



# ESSENTIAL READING TO IMPROVE YOUR INTERVIEWING

FOLLOW RUSHER ROGERS AND KEEP UP TO DATE WITH THE LATEST HR NEWS

[LinkedIn](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Blog](#)

[www.rrhr.com.au](http://www.rrhr.com.au)

*Rusher Rogers HR Solutions - High Performance People*

# Contents

Introduction.....	2
The Importance of Good Interviewing .....	3
Interviewing Preparation .....	4
Behavioural Event Interviewing .....	6
Why you should use behavioural event interviewing?.....	6
Personality Conflict .....	8
Are you comfortable when people are uncomfortable?.....	10
Interview questions to avoid and what to ask instead .....	12
Interviewing – Don'ts.....	15
Concluding the Interview .....	16
Some behavioural interview questions .....	17
A short summary:.....	22

## Introduction

You run a business, organisation department or team, but you also have to interview and hire new employees. Interviewing and hiring may not be one of your strengths but you may not know it. From the interviewers' perspective; if the interview went badly you would consider the candidate (interviewee) unsuitable and not hire them or, if the interview went well and you hired that person but the person wasn't right and didn't last in the role once again the candidate was never right for the role. The default position for the hiring manager is usually that the candidate was no good. But if it's your interview skills that are lacking consider that you may miss out on a great new hire or not hire someone that when part of your team cannot do the job.



Most people who conduct recruitment interviews and make hiring decisions have never been trained in how to interview effectively and how to make good hiring decisions. Yet this lack of training doesn't stop these hiring managers from believing that they have good interviewing and assessment skills and, therefore, don't need any training.

## The Importance of Good Interviewing

2012 research provides the rather startling result that 87 per cent of all interviewers are confident they make high quality hiring decisions yet 46% of all new hires fail, and only 20% achieve unequivocal success

(Leadership IQ, 2012, Three-year study compiled results after studying 5,247 hiring managers from 312 public, private, business and healthcare organizations. Collectively, these managers hired more than 20,000 employees during the study period). Additionally from similar research the number 1 reason for employee failures is an overreliance on hiring manager evaluations of talent in the interview process (DDI, 2012, Global Selection Forecast).

Also in research conducted by Chandler Macleod regarding the interview experiences of candidates uncovered the following:

- 40% of respondents had declined an offer because of a poor interview experience
- 69% had experienced no response or feedback after a full interview
- 42% had experienced discrimination in an interview
- 30% had experienced rudeness in an interview
- 22% had been asked inappropriate questions, with respect to such things as their marital status, weight, dating habits (?) and sexual preferences



These stats just confirm a sad truth about recruitment - there are too many people interviewing who are untrained at effective interviewing techniques and as a result, conduct very poor interviews. The impact of these ineffective interviewers being let loose on unsuspecting candidates is revealed in the above results of Chandler Macleod's research. The report further reveals that of those people who experienced a bad interview, 81% of them told up to 10 people about that bad experience!

Following the tips and steps in this eBook will help you to become a more effective interviewer and avoid the unhappy consequences **that Chandler Macleod's** research details.

# Interviewing Preparation

Thorough preparation is essential prior to conducting interviews, to ensure that the 30 to 60 minutes you spend in an interview is time productively and effectively spent.

The success, or otherwise, of most interviews is highly predictable. The first factor is the interviewer being sufficiently skilled in interviewing and the second is the amount of preparation the interviewer does prior to the candidate arriving. The good news for you is that if the general standard of interviews is so it doesn't take much for you to stand out from the crowd.

Here's a preparation for interview list you might wish to use:

## KEY SELECTION CRITERIA:

Agreement with the client regarding the 4 or 5, competency-based key selection criteria.

**WHY?** Unless there is an agreement, you risk assessing the candidate against criteria which the client regards as marginal.

What is competence-based? And this is very important. You may consider that something like 5 years work experience in your particular sector is mandatory. Not necessarily. They may have spent 5 very average and unsuccessful years working in your sector. The thing that you should be looking for is evidence that the candidate has the competencies to be successful (a High Performer) in the role that you have on offer and these things are not often evident on the resume. So you have to identify those competencies and, once matched against the successful candidate (who incidentally may not have the full 5 years experience) you will have a much greater chance that the new employee will be a high performer in the role on offer.

How do I identify evidence of a competency? A competency that you may require is "Strong Analytical Skills" so rather than ask for an opinion with something like are you good at tackling complex problems? Or even how would you tackle a complex problem you should say. "Please describe a complex problem you have tackled outlining in detail how you set about solving it." This is a behavioural question and calls for evidence not opinion. (See the section "More on Behavioural Interviewing" below)

## BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Prepare behavioural interview questions that request sufficient, specific detail about a candidate's demonstrated capability in the 4 or 5, competency-based key selection criteria.

**WHY?** Unless you have prepared the questions, you risk asking each candidate different competency questions which makes comparing answers, to assess competency, much more problematic.

REVIEW RESUME BEFORE HAND:

Thoroughly review the resume of each candidate to be clear as to what information provided on the resume you need to validate (eg depth of current responsibilities), and what information not provided on the resume, you need to discover (eg reasons for leaving last 3 positions) during the interview.

**WHY?** Research on resumes would suggest that between 20% to 40% of resumes contain significant omissions or inaccuracies. It's the job of the interviewer to ensure that the resume they submit to the client is complete and accurate.

JOB DESCRIPTION & COMPANY INFORMATION:

Bring to the interview a copy of the job description and a relevant page or two of information about your organisation.

**WHY?** Build credibility with the candidate. What opinion of a real estate agent would you have if they didn't have a floor plan, couldn't tell you when the house was built, what the council rates were etc?

INTERVIEW TEMPLATE:

Have an interview template.

**WHY?** Such a template greatly enhances your interview structure, ensures you list all the behavioural questions you need to ask, as well as sufficient space to write the answers to those questions. Writing everything on a candidate's resume makes it much harder, and takes a lot longer, to find the relevant information post-interview.

REQUEST SUPPORTING PAPERWORK:

Ask the candidate to bring in any relevant supporting paperwork (eg. referee names and contact details, originals of visas, degrees, testing etc).

**WHY?** Saves you chasing it up afterwards and helps you validate the candidate's *bona-fides* much faster.

CONFIRM INTERVIEW DETAILS:

Email the candidate the details of the interview (time, date, place, parking, public transport etc).

**WHY?** Candidates may not write things down, may lose the paper they wrote the interview information on, may forget, may get a better sounding interview, or they can't be bothered etc.

ENSURE INTERVIEW ROOM AVAILIABLE:

Book an interview room.

**WHY?** You look like a complete amateur if you keep the candidate waiting for an interview room or you have to interview them in an inappropriate place (eg, reception or a café).

## Behavioural Event Interviewing



Why you should use behavioural event interviewing?

Interviews are the primary tool used by agency recruiters to assess and recommend candidates to their clients. This is type of interview that you should use as it is critical to the effectiveness of this process. The traditional, unstructured interview is easily recognised by such questions as; *'tell me about yourself'*; *'what are your strengths?'*; *'how would you deal with a difficult person at work?'*; *'what would your referees say about you?'*

Questions such as these are requesting theoretical or opinion-based answers and as such are useless in assessing actual competencies at work.

A behavioural event interview is based on the premise that a candidate's past performance is the best indicator of their future success in a particular role. As can be easily seen, none of the four questions, above, about are asking specifically about evidence of past performance.

If you wanted to know whether an interviewer had conducted an effective behavioural event interview you only need to listen to the answer to this one question of the interviewer; *'tell me about the evidence that you have uncovered that demonstrates that the candidate is suitable, or not suitable, for the job you interviewed them for?'* Answers such as 'I think they would be great', 'the client will really like them' or 'she interviewed really well' are answers suggesting that the interviewer didn't do their job very well.

The answer you should be keen to hear is one that starts something like this; *'the three most important criteria for this job are X,Y and Z and here's what I found out about the candidate's specific capability and/or motivation with respect to X,Y and Z...'* In other words the interviewer has the facts or evidence at their disposal to provide a solid foundation on which to make an assessment of a candidate's eligibility and suitability for a specific role.

Just in case gaining specific evidence, as distinct from opinions, is not enough to convince you of the benefits of a structured behavioural event interview here are seven more reasons;

- 1) **Candidate comparisons are fair and easy**  
Asking candidates that you interview for the same role, the same questions, ensures a level playing field which quickly reveals the relative levels of competency across the candidates.
- 2) **Ensures legality**  
Behavioural event interview questions are only work-related which avoids the unintended consequences of innocent-sounding-but-ill-advised questions such as 'do you have children?' or 'how do you manage child care?' or 'are you planning to start a family?'
- 3) **Reveals the rehearsed candidate:**  
There is so much information readily available that tells people how to answer the traditional style interview questions (such as the four at the beginning of the article) that the candidate answers are so rehearsed and text-book like as to be of no use (eg. 'one of my weaknesses is that I work too hard and need to be better at time management'). An interviewer who is probing to understand a specific competency quickly breaks through the façade of a rehearsed answer.
- 4) **Relevance:**  
Discussions around who a candidate knows and what football team they support may be pleasant conversation fillers but they are not pieces of information that are relevant to the candidate's suitability for the job. Behavioural interview questions only focus on uncovering information from the candidate that is relevant to the job they are applying for.
- 5) **Professionalism:**  
The best candidates enjoy the challenge of providing specific information about their past performance and this positive experience reflects on the interviewer as being thorough, well trained and representing a professional organisation with high standards.
- 6) **Candidates better understand how suitable they are for the job:**  
If the candidate struggles to answer one or more behavioural questions, after effective probing from the interviewer, they have a much better idea of where their shortfall in competency is and can better understand their rejection for the role.
- 7) **Efficiency:**  
Relevant behavioural interview questions quickly reveal a candidate's level of competency and hence their suitability for a job. This ensures that the interviewer does not waste time in 'taking a stab' at various parts of a candidate's resume trying to find the relevant information they are seeking.

As important as each of the points, above, might be the most important reason is making better candidate recommendations and assisting your clients hire better employees. US organisational psychologist and candidate assessment expert, Dr Charles Handler, states that using a behavioural based interview increases your chances of identifying the best person for the job by approx. 75% compared to using an unstructured, traditional interview format. Other research suggests the difference could be much greater.

# Personality Conflict

Answers to questions you should never accept:  
**“I left because of a personality conflict with my boss”**

Consider the following interview exchange, which any recruiter with more than a few weeks experience will be familiar with:

Recruiter: "Why did you leave your role at XYZ company?"  
Candidate: (Stony-faced) "I had a personality conflict with my boss"  
Recruiter: (Awkward Pause) "Okay"

What happened next? Did you probe to discover more information or did you move to another, unrelated, question?

This answer, left unchallenged, is completely unacceptable because it is meaningless and does not describe any identifiable behaviour.

Personalities cannot conflict - what occurs is that two people have a communication problem or a disagreement. From my experience 'personality conflict' is often a reason used by candidates to cover for one or more of the following occurrences:

- being performance managed
- being counselled over inappropriate behaviour (eg calling the MD a weak, sleazy hypocrite after a few too many at the company Christmas party)
- being given a formal warning
- being held accountable
- being discriminated against
- being sexually harassed
- being sacked or involuntarily resigning
- the manager was arrogant, aggressive or incompetent or difficult to work with.



In other words the candidate is reluctant to volunteer more specific details in case these details do not weigh favourably in your consideration of them for the job on offer.

To maximize your likelihood of obtaining the specific information you need from the candidate you have to ensure that they see you as impartial and willing to give them a fair hearing about whatever happened. Just because a candidate uses the 'personality conflict' response doesn't necessarily mean they are a poor or inappropriate candidate for your client's role. A large number of people have had unhappy experiences with managers.

You should probe further regardless of the candidate's reluctance or discomfort. You are not interviewing to make friends -. By failing to probe in this area you're being as negligent and cavalier as a driver who fails to put their belt on ('accidents never happen to me').

Here's a list of questions you might wish to use the next time your candidate says the reason they left was because they had a personality conflict with their boss. Pick which one suits your style of interviewing.

- "So tell me what happened"
- "Give me some details about the conflict. When did it start?"
- "What was the most recent incident of conflict? How did you respond?"
- "It's a significant step to leave a job because of that reason. What actions did you take to try and resolve the issue?"
- "Who else witnessed this conflict? What did they say or do?"
- "With the benefit of hindsight, what could you have done differently in the situation?"

There are significant benefits in skillfully, carefully and respectfully probing in the area of reasons for leaving, especially 'personality conflict'.

As the interviewer, your professional role is to remain neutral until you have enough evidence to make an informed decision as to the candidate's suitability.

Any candidate will greatly appreciate you being open to listening to their complete explanation of 'personality conflict' and honestly explaining any concerns you have once you are in possession of the complete circumstances of their departure from an organisation.



## Are you comfortable when people are uncomfortable?

Here's an example for an uncomfortable line of questioning by a relatively inexperienced interviewer (let's call him Dan). He did an adequate job asking the (moderately experienced) candidate (let's call her Sarah) about her previous work experience. However when it came to Dan probing a gap of three months between Sarah's jobs, things didn't go so well.



Dan asked Sarah what she was doing between jobs and she said 'it's personal'. Then when pressed a little by Dan - 'what do you mean by that?', Sarah said, unconvincingly, 'I was looking after a sick family member'.

Dan wasn't really satisfied with Sarah's response but in the presence of a clearly uncomfortable candidate, he was obviously also uncomfortable to probe the matter further. The interview was completed without the issue being raised again. After Sarah left, Dan was then debriefed about the interview.

To his credit, Dan immediately identified that issue when asked 'How did you assess your own performance?'

Dan: 'Ross, I knew I needed more information than she was prepared to give me but I could see she was uncomfortable about my questions and she did say it was personal.'

Debriefer: 'Dan, let me ask you this: Are you prepared to refer Sarah to either the job you interviewed her for, or another job, with that question mark hanging in the air about how she spent those 3 months between jobs?'

Dan: 'Umm, err, I'm not sure. I mean she had some good experience'

Debriefer: 'Is that a 'yes' or a 'no'?''

Dan: 'I suppose it's a no.'

Debriefer: 'It's definitely a 'no'. Unless you can confidently recommend a candidate then you shouldn't recommend them. My firm view as a recruiter was that any candidate I referred to a client was one that carried my personal stamp of approval. Unless I was prepared to argue for my candidate in the face of a doubting client then I wouldn't refer them'

Dan: 'So how should I have responded when she said she was looking after a sick family member?'

Debriefer: 'Ask her for more specifics such as: Which family member? What were you doing for them specifically? How many hours per day or week of your time was this taking up?' These are all perfectly valid and reasonable questions to ask a candidate because it is your job to know the answers to these questions! In my experience, candidates who don't wish to answer these questions are those who are not telling you the complete story'

Dan: 'What if the candidate doesn't want to answer those sorts of questions?'

Debriefers: *'The candidate is perfectly entitled to decline to answer any question you ask them. Your role as the recruiter is to explain why it's in their best interest to answer any and all of your questions. You simply say to the candidate; you don't have to answer the question but if I did refer you to my client and that client asks me the same question about you and I can't answer it then that reflects poorly on my credibility. The result is that it's highly unlikely you will gain an interview. By answering this question you significantly increase your chances of gaining the job. Not answering it means you have almost no chance of obtaining an interview for the job'*

Our cultural upbringing and social experiences have conditioned a vast majority of us to deliberately not put other people in an uncomfortable situation. If an uncomfortable situation presents itself then our cultural and social conditioning has us immediately act to remove or lessen that uncomfortable atmosphere.

This is not appropriate behaviour for an interviewer. An interview is (for the interviewer) about understanding the full picture (as much as time allows) of a candidate's skills, competencies and motivation. The candidate is trying to present themselves as positively as possible (as they should).

The interviewer should be asking probing questions and examining every relevant element of a candidate's background. Areas of that background that the candidate may believe are less helpful to them in gaining a client interview, and ultimately a job, are ones the candidate would prefer the interviewer not to delve into. This is likely to create an uncomfortable period of time during the interview. This scenario is completely okay.



If you have built sufficient rapport and are speaking respectfully and without aggression, then you will not damage the quality of the interview nor your relationship with the candidate.

## Interview questions to avoid and what to ask instead

Interviewing templates are very important for rookie interviewers, ensuring that all the relevant areas of an interview are covered and, just as importantly, reduce the chances of ineffectual, irrelevant or illegal questions being asked.

The three pillars of an effective interview are:

1	2	3
To understand the job/career aspirations and motivators/drivers of the candidate and as a result, whether the candidate is committed to their job search or merely interested in their job search.	To understand whether the candidate has the technical skills and behavioural competencies relevant to your current clients and/or your prospective clients and the motivation to do the job on offer, or potentially on offer.	The candidate leaves the interview with the experience of being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• validated</li><li>• appreciated</li><li>• understood</li><li>• affirmed</li></ul>

Point 1 is primarily for the recruiter's benefit (so we don't waste time working on candidates who are only 'window shopping').

Point 2 is primarily for the benefit of our client or prospective client (so we only recommend suitable candidates).

Point 3 is primarily for the benefit of the candidate (so they leave the interview with a positive experience and will recommend us to others, regardless of whether they are placed by us or not).

Unfortunately poor interview questions and processes can very quickly undo any good work the recruiter may have been done prior to that point.



Here are a few interview questions I recommend you avoid asking and an alternative way to ask the same question.

Ineffective question: What are your major strengths?

Effective question: In your last performance review, what aspects of your work did your reviewer mention as being particularly good or strong?

OR: What accomplishment(s) or aspects of your current/most recent work are you most proud of? Why you are proud of it/them and describe to me how you accomplished it/them?

Ineffective question: What are your major weaknesses?

Effective question: In your last performance review, what aspects of your work did your reviewer mention as needing to improve the most, to take your work performance to the next level and tell me that you have done with respect to that feedback?

Comment: The two ineffective questions above are both opinion-based questions and as such, will elicit an opinion from the candidate. It is critical to gain evidence during an interview. A behavioural-based question explicitly asks for evidence (ie. "what happened") whereas an opinion-based question does not.

Ineffective question: What will you do if your child gets sick during work time?

OR Do you have young children?

Effective question: Because of the intense customer-focused and high response nature of this job (*or substitute any other valid job-related criteria*), it is extremely difficult for the client to be flexible with starting and finishing times between the core hours of 9am and 5pm. Does that present any difficulties for you with respect to any other commitments you have?

Comment: Although this sort of question may be asked with good intention, the reality is that if the candidate does not gain an offer for the job, they may believe it is because they gave the 'wrong' answer to this question and as such were discriminated against on non-job related criteria. Always ask questions that are specifically and demonstrably job-related questions.

Ineffective question: How did you feel about that feedback?

Effective question: How did you respond when you received that feedback?

Comment: Asking a candidate about their feelings with respect to anything, is a very indirect and unreliable way of asking a question where you need a definitive and reliable answer (eg. *I feel good about hamburgers, I just don't want one right now*).

What a candidate feels might be interesting to know, but how a candidate behaves is what determines job performance. When you start asking candidates about their feelings you risk drifting into the territory of a counsellor or therapist.

Ineffective question: Where do you see yourself in three years time?

Effective question: What skills do you want to gain or improve in the next 12 months and what steps have you taken recently to achieve this?

Comment: In this day and age of rapid change in the job market, who really knows where they are going to be in three or five years' time? I know I don't. This may have been a sound interview question to ask in a much more predictable work world (25 years ago), but not anymore.

Here is a quick guide to the difference between effective and ineffective interview questions:

Effective Interview Questions	Ineffective Interview Questions
Are specific and direct	Are general, vague or indirect
Ask for details of demonstrated behaviour (evidence of what happened)	Ask for theories or opinions or about a candidates feelings
Are job related	Are irrelevant to the job criteria and/or could be interpreted as discriminatory
Demonstrates thorough interview preparation (ie the candidate's resume has been read)	Are questions to which the resume has already supplied the answer

Before undertaking any interview, a recruiter needs to clearly understand the job brief and construct their questions to best assess the 4-5 key competency-based criteria for the role.

A high performing recruiter conducts excellent interviews. Asking effective questions is the foundation of effective interviewing. Any recruiter would gain much by thoroughly reviewing their interview questions and requesting peer feedback on their interviews.



## Interviewing – Don'ts.



Avoid stupid questions like

*“If you were a biscuit what type would you be?”*

(Yes, that has been a real question)

or

*“Where do you see yourself in ten years?”*

They don't give you any insight into the candidate and will only set them ill at ease.

Never ask questions related to age, sex, disability, children race or religion even in passing conversation.

They are illegal and can leave you open to litigation.

An example: We know of one case where, just to make polite conversation after the formal interview, the interviewer innocently asked a female candidate “Do you have any children? She replied that she did. The candidate did not get the job, because better candidates were shortlisted and feedback was provided. Sometime later the employer was sued by the candidate because she felt that she was discriminated against over other candidates who might not have children.

## Concluding the Interview

When you have finished your questioning be sure to ask the candidate if they have any questions about your organisation or the role. It's good to see that if they ask well informed and meaningful questions.

Be sure to let them know the process, next steps and timeline.

Thank them for their time and remember to always be professional and courteous.



## Some behavioural interview questions

### 1. ACCOUNTABILITY

Tell me about a time when you were most pleased with your performance.

What was the most important contribution you made to the organisation.

Tell me about a time when you weren't very pleased with your performance

### 2. ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION

Tell me of an objective you have set for yourself and what you did to achieve it.

Please describe a time when you have tried to achieve something and were unsuccessful.

Describe a time when you were most pleased with your performance.

Describe a time when you have exceeded a sales target or budget.

Please describe an example of when you achieved something difficult.

### 3. ACTIVE LISTENING

Describe an occasion when you correctly identified the needs of an internal or external customer.

Give me an example of when you have misinterpreted something someone told you.

Describe a time when you have been in a position where it was really important to keep quiet and listen to someone else talking.

Describe an example from the past three to six months where achieving a result has depended on your understanding someone else's point of view.

### 4. ADAPTABILITY

Describe a change that you have had to handle in your job over the past six months.

Describe a time in the past six months where you have had to adapt to change at work?.

Can you think of an example where it has been difficult to maintain your effectiveness as a result of external changes or pressures?

How have you helped your team to accept change with enthusiasm?

Describe an example of how have you had to adapt to meet the needs of your internal or external customers.

Describe your most frustrating work experience/temp assignment.

Tell me about a time when you have had to adapt to new systems/environments. How did you cope? How long did it take you?

Tell me about a situation in your job where you were required to abruptly change what you were doing.

### 5. ANALYTICAL SKILLS

Please describe a complex problem you have tackled outlining in detail how you set about solving it.

Give me an example of a time when you have recognised a problem before others in the organisation.

Tell me about a time when you defined and solved a business problem.

Have you ever spotted a trend/identified a problem/seen an opportunity through data analysis which others have missed?

### 6. BEHAVIOURAL FLEXIBILITY

Describe a situation in which your initial attempt to gain someone's support or cooperation failed. Did you try again? What approach did you use the second (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>) time?

#### 7. COMMUNICATION/INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Describe a time when you had to identify a customer's needs. What did you do? How did you know you had accurately identified the need(s)?

Describe a situation where you wished you had responded differently to someone within your team.

Please describe a situation where you have had to make a difficult decision and explain it to other people.

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with someone who was upset/angry.

Describe an example when you were required to be empathetic towards a customer's circumstances.

#### 8. CREATIVITY

What do you do differently from your predecessor in your current role?

Provide an example that has occurred during the past three to six months where you have generated new, or innovative ideas at work?

Describe a recent occasion when you solved a business problem with an unconventional solution.

#### 9. CUSTOMER SERVICE

There are times when we have to deal with an internal/external customer who has unreasonable demands.

Tell me about a time when you've gone beyond a customer's expectations with regard to the service you have provided.

#### 10. DECISION MAKING

Describe most complex work related problems you have worked through in your most recent role?

#### 11. DECISIVENESS

When have you had to make a quick decision to tackle a quality problem in your team, department or organisation?

Give me an example of a decision you had to make when you felt under time pressure.

What examples are there during the past three to six months where you have made a quick decision about something important at work, even when you didn't have all the facts?

#### 12. DEVELOPING OTHERS

Tell me about a time when you had to develop someone's interpersonal communication skills/self esteem/ or personal presentation.

Tell me about how you identify your team member's strengths and areas for improvement.

What did you do to facilitate their development?

Tell me about a time when you had to train someone to do a job.

Tell me about a time when you had to praise and criticise a team member at the same time.

Tell me about a time when you found someone was not doing their job the right way and you had to get them to do it properly.

#### 13. ENERGY LEVEL

Describe a time in your work when you felt thoroughly drained (either physically or emotionally). What caused this?

Tell me about a time you completed a task that you did not necessarily enjoy. What was the task? How did you overcome this to complete it?

Give me an example of when you have postponed a task/project that was supposed to receive immediate action.

Describe a time in your work when you felt thoroughly exhausted. What caused this? How did you manage the situation?

14. INFLUENCING / PERSUASIVENESS

Tell me about a situation where you had to persuade a customer to an alternative point of view.

Please provide an example of when you persuaded someone to do something for you.

Describe an example of when have you had to persuade your colleagues to adopt a new approach to their work?

When have you persuaded your manager to do something which they were reluctant to do?

What examples are there during the past three to six months where you have managed to persuade someone else to your point of view?

15. INITIATIVE

Provide an example from the past three to six months where you have personally initiated action in response to a problem or opportunity?

Describe an example during the past six months when your drive and determination has inspired others to give more commitment to their work?

What actions have you had to initiate to improve quality in your team, department or organisation?

Describe a time when you inspired others to continuously improve the way they meet the needs of your internal or external customers?

Tell me about a situation where you approached a task differently to others.

Tell me about a time when your results did not meet company expectations.

Give me an example of when you have done more than required in your job.

16. INNOVATION

Can you think of a change in your workplace which your peers would recognise as resulting principally from an innovation you developed?

Can you think of a situation you had to handle in which old solutions didn't work? What did you do to handle it?

17. INTEGRITY

Can you tell me about a time when you have had to bend the rules to reach a final outcome.

18. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Describe a time when you had to develop a relationship with a customer over the telephone.

Describe a time when you were required to vary your communication style to communicate effectively with a customer.

19. JUDGEMENT

Give me an example of a good decision you have made in the last 6 months. What were the alternatives? Why was it a good decision?

Describe the best strategic decision your organisation has taken in the last year. Why was it a good decision?

Describe a recent example where you have made an important work-related decision which turned out to be correct?

What was the toughest decision you have ever had to make?

20. LEADERSHIP

Tell me about a time when you had to set targets for staff.

Tell me about a time when you had to counsel a staff member.

Tell me about a time when you had to manage a difficult meeting.

How do you gain the respect of team members with more product/system knowledge than you?

Tell me about a time when you had to get a group of busy people to work together on a team project.

21. LEARNING CAPABILITY

Describe a time that you have had to learn a new system or process that you considered to be quite complex.

What did you have to learn to be effective at your job? How long did it take you and how difficult did you find it to learn?

22. NEGOTIATION

Describe a situation where you were able to reach a win-win outcome with a customer.

23. ORGANISATIONAL AWARENESS

Please describe a hectic period where your planning and organisational skills have been challenged.

KPI's are often affected by sources beyond a team leaders control. Tell me about a time when you have recognised a problem and how did you address this?

24. PLANNING & ORGANISING/ TIME MANAGEMENT

Tell me about a time when you have had to juggle many tasks at once.

Tell me about a time when you have had to complete an important task on time. What steps did you take to ensure completion?

Please describe a hectic day that you have experienced where your planning and organisational skills were tested. What did you do?

How have you determined what constitutes top priority in scheduling your time?

Describe a recent example where you have developed and implemented a really effective plan.

Describe an occasion when you have had to completely change your plans.

Describe a recurring problem in your area of responsibility and what you have done about it.

25. PROBLEM SOLVING

What were the most difficult work related decision you have had to make in the last 6 months. What process did you follow to make them?

26. QUALITY FOCUS

What examples are there during the past three to six months where you have personally acted/intervened/initiated action to address a quality or service issue?

What actions have you put in place to measure the quality and service you deliver?

Describe a time when you have been dissatisfied with the quality of services you delivered.

Have you received any negative feedback in the past six months? Describe how you managed that?

27. QUALITY ORIENTATION

Describe a situation where you have adopted a technique during the past three to six months to ensure that the details associated with your job are followed through?

Can you identify occasions when you have handled the details associated with a job whilst others have not?

We all get bored from time to time with the details of a task or job. Describe an occasion when this happened to you, and how you handled it.

We have all had occasions when we were working on something that just "slipped through the cracks". Can you give me some examples of when this happened to you? Cause? Results?

Can you tell me about a time when you have not been able to complete a task on time.

28. RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult boss, colleague or team member.  
Tell me about a time when you have had to build a relationship with a new customer.  
Describe a recent problem you have had with a team member and how you resolved it.  
Describe an occasion when you correctly identified the needs of an internal or external customer?

29. RESILIENCE

Describe a time you needed to maintain motivation whilst completing a repetitious task.

30. SALES ORIENTATION

Tell me about your most satisfying sales experience. What would you do differently if in the situation again?  
Describe your toughest sales experience.

31. SELF MOTIVATION

Describe a time during the past three to six months where you have set targets for yourself which were more stretching than was actually required?  
Describe a time when has your own self-motivation encouraged others at work?  
Have you felt at any time in the past six months that you were not receiving enough support at work?  
Can you describe an occasion when you have not achieved an objective which you had agreed to?

32. SENSITIVITY

What examples are there during the past three to six months where you have modified your approach in order to handle another person effectively?  
Describe a time when adopted a different style to deal effectively with someone at work.  
What sort of people do you find it most difficult to deal with at work? Describe an example of how you handled a situation with one of them.

33. TEAM FOCUS

Tell me about a situation when you have helped a team member/s achieve their goals.  
Describe a time when you have worked in a team where you felt other members of the team were lacking in commitment or ability?

34. TENACITY

Describe a time during the past three to six months where you have had to overcome major obstacles to achieve an objective?  
Have you felt at any time in the past six months that you achieved an objective through sheer persistence?  
Have you ever been too persistent in pursuing an objective at work?  
Have you ever submitted a good idea to your superior and he/she did not take action on it?  
What did you do?

35. TOLERANCE FOR PRESSURE

Describe an example during the past three to six months where you have had to handle rejection or excess workload?  
Have you ever had a feeling of frustration or impatience when dealing with customers?  
What was the situation? How did you handle this?  
Give me an example of when your ideas were strongly opposed in discussion. How did you react? Describe an occasion when you felt under particular pressure. How do you handle stress at work? Describe a specific example.

## A short summary:

1. Agree competency-based key selection criteria
2. Ask the same behavioral based questions of all candidates
3. Prepare for the interview
4. Do not ask ineffective or inappropriate questions
5. Be professional and courteous
6. You are not interviewing the person to be your friend. You are interviewing them to uncover evidence that they can do the job really well

# ALWAYS LOOK FOR EVIDENCE NOT OPINION

### Acknowledgement:

Rusher Rogers HR Solutions would like to thank Ross Clennett <http://rossclennett.com/> who has provided mentoring and much of the content for this eBook.

If you would like to know more about  
Rusher Rogers recruitment practice

**(We do this for our clients and more... All day every day)**  
visit: [www.rrhr.com.au](http://www.rrhr.com.au) or phone 03 9682 7044

Thank you for reading this eBook.



### **Rusher Rogers HR Solutions**

Level 5, 20 – 22 Albert Road  
South Melbourne VIC 3205  
03 9682 7044

[enquiries@rrhr.com.au](mailto:enquiries@rrhr.com.au)

[www.rrhr.com.au](http://www.rrhr.com.au)

*High Performance People*