Interviewing for Federal Jobs

Recruitment Policy and Outreach
Outreach, Diversity and Inclusion
Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

Approved 7/25/19 – ES2019,095743

Agenda

- Interview Formats

- Interview Coverage

- Delivery Methods

- Type of Questions

- Interview Scheduling and Preparation

- During the Interview and Other Considerations

Interview Formats:
Structured vs Hiring Manager Interview

Structured Interview	Hiring Manager Interview
All candidates are asked the same questions	Typically, all candidates are asked the same questions
All candidates are given the same amount of time to respond	Typically, all candidates are given the same amount of time to respond
Notes are scored	Notes are NOT scored

Interview Coverage

- Prior to the interview, review the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA):
  - Responsibilities
  - Qualifications
  - Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities and Competencies
  - Occupational Questionnaire

  – Tip: Keep copies of the JOAs for the jobs you sent applications.

Interview Coverage
Structured Interview

- Ideally, structured interviews focus on a small number (approximately 4 to 6) of competencies.

- Highly specialized jobs or jobs at a high level (e.g., managerial, executive) likely will cover more.

Interview Coverage

- Examples of general competencies:

  - Teamwork

  - Oral Communication

  - Interpersonal Skills

  - Problem Solving

Interview Coverage

- Examples of general competencies for leadership positions:

  - Influencing/Negotiating

  - Leading Change

  - Team Building

  - Strategic Thinking

  - Decision Making

Interview Coverage

- Examples of technical competencies for a Budget Analyst position:

  - Financial Management

  - Operating Systems

  - Budget Administration

  - Cost Estimation and Analysis

Interview Coverage

- Examples of technical competencies for an Information Technology (IT) Specialist position:

  - Network Performance/Monitoring

  - Knowledge of Application/System Programming and Analysis Techniques

Interview Delivery Methods

- In-person

- Telephone

- Video Conference

- Digital Media

  - ➢ FaceTime

  - ➢ Skype

Interview Delivery Methods

- Panel

- One-on-one

Type of Questions

- Behavioral

  - Draws from your actual behavior during past experiences

    — "Tell me about a time when you…"

- Situational (Hypothetical)

  - Indicator of how you will behave in a similar situation

    — "If you were in the following situation…what would you do?"

Types of Questions

- ## Résumé

  - Responses based on information in your résumé

    — "Tell me about your job at…"

- ## Getting-to-Know-You

  - What is your greatest strength?
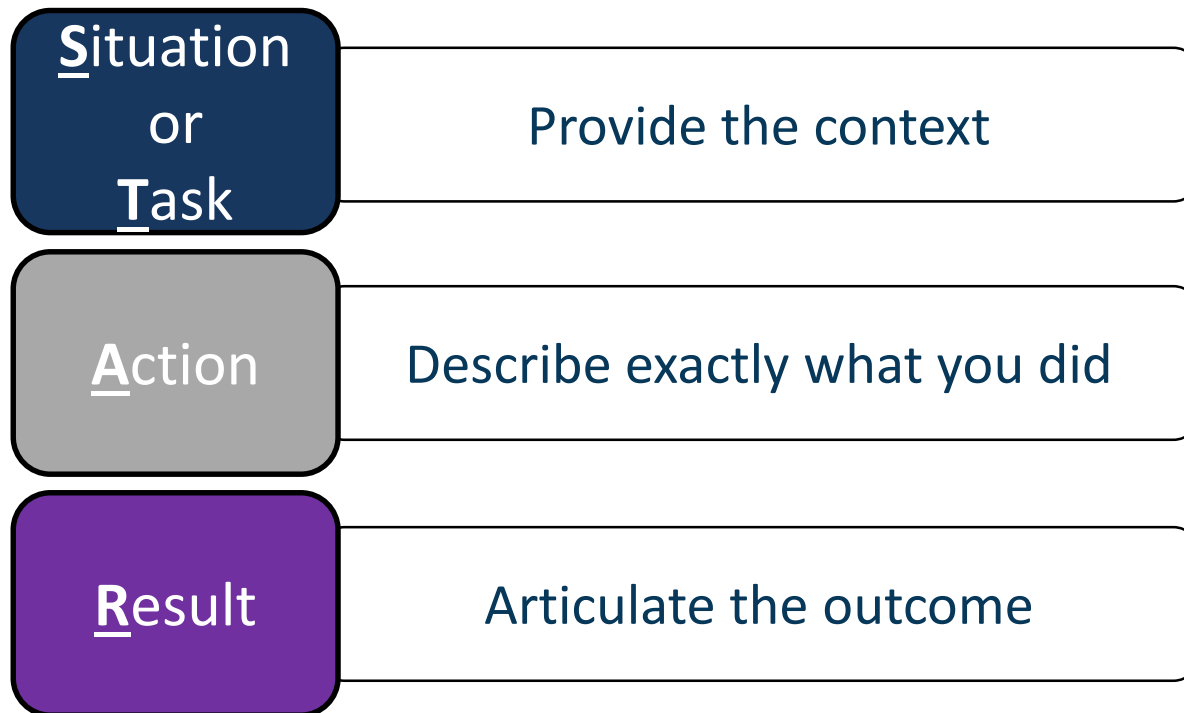
  - Why should I hire you?

Type of Questions

- Tell me about yourself
  - Focus on what the hiring manager is looking for
  - Highlight your most important accomplishments
  - Consider any volunteer-related work

Responding to Behavior-Based Questions

Use the STAR Model to provide three important pieces of information

Situation or **T**ask	Provide the context
Action	Describe exactly what you did
Result	Articulate the outcome

Behavior-Based Question - Example

- **Competency: Customer Service**

Customer Service - Works with clients and customers to assess their needs, provide information or assistance, resolve their problems, or satisfy their expectations; knows about available products and services; is committed to providing quality products and services.

Tell me about a challenging customer service experience.

- Who was involved?

- What specific actions did you take?

- What was the result?

Behavior-Based Response - Example

Situation or **T**ask	We needed to translate new IT jargon to users and communicate their needs and frustrations with the system to the IT staff. Lack of communication between the two groups was affecting satisfaction metrics.
Action	I convened focus groups with users and designated an IT team member follow up on specific recommendations. Based on the feedback, I prepared and implemented a plan to improve and expand Help Desk services.
Result	Users gained a better understanding of the IT system and new lines of communication were established between IT staff and system users. Service calls decreased by 15% and satisfaction rates improved by 20%.

Behavior-Based Question - Example

- **Competency: Teamwork**

Teamwork - Encourages and facilitates cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity; fosters commitment and team spirit; works with others to achieve goals.

Describe a situation/task where you worked collaboratively with others to accomplish a goal. Describe the goal, your role on the team, and the result.

- Who was involved?
- What specific actions did you take?
- What was the result?

Behavior-Based Response - Example

Situation or **T**ask	I work in a benefits claims department. One of our claim teams was understaffed and claims were backing up. My team was caught up so I had some extra time.
Action	I volunteered to complete several of their research assignments.
Result	I researched the claims for my teammates who were behind and got them caught up on that part of the work. I completed the research during work hours, which did not impact my regular work, and saved the organization from paying overtime.

Behavior-Based Question - Example

- **Competency: Resilience**

Resilience - Deals effectively with pressure; remains optimistic and persistent, even under adversity. Recovers quickly from setbacks.

Tell us about a time when you worked on a project for many months, perhaps even years, that just never made it to the finish line through no fault of your own.

- How did you personally handle this situation?
- What kept you motivated?

Behavior-Based Response - Example

I developed new training for one of our customers. The approval process took over a year. My supervisor told me the quality of the training was good but the customer decided not to use it. (Situation)

I was surprised as I felt I had prepared an excellent training that met the customer's needs. I asked my supervisor to review the training with me again and go over what the problems were. I asked her if I could prepare a new proposal for potential customers. She agreed. Once I had sent the proposal, I followed up with the customers to ask if they had any questions. (Action)

We did not get the initial customer but I was able to offer the training to two other organizations. I trained 400 employees in a six-month period. I was confident the training was needed and worked hard to find other customers. (Result)

Behavior-Based Question - Example

- **Competency: Leadership**

Influences, motivates, and challenges others; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situations.

Describe a situation in which you led a group to accomplish its goals.

- What was the project?
- Who were the team members?
- What actions did you take?
- What were the results?

Behavior-Based Response - Example

Task

My organization lacked a formal, corporate and strategic approach to managing and operating its web assets. My vision was to completely revamp the way my organization approached its web management activities by developing an integrated approach. Program officials strongly resisted my initial efforts to consolidate web management as they feared giving up the existing approach would cause them to lose control of their resources.

Action

To overcome resistance from senior leaders, I met with them individually and in groups, and strongly championed the integrated approach. I demonstrated how the current approach was highly duplicative and inefficient, and was hampering progress in advancing its mission and meeting customer needs.

Result

As a result of these efforts, the corporate approach to web management was prominently featured in my organization's Strategic Plan, making it one of the company's top priorities over the next five years. Progress in implementing the new plan has made the website a more dynamic and responsive tool that is now widely used by customers.

What is Not a
Behavior-Based Response

- Avoid the following types of responses:

  - Opinions

  - Theoretical

  - Vague

Behavior-Based Responses - Summary

- Use the STAR Model

- Present examples from your experience that demonstrate competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities for the job

- Quantify your achievements, such as:

  - If you saved money, state how much

  - If you improved a process, describe what was improved (e.g., saved money, helped more customers, increased sales)

Situation-Based Question

- Situation-based questions present realistic job-related scenarios, situations, or dilemmas requiring candidates to explain how they *would likely* respond

    - The underlying premise is that people's intentions are closely tied to their actual behavior in similar circumstances

Situation-Based Question- Example

- **Competency: Leadership**

Leadership - Influences, motivates, and challenges others; adapts leadership styles to a variety of situations.

You are managing a team project. Successful completion of the project requires the team to work together, but some of your team members have insisted on working independently. This has resulted in duplication of efforts.

- What specific actions would you take?

- What challenges would you anticipate?

Situation-Based Response - Example

Action: I would talk to each individual to ascertain contributions towards the project and goal. Then, I would conduct weekly meetings to share information about the status of the project and highlight everyone's contribution to achieving the goal. This would ensure all team members actively participate.

Anticipated Challenges: I expect to learn that some parts of the project are not being worked on at all and to have some resistance when I reassign some people to different duties. I would have a team meeting to figure out where we can redirect some individuals' efforts based on their talents and interests, to ensure the goals of the project are being met and that there is buy-in on the newly assigned tasks.

Questions Interviewers Can Ask

- Interviewers can ask about:

  - Specific roles and responsibilities at past or current jobs

    — Likes and dislikes pertaining to your work

    — Job knowledge and job-related factors (experiences, education, training, skills, etc.)

Interview Scheduling

- Hiring agency may telephone or email to schedule an interview

  - Ensure accuracy of contact information on your resume

- Obtain information from the scheduler

  - Point of contact information

  - Building access requirements; Identification needed

Interview Scheduling

- Inquire about the interview process

  - Panel, one-on-one, length of interview

- If you need an accommodation, notify the person who contacts you and provide details

Prepare for the Interview

- Learn about the hiring organization

  - Search agency's website

  - Research media

- Know the job: review the Job Opportunity Announcement

  - Job requirements, including competencies, knowledge, skills, and abilities

  - Major duties and responsibilities

Prepare for the Interview

- Review résumé

- Think about accomplishments

- Rehearse with someone who is an experienced interviewer

Day of the Interview

- Arrive early

- Dress appropriately

- Act professionally

- Bring several copies of your résumé

- Consider not wearing heavy perfumes/colognes

During the Interview

- Listen carefully

- Be honest

- Ask for clarity

- Project your voice

- Be aware of your non-verbal communication

Questions to Ask
Hiring Manager - Examples

- Interviewing is a two-way street

  - Be prepared to ask the interviewer(s) questions:

    — What is a typical day like?

    — What projects or assignments would I be responsible for?

    — What is the career path?

    — What is your management style?

    — When do you expect to make a decision?

Tips

- Regardless of the type of questions, follow basic principles:

  - Be truthful

  - Keep responses to questions job-related

  - Be clear and concise

  - State responses positively

Tips

- Listen carefully to each question

- Provide responses showing how you would contribute to the organization's mission/goals

- Avoid negative comments about previous employers or coworkers

Other Considerations

- Have your list of references ready

  - No more than 3 or 4 (including current supervisor)

  - Professional

  - Include name, title, email address and telephone number

- Leave on high note and ask for the job

- If you have a portfolio or samples of your work, this is a good time to set yourself apart from other candidates.

After the Interview

- After you leave, write notes on the interview

- Send a "thank you" email

- Stay positive

- Follow up if you do not hear back

Acquire Top Talent

- Developing strong leaders by improving interview skills
- **Service** – A modern workforce will improve customer service for the 21st century by facilitating faster, more convenient, and more cost-effective customer experiences

Questions

Contact us at
Outreach@opm.gov