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Job Interview Questions

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Interview Tips

- Pay attention to how your candidate answers your questions. Does he or she appear comfortable responding about each of the situations you describe and question? If not, the candidate may not be experienced and may be misrepresenting his or her credentials.
- Aside from this, you are looking for answers that reflect the values and approaches that are acceptable and promoted within the culture of the workplace.
- You are looking for truthful, genuine answers that accurately describe the personality profile and skill level that will “fit” within the work environment.
- Beware of a candidate who persistently says the right things but fails to back up statements with solid stories that demonstrate the requested value or approach in action.....
- Make a careful selection of the following sample job interview questions

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Adaptability

- Describe a time a change effort you were involved in was not as successful as you or the company would have liked.
- Describe a time when you had to separate the person from the issue when working to resolve differences.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation
- Tell me about a time you were able to become more comfortable in an environment that you were originally uncomfortable in.
- Tell me about a time you adapted your style in order to work effectively with those who were different from you.
- Tell me the steps you have taken to create a work environment where differences are valued, encouraged, and supported.
- Give me an example of a time when your values and beliefs impacted your relationship with a peer, co-worker, supervisor, or customer.
- When was the last time something came up in a meeting that was not covered in the plan? What did you do? What were the results of your judgment?
- Give me an example of a time you had to work on a project/task that you were absolutely dreading.
- Problems occur in almost all work relationships. Describe a time when you had to cope with the resentment or hostility of a subordinate or co-worker.

Analysis/Problem Assessment

- Describe a situation where you had to use conflict management skills.
- Have you ever had to settle conflict between two people on the job? What was the situation and what did you do?
- Tell me about a disagreement that you found difficult to handle. Why was it difficult? What did you do? How did it work out?
- Describe a problem situation where you had to seek out relevant information, define key issues, and decide on which steps to take to get the desired results.
- Give an example of when you “went to the source” to address a conflict. Do you feel trust levels were improved as a result?
- Give me an example of how your understanding of a community issue helped you address a business problem, issue, or concern.
- Give me an example when your ability to look at problems and issues from a big picture approach served you well.
- Tell me about a situation where the analysis that you performed was incorrect. If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?
- Sometimes even though we study the data from all sides, we make errors in interpretation of the data. Tell me about a time that happened to you.
- Tell me about a difficult problem you solved that had a significant positive impact on all or part of the organization.
- Tell me about a time when you felt that a co-worker or manager made you look bad.
- Describe a time when you were able to anticipate a land mine and plan your upcoming actions accordingly.
- Describe a time where your logical analysis was seen as illogical or flawed by someone else.

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- Describe a time you failed to anticipate a potential problem and develop preventative measures.
- Give me an example of a difficult problem someone recently needed your help to solve.
- Give me an example of a time where you felt that a process was getting in your way of getting something done.
- Tell me about a time you helped resolve a group problem. What caused the problem?

Attention to Detail / Quality Orientation

- Describe a situation where you didn't pay as close attention to the details as you should have.
- Tell us about a situation where attention to detail was either important or unimportant in accomplishing an assigned task.

Coaching

- Give me an example of a time when you had to talk to a direct report about his/her performance and were able to turn that employee around.

Communication

- Give me an example of a time you failed to keep your boss informed of your actions or progress on a task or project.
- Tell me about a time you failed to communicate effectively with your direct reports/client/customer. How did you find out you had failed to communicate effectively? What was the implication of this failure? What did you do about the situation? What did you learn from this?
- Have you ever had to introduce a policy change to your work group? How did you do it?
- Describe a time when you went out of your way to put someone at ease.
- Tell me about a time when your failure to show compassion to someone at work was a costly oversight on your part.
- When you disagree with your manager, what do you do? Give an example.
- Give me an example of a time you had to be excellent at multidirectional communication in order to be successful at something.

Verbal Communication

- Give me an example of a presentation you did for a small group that resulted in the group agreeing to do what you wanted.
- Give me an example of a particularly difficult or awkward conversation you needed to have with someone.
- Tell me about the most difficult or complex idea, situation, or process you have ever had to explain to someone. How did you explain it? Were you successful?
- Give me an example of a time when your ability to employ a sense of humour made you more successful than if you had not used it.

Listening Skills

- Describe a work situation that required you to really listen to and display compassion for a co-worker/employee who was telling you about a personal or sensitive issue.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively "read" another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values.

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- Give me an example of a time you were particularly perceptive regarding a person's or group's feelings and needs.

Written Communication

- Describe a time you wrote a report that was well received by others.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Give me an example of a time you used written communication to share information that, in hindsight, you realize should have been shared verbally.
- Describe the most significant or creative written presentation you had to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you used your written communication skills to convey an important message.

Customer Service

- Give a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you assess your success in diffusing the situation?
- Give me an example of a situation you handled where you demonstrated outstanding customer service.
- How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer? What have you done to gain their confidence? Give an example.

Delegation of Authority & Responsibility

- Give me an example of a major project or task you delegated to one of your employees. How did you monitor the project or task?
- Tell me about a time you encouraged a direct report to make decisions within his area of responsibility that worked out better than you expected.

Developing Organizational Talent

- Tell me about a time where you were not as effective as you would have liked to have been in managing an employee's or a team's work.
- Tell me about a time you discovered raw talent within your organization and recruited that person. How did it work out?
- Have you ever had an employee who surprised you with their outstanding performance? If so, what was your reaction?
- Give me an example of a time you helped one of your direct reports develop or improve his (communication, negotiation, sales, etc.) skills. How did you determine that this was a developmental need?
- Tell me about a time you needed to implement a new (or significantly raise an existing) performance standard for your team. What was the standard? Why did you need to raise it? How did you communicate the change? How did the affected employees respond when they were told? Were people able to meet the new performance standard? If not, why not?

Impact

- Give me some examples of when someone remembered you after only a brief introduction. Why do you think they remembered you?

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Information Monitoring

- Tell me about the most difficult time you have had in the last couple of years gathering the information you needed for a task or project
- Give an example of a time where, because you didn't have enough information, you felt it was wise not to voice your opinion on something.
- Tell me about a situation where, because you had a strong network, you were able to gather information that others were not able to secure.

Initiative

- Tell me about a time you found and took advantage of an opportunity to make an improvement in your position or department/team/group
- Describe a significant project idea you initiated in the last year. How did you know it was needed? Was it used? How did it work?
- Give an example of an important goal that you set in the past. Tell about your success in reaching it.
- Tell us about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell us about the last time that you undertook a project that demanded a lot of initiative.
- Describe a time where you took the initiative to act rather than waiting to be told what to do.
- How did you receive work assignments at your most recent employer?
- Tell me about a time you felt "off track" in your career progress.
- At times we are all faced with the situation of having to tell a customer, employee, boss, or someone else "No" because we don't believe that "Yes" would be the right answer—even though it would be the easy answer. Tell me about a time you faced this kind of situation.
- Give me an example of a time you had to present difficult information to someone, but were able to do it in a positive and helpful manner.
- Tell us about a time when you took responsibility for an error and were held personally accountable.
- Tell me about your greatest career achievements. Why did you pick those examples? What changes did you develop at your most recent employer?

Innovation

- Describe a time when you made a suggestion to improve the work in your organisation.
- Describe the most creative oral presentation you have ever made
- Give me an example of a time when you didn't bend on a policy, procedure, or operation, and later wished you had
- Tell me about the last time you thought "outside the box". (NOTE: Make sure they explain both why and how they did it.)
- Creativity often means stepping back from standard ways of thinking. Give me an example of a time when you were able to break out of a structured mindset and explore new or different concepts and ideas.

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- Sometimes it is essential that we break out of the routine, standardized way of doing things in order to complete the task. Give an example of when you were able to successfully develop such a new approach.

Integrity

- Tell me about a time when you took responsibility for a mistake before anyone else even knew that you had made a mistake.
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a loss for doing what is right.
- Tell me about a time when you gave the benefit of the doubt to someone. Were you glad you did?
- Tell me about a time you saw someone at work stretch or bend the rules beyond what you felt was acceptable. What did you do? Why did you take that action?
- If you can, tell me about a time when your trustworthiness was challenged. How did you react/respond?
- Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough problem that challenged fairness or ethical issues
- Tell me about a time when your trustworthiness was challenged. How did you react/respond?

Interpersonal Skills/Influencing Skills

- Have you ever been in a situation where you had to bargain with someone? How did you feel about this? What did you do? Give an example.
- Tell me about a time when you gained acceptance of an idea or project from your boss. How did you get this acceptance?
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual personally may not have liked you.
- Tell us about a time when you and your current/previous supervisor disagreed but you still found a way to get your point across.
- Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
- Describe a situation where you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Give me an example of a time when, because you failed to detect a person's feelings or concerns, you—at least initially—mishandled the situation.
- Give me an example of a time you were unhappy with the results of a negotiation you were involved in.
- Give some instances in which you anticipated problems and were able to influence a new direction.

Judgment/Problem Solving

- How quickly do you make decisions? Give an example & talk me through your decision making process.
- Give me an example of a time you had to take disciplinary action with a direct report. How do you handle a subordinate whose work is not up to expectations?
- Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution/idea/project/report to a problem in your past work.
- Give me an example of a time that you misjudged a person or data.

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- Give an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place?
- Give me an example of a difficult decision that you made where there were no supporting facts to guide you either way.
- Give me some examples of the kinds of things you have talked to your boss about rather than handling them yourself.

- Tell me about one of the most difficult (or one of the best) decisions you made in the last year/six months. What made it so difficult? What process did you use to make the decision?

Leadership

- Describe a time you had to make a decision that you knew would be unpopular.
- Tell me how you have developed trust and loyalty between you and your direct reports.
- Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.
- Give me an example of how you have celebrated an individual's or your team's success in the past. What was the occasion?
- Have you ever had a subordinate whose work was always marginal? How did you deal with that person? What happened?
- Tell me about a time when you had to convince your team to do something they didn't want to do. How did you do it?
- Tell me about a time you found it necessary to tactfully, but forcefully, say things that others did not want to hear.
- Tell me about a time you gave someone or a group what they needed even though they didn't yet know it was needed.
- Give me an example of a time where you were able to propose a variety of future scenarios to ensure that the proper course of action was taken.
- Give me an example of a time you needed to give constructive feedback to one of your peers or someone higher in the organization about his behaviour.
- Tell me about a time you were highly motivated and your example inspired others.
- Describe a time where, had you been able to predict a business/industry occurrence you would have been able to make adjustments so that your company/department/team did not suffer from it.
- Give me an example of when your staff achieved a goal because they willingly followed your suggestions.
- Tell me about a time when you sensed that something was wrong with one of your direct reports and talked to him/her about it. What was the result?

Management

- Tell me about the worst hire you ever made
- Walk me through the process you used to fill the last position you filled.
- How do you deal with people whose work exceeds your expectations?
- Tell me about a time when you failed to gather sufficient information before acting.
- How do you get subordinates to produce at a high level? Give an example.
- Tell me about a confrontation you've had with a direct report.

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- Tell us about a situation in which you had to separate the person from the issue when working to resolve issues.
- What is the toughest group of people that you have had to get cooperation from? Describe how you handled it. What was the outcome?
- Tell us about a time when you had to inform a direct report that you were dissatisfied with his or her work.

Organizational Awareness

- Give me an example of a time when a company policy or action hurt people. What, if anything, did you do to mitigate the negative consequences to people?
- Give me an example of a time when, if you had taken more time to understand how your organization worked, you might have been more successful.
- Give me some examples of how people in other parts of the organization use your department or group as a resource.
- Tell me about the organizational climate at your current (or most recent) employer and give me an example of how that climate made it difficult for you to successfully accomplish a goal or project.
- Give me an example of a time you used your influence to push something through for approval

Planning & Organizing/Work Management

- Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and how you accomplished that goal.
- Describe a time when you set a goal for yourself and did not achieve it because it was too high. What was the standard? Why was it too high? What were the ramifications of your failure to achieve this goal?
- Describe how you have improved the organization of a system, process, or task in your current position.
- Give me an example of a stretch goal you set for a direct report. Why was this a stretch goal? Was the direct report able to accomplish the goal? What did you do to contribute to her success?
- Tell me about a time you had to complete multiple tasks/projects in a tight timeframe.
- How do you decide what gets top priority when scheduling your time?
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Tell me about the process you used to set goals for your department and your direct reports last year.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle this?
- Tell me about one of your best accomplishments, including where the assignment came from, your plans in carrying it out, how you eventually did carry it out, and any obstacles you overcame.
- Give me an example of a time when you failed to set clear directions for one of your direct reports or your team.
- Give me an example of a time when you used a systematic process to define your objectives even though you were not prompted or directed to do so. What type of system did you use? What payoff did you get from using the process?

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- Give me an example of a time you had a lot of tasks put on your plate all at once. How did you decide what tasks to do and when to do them?
- Tell me about the most significant project you have worked on in which it was crucial to keep track of details while still managing the “big picture”. How did you make sure the work got done? How did you keep focused on the overall goal while still managing all of the specific parts?

Practical Learning

- Give me an example of a time you took the initiative to find out about a new or upcoming product/service change.
- Tell me about a time where your industry knowledge enabled you to identify a potential problem and develop a strategy to address it. What in your knowledge base enabled you to detect the potential problem?
- Tell me about a time when you needed to learn something quickly for a new task or project. How did you go about it?
- Tell me about your greatest success in using logic to solve a (technical/functional/job skill) problem. Why do you think you were successful?
- Tell me how you keep abreast of the professional/technical aspects of your position.
- Tell me about the changes or issues that are being discussed or taking place in your area of expertise. How are these issues or changes affecting the way you do your job?

Risk Taking

- What is the riskiest decision you have made? What was the situation? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you created a new process or program that was considered risky. What was the situation and what did you do?

Teamwork/Collaboration

- Describe the most difficult working relationship you’ve had with an individual. What specific actions did you take to improve the relationship? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example to convince me that you understand why groups do what they do.
- Tell me about a time where your understanding of what a group valued helped you work effectively with them
- Tell me about a time you needed to gain the trust and support of one of your peers in order to be successful on something.
- Tell me about a time you worked as a team member on a team that had one or more unproductive members. What did you do? Why did you choose to do that? How did it work out?
- Describe for me a time you developed and maintained (or strengthened) a relationship with a person or group inside/outside your organization. Why did you develop the relationship? How did you develop it? What did you do to maintain/strengthen it?
- Give me an example of a time when you were less successful as a team leader than you would like to have been.
- We’ve all been part of a work team or project team where there is one person who just rubs us the wrong way. Tell me about a time this happened to you. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time you needed to lead an intact project or ad hoc team toward a goal that you, personally, did not completely support or believe in.

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Technical/Professional Knowledge

- Describe a time when you applied a new piece of technology to an existing task or project. What benefits resulted from the technological application? How did you determine there would be a benefit?
- Give me an example of a time when you were responsible for selecting a new or improved technology.
- Tell me about a time where you prepared a budget larger than any you had ever prepared before. Did you meet the budget? What was the variance? Did the budget need to be altered (if so, how and why)?
- Give me an example of a time when you picked up on a business or industry trend or change and made appropriate changes within your company/department/team to respond to or take advantage of the opportunity.
- Tell me about a time when you took a complicated, technical process and explained it to people who were not familiar with the process.

Tolerance for Stress/Energy

- Describe a time in which you were faced with problems or stresses which tested your coping skills. What did you do?
- Give me an example of a situation you have faced when the “pressure was on.” What happened? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to complete a project/task on a strict deadline with little or no direction.
- Have you ever worked in a situation where the rules and guidelines were not clear? Tell me about it. How did you feel about it? How did you react?
- Give me an example of a time you had to think quickly on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Give me an example of a time you had to juggle a number of projects and priorities. What were they? How did you manage to juggle them?
- Tell me about a time you did not handle a stressful situation well.
- Tell me about a time a deadline was moved up on you and how you handled it. Did you accomplish the task on time? How (or why not)?