

Behavioral Interview Questions for Performance Skills

The following is a comprehensive list of behavioral style questions that may assist you when deciding the type of preferred soft skills you are seeking. When asking these questions be sure to document the Situation/Task, Action and Result for each behavioral question.

Performance Skill Categories

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Ability to Work under Pressure

- Give a specific example of a time when you used logic in solving a difficult problem. Did your approach work? What was the outcome?
- Tell me of a time when you had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas. What was your approach? Did it work?
- People react differently when job demands are frequently changing; how do you react? Give an example of a time you have had to quickly adjust to changing job demands.
- Tell us about a situation in which you had a disagreement with a co-worker and needed to work together to resolve a problem. How did you handle it? Was the issue resolved?

- Tell me about a time you had to prepare for an important assignment the day before it was due. How did you ensure it was completed? Was the task accomplished?
- Describe a time you received negative feedback. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about the most stressful situation you've faced at work. What did you do? What was the result?
- Describe a time you've made an error at work. Did you inform your manager? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you needed to handle constant changes at work. How did you handle it? Did your approach work?
- Describe a situation when you were assigned multiple tasks at the same time with aggressive deadlines. How did you organize and complete them all? What was the results?
- Describe a time you had to make a tough decision on or about a job. How did you make sure you were objective? What was the outcome?

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Analytical Thinking

- Tell me about a time when you recognized an issue that needed to be resolved. What action did you take? Was the issue resolved?
- Tell us about a situation which you had to demonstrate your analytical abilities. What steps were involved and the outcome?
- Tell about a time when you had to develop a detailed procedure to successfully complete a project. What stages were made and what was the result?
- Give an example of when you used good judgment and logic in solving a complex problem. What measures did you take? Was the issue resolved?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? What was your reasoning behind your recommendation?
- Provide an example of when you took a risk to achieve an important goal. What were the analytical steps involved? What was the outcome?
- Provide a specific time when you needed to be exact when completing an important task. What steps were involved and what was the result?
- Tell us about a job where great analytical thinking was essential to complete a task. What steps did you take? What was the outcome?
- Tell us about a time when you had to analyze information and provide a recommendation. What measure did you take? What was the result?
- Tell us about a past job that required you to be particularly alert to details while doing the task at hand. What steps were involved and the outcome?
- Provide a situation when you needed to be thorough when completing a critical task for an assignment. What measures did you take? Was the issue resolved?

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Attention to Detail

- Tell us about a current or previous job that required a great deal of attention to detail. Describe the action you took and the final results.
- Tell us about a difficult experience you had in working with details. What steps did you take? Was the task completed successfully?
- Tell us about a situation where attention to detail was essential in accomplishing an assigned task. What steps did you take? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you made a mistake in your work. Were you able to correct it and what resulted in the mistake?
- What tools have you used to ensure that there were no mistakes in your work? Describe the steps you took and the final results.
- Tell me about a time when you had to ensure the quality in your work with tight deadline. Describe the action you took and end result.

- Describe a time where you had to sacrifice quality to meet a deadline. What did you do to resolve this? What was the outcome?
- Tell us about a time you worked on something where it was crucial to be accurate. What steps did you take? What was the outcome?
- How do you go about getting all the important details from an important customer?
- What have you done when a customer/client sends over a request that you don't understand? What did you do? What resulted from the misunderstanding?
- Do you prefer to work with the "big picture" or the "details" of a situation? Give us an example of an experience that illustrates your preference.

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Attitudes /Aspirations

- What did you like most about your last or most recent job?
- What special skills and knowledge did you need to perform your duties in your previous jobs?
- Give me two examples of things you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- How have you benefited from your work with your last company?
- What could your past employers count on you for without fail?
- In what ways have your previous jobs prepared you to take on more responsibility?
- What kind of career progress did you make in your last job?
- What was the most disappointing aspect of your last job?
- What motivates you to put forth your best effort?
- Can you give me an example of how you have been creative?
- Why do you think taking initiative is important?
- In what areas do you feel you would like to develop further? How will you do that?
- What aspirations do you expect to satisfy by accepting this position?
- In your opinion, what does it take to be a "success?"
- What does it take to challenge you?
- What have you done that shows initiative?

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Change

- What is your reason for the decision to make a job or career change at this time?
- Your application lists many job changes. Tell me about that.
- How has your present or last job changed while you've held it?
- Give me an example of a time when you helped a staff member accept change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward.
- Have you thought about leaving your present job before? If yes, what held you back?
- How does your most recent job differ from the one you had before that?
- Describe a major change that occurred in a job you held. How did you adapt to this change?

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Communication Skills

- Tell me about a time when you had to inform a co-worker or someone to complete a task that could be difficult. Describe how you communicated the message and what resulted?
- What was the most significant struggle you had with another employee? How did you resolve it? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a difficult or irate customer that you had to handle. How did you address the situation? What was the conclusion?
- Tell me of a time when you encountered difficulties in communicating a suggestion to a manager. What was the outcome?

- How have you simplified a complex issue in order to gain understanding from a customer or colleague? How did you communicate the message? What was the result?
- Tell me about a tough conversation you had to have with a team member. How did you address it and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time there was a miscommunication at work. How did you handle it and resolve the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you had to communicate an unpopular idea. How did you go about communicating it? What was the end result?
- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you ensure that the other person understood?
- Describe a time when you had to be careful relaying sensitive information. How did you communicate the message? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time you had to use written communication skills in order to get an important point across to others.
- What have you done to improve your verbal communication skills?

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Creative Thinking

- Tell me about a time you had to think “outside the box” to resolve a problem. What action did you take and how was the problem resolved?
- Describe a time when you took an existing process and used your own creativity to make it better. Describe the action you took and end result.
- Describe a time when you had to develop a creative approach to problem-solving to get the job done. Describe the approach and how the problem was resolved.
- Tell me about a time you had to encourage a co-worker or someone else to be more creative and innovative. What action did you take and what was the result?
- Tell me about the most creative project or idea that you have generated in a previous position. What was the steps involved and the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you worked on a new and important project that involved a creative process. What steps did you take to ensure it was successful? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you used creativity in your current or past position on a job task. What steps did you take and what was the end result?
- Tell me about ideas you have created that benefited your current/former employer. Describe the steps involved and if the task was completed.
- Describe a time when you worked on a project where a normal approach was not possible. What steps did you take and what was the result?
- Tell me about a time you encouraged others to increase their creative ideas. Describe your approach and the outcome.

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Decision Making

- Describe a time in which you had to be proactive in making an important decision. What did you do? What was the result?
- Provide a time in which you could not finish a task because you did not have enough information to make a good decision. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an important decision as part of a team. Did everyone agree? How did it work out?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a decision even though you did not have enough information. How did you handle this? Did your decision have a negative result?
- Tell me about a time you had to decide on a strategy when dealing with a difficult customer. Describe the action you took. Did it work?

- Describe a time where you involved your manager and/or others when making a decision. What did you do? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time you had to make an important decision that had an impact on others or things. Describe the action you took. Did it work?
- Describe a time when you had to make a quick unpopular decision. What approach did you take? What was the outcome?
- Tell us about a time you had to ensure your decisions were correct and effective. Describe the action you took. Did it work?
- Tell us about a time when you had to defend a decision you made. What was your approach on defending your decision? Did it work out?

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General Attitudes

- What kinds of people do you get along with the best?
- What kinds of people irritate you?
- Tell me about your creative solution to a problem between two employees.
- Tell me about the toughest proposal you have ever written.
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you think you listen?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you think your employees would say you listen?
- What are you doing to improve your listening skills?
- How do you handle employees with an attitude problem?
- Explain the importance of good communication in your present job.
- What kinds of things do you enjoy teaching others to do?
- How does your manager get your best out of you?
- What do you do to encourage others to do their best?
- For what advice or assistance do your co-workers turn to you?

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Handling Conflict, Difficult People or Situations

- Tell me about a time when you had to take disciplinary action with someone you supervised.
- How do you deal with staff whose work does not meet your expectations?
- Have you ever fired someone? What were the reasons and how did you handle it?
- Before you would fire someone, what factors would you take into consideration?
- Tell me about a time when you worked on a team in an effort that failed.
- What has been your experience with major expansions or reductions in work force?
- What have you found to be the most difficult aspect of being a leader? Why?
- What do you do when you know you're right and your supervisor disagrees with you?
- Describe a leadership situation that you would do differently if you had it to do over again.
- How much turnover have you had in your last department, and what accounted for it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes as a manager?
- In a new position, how did you feel when you first met the people who would report to you?
- Tell me about a time when you have to tell a staff member that you were dissatisfied with his or her work.
- What is the most difficult work situation you have ever faced? How did you handle it?

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Influencing/Conflict

- Tell me about a time when you had to handle a highly emotional employee.
- How would you handle an employee who changed from a reliable, hard-working employee to a problem employee?
- How do you attempt to persuade others to your way of thinking?
- What would you do if you found yourself working for someone who could not control his or her temper?

- Tell me about a time when you caused a breakdown in communication at work.
- Tell me about a time when your supervisor criticized your work. How did you handle it?
- How do you assert yourself in order to get what you need?
- What would you say to an employee who is frequently late for work?
- How would you discuss your job dissatisfaction with your supervisor?
- Describe a situation where you had to use conflict management skills. How do you typically deal with conflict? Please give me an example.

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Initiative

- Tell me about a time when a job you held required a great deal of initiative to complete. What initiative did you take? Was the task successful?
- Tell us about a difficult experience you had in working with details and what initiative you took to ensure it was effective. Did it work?
- Tell us about a situation where showing initiative was important in accomplishing an assigned task. Did the task get completed?
- Describe a situation in which you anticipated problems and took initiative to correct the issue. What was your approach? Did it work?
- Tell me about a time when initiative was important in getting a high priority job completed. How did you get the job completed? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you needed to prepare for an important task to ensure it was a success. How was this accomplished? Did it work?
- Tell me about a time that you took initiative to complete a time sensitive assignment. What steps did you take? Was the assignment successful?
- Describe a time in which you had to take the initiative to excel within your job description. Did your approach work? What was the outcome?
- Tell me of a time when you went above and beyond the expectations of an assigned task. What action did you take? Was it successful?
- Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity. What was your approach? What was the outcome?

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Leadership Skills

- Give an example of a time in which you were able to build enthusiasm in your co-workers or subordinates at work. What measures did you take? What was the result?
- Give an example of your ability to build morale in your co-workers. How did you accomplish this task? What was the outcome?
- Tell me of a time when you had difficulty getting co-workers to accept your ideas. What was your approach? Did it work?
- Describe a time in which you worked with team members who did not work well together. What did you do to assist them? How was it resolved?
- Tell me about an instance where you had to get cooperation from a challenging group. What action did you take? What was the outcome?
- What is the toughest group that you have had to get cooperation from? Describe how you handled it. What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to demonstrate leadership. What steps did you take? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time when you had to gain respect and commitment from your team. What measures did you take? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time you had to resolve a conflict between co-workers. How did you handle it? Was it resolved?

- Tell me about a time when you needed to implement a change. How did your team cope with this change? What was the result?

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Management

- Tell me about an important task that you delegated. How did you ensure it would be completed successfully? What was the end result?
- Describe a time you had to encourage a staff member to accept an assignment that was difficult. How did you ensure it was completed? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of when you had to provide feedback to a staff member who was performing poorly. How did you go about this and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about the steps you took to establish rapport with a new staff member. What steps did you take? Did your approach work?
- Describe a time when you disagreed with your supervisor on how to accomplish an important task. How did you deal with it? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time your co-workers had a conflict. How did you handle it? What was the result?
- Talk about a time when you had to adapt to a major change at work and prepare employees on accepting the adjustment. What approach did you take? What was the outcome?
- Talk about a time where you had to make an important decision quickly. What action did you take? What were the results?
- Tell me about a major delay that compromised a task/project you've had at work. How did you deal with it? What was the result?
- Tell me about a challenging problem you've had to explain and resolve. How did you resolve it? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you and your boss disagreed but you still found a way to get your point across.
- Tell me about a time when a previous supervisor asked you to do a job that was not part of your job description. How did you respond?
- Describe your ideal manager.
- What policies or procedures of your last company did you disagree with?
- How would you describe your relationship with your last supervisor?
- What do you think your previous employer(s) would say about you?
- In what ways do you feel your previous supervisors found you to be a good worker?
- What would your references say about you?
- What could your last employer have done to convince you not to leave?

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Management Strategies

- What do you do when an employee comes to you with a personal problem?
- How do you handle employees who gossip?
- How would you recognize and reward a team player?
- What do you do to help your employees manage stress?
- What would you do if you caught an employee stealing?
- How do you handle unanticipated expenses?
- How do you handle a poor performer?
- What would you do if a co-worker came to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
- If you joined our agency and inherited a staff, what would you do first?
- How do you prepare for performance evaluations?
- Give an example of how you have been successful at empowering either a person or group to accomplish a task.
- In previous supervisor positions, what have you done to develop the skills of your staff?

- Give a specific example of how you have helped create an environment where differences are valued, encouraged and supported.
- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting and/or understanding their perspective or ideas.

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Methods

- What steps do you take to solve a problem?
- How do you enlist the help of others in solving a problem?
- What do you want your staff to do when they encounter problems?
- Tell me about a specific time when you eliminated or avoided a potential problem before it happened.
- Tell me about several unconventional methods that you have used to solve problems.
- What criteria do you use to make decisions?
- How long does it typically take you to make a decision?
- What is the last major decision you made before leaving your present or last organization?
- What kinds of decisions are the most difficult for you to make and why?

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Office Politics and Cooperation

- How many levels of management did you interact with in your last job? What was that communication about?
- How do you get cooperation from someone in another department?
- What does “open door policy” mean to you?
- How do you like to see a staff meeting run?
- How have you demonstrated your loyalty to your current organization?
- Describe a time when “office politics” impacted your job.
- Tell me about a time when someone was pressuring you to complete your share of the work for a project in another department.
- Describe a project you were responsible for that required a lot of interaction with people over a long period of time.
- How important is a “chain of command?”
- Tell me about a politically complex work situation in which you worked.

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Organizing Skills

- Tell me about a time when you organized a complicated project. Describe the steps to complete the task and the outcome.
- Tell me about a time when you worked under an aggressive deadline. Explain the measures to complete the task and the end result.
- Tell me about a time when your organizational skills helped you complete a task or project. Describe the steps involved and if the task was completed.
- Tell me about a time when your organizational skills and planning led to a positive outcome. How did you accomplish this and what was the result?
- Tell me about a time when you missed a critical deadline. What did you do and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond to complete a task/project on time. How did you complete the task and what was the end result?
- Tell me about a time when you were overwhelmed by your task at hand and workload. How did you cope and did you resolve the issue?
- Tell me about a time when you took on more tasks than you could complete. How did you react and what was the outcome?

- Tell me about a time when you were unsuccessful in delegating a project effectively. What action did you take and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you were successful in delegating an important task. Describe the steps involved and if the task was completed.

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People Skills as a Manager

- How do you reward people who work for you?
- How do you define “teamwork?”
- How do you go about delegating?
- How do you keep your staff focused?
- As a leader, what advice do you have for followers?
- What people skills would you bring to this job that others would not?
- How do you use praise?
- How do you monitor the performance of your staff?
- What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
- What is your most important job as a leader?
- What has your staff criticized you for?
- Tell me about your best and worst hiring decisions.
- How do you see your job relating to the overall goals of your present/prior organization?
- Gaining the cooperation of others can be difficult. Give a specific example when you had to gain cooperation. What was the result?
- How do you think the people who work for you might find you difficult to work for?
- Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough morale problem.
- How do you make your feelings known when you disagree with your manager?
- What type of employee do you find the most difficult to manage?

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Personal Attributes and Leadership

- How would the people who work for you describe you?
- Tell me about a time when you conformed to a policy with which you disagreed.
- What motivates you to lead others?
- Describe your leadership style.
- What personal characteristics are necessary for success as a leader?
- What makes you an effective leader?
- What leadership skills do you have that might account for your success thus far?
- What single skill or ability is your greatest asset? How did you develop this expertise?
- How have you used your position as a leader to get what you want?
- What would it be like working for you?
- What do you think could potentially interfere with your effectiveness as a leader?
- Describe the relationship you feel should exist between the manager and those reporting to him or her.
- What does being a leader mean to you?
- In what kind of environment are you most comfortable?
- Describe a project you were responsible for that required a high amount of energy over a long period of time. How did you handle this? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a difficult assignment even though the odds were against you. What did you learn from that experience?
- What aspects of your job do you consider most crucial?
- What do you enjoy most about being a leader? What do you enjoy least about being a leader?

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Prior Job Behavior

- Which of your ideas and actions helped you move up in your present/prior organization?
- What risks did you take in your last or present job? Tell me about it.
- Tell me about a project that you initiated.
- What would you like to have done more of in your last job? What held you back?
- What did you do to make your last job more interesting?
- What 3 things about your last job gave you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Tell me about your efforts to “sell” a new idea to your supervisor.
- Tell me about a time when you reached out for additional responsibility.
- What have you accomplished in your last job that makes you feel proud?

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Prior Job Duties

- Describe your activities during a typical day on your last or current job.
- What were your major responsibilities in your previous job?
- What were some of the toughest parts of your previous job?
- Whom did you report to and who reported to you?
- What responsibilities/tasks took most of your time?
- Describe the most significant project you have worked on so far.
- Have you held other positions like the one you are applying for currently? Tell me about them.
- How much time did you spend working alone in your last or present job?

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Projected Use of Initiative

- How do you expect to keep yourself motivated?
- If I offer you a job, how do you plan to get off to a good start?
- Describe two specific contributions you would expect to make during the first six months if you join our agency.
- How would your performance in this job be different from your last job?
- What do you hope to be doing 5 years from now? How do you plan to get there?

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Special Challenges

- Describe the way you handled a specific problem involving people in your last job.
- What kinds of problems are you best at solving?
- What is the biggest error in judgment you have made in a previous job? Why did you make it? How did you correct the problem?
- If a co-worker needed help in solving a problem, but you did not have the time to help, what would you suggest?
- To whom did you turn for help the last time you had a major problem and why did you choose that person?
- Tell me about a time when many people were counting on you and you failed to solve the problem.
- Tell me about a recurring problem in your current/last job, that you wanted to resolve but didn't.
- Give me two examples of decisions you had to make on your last job.
- Tell me about an experience in which you had a limited amount of time to make a difficult decision.
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
- What do you do when priorities change quickly? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a decision you made while under a lot of pressure.
- Tell me about a decision you made but would do differently if you had it to do over.
- If you saw a staff member or a co-worker about to make a bad decision, what would you do?
- What do you do when you need to make a decision and there are no procedures in place?

- How do you set goals for yourself?
- What was the turnover in your department for the last 2 years and what have you done to reduce turnover in the future?

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Teamwork

- Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone on a project who was not a team player. How did you cope? Was the project successful?
- Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working as part of a team. How did you handle that? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you struggled to build a relationship with a co-worker or member of management. How did you overcome that? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time you handled a situation poorly with a colleague. How did you address the situation? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time you needed to get important information from a co-worker who wasn't very responsive. What did you do? Did you get the information needed to complete the task?
- Describe a time when you worked well as part of a team. Describe the steps involved. What was the results?
- Tell me about a time when a lack of teamwork delayed a project. What action did you take? Was it resolved?
- Tell me about a time where you disagreed with your manager. How did you handle it? Was the disagreement resolved?
- Tell me about a time when a team experience was frustrating. How did you get through it? Was the task completed?
- Tell me about a time when a team project you worked on was unsuccessful. What made it unsuccessful? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal. What was the goal? To what extent did you interact with others on this project?

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Time Management

- Tell us how you schedule and manage your time at work. What steps do you take? How does your day end?
- How do you switch between priorities at work? What steps do you take and how does your day end?
- Describe how you set a deadline at work. What measures do you take?
- Describe how you prioritize task. Walk us through your method.
- Tell us how you limit distractions at work. What was your approach?
- How do you manage important deadlines? Walk us through your method.
- How do you manage your time at work? Walk us through your method.
- How do you balance day to day work and important deadlines? Walk us through your technique.
- How do you manage pressure at work? Explain the process. Did it work?
- Describe a situation in which you were unable to complete a task. What did you do? How was this resolved?
- Describe a situation that required you to do a number of tasks at the same time. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?

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