

To help
communicate
the plan.

To help evaluate
program
effectiveness
and/or impact.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you applied your understanding of global and diverse perspectives in your organization's line of business.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **lack** understanding of diversity indicators and how they apply to broader functions.

To look into previous employee engagement surveys.

To observe current diversity climate at different levels within the organization.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

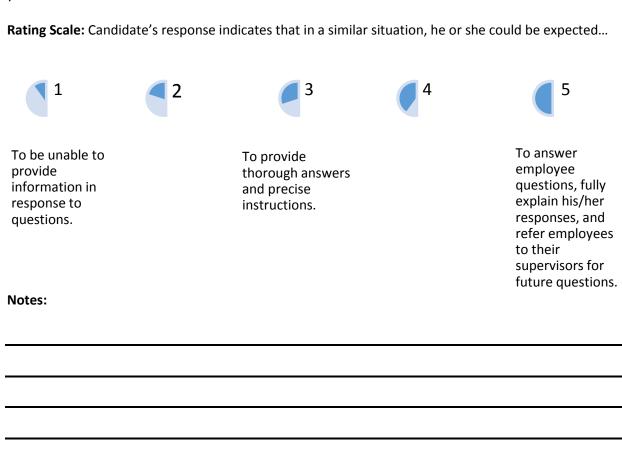# Targeted Competency: Relationship Management

Definition: The ability to manage interactions to provide service and to support the organization.

Question: Describe a time when you were the first point of contact for employee questions. How did you handle this situation?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To be unable to provide information in response to questions.		To provide thorough answers and precise instructions.		To answer employee questions, fully explain his/her responses, and refer employees to their supervisors for future questions.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think about a time when listening skills helped you solve a business problem. What was the problem? How did you develop a solution?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **fail** to listen to an employee concern.

To listen and take notes on the situation.

To listen intently and paraphrase the problem to the employee to confirm understanding.

Notes:

Question: Tell me about a time when you were faced with a difficult interaction at work. How did you handle the situation?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To avoid
interaction.

To discuss the
situation with
the other party.

To tell a
manager about
the interaction.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you dealt with a transactional conflict at work. What was the situation? What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1

2

3

4

5

To inform the parties involved in the conflict that s/he is not responsible for its solution.
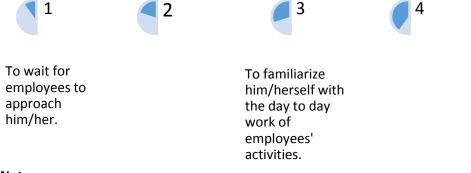
To notify a supervisor of the conflict.

To refer to organizational policies to address the conflict.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Think of a time when you were new to an organization. What specific steps did you take to gain trust and become approachable as an HR professional in the eyes of your colleagues?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To wait for employees to approach him/her.

To familiarize him/herself with the day to day work of employees' activities.

To follow up with employees in a timely manner regarding their questions.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Consider a time when your boss made a decision that you did not agree with. How did you communicate this decision to other employees?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To communicate to employees that the decision was wrong.

To explain the rationale behind the decision to employees.

To align behaviors to support the decision.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Give me an example of a time when you had to communicate with someone whose opinion differed from yours. What was the situation? What actions did you take?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1 2 3 4 5

To argue with an employee.

To remove his/herself from the situation.

To engage in active listening to understand the other person's position.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you provided customer service to an employee or other stakeholder.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1

2

3

4

5

To let the employee know that the service had been provided previously and should not need to be provided again.

To refer the employee to another source of help when lacking necessary information.

To provide what was requested, and additional service above and beyond the initial request.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time in a previous role when you had to develop relationships internal to your organization.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5
To focus on one type of communication.		To participate in relationship building activities (e.g., team building retreats).		To work with cross functional teams.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Describe a time in a previous role when you had to develop relationships external to your organization.

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1	2	3	4	5

To focus on one type of communication.

To attend industry events.

To participate in networking activities.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Question: Tell me about a time when you were the first point of contact for vendors or suppliers. What actions did you take within this role?

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

To **lack** familiarity with the vendor/supplier.

To communicate with stakeholders and other users of the process.

To share expectations of the relationship.

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Section 3: What to do After Conducting a Behavioral Interview

Because interviewers are all coming to the interview process with different perspectives, biases, and beliefs about the role and the job candidates, there is always a chance that this bias will show up in the candidate ratings for the open position. When there are multiple interviewers involved, to maintain fairness when evaluating a candidate, it is critical that all interviewers have the same candidate expectations, and that the interviewers all rate each candidate in a similar way. If the raters all have agreement in their scoring, this can make discussions about job candidates more standardized. If not, the interviewers will need to work to gain inter-rater agreement.

Interviewer Debrief Meetings

To gain inter-rater agreement, the interviewers should conduct a debrief meeting to discuss their individual ratings for a candidate's responses to each competency assessed. As these ratings should be based on the rating guide provided, the hope would be that all interviewers would reach a consensus about the score assigned. If consensus is not reached by all interviewers, the rating selected for each competency should either represent the majority rating vote or the average of all rating votes. This activity should be repeated for every candidate to help the voting become more standardized across the candidates. The goal is to select the top candidate for employment, but in doing so ensuring that a fair selection process has been used.

The interview debrief should involve those who interviewed the candidate as well as the hiring manager for the position. A debriefing meeting can take place either immediately after each candidate interview or after all candidate interviews have been completed. The hiring manager can act as a facilitator to keep people on task and fact-based.

During the debriefing meeting, attendees should discuss the following:

- *First Impression:* This is a tallying of the interviewers' initial gut reactions to the candidate's appropriateness to this role. It can be a yay or nay vote or as simple as a thumbs up or down. This vote's outcome should be recorded, but should not be considered the final vote.
- *Review of Questions/Responses:* This is an opportunity for each interviewer to review the questions he/she asked, the responses that were provided, and what was expected in a response.

- *Final Voting:* Based on the information shared by the interviewers, a second vote is taken. If the decision is not unanimous, additional discussion may take place, and another vote may be captured. The final vote is taken into consideration by the hiring manager when deciding the top candidate.

Making and Documenting the Final Hiring Decision

The hiring manager will use the notes and feedback from the debrief meeting to help inform his/her hiring decision. An HR professional does not need to be in attendance at such a session, but should be informed of all decisions by the hiring manager.

Once all candidates have been evaluated by those who conducted the interviews, it is the responsibility of the hiring manager to make a final hiring decision. To help with this decision, the hiring manager should:

- Review each candidate's ratings.
- Ensure that the notes provide support to the ratings given to the candidates.
- Ensure that the ratings relate to specific behavioral examples.
- Ensure that the candidate is a match both in terms of his/her job and organizational fit.

On this is completed, the hiring manager should provide the following to HR, who is responsible for maintaining all documentation regarding the decision and the process used:

- Job analysis data and outcomes.
- Job description.
- Behavioral interview questions.
- Rating scale.
- Rating guide.
- Interview notes.
- Candidate evaluations for this interview.

Appendix A: Question & Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scale Template

Question:

_____

_____

_____

Rating Scale: Candidate's response indicates that in a similar situation, he or she could be expected…

1   2   3   4   5

Notes:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix B: Additional Competency-based Behavioral Interview Questions

Ethical Practice

- Describe a time when you came across questionable business practices. How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever faced a significant ethical problem at work? How did you handle it?
- Describe a time when you made a mistake at work. How did you deal with this situation, and what was the outcome?
- Have you worked in a situation in which an employee, vendor or supplier had a conflict of interest? How did you handle this?
- Describe a time when you had an opportunity to personally profit from your employer's product.
- Tell me about an ethical situation you have encountered and the part you took in resolving it.
- Describe the most difficult employee relations situation you have had to handle. What did you do to try to resolve it, and why?

Leadership and Navigation

- What are some of the most important steps you've used in making business-related decisions?
- Give a specific example of a decision you made that was not effective. Why do you think it was not effective, and what did you do when this realization was made?
- Describe a time when you had to make a very important and difficult decision that affected everyone in your department.
- Recount a time when you were not the authority but had to make a decision about the team's next step(s).
- Can you tell me about a time during your previous employment when, unsolicited, you suggested a better way to perform a process?
- Describe a time when you performed a task outside your perceived responsibilities. What was the task? Why did you perceive it to be outside your responsibilities? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you kept from getting bored when dealing with routine tasks.

- Give me an example of a time you were able to take the lead in changing a policy for your department and for the organization.
- Give me an example of a time when you needed to help other employees learn a new skill set. What did you do?
- Have you ever been in a position in which you had to lead a group of peers? How did you handle it? Tell me about problems you had and how you handled them.
- Have you ever managed a situation in which the people or units reporting to you were in different locations? Tell me how this worked.
- Tell me about your experience working with a board of directors. What approach and philosophy did you follow in working with boards?
- Tell me about a time when you organized, managed and motivated others on a complex task from beginning to end.
- Give me an example of how you have motivated your employees.
- Tell me about a situation you wish that you had handled differently based on the outcome. What would you change (or will you change) when faced with a similar situation?
- Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult boss, co-worker or customer. How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you inherited a process that wasn't working and you had limited time to fix it.
- Have you ever had to champion an unpopular change? What was the situation, and how did you handle it?
- Have you ever had to persuade a peer or superior to accept an idea that you knew he or she would not like? Tell me about the resistance you met and how you overcame it.
- Have you ever had to persuade a group to accept a proposal or idea? How did you go about doing it? What was the result, and how did you feel about it?
- Have you ever had to persuade an executive (or other superior) to accept a proposal or idea? How did you go about doing it? What was the result, and how did you feel about it?
- Describe an occasion when you recommended a change to procedure. What did you learn from that experience? How did you apply that learning in other situations?
- What was the most challenging employee performance issue you've had to deal with, and how did you handle it?
- Explain, step by step, how you have handled an employee who had performance problems.
- Describe a time when you needed to discipline an employee who reported directly to you.
- What coaching or mentoring experience have you had? With groups or one-on-one? How did you determine the appropriate way to coach or mentor, and what were the results?

Business Acumen

- Tell me about a time you used your knowledge of the organization to get an idea approved.
- Tell me about a time you used financial data to support a successful project.
- Tell me about a time when you used industry data to support a successful project.
- Tell me about a time when you used economic environment data to support a successful project.

- What have you done in your previous positions at other companies that made a significant difference to the business and for which you believe you will be remembered?
- Recall an occasion when you had to explain your department's losses.
- Have you ever been over budget? Why? How did you handle this?
- Recount a time when you had to prioritize bill or invoice payment.
- If you could pick a stock to add to this company's portfolio, which one would it be? Why?
- Describe a tough financial analysis problem you were able to solve and how you solved it.
- Walk me through a financial statement (pick one).

Consultation

- Tell me about a long-term project that you were responsible for that required you to communicate with numerous people and departments.
- Think of a specific project that you've completed. Were you successful in achieving the desired results?
- What was the most interesting or challenging technical proposal you've ever written?
- Tell me about the most challenging project you managed.
- Have you had a nonproductive team member on your project team? What happened, and how did you handle this situation?
- What did you bring to the last team on which you were a member? Describe how your strengths improved the team.
- What was the last big project you worked on? How did you start this project? What obstacles did you overcome? Were the deadlines met? Why or why not? What would you have done differently?
- Tell me about a project you worked on and how it helped the organization meet its business goals.
- What have you done to help your human resource department become a strategic partner?

Critical Evaluation

- Describe for me a decision you made that would normally have been made by your supervisor. What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you needed to use the principles of logic to solve a problem.
- Have you ever solved a problem that others around you could not solve? Tell me about it.
- What was one of the toughest problems you ever solved? What process did you go through to solve it?
- Tell me about a time when you had a work problem and didn't know what to do.
- Tell me about a time when you solved one problem but created others.
- Tell me about a time when a work problem was more than it at first appeared to be.
- How have you approached solving a problem that initially seemed insurmountable?
- What have you done when faced with an obstacle to an important project? Give me an example.
- How do you analyze different options to determine which is the best alternative?
- Describe for me how your prior positions required you to be proficient in the analysis of technical reports.

- Give an example of when you used analytical techniques to design solutions to solve problems.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to engage in future planning.
- Tell me about a time when you participated in developing your departmental or organizational business strategy. What was your role? How did you approach it?
- Tell me about a time when you identified a need for a new approach or product to meet a market need.
- Tell of how your job (at a current or former employer) was directly related to a strategic goal.
- The last time that you experienced a technical problem during your workday, to whom did you go for help? Why did you choose this person?
- Tell me about a time when you used your technical knowledge to solve a problem that appeared to be unsolvable.
- Describe a technical report that you had to complete. What did the report entail? What was the purpose? Who was the audience?
- Describe a time when you had to share data electronically.

Communication

- Give some examples of how and when you were the spokesperson for your current (or most recent) company.
- Give an example of how you carefully considered your audience prior to communicating with them. What factors influenced your communication?
- Describe a time you used your communications skills to negotiate with an angry person.
- Have you ever given a presentation to a group? How did you prepare for it? What would you do differently?
- Describe a time when you were able to overcome a communications barrier(s).
- Tell me about a time when effective listening skills helped you in a problematic situation.
- Tell me about a time when you thought someone wasn't listening to you. What did you do?
- Recount an occasion when you were greeted with a greeting that was not normal for you. How'd you respond?

Global and Cultural Effectiveness

- On your last expatriate assignment, what did you do to ensure that your adjustment into the new environment went smoothly?
- Tell me about a time when working in a different country you had to adapt to the culture. What adaptations did you have to make? How did you go about it?
- Describe a situation in which you have had to work in a multicultural environment and the challenges you had. How did you approach the situation, and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you worked in a remote location or situation that was totally foreign.
- Talk about a time when you worked abroad.
- What has been the most challenging aspect of being in a diverse working environment? What steps have you taken to meet this challenge?
- Tell me about a time you had to alter your work style to meet a diversity need or challenge.
- How have you handled a situation when a colleague was not accepting of diversity of others?

- What strategies have you used to address diversity challenges? What were the positives and negatives?
- Describe a time when you included someone in your team or on a project because you felt he or she would bring a different perspective.

Relationship Management

- Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a difficult time you have had dealing with an employee or customer. Why was it difficult? How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you were instrumental in creating or improving a good relationship with another department within your company.
- Recall an occasion when you had to work with people from different divisions to accomplish a single goal.
- Recount an occasion when you were able to connect individuals from different backgrounds or cultures in a unified organizational effort.
- Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to give great service to a customer.
- Tell me about a time when you asked for feedback on your customer service skills from your manager or co-worker and then used that response to improve your work.
- Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult guest- or client-relations problem. What was the outcome? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a time when you knew that your customer might not get what he or she needed on time. How did you handle this?
- Tell me about a time when you had to say "no" to a customer because his or her request was against company policy.
- Tell me about a time when you had trouble working with a difficult or demanding customer. How did you handle this?
- Tell me about a situation in which you "lost it" or did not do your best with a customer. What did you do about this?
- Describe a time when you exceeded a customer's expectations.
- Describe a time when you lost a customer. What would you do differently?
- Tell me about a time when a team project failed.
- Tell me about a time when you needed to work as part of a team to satisfy a client or resolve an issue.
- Tell me about a time you worked on a cross-functional team. Were there different challenges compared to a departmental-task team?
- When groups work together, conflict often erupts. Tell me about a time that conflict occurred in one of your workgroups and what you did about it.
- Tell me about a time you pitched in to help a team member finish a project even though it "wasn't your job." What was the result?
- Tell me about a situation in which political power plays affected team dynamics. How did you or the team overcome this situation, and how could the situation have been avoided?

- Tell me about a time when you were a part of a great team. What was your part in making the team effective?
- Tell me the role you play within workgroups and why.
- Tell me about the most effective contribution you have made as part of a task group or special project team.
- Have you ever worked on a virtual team? If so, tell me about this experience. What were the team dynamics? Was the team successful? If not, what do you perceive to be the advantages and disadvantages of this type of team? What would you do differently? How would you suggest creating team cohesiveness in a virtual setting?

Other Organizational Competencies

Time Management

- Have you worked under time constraints before? Give us an example.
- Was there a time when you struggled to meet a deadline? Tell us about it.
- Describe a time you identified a barrier to your (or to others') productivity and what you did about it.
- When you have a lot of work to do or multiple priorities, how do you get it all done? Give me an example.
- Give an example of how you stay organized when juggling multiple tasks.

Thoroughness

- What means have you used to focus on detail and to keep from making mistakes?
- When there's a decision for a new critical process, what means do you use to communicate step-by-step processes to ensure other people understand and will complete the process correctly?
- Tell me the steps you take to monitor the quality of your work in your current job.
- How do you decide when something is "good enough" or when it needs to be as close as possible to perfection? When have you had to make this determination? Explain.
- Describe a time when you failed to satisfy a client or customer due to some minor neglect. What did you do to correct it?

Flexibility

- Give an example of a time when you were trying to meet a deadline and you were interrupted and did not make the deadline. How did you respond?
- Give an example of a time when you had to quickly change project priorities. How did you do it?
- Recount a time when you accommodated someone beyond your comfort level, though you didn't have to.
- How have you reacted when you found yourself stalled in an inefficient process?
- Tell me about a time when significant changes took place in your job. What did you do to adjust to the change(s)?

Learning Orientation

- Describe a time when you took a new job that required a much different set of skills from what you had. How did you go about acquiring the needed skills?
- Have you had an occasion when a prior strength actually turned out to be a weakness in another setting? How did you cope?
- Throughout your career have you learned more about your profession through course work or through on-the-job experience? Explain.
- What area of your last job was most challenging for you? Why was this specific part of the position difficult? Is this still challenging? Why or why not?
- Tell me about a time when you volunteered for an assignment to expand your knowledge and skills.
- Tell of a time when you had to educate yourself about a topic to make a presentation.

Stress Management

- Tell me about a work "nightmare" you were involved in. How did you approach the situation, and what was the outcome?
- Have you ever been caught unaware by a problem or obstacle that you had not foreseen? What happened?