

Interview Questions on Communication Skills

Once an employer is satisfied that you can *do* the job, they will focus their attention on your communication skills. Specifically they'll want to know how you'll interact with colleagues/ senior management /customers, how skilled you are at resolving conflict and how adept you are in the art of negotiation. By anticipating questions that will be asked, you can prepare examples that show your competency in these areas and prove that you are a great fit for the role.

Questions that may be asked:

What types of people do you find it difficult to get on with?

When asking this question, an employer isn't interested who you find it difficult to work with. They want to know what you *do* to ensure an effective working relationship with such individuals. A possible answer for this question could be: "I get on with all types of people, but get frustrated when working with those who don't share my work ethic. In these situations, I find that by developing a good rapport the person, letting them know how important their contribution is to getting the job done, and appealing to their better nature.....things get done."

Tell me about a time when you successfully dealt with conflict.

When preparing your answer for this question, bear in mind that the employer is most interested in the *tools* you use to deal with conflict. Choose an example where you had to work hard to come to a mutually beneficial outcome. Points that you may want to consider when preparing your answer:

Emphasise that you always act calmly even if the other party is aggressive and that you never personalise a situation. Mention that you actively listen and try to understand the other person's viewpoint. Show that you are open to the idea that a third position may exist and that by working together a creative solution may be found. Highlight that if approached correctly you think conflict can be positive as it can deepen your awareness of a situation, sharpen your focus and force you to think outside of the box.

Tell me about the most difficult or complex idea you have had to explain to someone.

Once again, the employer is more interested in the *tools* you use to effectively communicate a complex idea, rather than the idea itself. Points to bear in mind when explaining your methodology:

When communicating complex ideas, you keep your message simple and straightforward – avoiding technical jargon and overusing statistics. You don't expect people to have the same background knowledge as you and are careful to introduce your idea in clear, concise terms. You find that giving examples, using pictures and graphs helps clarify difficult concepts and can be useful as people have different learning styles. You always encourage questions and if somebody is having difficulty understanding, you are quick to adapt your style.

Conclusion:

I would advise using the Competency Framework (Situation, Action, Result) when answering these questions as it will help you respond in a clear, concise and powerful manner. Next month's article will be totally dedicated to Competency Based Questions and how to best answer them.

About the Author

Laura McGrath is the owner of [Interview Techniques](http://www.interviewtechniques.ie), a leading provider of interview coaching services. She has spent the last 15 years in staffing and recruitment and is a regular contributor with Irish Jobs and the Sunday Business Post.

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