



FACTSHEET

Competency Based Interviewing

The mention of a Competency Based Interview can typically instill various emotions in an interviewee. These may include apprehension, suspicion, fear, relief, or confidence.

Why such a diverse range? Competency Based Interviewing is a means of interviewing based on the premise that past performance is an excellent indicator of future performance. Competency based questions are used in an effort to make the interview process as standard and as fair as possible. It is a technique which is being used increasingly in large organisations where many managers may be interviewing for the same type of position. Vitally, the interviewee should regard as the Competency Based Interview as a genuine **opportunity** to shine and tell the interviewer how they have excelled in the past and use examples (of their choosing) to demonstrate their achievements.

With prior research and extensive preparation the interviewee can turn the Competency Based Interview into a gold-plated opportunity as opposed to a barrier to securing their next role.

The word competency is widely used in business environments and refers to the skills that are necessary to achieve an effective performance level in the job. Every job will have a set of key competencies, some of which are essential and others desired and all are required to do the job properly. The competencies that are required to succeed in Medical Sales include

- Commercial acumen
- Organisational skills
- Relationship building
- Influencing people
- Resilience
- Ambition

A skilled interviewer will therefore tend to ask questions which will encourage an applicant for a Sales role to elaborate on scenarios which will demonstrate their **skills** and **past behaviours** in these various areas.

Question answering technique

When answering Competency Based Questions the interviewee should **only** ever use examples of experiences that have actually happened to them personally, as they will be expected to talk about them in **great detail**.

A tried and tested way of answering (and scoring) Competency Based Questions is by using the **S.T.A.R.** acronym to articulate responses.

Situation - outline the situation you were in

Task – describe what you needed to do as a result of the situation

Action – explain what you did, how you did it and why

Results – describe the successful outcome of your actions using specific examples

By breaking down responses into these headings the interviewee is more likely to answer the question being asked in a fashion which demonstrates their skills most appropriately.

Research

Many organisations will supply the outline of the interview in the form of Organisational Key Core Competencies in advance, thus aiding research and preparation. They might even disclose how important they regard each competency in terms of the type of role and how these weightings change as a person becomes more senior in the role. Company websites sometimes publish these Organisational Key Core Competencies in their 'Careers' or 'Working For Us' sections.

Examples of Competency Based Questions

- Tell me about a situation where you have had to use your planning skills to get several parties together in order to develop a commercial opportunity
- Give a recent example where you have conducted a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) and have won business as a result of it
- Describe the sales success are you most proud of
- What sales success has been the most time-consuming and how did you keep motivated to succeed
- How have you used your knowledge of the internal structure of your organisation, or colleagues special skills, to help develop a sales opportunity or deliver a project
- Tell me about a situation where you have taken a calculated risk to benefit the business
- Give an instance where you have failed to win a contract. What lessons did you learn as a result?
- Give me an example of when you have had to change your strategy at very short notice
- Tell me about a time when you have had to deal with an unhappy or demanding customer
- Tell me about a time when you joined an under-performing team and what you did to turn around the situation
- Explain how you have gained customer commitment to a proposal which they were at first sceptical about.
- Tell me about a time when you didn't meet an objective/deadline.



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