

Competency Interview Questions – Problem Solving

As today's market place is dominated by uncertainty, employers are placing an increasingly high value on a candidate's ability to problem solve, show sound judgement and make quick decisions.

What questions can I expect?

The following are examples of "problem solving" competency questions:

- Describe a difficult problem you had to solve in your last job.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyse information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? What was your reasoning behind your decision?
- Describe a time when you had to analyse a problem and generate a solution.

How do I answer competency interview questions on problem solving?

In these questions an employer is looking for your ability to gather and organise all relevant information, to identify cause-effect relationships and to come up with appropriate solutions.

It is helpful to structure your answer as follows:

- Define the problem
- Explain how you analysed it and broke it down
- Show you decided on the best solution
- Describe how you implemented the solution and outline the outcome

Define the Problem

Describe the problem. What made it a problem? What did the problem involve?

Analyse the Problem

Show how you collected the information and analysed it to look for possible causes. Then describe how you looked for links between the causes, and analysed these "groups of causes" to come up with possible solutions.

Generating Possible Solutions

Describe how you generated a number of possible solutions. Talk about what results you expected to achieve and the risks involved in each course of action. Which solution did you opt for and why?

Results

Discuss how you implemented the solution and what you achieved. Highlight what you learnt from that experience.

Conclusion:

Use the SAR (Situation, Action, Result) method when answering your questions – this will provide you with a nice framework for your answer and will help keep your response focused and concise. [See Link to May's article.](#)

For further examples of answers on competency questions and answers, go to www.interviewtechniques.ie

About the Author:

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