GUIDELINES FOR BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEWING

What is behavioral-based interviewing?

• Behavioral interviewing requires candidates to respond with specific examples of past experiences rather than generalized responses.

• Past performance is the most accurate predictor of future performance.

• Questions are designed to uncover the extent to which a candidate possesses key characteristics and competencies essential for effective job performance.

Behavioral questions often begin with “Tell me about a time when…,” “Describe a situation…,” or “Give an example of…”

Some areas where behavioral questions are used include:

• Relationship Building
• Communication
• Team Experience
• Organization
• Problem Solving
• Leadership
• Innovation
• Performance Management
• Diversity

Listed below are sample questions that could be asked to assess candidates in each of these areas.

Relationship Building

Examples of behavioral interview questions that assess relationship building experience include:

• Give an example of a situation where there wasn’t a trusting relationship with a colleague. What did you do to try to build a more trusting relationship? What was the outcome?

• How would you coach someone on building trust?

• Describe a time when you built rapport quickly with someone under adverse conditions.

Communication

Behavioral interview questions that assess communication experience include:

• Tell about a time when you felt you had not communicated well. How did you correct the situation?

• Describe a time when you had to “sell” an idea to a group. What approach did you use? What was the outcome?
• Tell about a time you encountered resistance when implementing a new policy. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
• Describe your methods for keeping your supervisor advised of the status on projects.

Team Experience

To assess team experience, you could ask any of the following behavioral interview questions:
• Share an example of a successful team experience from your previous job.
• Tell about a time when you experienced an unpleasant teamwork situation. How did you manage the situation?
• Provide an example of how you have motivated team members to produce at their peak potential to solve a difficult problem in a short period of time.

Organization

Examples of behavioral interview questions that assess organizational experience include:
• Share an example of a project you led that best describes your organizational skills.
• Describe how you would manage a reorganization of departments in the face of significant budget cuts.
• Tell of a time when you had to manage multiple projects within tight deadlines. Explain the most difficult aspect of that situation. How did you manage it?

Problem Solving

Behavioral interview questions that assess problem-solving experience include:
• Describe the most challenging decision you had to make in the past year. What made it challenging? How did you solve it?
• Describe a situation where your best efforts did not produce the desired result. What did you learn from the experience?
• Give an example of a time when you were caught off-guard about a problem that existed and you had not foreseen. How did you respond?

Leadership

An applicant’s skill in leadership can also be assessed through behavioral interview questions. Ask questions like:
• Give an example of a situation in which you were able to build motivation within your department.
• Describe a situation where you had to obtain cooperation from a difficult group. How did you handle the situation? What was the outcome?
• What is your vision for the department [or college]? What would you accomplish during the first six months as department chair [or dean]?

Innovation

Examples of behavioral interview questions that assess innovative experience include:
• Describe a problem you solved using an unusual or unique approach. What was the outcome?
• Describe a situation which required you to develop an innovative approach. How did you develop the approach? Who was involved?
• Give an example of a time when you had to take a risk to achieve a goal. What was the outcome?

Performance Management

Effective performance management skills are necessary for supervisor positions. Examples of behavioral interview questions that assess an applicant’s performance management skills include:

• Give an example of how you have successfully empowered faculty to increase research productivity.
• Describe a difficult performance review you had to provide. What was the development plan you devised to help the staff member improve performance? What was the outcome?
• What have you done to develop the skills of your staff?

Diversity

The University embraces diversity and inclusion in its workforce. Examples of behavioral interview questions that assess diversity include:

• What have you done in your current position to create an environment where the sharing of differences is encouraged and valued?
• What have you done to further your understanding of diversity?
• What have you done to support diversity in your unit?

RESOURCES


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