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## **ALL ABOUT COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS**

It seems today that standard interviews aren't enough for employers: in order to pick the best possible candidates, they are also now using competency based interviews too. These are designed to force you to discuss real life situations that you've faced at work before, so that employers can gauge whether how you work will fit in well with their own company. After all, how you've worked in the past is the best indicator of how you'll work in the future...



# ALL ABOUT COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS

The most important thing to remember about competency base questions is that your answers must be specific, about a real event that has happened to you. Saying “if this happened...” isn’t enough - instead it should be “when this happened previously to me...” The interviewer will want to delve into this answer as much as possible with you, so be prepared for them to ask follow-up questions on all manner of different minute details from your answer.

## Example of How to Respond

The best way to show how to answer these questions is to use an example. So, let’s assume the interviewer has asked: **“Tell me when you had to deal with conflict and how you defused the situation.”**

A good start to answering this question might be:

**“When I was working in ABC Shop, a customer was incredibly unhappy with a product they’d been sold. I listened to their complaints carefully and then responded calmly, before issuing them a refund and apologising for the experience they had gone through.”**

Don’t think that this is the end of this question though as, as already stated, the interviewer will then follow up with more questions. Such questions could include:

- **When did this happen?** If it was a particularly long time ago, they might ask for a different example from your more recent work history. Example answer: **“It happened last year, while working during the summer sale, therefore the store was also incredibly busy.”**
- **How did you respond verbally to their complaints?** You’ll need to tell them the ways in which you used your skills to defuse the situation in more detail, including important words you used and how you used the tone of your voice. Example answer: **“I made sure I didn’t use any language that would enflame the situation and that I didn’t accuse them of, or infer that they were, dishonest. I also made sure I used her name lots to create a relationship and kept my voice calm yet professional.”**

- **Why did you issue them a refund?** This is to make sure that you followed policy and simply didn’t refund the customer because you were intimidated. Companies like to know that policies are followed, although if you can show that you used initiative this is good also. Example answer: **“I gave them a refund as the company policy was to offer refunds on any items that were faulty, providing they had a receipt, which she did.”**

- **Why did you apologise to them?** By apologising, you potentially ensured that the customer will come back and spend more money, and that the reputation of the company wasn’t damaged too much. The ability to admit faults is something that’s valued by many employers. Example answer: **“I apologised because I was the face of the store, and we clearly hadn’t provided a good product to her. If I hadn’t apologised, she would not have shopped there again and could also have used various methods to tell others not to shop there.”**

As you can see, depending on your answer, the interviewer is easily able to keep digging until they have exactly what they need. In order to overcome this, think of the questions that could be asked and make sure you have detailed answers prepared for each of them. It might be the case that you have already answered these questions in an application form as well, so refer back to ensure that there are no discrepancies in your answers - this will be jumped on straight away by any good interviewer.

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