

## Beehive/b.SAFE Guide to Behavioural Interviewing

### Introduction

Behavioural interviewing is also known as structured or competency-based interviewing. The questions in behavioural interviews are designed to test for the specific Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSAs) associated with a role or job, with the answers matched and marked against pre-determined criteria. This helps to reduce subjectivity in the interview process. Behavioural interviewing is ideal for establishing if a candidate has the behavioural attributes, rather than just the operational or technical knowledge and experience, desired for a role.

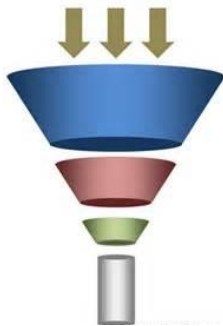
The KSAs that can be tested in a behavioural interview depend on the job role and the organisation. Some common KSAs that are tested for are:

- |                       |                                     |                      |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Adaptability        | • Organisational/industry awareness | • Openness           |
| • Compliance          | • Influencing                       | • Interest in Others |
| • Communication       | • Flexibility                       | • Integrity          |
| • Conflict management | • Resilience                        | • Self-awareness     |
| • Delegation          |                                     | • Risk taking        |

What follows is our five top tips for behavioural interviewing:

### 1) Use behavioural questions

Behavioural interview questions are designed to measure the interviewee's behaviours, abilities and experience in the context of an actual event, with examples from personal experience rather than from theory or in general.



Generally questions are 'funnelled' from the wider general:

• **'How do you deal with conflict at work?'**

To a specific example:

• **'Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a conflict with a client'**

To specific probing:

• **'How did you deal with the stress the conflict caused? How did you manage your team through the conflict? What did you actually say to the client which helped/didn't help? What would you do differently next time?'**

### 2) Use the STAR approach when preparing for interview

The acronym in this context stands for:

1. **Situation or Task**
2. **Action**
3. **Result**

This is a helpful acronym for both interviewers - it enables them to recognise and match/mark the information provided, and for interviewees - if they use the structure to prepare for interviews it will enable them to give meaningful and complete answers.

1. *Situation/task - describe the situation or task, focusing on what is relevant to the question*
2. *Action - explain what you did; use detail; focus on self not team; explain how and why*
3. *Result - explain what happened eventually; explain what you accomplished and learned*

### 3) Matching/markings

Before a behavioural interview the interviewers decide on the type of answers that would score points for and against the candidate so they can match the responses to the criteria. For example, for conflict management the behavioural indicators may be:

<i>Positive Indicators</i>	<i>Negative indicators</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ⓑ Willing to accept more than one perspective or point of view</li> <li>ⓑ Listens to understand the situation and the needs of the other party</li> <li>ⓑ Accepts own part in the process</li> <li>ⓑ Strives to find a workable solution</li> <li>ⓑ Understands impact of conflict on team</li> <li>ⓑ Learns from experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ⓑ Sees the conflict as the other person's problem</li> <li>ⓑ Imposes own view of the situation</li> <li>ⓑ Apportions blame</li> <li>ⓑ Unaware of the effect of the conflict on those around</li> <li>ⓑ Does not reflect or learn from the situation</li> </ul>

Sometimes these indicators can be further split into 'minor' and 'decisive' negative indicators to help decision making. Marks can then be allocated depending on whether the interviewee's answers provide evidence of each behavioural criterion or not. A marking schedule might look like:

0	No evidence	No evidence to report
1	Poor	Little evidence of positive indicators, mostly negative (many decisive)
2	Areas for concern	Limited positive indicators, many negative (one or more decisive)
3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory display of positive indicators, some negative but none decisive
4	Good	Good display of positive indicators, one or two negative but none decisive
5	Excellent	Strong and consistent display of positive indicators, no negative

### 4) Beware psychological bias in marking

Any human decision has some degree of subjectivity. Behavioural interviewing questions, behavioural criteria and mark schedules are designed to reduce subjectivity. However, there are psychological influences that will still impact in interview, for example an interviewer may decide to probe further if they have a positive impression of the interviewee, and stop asking questions if they have a negative view. Some common biases it is helpful to be aware of are:

- ⓑ **Halo/Horn Effect** - the tendency to rate a person high or low on all performance factors because of the general impression the individual has created in the interviewer/because of a single factor.
- ⓑ **Negative or Positive Leniency and the Central Tendency** - some interviewers are consistently too hard or too easy overall in evaluating candidates, or stick to the middle line too consistently. Ratings that are consistently middling, severe or lenient can result in the whole interview process being skewed.

### 5) Reduce psychological bias using the ORCE Model

Using the **ORCE** approach can help reduce this. **ORCE** stands for **Observe, then Record, then Classify and then Evaluate**. It's a way of approaching the interview process which will help you to gather all the necessary data you need, and ensuring you make objective and fair judgements on the person's performance. Take each stage in turn and consult with fellow interviewers to ensure there is consistency.