

# Wellington Careers and Employment

## Career Essentials—Behavioural-based interviews

Behavioural questions are based on the concept that past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour. The interviewer will want specific examples of when and how you demonstrated specific behaviours. Interview questions are designed to identify if the candidate has the skills, competencies, and characteristics that are needed for the role.

### What do competencies say about you?

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Competencies refer to behaviours that are necessary to achieve the objectives of an organisation. They are measurable and can describe how different people perform in various situations. Every job can be described this way. Competencies may include:

- **Individual**—your personal attributes: flexibility, decisiveness, tenacity, independence, risk taking, personal integrity
- **Managerial**—taking charge of other people: leadership, empowerment, strategic planning, project management
- **Analytical**—the elements of decision making: innovation, analysing, problem solving, practical learning, detail consciousness
- **Interpersonal**—interacting with other people: communication, persuasiveness, personal awareness, teamwork, openness
- **Motivational**—things that drive you: resilience, energy, motivation, initiative, achievement orientation, quality focus

### Preparation

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To prepare for this type of interview, review the job description carefully and identify the skills and traits likely to be assessed. Next, identify the situations and experiences that you will refer to in the interview to demonstrate these skills and traits. The situations might be drawn from work, volunteering, university, extracurricular activities, etc. Competency-focused, well-structured answers are very powerful, and well received by interviewers. The **STAR** model provides a structure to your answers:

- **Situation**: briefly describe a situation or problem that you have encountered.
- **Task**: describe the task that the situation required or your ideas for resolving the problem.
- **Action**: describe the actions you took and obstacles that you had to overcome. Most of the answer should focus on this part.
- **Results**: always highlight the positive outcomes you achieved.

### Question examples

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These examples are intended as a guide to stimulate your thinking and are **not model answers**.



**Influencing or persuading others** The employer wants to find out whether you can influence another person to change their thinking or take some specific action. Perhaps a colleague follows your advice, or a client decides to buy a service or product. Are you ethical in your dealings with others?

- Tell me about a time when you were able to change someone's viewpoint significantly.
- Can you give an example of when you influenced a colleague's decision making?
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something that you disagreed with.

**Interpersonal and team skills** The employer wants to understand how you interact with others. The desire to build and maintain relationships in and beyond the workplace is critical. Many workplaces function around project teams. These teams are task oriented and may function for short time frames only. Those who are highly collaborative and cooperative are most likely to thrive in this type of environment.

- Can you give me an example of working in a team with a difficult person? How did you handle that?
- What skills and personal qualities have you contributed to the teams you have been part of?
- Tell me about a time when you used tact and diplomacy to achieve a good team result.
- Tell me about a time when you felt one of your team members wasn't doing their share of the work.

**Communication skills** The employer wants to find out if you can listen to all types of communication in an open way. Are you an active listener and do you hear what is actually said? Are you able to read the non-verbal messages that others communicate? Do you communicate in an engaging and convincing way?

- Tell me about a time when you were successful in getting crucial information from another person.
- Tell me about a time when someone misunderstood what you were attempting to communicate
- Can you give an example of a technique you have used to improve communication?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with people from a culture unlike your own. What did you do to overcome any perceived barriers to communication?

**Adaptability, energy, and resilience** The employer wants to find out how quickly and positively you would adapt to changes in work practices, work roles, and work environments, and the general flux of the workplace.

- Give us an example of how you manage or avoid stress.
- Tell me about a time when your work or an idea was criticised and how you responded.
- Tell me about a time when you felt under pressure or frustrated by your work and how you managed it.
- Describe something creative that you've done.
- What has been your most satisfying/disappointing work-based experience?

**Self-management, self-motivation, and self-knowledge** The employer wants to find out whether you consistently strive to achieve a standard of excellence, use initiative at the appropriate time, and show persistence in pursuing goals. Are you objective and reflective in evaluating your strengths and weaknesses?

- Tell me about a time when you acted over and above the expectations of your role.
- What's a good example that shows your initiative and willingness to work?
- Tell us about a time when you had more to do than you could complete in the time allocated: tell us what you did about it and what the outcome was.
- What are the two most significant accomplishments of your career so far?

**Solving problems and making decisions** The employer wants to find out your problem-solving style, how you manage your activities to minimise or avoid problems, and how you might behave in a crisis.

- Tell me about a difficult decision you've had to make.
- Tell me about a time when you had to make a quick decision. What were the circumstances and what did you do?
- Tell me about a situation where you achieved a satisfactory outcome to a problem that others thought couldn't be solved. What did you do and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had conflicting priorities and what you did to resolve them.

