Competency-based interviews
White paper: Competency-based interviews

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This white paper is designed to help “intelligent executives” (knowledge workers, professionals & semi-professionals), managers and senior execs CXO level prepare better for interview – this particular article is written to help the candidate approach their interview better informed and more prepared.

Where appropriate, in each occupational discipline, we have included questions for both individual contributors and management questions for individual disciplines.

This white paper, specifically addresses the issues of how to best approach handling competency-based interviews.

Other white papers and articles you may wish to refer to include...

• The executive interview
• The promotional interview
• The Executive CV Resume
• Linkedin profiles
• Intelligent Networker 360% job search guide

Find these on www.intelligentexecutive.com
What does competency-based interviewing mean?

Competency-based interviews are structured, with the interviewer working from a set of pre-determined questions. They work on the basis that your past performance is a reliable predictor of the future, so you can expect to be asked a number of questions that will require you to draw on specific aspects of your past performance. Competency-based interview questions will typically begin:

Tell me about a time when you...
Tell us what approach you took to...
Describe an occasion when you...
Give me an example of when...

These are often based around core behavioural competencies such as:

**Initiative and innovation**
**Developing others** **Delivering results**
**Team leading** **Interpersonal skills**
**Learning and self development** **Communication**
**Planning and organising** **Analytical thinking** **Strategic thinking**
**Building relationships**
**Teamwork and collaboration**

However competency-based interview questions are more likely to be put to you in a specific context, determined by the requirements of the job and what is to be accomplished / achieved.
Why is it so important that you understand competency-based interviewing?

**Two reasons;** firstly, HR is increasingly becoming recognised for its contribution to the business – once a discipline which many people saw as taking a back-seat, HR as a function is becoming increasingly valued, and HR professionals becoming increasingly business savvy, better focused on business outcomes and more influential in driving up organizational capability through more robust recruitment and selection tactics and techniques for internal and external resourcing.

Best practice in HR, means leveraging a competency-based interview approach; taking a more scientific approach to determining a candidates ability to perform in the job and this means looking for previous experience of success (competency) directly relevant to the specific demands of the job, the goals to be achieved and situation in which it is to be done (business drivers, market conditions / dynamics……).

**Second reason;** most experienced senior managers or business leaders are either aware of the merits and rationale of competency-based interviewing or are sub-consciously aware of it, and therefore will often use competency-based interview questions to assess a candidates real ability.

In relation to their questions, the interviewer(s) will analyse your answer around ‘what you did’, in terms of your experience, knowledge and skills applied to the situation that is in question. The question is most likely to be framed in terms of direct relevance to the organization and the job being recruited for, and you should look to answer it in the same terms. You will demonstrate the extent of your affinity to the organizations activities. The interviewer, and certainly if they are part of HR, will want to know ‘how you did what you did’. This relates to the behavioural competencies that are relative to the values of the organization. Are you a fit with the desired culture of the organization?

For more senior roles, and particularly jobs that involve people management, apart from the technical skills and general behavioural aspects, management of people is key. However it is increasingly common for the term leadership to be used, therefore it may help to provide some delineation between the two terms.

**Management is seen as the transactional processes** by which an organization is steered and its activities are planned, directed and executed procedurally. **Leadership is considered to be a more transformational activity** in which influence is created and used to bring about people performance. So we can see fundamental differences in approach – authoritarian v. charismatic, short-term objectives v. strategic vision; doing things right v. doing the right things.

Leadership is seen as much more behaviourally driven, an innate characteristic of nature rather than learned, hence it may drive competence interview questioning that has greater focus on emotional intelligence. Competence questions have their foundation in the premise that how a person behaves in a
given situation is characteristic, rather than what they say they would theoretically do in a given situation, which may or may not be the case in the event. At the most senior levels of an organization, the criticality of leadership will feature strongly in the manner of the competence interview questions that you will be asked, as much as your focus on past business performance.

**How to second guess what questions may arise and how to answer them.**

Expect questions to be focused around very predictable business-critical goals for which you will be expected to be responsible, and against which your performance will most likely be measured, and by which success or failure will be determined.

These are most likely to be industry-sector and job specific. Consider what matters most in the position into which the employer is hiring – the key challenges of the role, the key issues facing the business, its ambitions and objectives. Anticipate what areas you think they are most likely to probe you about. Where does your experience and achievements relate?

You should reflect on what insight you have into the opportunity from any job spec, briefing from a head-hunter, internal recruiter, job advert, inside line from someone in your network, news items or other media items including their website, then try to second guess what questions they are most likely to put to you. Consider sitting in the interviewers’ shoes and think about what questions you might ask if you were on their side of the table.

**Factors most likely to influence the shape of the competency based interview question/s!**

- Increasing profit
- Increasing sales
- How this role contributes to the success of the business
- Reducing cost
- Loss turnaround

**Requirements of the job**

- Achieving objectives
- Industry sector drivers
- The issues, facing the company
Take a broad view of the organization itself – its size and spread geographically, its range of products and services, its operational activities, its recent market performance, emerging issues; something of a SWOT analysis.

What will be the impacts required of the role-holder – critical short term deliverables, long term ambitions, key areas of influence; in the context of the organization.

Now, look to define the role in terms of the important attributes (experience, knowledge, skills) that will underpin delivery of job performance. You have got to the interview stage so what is it on your CV that will likely have interested them in you.

Okay, now try to prepare and plan for the interview itself. Think about the concepts raised in the above visual and...

- Firstly, try to second guess which competency based questions they are most likely to put to you.
- Secondly, think back through time to when you have been faced with a similar responsibility, project or challenge in the past. This should ideally be one which was recent (ideally in the last two years, where the outcome was successful. Things which happened a long time ago e.g. five years ago, carry far less weight.
- Thirdly, talk with a trusted advisor about it, this may be a career coach, a mentor, an ex-colleague, friend i.e. someone you feel is qualified to give you some constructive or objective input.

Answer competency based interview questions using the STAR formula!

**SITUATION** – say where you were (employer name), what your role was and when it happened.

**TASK** – outline the challenge or nature of the project for which you were responsible and why it was important in the context of impact on the organization.

**ACTION** – explain how you approached the task and the actions you took. If your efforts were part of a team effort, focus most on what you did, and what you contributed. Avoid saying what you thought you might do – you need to focus on what you have achieved and how you achieved it.

**RESULT** – what were the outcomes? These should be substantiated with facts and figures and should show you in a positive light.
What if you can’t think of a good or recent example?

In this case you may wish to tell the interviewer that you cannot think of a directly comparable situation, but you can think of something similar, and then elaborate on how you might have approached this task if faced with it. The interviewer will normally accept this approach. Expect sub questions.

Your response to any competency-based question needs to be focused but in dealing with all four points of the STAR technique in sufficient detail, it is not untypical for a response to take around five minutes to explain. If you have not covered aspects that the interviewer is looking for you to cover, they may interject or at the end of your answer give you one or more ‘prompt’ questions but it is also common for an interviewer to give you a series of sub-questions having asked the main question, to give you a steer as to what they are looking for you to cover in your response.

In answering competence-based interview questions, the process you apply is important to make sure that you give the best answers you can.

• Having been asked the question, give yourself some thinking time so that you identify a particularly relevant scenario for your response and to prepare and frame your response so that it is comprehensive yet focused.

• The interviewer will expect you to take time to prepare your answer.

• Feel free to ask for the question to be repeated – you need to be certain that you understand the question.

• Have a pen and paper to note the salient points of the question as a reminder of what needs to be addressed if you personally feel comfortable and confident in this approach.

• If you think you may be going off track with your answer, ask for the question to be repeated – better safe than sorry.

• Expect the interviewer to be writing notes as you talk.
Examples of generic competency-based interview questions

**Communication and presentation skills**
Think of a time when you tried to persuade someone else to adopt your point of view. What was the situation? How did you present your views / arguments? What was the result?
Tell us about a major change you have experienced in your work environment.
Tell us about a time when you failed. Why did you fail? What did you learn from the situation?

**Delivering results / results orientation**
Tell us about a project where you have persisted in spite of obstacles.
Tell us about a major achievement and how you went about it.
Describe a time when you experienced setbacks in your work.

**Interpersonal skills**
Tell me about a time when you needed to persuade others to commit to a course of action.
Describe a situation where you got people to work together.
Can you tell me the last time you upset someone? What happened?

**Use of initiative**
Tell me about a time when you undertook a project in an area in which you had little or no experience.
Tell me about a time when you initiated a change on your own. How did you present this to your boss?
Can you give me an example of a time when you wanted to initiate a project on your own? How did you go about it?

**Planning and organising**
Tell me about a complex project you’ve been responsible for that required significant planning.
Tell me about a time when you didn’t meet an objective / deadline.
Give me an example of a time when you have had to change your plans.

**Analytical thinking**
Tell me about a time when you identified a new approach to a problem.
Describe a time when your analytical skills were put to the test
Tell me about the most complex or difficult information you have had to analyze.

**Strategic thinking**
Tell me of a time when you have influenced strategy.
Can you tell me about a time when you implemented a plan that had long-range implications?
Can you give me an example of a time when you developed a mission statement?
Question bank: Generic examples

Building relationships
Tell me about a time when you quickly developed a relationship with a new colleague or client.
Give me an example of a time when you went about building good working relationships within a team.
Describe a situation in which you had to develop and maintain a working relationship with someone with whom you didn’t like to work. How did you do that?

Management/influence
Describe a time when you have had to change a process or methodology. How did you go about it?
Can you describe a time when you had to influence business decisions in a business unit not directly accountable to you?
Describe your recent experience of partnering with senior managers to influence commercial outcomes.

Commercial and business awareness
Describe a situation where you championed strategic thinking corporately.
Describe financial / commercial decisions that you have made / advised on.
Tell us about an occasion when you borrowed ideas from other industries.

Decision making – problem solving and analysis
Tell us about a particularly difficult decision you have had to make.
Describe a complex problem that you have had to deal with. What approach did you take?
Tell us about some of the analytical methods you have used in the past, e.g. cost / benefit analysis. How have these helped you add value?

Team-working
Can you tell me about a time when you have had to resolve conflict between individuals?
Describe a time where you have had to use different approaches to deal with different personalities.
Can you describe a time when you worked in a team drawn from other departments / areas of your business?
Who is the most difficult person you have ever had to manage?

Team leading
Describe your approach to leadership style in your last position / s.
What is the best team you’ve led and why?
Tell me about a time when you led a dysfunctional team.
What techniques have you used to encourage others to contribute to the team?
On this page and the next, we have some words of introduction you may find useful. On the following pages, we have given examples of questions.

**The difference between “management” and “leadership”**

There have been huge debates about the distinction between a leader and a manager, and whether one is inherently better in some way, or represents a ‘magic bullet’ guaranteeing success.

No doubt such debates will rage on for many years to come, but for now it seems fair to draw a distinction as follows:

- **Leadership** is about determining direction or vision and strategy for a group, which the group will subsequently follow; i.e. a leader will outline a vision and determine goals and objectives. The successful CEO surrounds himself or herself with great people who don’t need to be micro-managed. And he or she will execute plans through multiple business units and teams, and keep the company headed in the right direction. The role is transformational.

- **Management** is about putting into effect the people / team and resources to deliver those goals which have already been established. Management is about getting things done. This includes setting operational direction, and organising resources to maximise performance, drive optimisation and efficiency. The role is transactional.

Appreciate, that lines of distinction between expectations of managers and leaders are sometimes blurred because of different company cultures, varying degrees of responsibility and autonomy – and an increasingly competitive /fast-changing business landscape often translates into transformation being on the agenda both at management and leadership level.

Also it was once said by Warren Bennis that leadership was ‘doing the right things’ and management was ‘doing things right’. As Tom Peters pointed out, in today’s climate, you’ve got to do both.

Strategy needs execution, just as for execution to be effective, it must follow a strategy. So the expectation of even middle managers is that the best can do both the transactional and the transformational. That is why Managing Change is more than a specialist role, it is a normal part of today’s business. Those that can do both well, can also find a path to the highest leadership levels of an organization.

At leadership levels, competency based interview questions are likely to be heavily influenced by whatever agenda the organisation is pursuing: grow, buy or sell (grow = organic growth, buy = growth by acquisition, sell = objectives to sell the company). Bear in mind that the overall agenda might either have more than one possible intended outcomes running in tandem and / or be subject to change.

The bottom line is that the leadership team, should be viewed as responsible for the shareholders / owners investment, and how that investment reaps the maximum
benefit in their eyes. Any organisation has a set of resources (employees, IP, products / propositions, cash, capabilities, customers, capital ability to borrow). The job of the CEO is really to determine how these resources can be used to return maximum benefits to the shareholders / business owners – often determined by increased stock price, company value, sales, profit, market share.

In addition to bottom line business outcomes, when making leadership hires, the hiring team will be looking for people who can determine, shape and implement a successful strategy.

The hiring team will be looking for leadership qualities. Therefore you may expect questions to be asked that relate to key leadership aims.

Such as developing a mission statement, sense of value that is all encompassing and has meaning throughout the organization.

How you would go about creating a culture of success, in which there exists a sense of purpose, belief and confidence.
Examples of executive leadership competency-based interview questions

Main Question:
Tell me about how you turned Company XYZ around.

Sub Questions:
What was the position when you took over?
What was your strategy?
What were the difficult decisions and why?
Who were the key stakeholders and what were your messages to them?
What was your picture of success?
How did you perform and what made the difference?

Main Question:
Tell me about the business decision that gave you most emotional difficulty.

Sub Questions:
What was the situation?
Where did the biggest challenge lie?
Why was it emotionally difficult for you?
How did you rationalise it?
What did you do?
How did you feel afterwards?

Main Question:
Tell us about the closure of the ABC business unit within DEFG and your management of that exercise.

Sub Questions:
What was your evaluation of the business performance and why?
What was your decision and why?
What were the main factors that shaped your planning?
How did you manage the exercise?
Evaluate that business activity?
What were the key lessons that you took and where have they been applied elsewhere successfully?
Main Question:
How do you account for the flat-lining of your share-price despite your last set of results?

Sub Questions:
How do you view your financial results?
Why has the market responded less than positively in your view?
What influence did it have on your decision to close your operations in Wales?
How has this situation impacted upon your strategy for the next 3 years?

Main Question:
What single achievement has given you the most satisfaction?

Sub Questions:
What was that achievement?
What did you derive from it?
How did you view it at the time?
Why has it been so important?
What impact has it had on you since that time?

Main Question:
Tell me about your decision to leave DEFG and why you made that move?

Sub Questions:
What prompted you to consider moving on?
What were your options?
How did you evaluate the situation?
Who did you discuss the situation with and what was their view?
How did you arrive at your final decision?
What influenced your management of the communications?

Main Question:
Tell me why you believe that DEFG needed to renegotiate its contract with MNOP and how you managed around the risk that you would not be able to reach a further agreement?

Sub Questions:
Why did you need to renegotiate the contract?
How did you view your performance under the contract?
What was your assessment of MNOP’s response?
What were the risks for DEFG and what mitigation measures had you enacted?
How did you handle the formal and informal discussions?
Where did the final deal sit against your plans and expectations?
Main Question:
Describe an occasion when your decision or take on an issue surprised a lot of your colleagues

Sub Questions:
What was the situation or issue?
What was the general view?
How did you see things and why?
Where was it critical to win support and why?
How did you bring others on-board with your thinking?
What was the outcome?
Did that decision have any negative impacts and how did you handle those?

Main Question:
Tell me about the strongest challenge you received in respect of a decision made by you and how you dealt with it?

Sub Questions:
What was the situation?
Where had been your decision and how had tat been communicated?
Where did the challenge come from and in what context?
How did you take it?
What was your response?
How did you manage the issue?
What wider implications were there?

Main Question:
What has been your darkest moment in business and why?

Sub Questions:
What was the situation?
Why did it have such an impact upon you?
What options did you consider?
What did you do and why?
What did you learn from the event?

Main Question:
Tell us about the acquisition of GHIJ and why it was of strategic importance to your business.

Sub Questions:
What was your thinking?
What options did you see and how did you evaluate and rate them?
What strategy did you adopt?
How has that acquisition worked for GHIJ?
Main Question:
From the time of your appointment as CEO of GHIJ, who has proved to be your most successful appointment and why?

Sub Questions:
What was the gap in the organization as you saw it?
Who did you appoint and why?
What is it that they have contributed to the business and what has been key to their success?
What has been the impact of your relationship on them?

Main Question:
Tell me about a risky opportunity that your Board didn’t take and why?

Sub Questions:
What was the opportunity and how was the risk evaluated?
What was the potential up-side?
What was the general view?
Where did you stand on this and why?
With the benefit of hindsight, what would you have done differently and should the business have responded differently?
What was learnt within the business from this episode?

Main Question:
Give me your views on how the Government reacted to your last price rise and tell me how you managed in the space between Regulators and customer?

Sub Questions:
What had been your planning prior to the price rise?
What communications had you made off-line around the impending news?
How had the feedback shaped your plans?
How do you think you handled the media?
What was the bottom line impact on your business and how have you addressed this?
Main Question:
Tell us about your decision to close the packaging plant on Michigan and concentrate operations in Detroit?

Sub Questions:
What factors were fundamental in your review?
How did you see the market changing?
What was the business case?
What were your expectations of the reaction from the local press and their past issues seemingly with you personally?
How did you prepare for that situation?
How well do you think you managed the closure?
How did you prepare the Detroit operation for the changes that were necessary?
What has been the performance of the new operating unit?

Main Question:
Tell me about a decision that you made that you later wish you had reversed.

Sub Questions:
What was the decision and what had been the basis for your judgement?
What could you have done but didn’t and why not?
Why do you now wish you had acted differently?
With the benefit of hindsight, what would you have done?

Main Question:
Describe an occasion when you were too slow to react to an emerging situation.

Sub Questions:
What was happening?
How was information being fed to you?
What was your view and what did you do?
Where was the shortfall?
What was the impact on the business and you personally?
Examples of general management behaviours competency-based interview questions

In an interview situation, certain questions may be more generic than focused on your particular business skills or technical discipline.

They are intended to provide insight into your natural pattern of behaviour around one or more specific behavioural attributes. It may be that the recruiting organization is looking for those certain attributes as a strong requirement because of something that is happening in the business generally or the area that you will be working. If you will be affected by changes that are planned in the area where you will start to work for the business, they may want to test your natural resilience.

If you will be given a team to manage that has a reputation for generating difficulties, they may not want to state as such in an interview but they will want to be convinced of your skills to manage the sort of situations they have experienced. Some examples of the more generic questions are below.

**Main Question:**
Tell me about a time when you had to act to resolve an issue a conflict between your department and another area of the business.

**Sub Questions:**
What was the nature of the issue?
Why was it a matter of conflict between your department and another area?
How did you become involved?
What actions did you take?
What was the outcome?

**Main Question:**
Describe a situation when you realised that your recommendations would have negative consequences for others and how you rationalised your decisions.

**Sub Questions:**
What had you been tasked with doing?
What were your conclusions and recommendations?
What consequences did these have for others?
How did you communicate these issues and to who?
How did you rationalise these issues?
How did you feel personally about those who were impacted?

**Main Question:**
Tell me about a time when your personal network enabled you to better support the business or address a problem.

**Sub Questions:**
What was the issue or opportunity?
What made you look to your network?
How did you make the contact?
How did your network help you?
Why did you trust your network capability?
Main Question:
Tell me about how you dealt with a difficult colleague in a particular situation.

Sub Questions:
What was the basis of your relationship with your colleague?
What caused the difficulty with the colleague?
How did the difficulty manifest itself?
How did you assess the situation?
How did you approach your colleague?
What was his/her reaction?
How did you reach resolution or overcome the issue?

Main Question:
Tell me about an occasion when you had to give difficult feedback to a member of your team.

Sub Questions:
How did the problem arise?
What was relationship like with your subordinate generally?
How did you prepare?
How did you set the scene for the meeting?
How did you handle the conversation?
What was the response from your subordinate?

Main Question:
Tell me about a time when you have successfully coached someone to deal with a difficult situation.

Sub Questions:
Why did you become the coach and to whom?
What difficulty did they face?
What approach did you take as their coach?
How did the situation work out?

Main Question:
Tell me about a time when you made a wrong decision and had to be open about it to involve others.

Sub Questions:
What was your initial decision?
Why did it turn out to be a wrong decision and how did you recognise it?
What was the impact of having to make a change?
How did you communicate the position?
How did others respond and how did you deal with their response?
Main Question:
Describe an occasion when you received feedback that was difficult to accept but you saw its merit.

Sub Questions:
What had happened?
What feedback were you given?
How did you receive the feedback?
What was your immediate reaction?
What were your thoughts following time for reflection?

Main Question:
Can you describe an important situation or event that you found very unfamiliar and how you coped with it and adapted to it.

Sub Questions:
What was it that made the situation or event important to warrant your involvement?
What made the situation unfamiliar?
How did you assess the situation?
How did you react?
What did you decide to do?
How did it work out?

Main Question:
Tell me about an occasion when you resisted change and why.

Sub Questions:
What was the situation?
Why did you look to disagree?
How did you make your case?
What was the response to your stance?
How did you gather information and apply judgement?
What did you finally decide?

Main Question:
Tell me about a significant business change that caused you personal difficulty, and how you adapted.

Sub Questions:
What was the business change?
How did it impact you?
How did you reconcile the change with your own situation?
What major personal changes did you make and why?
How did things end?
Main Question:
Tell me about a time when you recognised the knowledge or skills of a subordinate in a situation such that you delegated the leadership of the team to them.

Sub Questions:
What was the situation?
Why did you delegate the job to a subordinate?
How did you assign the job to them and agree the way forward?
How did you maintain the necessary overview?
What worked and what didn’t?

Main Question:
Describe an occasion when you had to deal with the failure of a team member to deal effectively with a situation involving another department that was widely observed.

Sub Questions:
What was the situation and what had gone wrong?
What had been the external reaction?
How did you deal with the team member?
What position did you take for the external audience?
What communications were necessary?
What was the outcome?

Main Question:
Describe a time when you had to differentiate your audience with different communications.

Sub Questions:
What had to be communicated?
How did you decide that the audience needed to be split?
What differentiated the segments of your audience?
How did you construct your communications to suit?

Main Question:
Tell me about a time when you recognised that you were communicating bad news for your audience.

Sub Questions:
Who were your audience?
What had to be communicated?
How did you establish your communications plan?
How did you cater for your audience reaction?
Main Question:
Can you describe an occasion when you were unable to communicate the full picture.

Sub Questions:
What was the situation?
Why were you constrained?
How did you feel about the situation?
How did you handle the communications?
How did you explain the constraints?

Main Question:
Tell us about when you have carried out a Project Investment Appraisal and the financial modelling you undertook. Describe how the appraisal impacted on the approval process for the project and the conditions that were applied to it.

Sub Questions:
What was the project and what financial measures where used to assess it?
What were the financial ‘hurdles’ that had to be cleared for the project to go ahead?
How did you set about your modelling and appraisal?
What were you most significant conclusions and how had you drawn those conclusions?
What sensitivity analysis did you include?
How did you present your findings and what recommendations did you make?
How did the project develop from there?

Main Question:
Describe an occasion when your input to the management of a challenging financial situation was essential in effecting an improvement in business performance.

Sub Questions:
What was situation?
What was your evaluation and major concerns, and why?
What did you do?
Who did you need to influence and why?
What was the impact of your work on the business performance going forward?

Main Question:
Tell me about a time when your ownership/improvement of the organizations budget management processes enabled a significant improvement in the financial performance of the business.

Sub Questions:
How had you developed/improved the budget management process?
What was the financial performance of the business like prior to the changes?
What was it that you had done that had a positive impact on business performance and why?
What was the extent of the improvement?
Examples of finance and accounting competency-based interview questions

Finance and accounting professionals at a senior level are much more critical to an organization than keeping control of the finances. They are there to influence and drive cash-flow and the bottom line business performance.

Expect questions to focus on improvements that you have made to business performance, how you have influenced and driven the rest of the business functionality and the smart decisions that you have made to optimise the financial position. They will want to be certain that you have a handle on regulatory requirements, even on an international basis if they are a global operator.

A company that is in a tight financial situation will want to know what your expertise can do to steer them through choppy waters.

Main Question:
Tell me about a time when you have implemented plans to significantly improve the cash-flow performance of the business.

Sub Questions:
How did you develop/improve the cash flow?
What was the cash-flow position like originally?
What was it that you had done that had a positive impact on business cash-flow and why?
What was the extent of the improvement?

Main Question:
Please tell me about an occasion when your critical understanding of taxation management had a significant benefit in terms of legally minimising the organisation’s tax liability.

Sub Questions:
What was your evaluation of the tax position?
How did your evaluation enable you to put the business in an optimal position?
What was the value of your decision making to the business?

Main Question
Tell me about the advantages and disadvantages of a specific accounting software package that you have used or even implemented and how you overcame any system shortfalls?

Sub Questions
What package was being used?
Why had the business selected that package and if you had any involvement in that selection process, what was it?
What was your evaluation of the merits and demerits of the system?
What issues did you have to overcome and how did you do that?

Management Questions

Main Question
Describe to me how your internal management of the finance function actually improved the business performance of the organization.

Sub Questions
What were the key improvements you made and why?
What impact did they have within the team?
What did they drive in other areas of the business?
What did you put in place to track performance improvement?
What were the quantitative and qualitative measures of success?
Main Question:
Tell us about a time when your senior finance perspective on a business deal was different to one of your peers in another function.

Sub Questions
Why was the deal being considered, and what was the business case that had been put forward?
What was your view of the business case and why did it conflict from your colleagues view?
How did you deal with the conflict and present/negotiate your case?
How did you manage to progress matters and what was the outcome?
How do you view your intervention in terms of business performance and in particular the financial impact?

Main Question:
Tell us about your involvement in a business acquisition.

Sub Questions
What was the nature of the acquisition and why was it being pursued?
How did you conduct due diligence from your side?
What process did you adopt to financially evaluate the acquisition?
What other factors were critical within the evaluation?
What were your recommendations and why?

Main Question:
Tell us about an occasion where you had to manage the financial integration of two business units with different accounting systems and their own finance teams.

Sub Questions
Which business units were being integrated and what were the systems in use?
What was your assessment of the accounting needs going forward?
What did you do in respect of the accounting systems?
How did you manage the integration of the two teams?
What KPI’s did you put in place to evaluate and control the integration?
How successful was the integration and with the benefit of hindsight what would you have done differently?

Main Question:
What innovative KPI’s have you put in place within an organization to assess business performance from a financial angle, over and above the traditional targets around cash-flow, income, expenditure and profit?

Sub Questions
Why did you see other or additional KPI's as necessary or appropriate?
What targets did you put in place and why?
How did you gain buy-in to these across the organization?
How successful were these other KPI’s?
What value do you think they added to overall business performance?
Examples of marketing competency-based interview questions

Key to shaping the products and services of an organization to the customer base, the Interviewer will look to see how you apply your expertise to drive critical decision making and position the organization directly in front of its potential customers. Your knowledge of customer thinking and behaviour must be insightful and soundly assessed if you are to establish that vital relationship between the organizations product and the customer.

Your strategic thinking as a manager will drive key business decisions that have will massive impact – positive or negative – on business performance.

Your commercial track record must be clearly demonstrable in relation to the business performance.

Expect the interviewer to probe as to the outcomes of your marketing initiatives, what additional sales or profit was generated from them. And the extent to which market spend produced a profitable outcome e.g. new sales exceed costs of campaigns v’s a campaign which was a cost to the business.

Smart interviewers will drive to the very core of your critical analysis and judgement.

General marketing questions

Main Question
Describe your most successful marketing campaign in the last 3 years.

Sub Questions
What was the product or product range and what did you see as the key elements of the customer proposition or propositions?
How did you develop your campaign and what lay behind your concepts?
How did you launch the product?
How did you measure the impact of your marketing?
What were the outcomes, in relation to the cost of the campaign, the leads generation / sales achieved directly from the campaign and how the costs of the campaign compared with the money spent? In what way was it a profitable exercise or a cost to the business.

What works best?

Main Question
Describe an occasion when your evaluation of buyers’ behaviour was particularly instrumental in the development of your marketing tactics.

Sub Questions
What was the product and who were the target customers?
What did you identify as the significant features of buyers behaviour in this case?
Why was this data so influential in the development of your tactics?
What did you do that was directly in response to this analysis?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you believed that you optimised your marketing output on a tight budget and how you ensured that your marketing delivered value for money

Sub Questions
What was the situation and why was budget constrained?
What did you do to optimise your spend and ensure real focus on value?
What were your results?
What would you have done differently with a larger budget and would that have provided a better ROI.
Main Question
Tell me about where you have utilized the marketing streams afforded by e-commerce and how you ensured that you were best served by the technology available.

Sub Questions
What did you see as the opportunity?
How did the technology fit with your needs?
How did you apply the technology?
What has worked well and what hasn’t, and why?

Main Question
Tell me how you have capitalized on the emerging opportunities afforded by social media to develop your marketing capability and how you have evaluated the success of their use.

Sub Questions
What opportunities did you identify?
What aspects of social media did you see as relevant and why?
How did you apply them to your products?
What has been successful and where was the use of social media less than successful, and why?

Main Question
Tell me about a campaign in which you have managed a supplier, how did you go about it?

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
Was it an existing relationship?
How did you go about establishing expectations?
How did you manage the relationship?
What issues arose and how did you deal with them?
How did you evaluate the success of the supplier?

Main Question
Tell me about a customer event which you have organised recently?

Sub Questions
What was the event needed for?
What was your concept of the event and how did you see it as relevant?
What did you do?
What feedback did you get around the event?
Main Question
Can you tell me about a time when you have created customer case studies and promoted them?

Sub Questions
What was the nature of the marketing campaign?
Why did you see this approach as relevant?
What approach did you take?
How did you use the case studies?
How did you evaluate the success of the approach?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you were responsible for a new market entry e.g. new product, new geography (local / international) or new market segment.

Sub Questions
What was the product and its intended market?
What were your ideas and on what research were they based?
What plans did you put in place and actions did you take?
How successful were you?

Specific marketing functions

Main Question
Tell me how you have developed and used Partner / Channel Marketing to good effect.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
Why was this a good choice of overall approach?
How did you determine the best choices for Partner/Channel Marketing?
What issue did you have to overcome?
What worked well and what didn’t work so well?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you have used joint marketing initiatives

Sub Questions
What led you this choice?
Why was the perceived benefit?
What arrangements did you establish?
What issues did you experience and how were they managed?
How did you evaluate the success of approach?
Main Question
Tell me about a time when you were responsible for a major product launch

Sub Questions
What was the product and what was the target market?
What were the main elements of your launch strategy?
What plans did you develop?
How did implementation go?
How successful were you?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you established a promotional activity for reasons that were not directly product related.

Sub Questions
What had generated the thinking?
What approaches were considered, which one was selected and why?
How was it received?
What was the benefit to the organization?

Press and PR

Main Question
Tell me about a statement you have issued to the press.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did you determine the approach to be taken?
What approach did you take?
Who else was involved?
How did it land?

Main Question
Describe how you have used the press to feature positive reports about your company or products.

Sub Questions
Had you created public relations materials to earn publicity based on a specific overall strategy?
Tell me how you used an overall Public Relations Strategy to define your brand, how you want people to perceive you and what you want to accomplish in the way of publicity?
Describe a time when you went cultivating a relationship with the press?
**Main Question**

Tell me about a time when you handled the press in a crucial situation?

**Sub Questions**

What was the situation?

What was your situational analysis?

Who needed to be involved?

How did you set things up?

What were the key messages and how were they transmitted?

How were they interpreted in the press?

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**Marketing communications and corporate communications**

**Main Question**

Tell me about a time when you undertook a strategic demand generation campaign?

**Sub Questions**

What was the situation?

In what way if any did these incorporate advertising, branding, direct marketing, design / packaging and promotion?

How successful were you?

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**Main Question**

Describe a recent significant initiative where you have promoted your company as a whole or sought to re-position the perception of the company, repair the image of the company?

**Sub Questions**

What was the objective?

What was the initiative?

What prompted this approach?

What communications were made and why were these seen as appropriate??

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**Market research**

**Main Question**

Tell me about a time when your research and analysis of consumer needs was central in shaping product development?

**Sub Questions**

What were the methods of research that you used and why?

How did you evaluate the data, what insight did you gain and what were your conclusions?

Who did you communicate with and how did you present your views?

What was the response?
**Main Question**
Tell me about a time when identification and focus on market segmentation was a key feature of your delivery of a successful marketing strategy?

**Sub Questions**
- How did you identify the customer base and its segments?
- What choices did the organization have to make based upon this segmentation?
- What did you recognise as the key elements of target differentiation?
- How successful were you in each segment?

**Management**

**Main Question**
Can you talk me through an occasion when you worked with the CEO to shape the direction of the business and your input to the overall business plan to move the company forward?

**Sub Questions**
- What position were you in?
- What vision did you CEO have?
- What was your view and input?
- How did it shape the CEO’s position?
- What were the key elements of the business plan that you influenced?

**Main Question**
Tell me about a time when you have written a marketing plan.

**Sub Questions**
- What was the position of the business?
- What did you see as the key elements of your plan?
- In what ways did you assess the profitability and strategic outcomes, of the various options open to you.
- How did you go about determining the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of the options open to you?

**Main Question**
Describe a time when you have re-assessed the entire company’s approach to marketing.

**Sub Questions**
- Why was your assessment necessary?
- What approach did you take and why?
- What were your conclusions?
- How did you take things forward?
Main Question
Describe a time when you analysed the marketing spend and value for money?
Sub Questions
How did you conduct your analysis?
What data did you have and what data needed to be worked up?
What were your findings?
How did you use that analysis to change things?

Main Question
Tell us about your management of marketing in relation to an organization looking to break into a new market.
Sub Questions
What was the market opportunity and why was it significant for the organization?
What was your analysis of the competition and what did you see as the main barriers to entry?
How did you look to build and associate the existing brand with the new market or did you do something completely different?
How did you seek to differentiate your products from the existing market offerings?
How did your market performance compare against targets?

Main Question
Tell me about your development of a marketing strategy in relation to the business plan, and what the key features were of that strategy.
Sub Questions
What were the key elements of the business plan that you had to address?
How did you see priorities in terms of the short, medium and long term?
What were the strategies that you developed and why?
What means did you apply to drive and track performance?
Can you tell me about a time when you have re-assessed your company's marketing spend and value for money?

Main Question
Describe to me how you managed the development of branding and propositions for a new business.
Sub Questions
What market or markets were you aiming at?
What did you do to build the brand with the requisite image?
What were the propositions that you saw as critical to successfully establish your market presence?
How did you influence and steer your senior level colleagues and what KPI's did you establish to adjudge success?
**Main Question**
Describe to me how your role within an organization influenced R&D, production and financial planning within that organization.

**Sub Questions**
- What did you see as your accountability for interaction with the other functions and information flow?
- How did you structure that interaction to achieve your aims?
- What did you see as the key aspects of your influence in relation to the other functions?
- What issues did you experience and how did you address them to provide workable solutions?

**Main Question**
Tell me about a time when a key marketing plan was negatively impacted by an internal issue and you had to engage with external stakeholders to manage expectations and business reputation.

**Sub Questions**
- What was the situation?
- How did you assess the impact on external stakeholders?
- What actions did you take to manage customer expectations and business reputation?
- What support did you provide internally?
Examples of sales competency-based interview questions

How capable you are at opening up new opportunities, with new customers, new marketplaces and new projects within existing clients.

You are at the sharp end of the organization, the prime interface with those all-important customers. By nature you are results driven, but interviewers will also want to see how you apply all of those key attributes that make a person not just personally great at selling but leading in a sales environment and driving it – commercial acumen, depth of product knowledge, market understanding, customer insight and customer relationship management. All key to sustainable, successful business performance.

Expect questions to be focused on your sales performance v’s target in the last 3-5 years and on giving examples of sales where you have created the opportunity, built value, cost benefit / ROI and closed deals.

Main Question
Tell me how you have performed against your sales targets over the past 3 years.

Sub Questions
What was the detail within your targets?
To what extent did you bring in new customers and what value were those accounts?
How did the balance change between continuing business, new prospects and new products; and what did your analysis explain this?
How has your performance been rated and how has it compared with others within the team?

Main Question
Talk us through the detail of a major sale that you have made in the last 3 years.

Sub Questions
What was the opportunity and how did you identify it?
Who were the key stakeholders, how did you identify them and what actions did you take to put yourself into a strong position with them?
What was your proposition and how did it compare with the competition in terms of strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats?
What was the detail of the outcome and what was it in the proposition that had given you the edge?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when the strength of your proposition persuaded a customer to change their procurement plans.

Sub Questions
How did you identify the opportunity with the customer?
What was the proposition that you developed, what did you see as the key attraction for the customer and why?
How did you help the customer with their business case to win internal support?

Main Question
Tell us about a sale that you were unable to complete?

Sub Questions
What was the opportunity and what had you done to put yourself into position?
What other suppliers were there and what was your assessment of the competition?
What was the actual deal done with the customer and what was your analysis of the reasons?
What did your review indicate that you should have done differently?
**Main Question**

Tell me about a time when you had to generate sales of a new product into the construction equipment / healthcare / automotive / electronics / etc. sector?

**Sub Questions**

What was the new product and what differentiated it from the competition?
How did you segment and target your customer base?
What different approaches did you develop?
Where were you successful and where were less than successful, and why?

**Main Question**

Tell us about a difficult sales negotiation and how you managed ambitious customer expectations regarding product pricing.

**Sub Questions**

What was the situation and what were the customers’ expectations?
What constraints were you operating within?
How did you set your negotiating tactics?
How did the negotiations go and what was the deal concluded?
Where did the outcome sit within the overall sales strategy?
What did you do to manage the client relationship beyond the sale?

**Main Question**

Describe an occasion when you recognised a strong sales opportunity but were seriously concerned about the customer demands around delivery dates.

**Sub Questions**

What information were you acting upon?
What was your assessment of the situation?
Who had you identified as the key stakeholders and how did you handle those discussions?
What risks did you identify and what measures did you take in response?
How did you complete the sale?
How did you manage the situation to meet your commitments?
Question bank: Sales

**Main Question**
Please tell me about a time when meeting your personal sales targets was potentially in conflict with a longer term business opportunity?

**Sub Questions**
What was your sales target?
What further opportunity had you identified and where was the potential for conflict?
How did you approach the situation?
What solution did you propose?
What was the outcome?

**Main Question**
Please tell me about an occasion when you questioned the competitive capability of your business in a particular market.

**Sub Questions**
What had flagged up the issue?
What was your assessment of the issue?
Who did you need to involve and why?
What solutions did you propose?
What was the outcome?

**Main Question**
Tell us about a time when you had to deal with the negative views of a customer?

**Sub Questions**
How did you research the situation?
Why did the customer hold a negative view?
How did you plan your approach?
What was your approach and how did you progress the customer relationship?

**Main Question**
Tell me about a time when you struggled or failed to make sales targets?

**Sub Questions**
What was the product?
How did you see the issues?
How were colleagues faring in comparison?
How did you seek to deal with the situation?
What was the outcome?
Management Questions

Main Question
Tell us about the performance of your sales team over the past 3 years.

Sub Questions
How has team performance compared to target revenues and margins for each year?
What were the key contributory factors to performance in each year?
What were your significant contributions to the results in terms of strategies, tactics and people?

Main Question
Tell us about an innovative deal that you led, to break through with a new major customer?

Sub Questions
What was the market opportunity?
Why was it significant for the organization?
What was innovative about the deal?
What impact did it have on your personal targets and the business financial performance?
What issues and risks did you need to manage and how did you manage them?

Main Question
Describe to me how you developed and implemented a new sales strategy and approach to meet the KPI's for business performance.

Sub Questions
What were the key business KPI's that you sought to address?
What were the main components of your sales strategy?
How did you translate that strategy into deliverables amongst your team?
How did you monitor on-going performance?
How successful were you in meeting the business KPI's?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you had to push up sales to meet the high-growth objectives of the business.

Sub Questions
What was the business plan and what was driving it?
What were the main elements of your response for the sales function?
Why did you see them as most likely to achieve the requisite level of success?
What issues did you need to address?
How did actual performance compare to the desired level?
Question bank: Sales

Main Question
Tell us about a time when your team’s sales revenues were below target and the remedial actions you took to recover performance.

Sub Questions
How was sales performance compared to target?
How did you conduct your evaluation into causation and what were your findings?
What were the main elements of the plan you developed to recover performance?
Who were the key stakeholders and what communications did you make to them?
How did you measure the success of your plan?

Main Question
Tell us how about your most successful sales team that you have established and what made the team so successful?

Sub Questions
What was the nature of the organization and its products?
How did you establish the team and its capability?
How did you motivate the team to perform?
What do you think were the critical success factors in your team’s performance?

Main Question
Tell me about an incentive and reward scheme that you developed for your sales team?

Sub Questions
What were your key objectives and how did these relate to the structure of the scheme?
How did the elements of the scheme fit within the wider performance management programme in place across the business?
How did you introduce the scheme?
What issues did you experience and how did you address them?
How would you evaluate the long-term success of the scheme?
Examples of customer services competency-based interview questions

In a highly competitive and consumer focused world, customer services is not only provides roles and career path as a specialist area, it is part of the role of so many positions, from a fee-earning lawyer to the internal customer focus of a HR Business Partner.

The objective is customer retention and whilst price, specification and quality are important, nothing loses you their future business quicker than poor customer service.

Expect questions to focus on engagement with the customer or client, ensuring service delivery and continually winning the customer over.

Main Question
Describe how you handled a difficult customer situation to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the customer and the business.

Sub Questions
What was the situation and how was the customer behaving?
What latitude did you have to act?
What options did you identify?
What did you do to resolve matters and why?
How did you evaluate the outcome for both parties?

Main Question
Tell me how you have performed against your personal targets over the past 3 years and how you believe those targets influenced your approach to customer service.

Sub Questions
What were your targets?
What did you see as your priorities?
What did you see a key to driving your personal performance?
How did your performance compare to your colleagues?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you had to disappoint a customer.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
What were the customers’ requirement and expectations?
Why were you unable to meet those requirements and expectations?
How did you handle the customer and what did you do?

Main Question
Describe an occasion when you went the extra mile to delight a customer.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
What did you do that was different or unexpected?
Why did you see the need to act as you did?
What was the response of the customer?
Question bank: Customer Services

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you believed that the business approach to customer service could be improved?

Sub Questions
What was the issue as you saw it?
What was the reason that things were done the way they were?
What did you see as an improvement and why?
How did you look to get internal buy-in to your idea?
Was it implemented and what difference did the new approach make?
If it wasn’t implemented, what was the reason why?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you escalated a customer issue.

Sub Questions
What was the issue?
Why were you or why did you feel unable to resolve matters?
How did you escalate the issue?
What further involvement did you have?
What was the resolution and what did you learn from the event?

Main Question
Describe an occasion when you had to deal with an undesirable customer?

Sub Questions
Why was the customer seen as undesirable?
What was the issue on this occasion?
What would have been a good outcome for the business?
How did you respond to the customer?

Management Questions

Main Question
Tell us how you managed performance across the team to deliver customer service?

Sub Questions
What was the sector in which you operated?
How did you set up your team?
How did you develop a customer focus ethos within the team?
How did you establish performance targets and the means of measurement?
Main Question
Tell me about a review that you conducted into your operating processes and what customer service improvements you identified and implemented.

Sub Questions
What opportunities did you see for improvements?
How did you structure your review?
What changes did you make and how did you evaluate their impact?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you have set up a customer services operation as a green-field operation.

Sub Questions
What was the nature and scope of the operation?
What was your objective?
What did you see as the key matters to address?
What was your plan and how did you enact that plan?
What was the outcome?

Main Question
Can you describe a time when you put in place a framework to enable your customer services operation to engage better with customers harnessing social media and on-line capabilities?

Sub Questions
What was the nature of the operation?
What were your traditional methods of customer engagement?
What opportunity did you see to capitalise on new technologies and capabilities?
How did you harness those opportunities and what were the benefits?
What impact did they have on customer retention?

Main Question
Talk me through a circumstance in which you went about determining process for handling all forms of customer contact i.e. telephone, email, web-based, on-line chat.

Sub Questions
What was the scope and nature of your review?
What did you analysis tell you?
What was your process?
What impact did your process have on efficiency and customer service?
Main Question
Can you tell me about a time when you were responsible for increasing customer service levels whilst reducing the overall costs of your department?

Sub Questions
What was the business operation?
What targets were you set?
What were the conclusions of your review?
What actions did you take?
How did you perform against your targets?

Main Question
Describe to me how you dealt with a customer issue that was escalated to you?

Sub Questions
What was the issue?
Why had it been escalated to you?
What was your resolution and how did you manage the situation?
How did the customer service team benefit from the learning opportunity?

Main Question
Tell us about your input to the development of CRM systems within a business and how you ensured the quality of data capture and reporting.

Sub Questions
What was the scope for the CRM system development?
What was your remit?
What were the essential elements for inclusion that you identified?
What improvement was gained from the CRM systems?

Main Question
Tell me about an initiative you developed and drove to increase customer engagement

Sub Questions
What was your idea?
How did you see it increasing customer engagement and enhancing the customer relationship?
How did it fit with your existing operating model?
To what extent did your initiative improve customer satisfaction?
**Main Question**
Tell me how you established the means of measuring customer satisfaction for an organization?

**Sub Questions**
- What was the key information you needed?
- How did you survey customers and gather data?
- How was that data analysed?
- What did you do with the analysis?

**Main Question**
Tell me of an analysis you undertook on customer churn and what you did with your findings.

**Sub Questions**
- What was the level of customer churn?
- How was that performance viewed by the business?
- What were your views and findings?
- What actions were taken going forward?
- What improvement was there in customer churn?

**Main Question**
Tell us about a change you made based on customer feedback

**Sub Questions**
- How was that feedback gathered?
- What analysis was carried out in this area?
- Why was the feedback seen as so relevant?
- What was changed?
- What follow up took place?
- What information was fed back to customers?
Examples of manufacturing, operations and supply chain competency-based interview questions

What your organization makes and does is in effect, its turnover. Within manufacturing, operations and supply chain, the impact on business performance is direct and measurable. What you do is therefore direct and measurable.

Interviewers will want to know the ‘what’ and ‘how, and the questions will draw out the application of your knowledge and skills, but the ‘why’ will need to very clearly relate to business performance and measurable results, those Key Performance Indicators that demonstrate business success or failure.

The questions below are somewhat generic given the breadth of this area, but the structure of these examples will very clearly demonstrate how an interviewer will use a competence interview question to drill down and extract the information from you that will indicate the extent of your alignment with their needs.

**Main Question**
Tell us about a significant production de-bottlenecking exercise you delivered.

**Sub Questions**
Where did the bottleneck occur and what was its impact on production output?
How did you conduct your review and analysis?
How did you present your findings and what recommendations did you make?
How did you manage the disruption to production when making the changes?

**Main Question**
Describe an occasion when you experienced quality issues in the manufacturing process and how you resolved the issues.

**Sub Questions**
What was situation?
What was your evaluation of the problem and the resolution you developed?
What changes needed to be made and how did you implement those changes?

**Main Question**
Tell me about a change you introduced to the stock inventory processes for manufacturing materials to reduce costs but maintain production availability.

**Sub Questions**
How had you assessed the cost saving potential?
What systems and processes had to be developed to facilitate the change?
What interaction did you have with suppliers to support the initiative?
How did you manage the change within the team?
What was the actual performance improvement achieved?

**Main Question**
Please tell me about a significant cost reduction initiative you implemented to improve logistics contribution to the business whilst maintaining customer service standards.

**Sub Questions**
What was expenditure on logistics in relation to overall production costs?
What external benchmarking had you undertaken and what had it indicated?
What changes did you identify to reduce your cost base?
How did you ensure that you maintained customer service?
How did you manage the implementation?
What was the value of your decision making to the business?
Main Question
Tell us about a time when you had to make a critical decision between continuing production to meet schedules and stopping production to deal with an equipment issue.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did you analyse the two scenarios around risk and probability?
What support did you enlist and why?
What was your decision and what were the key factors that influenced your decision?
How did you deal with the stakeholders disadvantaged by your actions?

Main Question
Tell me how you developed a proactive maintenance regime to improve plant performance?

Sub Questions
What data did you gather and what did your analysis tell you?
Where were the most significant gains to be made and why?
What changes did you make?
What KPI's were critical to evaluate performance?
What performance benefit did you derive?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when a change in regulatory requirements had an impact on your manufacturing processing capability?

Sub Questions
What was the regulatory change?
How did you conduct your impact assessment?
What was the nature of the impacts?

Main Question
Please describe how you sourced and contracted new suppliers for a new product range.

Sub Questions
What was the product and process?
How did you identify and evaluate potential suppliers?
How did you model costs against budget provision?
What contractual arrangements did you put in place and what control measures?
Management Questions

Main Question
Please describe how you managed a production start-up for a new manufacturing plant.

Sub Questions
What involvement did you have in the commissioning phase through to acceptance and hand-over?
What were the key elements of your start-up plan?
What team had you established?
What issues did you encounter and how did you deal with them?

Main Question
Describe to me how you established a distribution network to manage global product logistics.

Sub Questions
What were the products and markets for shipping?
How did you establish your network and what was its’ structure?
What was your logic in deciding what was done in-house and what was contracted-out?
What measures and KPI’s did you establish to track and evaluate performance?

Main Question
Tell us about how you developed a strong health, safety and environmental performance culture within your operations

Sub Questions
What were your views of HSE performance and what issues were you looking to address?
What initiatives did you introduce and why?
Where did behavioural safety sit in your thinking?
How did you lead on the improvements?
How did you assess performance and improvements?
How did you compare externally?

Main Question
Tell us about a major cost reduction programme that you managed within your operations as part of your competitive positioning.

Sub Questions
What was the challenge for the business?
Why was cost seen as a focal point?
How did you lead the review?
What were your findings?
What actions did you take?
How did you manage any wider implications of the cost reduction?
Main Question
Tell us about an occasion when production capability and output was challenged at a senior level.

Sub Questions
What was the nature of the challenge?
How did you counter and respond to the challenge?
What informed your position?
What further review did you make?
What were your findings?

Main Question
Tell me about a planned plant shutdown and how you managed a major overhaul to improve plant reliability and availability.

Sub Questions
What stage was the plant at in its life-cycle?
What issues around plant availability and reliability were you experiencing?
What engineering changes were planned?
How did this major overhaul fit with production plans and normal shutdown activity?
How did you manage the shut-down work and work-plans?

Main Question
Tell us about a multi-million dollar critical contract tendering and negotiation exercise that you successfully led.

Sub Questions
What was the requirement?
How did you identify and evaluate potential suppliers?
What was your tendering process?
How did you establish the commercial arrangements?
What KPI's did you establish to measure contractual performance?
What incentivize arrangements did you build into the contract?

Main Question
Tell me about how you identified and implemented a new ERP system

Sub Questions
What system were you looking to replace?
What were the key aspects you required within the new system specification?
What additional benefits did you see as available from the new technologies?
How did you derive the optimal benefit from the system capability and what impact did these have on the operation?
Examples of project management competency-based interview questions

Project management invariably has three over-riding outcomes: business outcomes / changes, costs and timescales. Delivery is critical and project control and robust management of project risk are fundamental to success.

Invariably organisations are looking for transformational improvement as part of any project undertaken.

Whether project management is your role or a part of your role, a clear understanding of expectations and focus on delivery against project KPI’s is what an interviewer will want to see in you and a demonstrable track record of success is his best indication of what you can do for his organization.

Main Question
Describe the highest value project that you have managed and how you performed against the project KPI’s.

Sub Questions
What was the project and what was its value?
What were the KPI’s in place?
What were the key issues that you had to address?
What was your major contribution to achieving the project outcomes?
What was achievement against KPI’s?

Main Question
Tell me how you managed recovery of a project schedule that had slipped or had been accelerated by the client or impacted by an increased work-scope.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did you evaluate the impact on the programme?
What changes did you make and how did you coordinate the changes?

Main Question
Tell me about the project controls you established to manage and track project performance and progress and how you delivered external client reporting.

Sub Questions
What was the project, and what was the nature of the client set-up and involvement?
What were the clients’ requirement and expectations for reporting?
Describe the key project control processes that you put in place and why?
How did they link to client reporting?

Main Question
Describe an occasion when there was conflict of views with a client over project specification and the standards of actual work completed, and how you dealt with the issue.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did both parties interpret the contractual requirement?
What were the risks to the project and your company’s position?
How did you handle the client?
How were matters resolved?
Question bank: Project management

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you recognized that an internal project was significantly under-budgeted as the project progressed.

Sub Questions
How had the issue been discovered?
What was your assessment of the situation and the scale of the issue?
What options did your analysis identify?
How did you raise the matter and with whom?
How were matters resolved?
How did you feel about your management of the situation after the event?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you had to select a project planning software tool.

Sub Questions
What was the project?
What were the key drivers in the selection of an appropriate planning tool?
What were your options as you identified them?
What were the advantages and disadvantages of each tool to your project?
What was the final decision and why?

Main Question
Tell me about a project where part of the work-scope involved training the end-users.

Sub Questions
What was the project?
How did you engage with the client to determine end-user training requirements?
How was the training plan integrated with project handover and acceptance?
What were the key issues in managing the activity?

Main Question
Tell me how you managed an internal projects programme from prioritisation of projects for proposal, through the project approval process to coordination of their execution.

Sub Questions
What was the basis of your prioritisation of projects for the business?
How did you present your business case and what issues did you have within the approvals process?
How did you manage an overall programme to ensure each project was properly resourced, controlled and implemented?
Main Question
Tell me about a project where the use of an established project management tool such as PRINCE2 or Six Sigma was significant in facilitating the successful execution of the project...

Sub Questions
What was the project?
What was the tool and why was it selected?
How did its use contribute significantly to project performance?

Main Question
Tell us about a project that you managed where the main scope of works was contracted out.

Sub Questions
What was the project, what work was contracted out and why?
What was the contractual arrangement and what innovation did you build into the contract around risk and reward?
How did you manage the contractual relationship in practice?
What went well and what didn’t work so well?
How did the project financials reconcile with actual contract performance?
Examples of IT competency-based interview questions

The reliance of organizations on technology and the pace at which it develops in providing opportunity for organizations to work smarter and reach further, places an emphasis on IT professionals to take a value-based approach to their IT strategy and a business end-user focused approach to managing the infrastructure, including the new technologies that are changing the face of customer interaction.

The frequency of high-budget changes and risk of business interruption mean that interview questions for senior roles may have limited focus on the technology itself but increasing focus on the economic and effective management of infrastructure and risks.

Main Question
Describe an occasion when your technical evaluation of a product was fundamental in shaping the development of the IT infrastructure of an organization.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
What were the options you considered?
What was the basis of your evaluation?
What was your recommendation and why?

Main Question
Tell me how your analysis and resolution of a technical issue was critical in recovering a major disruption to system availability.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did you become involved?
How did you approach your analysis?
What was the problem, what was your solution and what needed to be done to implement the solution?

Main Question
Tell me about a significant contribution you made to improve system availability and reliability within a business.

Sub Questions
What were the percentages before your intervention?
What was the opportunity that you saw to make an improvement?
What was the nature of your intervention?
What level of improvement did it provide?

Main Question
Describe a time when you developed and provided a technical solution to meet customers’ needs.

Sub Questions
Who was the customer and how did they involve you?
What was your analysis of the issue?
How did you determine the options available and what were they?
How did you present your findings to the user?
Question bank: Project management

Main Question
Tell us about how you executed a system upgrade to minimise business disruption.
Sub Questions
What was the reason for the upgrade and what was the scope of work?
How did you plan the job?
What risks did you identify and how did you mitigate the risks?
What issues did you experience and how did you resolve them?
How did you support the user population through the change-out?

Main Question
Tell me about a system change-out that didn’t go to plan but you were heavily involved in.
Sub Questions
What was the change-out and what your involvement?
Where did the failure arise and why?
What was the impact on your area of the works?
How did you react and what did you do to improve the situation?

Main Question
Describe an occasion when you were unable to resolve a technical issue directly for a user or users?
Sub Questions
What was the situation?
What had you done and at what stage did you recognise you needed support?
What action did you take to progress matters?
What communication did you maintain with the user or users?
What did you learn from the event?

Management Questions
Main Question
Tell us how you developed an IT strategy for an organization to provide a sustainable platform for its business operations.
Sub Questions
How did you define the business need?
How long term was your thinking and why?
What was the direction you took for the technological development?
What were the key risks and the mitigation measure that you put in place?
Main Question
Tell me about a key business decision that had to be made around the procurement of an integrated business software system that had to encompass the business value chain.

Sub Questions
How was the specification scoped?
How did you identify potential systems suppliers?
What process did you put in place to tender the work and evaluate the submissions?
How did you establish the project resources?
How did you engage the business at each stage?

Main Question
Describe to me how you structured your team to provide reactive response, planned intervention and project work across an organization?

Sub Questions
How did you identify the needs in each area and what data did you use?
What interaction did you have with your user base to evaluate their needs?
What structure did you put in place and why?
How did you develop the team to meet the needs?

Main Question
Tell us how you outsourced an area of IT supply arrangements and how you ensured value from the outsourcing?

Sub Questions
What was the scope of outsourced activity and why was it defined as such?
What was the value proposition for outsourcing??
How did you manage the contracting process?
How was the transition implemented and managed?
How did you demonstrate the actual value derived from the outsourcing?

Main Question
Describe the performance measures that you developed and implemented to identify departmental performance, why they were relevant and how your team actually performed over the past 3 years.

Sub Questions
What KPI’s did you adopt and why?
What did you change over that period and why?
What was your actual performance and what drove any significant performance improvements?
What did you benchmark externally?
Examples of human resources competency-based interview questions

You may be working at the highest strategic level or delivering transactional activity. Regardless of the aspect of the people agenda that you are addressing, it must contribute to the business performance.

The higher the HR ladder you seek to climb, the more that you must be able to articulate the value of any HR activity in measured terms in its contribution to the business. The business case must be there in terms of added value or mitigation of risk across resourcing, employment relations, compensation and benefits, L&D and OD.

You may be the very role model of the organizations values, but the interviewer will also want to see the commercial clarity you possess.

HR generalist

Main Question
Tell me what you consider to be your single most significant contribution to a business bottom-line, as a HR professional.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did the opportunity come about?
What did you do?
Why do you consider it to be so significant?
Did you quantify the value and if so what was it?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when your intervention was critical in bringing about performance improvement in respect of a particular employee.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did you become involved?
What was your view?
What actions did you take and how were matters progressed and concluded?

Main Question
Describe a decision you made that had a significant cost reduction impact for the business.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
How did you see an opportunity for cost saving?
What actions did you take?
Who else needed to be involved?
What was the saving?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you introduced performance management into an organization or made a significant change to the existing performance management processes.

Sub Questions
What prompted the development?
What challenges did you receive to your proposals and how did you deal with them?
How did you progress the implementation?
How measurable was the success of the change?
**Main Question**
Tell me about a time that you led a major change initiative within an organization.

**Sub Questions**
What was the situation that warranted the change?
How did you develop your proposals?
What were the key elements of your plan?
What were the key aspects of communication?
How did you implement the changes?
How did you evaluate the contribution the change made to the business bottom-line?

**Main Question**
Tell us about an occasion when you had a key role in a major organization re-structuring activity.

**Sub Questions**
How did the need for organization restructuring come about?
What was your contribution to the activity?
Why was your contribution significant?
What were the key performance indicators for a successful change?
How did you evaluate the level of success?

**Management Question Set**

**Main Question**
Please describe the measures that you adopted within a business to quantify the value that your HR team added to the financial performance of your organization.

**Sub Questions**
What KPI's did you consider?
Which ones did you use and why?
Which ones did you consider to be less than appropriate and why?
What were the wider leadership views of your approach?
What was your evaluation of your team's contribution.

**Main Question**
Tell me how you managed the link between levels of employee engagement with line management and team performance within an organization.

**Sub Questions**
What was the general view of the concept within the leadership of the organization?
How did this fit with your views and how did you reconcile any difference in views?
How did you collect employee engagement data?
How were results across the organization evaluated against team contribution to organization performance?
Main Question
Please explain from a HR perspective, how you influenced and contributed to delivery of the overall vision for a particular organization.

Sub Questions
What was the organization and where did your role fit within it?
What was the vision of the organization?
What were the fundamentals of your HR Strategy and Agenda?
How were these aligned with the organization's vision?
How successful were you?

Main Question
Describe a significant and difficult change that you made within your own team.

Sub Questions
What was the situation that initiated your thinking?
What did you decide to do?
What were the most difficult aspects of the change?
How did you manage the changes?
How did you deal with external perceptions?
How would you assess the success of the changes you made?
Upon reflection, what would you have done differently?

Main Question
Please tell me about a time when negative perceptions around your team’s performance or any aspect of it within the business brought about severe pressure upon you to act and how you managed that situation.

Sub Questions
Where was the pressure coming from and why?
How was morale within the team?
What issues were foremost in your view of the situation?
How did you handle your team members?
How did you manage relationships with your internal customers during this period and to what extent did you engage with them to gain wide support for your actions.
How did you exert influence to manage the situation?
Question bank: HR

Talent management

Main Question
Please describe an occasion where you introduced an aspect of talent management that brought about a step-change in people capability within an organization.

Sub Questions
Why was your intervention necessary?
What was your approach?
How were your proposals received within the organization?
What impact did your intervention have and how did you measure success in meaningful terms?

Main Question
Please tell me about a significant change in approach to succession management that you developed and implemented.

Sub Questions
What was the change in approach?
Why did you see it as appropriate and necessary?
How did you manage its implementation?
How did you quantify the organisational benefit from the change?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you fundamentally disagreed with the view of a senior manager regarding the development potential of one of his or her team.

Sub Questions
How did the issue come to light and what was the situation?
Why did you hold such a different view of the employee’s potential?
How did you approach the subject with the manager?
How were matters resolved?

Main Question
Describe an opportunity that you took to improve the way in which leadership potential was evaluated within the business.

Sub Questions
Where were the existing processes weak?
What ideas did you have?
What resistance did you have to overcome?
How did you sell your approach?
How would you gauge the success of the changes you introduced?
Main Question
Please tell us about your contribution to an organization-wide mentoring scheme.
Sub Questions
Why was such a scheme important in your view?
What was your role?
How did you communicate the scheme's purpose across the population and achieve engagement?
What training did you provide to establish mentoring?

Management Question Set
Main Question
Tell us about the KPI's that you put in place to quantify the bottom-line benefit of any talent management programme you implemented.
Sub Questions
What was the specific programme?
What specific quantitative measures did you establish?
How did you benchmark the direct extent of improved business performance?

Main Question
Describe the actions you took to get Talent Management on the agenda at the highest levels in the organization.
Sub Questions
How did the organization view talent management prior to your intervention?
What actions did you take to promote the concept of talent management and what challenges did you face?
How did you build organizational commitment to your ideas?
What organization did you put in place to support your agenda?

Main Question
Tell me how you supported the establishment of the succession planning process and development of succession plans within the senior leadership of an organization.
Sub Questions
What approach did you take to create senior level engagement?
How did you role model the approach to succession planning within your own team?
How did you measure the success of this particular activity?
**Main Question**
Talk us through a situation where you had to redirect or influence the re-shaping of unrealistic aspirations of an ambitious team member.

**Sub Questions**
What were his/her aspirations?
Why were his or her ambitions not realistic?
How did you approach him/her?
How did you help coach them to realise a change to a more realistic position?

**Main Question**
Please give me an example of where your coaching skills made a significant difference to the organization

**Sub Questions**
Where did issues lie?
How did you come to be involved?
What did you do and what had the most positive impact?
What benefit was actually realized?

**Compensation & benefits**

**Main Question**
Tell me about a critical pay benchmarking activity that you have undertaken.

**Sub Questions**
What was the situation?
Why was benchmarking so critical on this occasion?
How did you identify the appropriate benchmarking approach?
What did the data tell you and what were your recommendations?

**Main Question**
Tell us about an occasion when your view of a remuneration package differed significantly to the manager of the post in question.

**Sub Questions**
What was the role and what was your view of the appropriate package?
What was the manager's view and why was it so different to yours?
How did you resolve matters and what was the final outcome?
**Main Question**

Please talk us through a situation where a significant change in remuneration or reward arrangements had to be negotiated with a trade union or trade unions.

**Sub Questions**

What were the proposed changes?
What was the nature of the organisation’s relationship with the trade union or trade unions?
What was your role in this scenario?
What did you do and what influence did you have?
What difficult issues did you have to deal with and how did you deal with them?

**Main Question**

Tell us about a major change in compensation and benefits arrangements that you developed to improve the cost base of the business.

**Sub Questions**

What opportunity did you see to bring about a major change?
How did you present your views and to who?
What were your major supporting arguments?
How were your recommendations received?
What was the business benefit realised by the change?

**Main Question**

Describe a situation where you were a key player in reconciling conflicting views within the business on remuneration strategies.

**Sub Questions**

What different views existed and why?
How did you view the situation and why?
How did you seek to influence the situation?
What means did you exercise to reach a resolution?

**Recruitment**

**Main Question**

Tell me about a time when you were tasked with a particularly challenging role to recruit for?

**Sub Questions**

What was the role?
Why was it a difficult role to fill?
How did you determine the recruitment methodology and why?
What selection methods did you propose and why?
How did you rate the success of the approach?
Question bank: HR

Main Question
Please describe an occasion when you were challenged on your proposed methods of recruitment and selection?

Sub Questions
Who challenged you?
What was the nature of the challenge?
What was your response and how did you justify your chosen approach?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when your recruitment and selection activity failed to find a suitable candidate.

Sub Questions
What role were you recruiting for?
What approach did you take and why?
What response did you get and how did you rate it?
What was the view of the recruiting managers?
How did you react and what did you learn from the event?

Main Question
Describe a major recruitment campaign that you designed and implemented.

Sub Questions
What was the target audience?
What were the key features of your campaign?
Why did you see these as particularly appropriate for your target audience?
What would you have changed with the benefit of hindsight?

Main Question
Tell us about an assessment centre that you developed and managed for a senior level appointment?

Sub Questions
What was the target audience?
What selection activities did you include and why?
What selection activities did you decide not to include and why?
What resources did you organise to support the running of the assessment centre and how did you direct them?

Main Question
Describe to us how you ensured that you understood the markets that the business needed to recruit in and the type of technical skills required.

Sub Questions
In what specific areas did you recognise that increased understanding or knowledge was required?
How did you gain your understanding and knowledge?
How did you evaluate the contribution of such enhanced knowledge to your recruitment and selection activities?
Management Question Set

Main Question
Can you describe how you benchmarked the performance of your recruitment function against the external market place?

Sub Questions
What did you see as the key criteria to be used for benchmarking?
What data did you gather internally?
How did you gather relevant external benchmark data?
What comparisons did you make and what did you learn?

Main Question
Describe to us how you determined the strategy for recruitment around both direct recruitment and use of external recruiters.

Sub Questions
What was the strategy when you took over?
What factors determined your philosophy in this aspect?
How did you engage the recruiting managers to support your philosophy?
What changes in recruitment performance did you achieve and what KPI's did you use to demonstrate the shift in performance?

Main Question
Tell us about how you demonstrated that your function was delivering a value-for-money approach to recruitment from its methodologies.

Sub Questions
What measures did you apply to evaluate performance?
How did you embed these measures within the team?
How did you assess value against other potential methodologies?

Main Question
Tell us about how you measured and demonstrated performance improvement in service delivery by your recruitment function within an organization.

Sub Questions
What did you see as the key areas for performance improvement and why?
What did you see as the major KPI's to measure performance?
What improvements did you deliver in terms of cost reduction, improved recruitment times, etc?
**Main Question**

Tell us what improvements you made in selection methodologies and on-boarding processes within a business and how you demonstrated the success of such changes.

**Sub Questions**

What changes did you make?
What impact did the improvements have?
What measures did you use to demonstrate the positive impact of your changes?
To what extent were you able to demonstrate increased quality amongst your ‘hires’?

**Main Question**

Please describe how your approach to segmentation within the recruitment phase had a positive impact on conversion ratios throughout the selection stages and reduced rates of employee attrition.

**Sub Questions**

How did you determine segmentation across your target recruitment audiences?
What sort of conversion ratios did you achieve at each stage and how do you adjudge that performance?
Did you have any employee attrition issues and what improvements did your resourcing approach bring?

**Main Question**

Tell me what Service Level Agreements you put in place with your internal customers and why?

**Sub Questions**

What were the key elements and why were they appropriate?
How did you engage with your internal customers as part of assessment of performance?
What feedback did you provide to your internal customers?

**Learning & development**

**Main Question**

Tell me about a time when the value of an L&D intervention you were championing was challenged at senior level.

**Sub Questions**

What was the training need?
How was the L&D/training activity to be delivered?
How did you evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention?
How did senior management see things?
What was your response?
Main Question
Tell us about an innovative approach that you developed to meet a particular training need.

Sub Questions
What was the training need?
What options did you consider and propose?
What was innovative about your optimum solution?
How did you persuade others to adopt your approach?

Main Question
Tell us about a business challenge where you saw L&D as the main focus of its resolution.

Sub Questions
What was the challenge to the business?
What did you see as the means of resolution and why?
What actions did you take to progress your ideas?
How did things move forward?

Main Question
Please describe a major training needs analysis exercise that you led.

Sub Questions
What had led to the need for the exercise?
How did you establish your role and how did you plan the exercise?
Where did you add the most value?
What worked well and what did you learn for the future?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you challenged a well-established L&D or training practice.

Sub Questions
What was the practice in place?
Why did you think it was necessary to challenge it?
How did you make the challenge?
What was your alternative solution?
Management Question Set

Main Question
Give us an example of where you managed the L&D budget planning process to prioritise L&D delivery.

Sub Questions
What was the process?
How did you coordinate with the functional leadership of the business?
How did you balance priorities across different functions in terms of budget allocation?

Main Question
Please describe within any organization as an example, how you evaluated the overall effectiveness of your L&D function within that organization?

Sub Questions
What KPI's did you put in place and how did you determine that they were appropriate measures?
What performance tracking and monitoring methods did you put in place?
How did you engage with the business leadership to gain their views?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you delivered an L&D/training activity in-house, rather than outsource the provision.

Sub Questions
What was the activity?
What were the options?
Why did you elect to deliver the activity in-house?
Through what measures did you evaluate your judgement after the event?

Main Question
Describe an occasion when you were able to successfully argue a ‘value driven’ approach to an L&D solution in preference to a largely ‘cost driven’ solution to an identified need.

Sub Questions
What was the training need identified?
What options were available?
How did you construct your supporting argument and who needed to be persuaded?
How did you demonstrate a return on investment
**HR legal**

**Main Question**
**Please describe an occasion when your insight into employment law had a significant influence on the outcome of a situation.**

**Sub Questions**
- What was the situation?
- How did you evaluate matters to reach your viewpoint?
- How did you seek to influence the situation?
- What was the final outcome?

**Main Question**
**Tell me about an aspect of HR Policy change that you significantly influenced from a legislative perspective.**

**Sub Questions**
- What aspect of HR Policy was in question?
- What was your perspective?
- How did you influence the situation?

**Main Question**
**Describe a complex employee relations case where you were instrumental in managing it to a successful conclusion.**

**Sub Questions**
- What was the nature of the case that made it complex?
- What was your role or involvement?
- What influence did you have?
- What was the final outcome?

**Main Question**
**Please talk us through a situation where you were involved in managing an employee out of the business.**

**Sub Questions**
- Why did the employee need to be managed out?
- What was the position at the point you became involved?
- How did you approach matters and what actions did you take?
- What was the final outcome?
Main Question
Describe a complex situation where you used your knowledge of employment law to influence the way in which a particular situation was handled.

Sub Questions
What was going on in the business?
How did you see it from an employment law perspective?
How did you manage to influence the situation?
What was the outcome?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you adopted a pragmatic approach to resolve a situation where that approach was in conflict with a purely law based approach.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
What would have been the correct approach in law?
What approach did you actually adopt and why?
What was the outcome?
**Examples of governance, risk and compliance competency-based interview questions**

Whilst Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance provide career paths in their own right, the more senior the role in the organization, the more that they become an integral part of the role and form part of the strategic and operational thinking of the role in terms of impact and outcome. Questioning will look to identify the keenness of analytical skills as well as understanding of regulatory obligations, threats to business continuity and exercise of adequate control measures. They will also expect an approach to these things in the context of business economics and business reputation.

**Main Question**
Tell me about how you approached the identification of the key risks within an organization and the processes you developed for business continuity planning and risk management.

**Sub Questions**
- What approach did you adopt to identify and prioritise the risks to the organization?
- How did you engage your colleague across the functions in the processes?
- What principles did you adopt in assessing the risks?
- How did you approach the development of contingency planning and appropriate management controls?

**Main Question**
Tell me about an occasion when you tested a business continuity plan and what you learnt from the testing.

**Sub Questions**
- What scenarios was the contingency plan in relation to?
- How did you establish the testing process and what influenced your approach?
- What did you learn from your testing and what needed to be changed to recognise the testing outcomes?

**Main Question**
Tell me about a regulatory requirement that posed a challenge for the business to meet, and what you did to ensure compliance.

**Sub Questions**
- What was the legislative requirement?
- Where did the organization stand prior to its introduction?
- What analysis did you undertake and where were the gaps?
- What actions did you take to ensure compliance?
- How did you measure on-going compliance?

**Main Question**
Describe how you established and controlled corporate reporting requirements.

**Sub Questions**
- What was the extent of data capture required?
- How did you set up your data gathering and recording system?
- How did you set up data reporting to ensure that the right people were given the right information at the right time?
Main Question
Tell us about a time when there had been a breach of statutory compliance and how you managed the situation.

Sub Questions
What was the issue and what were the negative outcomes for the organization?
How did you handle the internal investigation?
Were any external bodies involved and what was their involvement?
What remedial measures did you put in place?
How did you monitor compliance thereafter?
Was there any external action taken and what happened there?

Main Question
Tell me how you applied a value-based approach to risk management within a business.

Sub Questions
What were the principles you adopted around value based assessment?
What process did you develop and how did you apply it?
What aspects of the business did not fit readily with this approach and why?
Where do you think the process worked well?
What did you learn from your initial approach that allowed you to refine it?

Main Question
Tell me how you introduced and managed a major internal audit programme across the business to evaluate compliance and establish remedial action plans.

Sub Questions
How did you establish the programme as a management activity with true ownership?
How did you establish the audit teams and what training did you give to equip them?
What process did you set for audit execution and reporting?
Where did the audit programme fit into any corporate targets?
Examples of lawyers competency-based interview questions

Whether you are a fee-earning solicitor or a corporate lawyer, you need to understand what potential employers will expect of you based on your contribution to past employers visions and goals, whether it is retention of fee-paying customers, smart commercial and contractual arrangements with a major supplier, or regulatory compliance.

Managing risk and delivering value to the bottom line are still the fundamental drivers and will underpin the competence based questions you can expect to be asked.

**Main Question**
Tell me what approach you have taken to enhance customer relationship management within your business.

**Sub Questions**
Why is CRM important to your business?
What have you done to attract customers?
What have you done to manage retention?
What percentage of your annual turnover is repeat business?

**Main Question**
Tell me about an occasion when you made a significant contribution to the commercial and contractual arrangements relating to a major contract.

**Sub Questions**
What was situation?
What was your contribution to the contract development?
How did you assess the value of your contribution?

**Main Question**
Tell me about a legal requirement that you led on, not only to manage compliance but also address the practical working aspects.

**Sub Questions**
What was the legislative requirement?
Where was your take on the existing position of the organization?
What was necessary to provide legislative compliance?
How did you work support the business operations from a practical perspective?
How did you measure on-going compliance?

**Main Question**
Tell us about a time when a situation that you were advising on was made complex by the differing legislative requirements of cross-border trading.

**Sub Questions**
What was the situation?
What was the internal capability?
How did you recognize where external support was necessary and how did you engage that support?
How did you coordinate the flow of information and ensure that the overall solution as appropriate?
Main Question
Tell us about a time when you felt that a business requirement could potentially compromise the legal position but it was grey area.

Sub Questions
What was the issue and where did the business stand?
What was your take on the situation and why?
How did you evaluate the risk and present your analysis?
How did you help the business decide the way forward?
Examples of R&D and creative competency-based interview questions

Ideas, innovation and technical excellence may be your mantra, but purpose and business focus must guide you if your personal impact is to allow you a career path in a commercial world.

Your technical expertise and outside-the-box approach puts you ahead of others but the interviewer will want to be sure that what you deliver is something that will not only meet the future technical challenges of the business but its commercial targets and constraints.

The skill-sets to manage in such environments are a complex balance and you can expect the interviewer to have a set of competence based questions to probe for that balance.

Main Question
Tell me about an occasion when your innovative ideas were entirely workable but rejected by the organization due to their particular view of the commercial proposition

Sub Questions
What was your development or proposal?
What had been your brief and how did your development or proposal sit within that brief?
What was the basis of the business case you had developed?
How were your proposals seen by the business leadership?
What was the outcome?
What did you learn from the experience?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when your innovation delivered exceptional value to the business.

Sub Questions
What was your problem to be solved and what was your brief?
What was your concept and what had stimulated your thinking?
How did you develop and test your ideas?
How did you present your proposals?
How were they received and progressed?
What impact did they have on business performance?

Main Question
Describe an occasion when your ideas were criticised by colleagues, but you were convinced of their validity.

Sub Questions
What was the situation?
What had you done to be so sure of your views and unconvinced by your colleagues?
How did you progress matters within the business and who did you involve
What was the outcome?
What actions did you take to ensure compliance?
How did you measure on-going compliance?
Question bank: R&D

Main Question
Describe a time when you used research to challenge conventional thinking within the business.

Sub Questions
What was the subject matter and what was the accepted approach to it?
What did you see differently and why?
How did you develop and present your case?
What was the outcome?

Main Question
Tell us about a time when you had spent an R&D budget but you need more funds to complete

Sub Questions
What was the situation and what was the financial position?
How did you develop your case and explain the reasons for the over-spend?
What was the process you had to follow?
How were your presentations received?
How did matters conclude?
What had been your analysis of the initial business case, with hindsight?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you were under pressure to complete an R&D project but lacked resources to finish within the initial time-scale

Sub Questions
What was the situation and what were the reasons for the over-run?
What re-work of the programme had you done and how confident were you about your revised plan?
What resources did you need and how did you justify this requirement?
How was this news received and what agreement were you able to reach?
What conditions were applied and how did that affect you?
What was the final outcome?
Examples of consultant / management consultant competency-based interview questions

For most consultants employed in privately owned firms, there is a “sell and deliver” mantra.

On the one hand, you exist because you win business and on the other you exist because you can take your clients somewhere they are largely unable to get on their own; and you understand that both objectives are linked as far as personal sustainability and career growth is concerned.

Being able to demonstrate how good you are at doing both and being able to articulate the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of performance in incisive and measurable terms for both objectives is critical to winning your next career move.

These atypical questions require that structured and insightful response if you are to win the interviewers approval.

Main Question
Tell me about an occasion when you met with opposition from within the client organization.

Sub Questions
What was the assignment?
How did the opposition manifest itself?
How did you manage the situation?
What was the outcome?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you felt that a client was not being open with you.

Sub Questions
How did you form your opinion and why?
What impact did the situation have on your ability to act?
How did you raise the matter with the client?
What was the response?
How did you pursue your agenda?

Main Question
Describe a time when you had to persuade a client to take a course of action that was personally difficult for him.

Sub Questions
What was your assessment of the situation?
What did you see as a necessary course of action?
Why was it personally difficult for the client?
How did you seek to persuade the client?
How did you support the client in progressing matters?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when your views of a client’s business or recommendations were vigorously challenged by the client.

Sub Questions
What prompted the challenge?
How did you respond initially and how did you control the situation?
How did you evaluate the challenge and what did you do to re-state your case?
How did you make progress on the issue with the client’s support?
Main Question
Tell me about a time when you were asked by the client to work significantly outside of your consultancy remit.

Sub Questions
What was the request and why was it significantly outside of your remit?
What was your assessment of the situation?
How did you decide to deal with the matter?
How did you communicate your views and actions to the client?

Main Question
Tell us about an occasion when you were struggling to come to terms with the information provided by the client.

Sub Questions
What were you working on?
Why did you think you were struggling with the data?
What were any concerns in approaching the client with the issue?
How did you progress matters?

Management Question Set

Main Question
Please describe a time when you agreed a smart scorecard of KPI’s with a client to measure your teams’ performance on a major consulting project that were also linked to business reward.

Sub Questions
What KPI’s did you consider?
Which ones did you propose and why?
What was the Client’s view and what did they see as appropriate
What was the final scorecard of KPI’s and why were they smart?
What was the linkage to reward?

Main Question
Tell me how you dealt with a budget over-run on a consulting project and managed resolution with the client to deliver an acceptable way forward?

Sub Questions
What was the situation and to what extent was there budget over-run?
What had been the causation?
What was your Company position as to the resolution?
How did you reach resolution with the client and what was the agreement going forward?
Main Question
Please tell us about a time when you had a serious conflict situation with a client over a consulting project and its direction.

Sub Questions
What was the consulting project?
What brought matters into conflict and where did views differ?
How did you handle the discussions with the client?
What were your proposals to resolve matters?
Were you able to reach resolution and move forward?
If you weren’t, what caused the impasse and how did you close the project out?

Main Question
Describe a significant error that had been made by your team and how you handled the situation with the client.

Sub Questions
What was the error and what was its impact?
How action did you take internally?
What did you communicate to the client?
How did you handle the situation with them?

Main Question
Please tell me how you coached an inexperienced consultant in a difficult client situation.

Sub Questions
Where was the situation?
How did you evaluate the consultants’ performance?
How did you support the consultant/client relationship?
What did you do that brought real value to the situation?

Main Question
Tell me about a time when you saw the clients’ performance having a significantly detrimental impact on a consulting project?

Sub Questions
What was the project?
What was the client doing or not doing, and what was the impact?
How did you look to tackle the issue with the client?
How did the client respond and how did the issue progress?
Main Question
Tell me about an occasion when a potential client was struggling to define a project scope and you were able to move things forward to benefit the client and you company.

Sub Questions
What was the nature of the work and why was the client struggling to define the work-scope?
How did you develop the client relationship to position yourself to become a trusted advisor?
How were you able to help without creating a perceived conflict of interest?
What was the outcome?