



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Skills & Behaviour Assessment

Assessing for skills and behaviours rather than experience

How does this differ to competency based assessment?

Assessing for skills and behaviours rather than experience is useful for assessing candidates who will be developing into the role or have not done the specific job before. Questioning in this way allows the assessor to observe the skills that the candidate will bring to the role and how that contributes as well as how they have behaved in previous situations rather than assessing the experiences they have from previous roles that are directly relevant.

Skills based questions

Skills-based questions aim to uncover whether the candidate's skill set matches what a role wants and needs. These questions require the candidate to discuss existing skills as well as those they would like to develop.

Example questions

1. Talk us through your professional and/or technical skill set

It's important that the candidate is very familiar with the role and job description when answering this question, so they can highlight how useful their skills are to the current position. If the organisation is looking for someone with online business skills they could say:

"I have experience in HTML and coding, and I used these skills in my last two roles. My previous place of employment didn't have a website, so I taught myself how to code. I built a website from scratch for the business and they saw their sales increase by 80 percent."

2. What is the one professional and/or technical skill you would most like to develop?

This is an opportunity for the candidate to highlight the skills they want to develop. This shows they understand the requirements of the role and a willingness to undertake professional development.

It's also an opportunity for the candidate to emphasise how they have addressed any skills shortages in previous roles and how new skills were utilised.

3. Based on your understanding of this role, what do you think are the key challenges? How could you best apply your skills to resolve these?

This is a question the candidate needs to know the requirements of the role and how experience, skills and knowledge match up. It's also an opportunity to highlight soft skills which are critical to the development of effective working relationships.

4. Tell me about a time that you had to gain the cooperation of a group over which you had little or no authority. What did you do? How effective were you?

This question gives an insight into leadership style and effectiveness as well as communication styles to be expected if the candidate were successful.

5. What is your greatest strength, and how do you take full advantage of it?
This is a question the candidate needs to know the requirements of the role and align their skill set to those required by the job. This answer also gives a great insight into how the candidate would fit in with the team and role requirements.

Alternative methods to assess skills

Skill can also be very effectively assessed through real work based situations rather than looking at how well a candidate performs in an interview. Providing work style tests or assessments can give you as the hiring manager a clear insight into how well a candidate is likely to perform in the role.

To decide on an appropriate skills test, think about activities undertaken in the role and ask the candidate to take on a similar task. For example, if a role involves the regular creation of meeting schedules with various contributors with differing requirements you could provide a scenario where the candidate creates a meeting schedule using a set of provided differing requirements from attendees. This will give a very clear picture of precisely how the candidate will perform in the role. There is often the tendency to assess suitability for a role by seeing how well someone interviews and does a presentation. When if successful in the role, these skills will not be used. Try to assess candidates for what you really need to know.

Behavioural interview questions?

Behaviour based interview questions prompt candidates to discuss their past behaviours. Their answers provide you with clues about how they will behave in similar situations when working in your team, allowing you to determine if they possess the specific qualities needed for your position.

Example questions

1. Tell me about a time you made a mistake affecting a customer and how you resolved the issue.

With this question, you can learn about a candidate's customer relationship management skills, how they deal with mistakes, problem-solve, display humility and accept accountability. The answer should demonstrate a customer service focus, interpersonal skills and critical thinking under pressure. Find out what they learned and what they've done to ensure it doesn't happen again.

2. Tell me about a task where you had to develop a new skill and how you approached the learning process.

This question assesses a candidate's ability to adapt to challenges and a willingness to take advantage of learning and growth opportunities. Employees should recognize the rewards of skill development. This question allows them to demonstrate how they react to tasks they are not skilled at and explain the strategy they use to gain experience.

3. Describe a situation where you made a tough decision that usually would have gone to your supervisor, how you handled it and the outcome.

This question provides an insight into the candidate's decisiveness and confidence. The result of the situation determines the quality of the candidate's decision-making

and problem-solving skills. Look for confidence, decisiveness and analysis of the decision.

4. Tell me about a time you had too much to do and not enough resources. Describe how you overcame the deficit and achieved your goals.

With this question, you can evaluate the candidate's response to pressure and problem-solving skills. It further reveals the quality of their decision-making and communication skills. It also outlines their ability to work with limited resources. Their answer may also demonstrate negotiating skills and lateral thinking.

5. Describe an occasion when you had to manage your time to complete a task. How did you do it?

This question lets the candidate focus on their time management skills, setting priorities, organisational strategies and any tools used for tracking deadlines.

Alternative method to assess behaviour

Scenario based role play is another good way to assess behaviour. Allowing candidates the opportunity to not only tell you how they would behave but through role play, to actively demonstrate how they would behave in a specific circumstance. Role plays can be set up to reflect regularly occurring situations in the job for which you are hiring to get a picture of how a candidate would behave.

Examples of this could be:

- a set up interaction with a customer on the phone, on Teams or face to face
- A conversation with a colleague where the candidate needs to change their mind on the best way to do something.
- Selling an idea