

## **BEHAVIORAL COMPETENCIES AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

The following are recommended competency-based questions. Those with an asterisk (\*) are recommended to be asked of all candidates. Get specific examples, not general responses.

A general format, applicable to all the Focused Questions, is: "Please describe \_\_\_\_\_ and what specific examples can you cite?"

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### **INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCIES**

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|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. INTELLIGENCE              | 11. EXPERIENCE            |
| 2. ANALYSIS SKILLS           | 12. "TRACK RECORD"        |
| 3. JUDGEMENT/DECISION MAKING | 13. INTEGRITY             |
| 4. CONCEPTUAL ABILITY        | 14. INITIATIVE            |
| 5. CREATIVITY                | 15. ORGANIZATION/PLANNING |
| 6. STRATEGIC SKILLS          | 16. EXCELLENCE            |
| 7. PRAGMATISM                | 17. INDEPENDENCE          |
| 8. RISK TAKING               | 18. SELF-AWARENESS        |
| 9. LEADING EDGE              | 19. ADAPTABILITY          |
| 10. EDUCATION                |                           |
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### **INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES**

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|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 20. FIRST IMPRESSION         | 30. PERSUASION             |
| 21. LIKABILITY               | 31. SELECTING "A" PLAYERS  |
| 22. LISTENING                | 32. COACHING/TRAINING      |
| 23. CUSTOMER FOCUS           | 33. GOAL SETTING           |
| 24. TEAM PLAYER              | 34. EMPOWERMENT            |
| 25. ASSERTIVENESS            | 35. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT |
| 26. COMMUNICATIONS – ORAL    | 36. REMOVING "C" PLAYERS   |
| 27. COMMUNICATIONS – WRITTEN | 37. TEAM BUILDER           |
| 28. POLITICAL SAVVY          | 38. DIVERSITY              |
| 29. NEGOTIATION              | 39. RUNNING MEETINGS       |
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### **LEADERSHIP**

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|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 40. VISION                   | 45. ENTHUSIASM             |
| 41. CHANGE LEADERSHIP        | 46. AMBITION               |
| 42. INSPIRING "FOLLOWERSHIP" | 47. COMPATIBILITY OF NEEDS |
| 43. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT      | 48. BALANCE IN LIFE        |
| 44. ENERGY                   | 49. TENACITY               |
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## INTELLECTUAL COMPETENCIES

### 1. INTELLIGENCE

- a. Please describe your learning ability.
- b. Describe a complex situation in which you had to learn a lot quickly. How did you go about learning, and how successful were the outcomes?

### 2. ANALYSIS SKILLS

- a. Please describe your problem analysis skills.
- b. Do people generally regard you as one who diligently pursues every detail or do you tend to be more broad brush? Why?
- c. What will references indicate are your style and overall effectiveness in “sorting” the wheat from the chaff?
- d. What analytic approaches and tools do you use?
- e. Please give me an example of digging more deeply for facts than what was asked of you.

### 3. JUDGEMENT/DECISION MAKING

- \*a. Please describe your decision-making approach when you are faced with difficult situations, in comparison with others, at about your level in the organization. Are you decisive and quick, but sometimes too quick or are you more thorough but sometimes too slow? Are you intuitive or go purely with the facts? Do you involve many or few people in decisions?
- b. What are a couple of the most difficult or challenging decisions you have made recently?
- c. What are a couple of the best and worst decisions you have made in the past year?
- d. What maxims do you live by?

### 4. CONCEPTUAL ABILITY

- a. Are you more comfortable dealing with concrete, tangible, short-term, or more abstract, conceptual, long-term issues? Please explain.

### 5. CREATIVITY

- \*a. How creative are you? What are the best examples of your creativity in processes, systems, methods, products, structure, or services?
- b. Do you consider yourself a better visionary or implementer, and why?

### 6. STRATEGIC SKILLS

- \*a. In the past year, what specifically have you done in order to remain knowledgeable about the competitive environment, market and trade dynamics, products/services and technology trends, innovations, and patterns of customer behavior?
- b. Please describe your experience in strategic planning, including successful and unsuccessful approaches. (Determine the individual’s contribution in team strategic efforts.)
- c. Where do you predict that your (industry/competitors/function) is going in the next three years? What is the “conventional wisdom,” and what are your own thoughts?

### 7. PRAGMATISM

Do you consider yourself more of a visionary or more pragmatic thinker, and why?

## 8. RISK TAKING

- \* What are the biggest risks you have taken in recent years? Include ones that have worked out well and not so well.

## 9. LEADING EDGE

- \*a. How have you copied, created, or applied best practices?
- b. Describe projects in which your best-practice solutions did and did not fully address customer/client needs
- c. How will references rate and describe your technical expertise? Are you truly leading edge, or do you fall a bit short in some areas?
- d. How computer literate are you?
- e. Please describe your professional network.

## 10. EDUCATION

- a. What seminars or formal education have you participated in (and when)?
- b. Describe your reading habits (books and articles – global factors, general business, function, industry).

## 11. EXPERIENCE

- a. Compose a series of open-ended questions – “How would you rate yourself in \_\_\_\_\_, and what specifics can you cite?” For Finance, learn expertise in Treasury, Controller, Risk Management, etc. For Human Resources, learn expertise in Selection, Training, Compensation, etc.
- b. What are the most important lessons you have learned in your career? (Get specifics with respect to when, where, what, etc.)

## 12. “TRACK RECORD”

Looking back in your career, what were your most and least successful jobs?

## 13. INTEGRITY

- \*a. Describe a situation or two in which the pressures to compromise your integrity were the strongest you have ever felt.
- b. What are a couple of the most courageous actions or unpopular stands you have ever taken?
- c. When have you confronted unethical behavior or chosen to not say anything, in order to not rock the boat?
- d. Under what circumstances have you found it justifiable to break a confidence?

## 14. INITIATIVE

- \*a. What actions would you take in the first weeks, should you join our organization?
- \*b. What sorts of obstacles have you faced in your present/most recent job, and what did you do?
- c. What are examples of circumstances in which you were expected to do a certain thing and, on your own, went beyond the call of duty?
- d. Who have been your major career influences, and why?
- e. Are you better at initiating a lot of things or hammering out results for fewer things? (Get specifics.)

## 15. ORGANIZATION/PLANNING

- \*a. How well organized are you? What do you do to be organized and what, if anything, do you feel you ought to do to be better organized?
- b. When was the last time you missed a significant deadline?
- c. Describe a complex challenge you have had coordinating a project.
- d. Are you better at juggling a number of priorities or projects simultaneously, or attacking few projects, one at a time?
- e. Everyone procrastinates at times. What are the kinds of things that you procrastinate on?
- f. How would you describe your work habits?
- g. If I were to talk with administrative assistants you have had during past several years, how would they describe your strengths and weaker points with respect to personal organization, communications, attention to detail, and planning?
- h. Describe a situation that did not go as well as planned. What would you have done differently?

## 16. EXCELLENCE

Have you significantly “raised the bar” for yourself or others? Explain how you did it – your approach, the problems encountered, and the outcomes.

## 17. INDEPENDENCE

- \*a. Do you believe in asking for forgiveness rather than permission, or are you inclined to be sure your bosses are in full agreement before you act?
- \*b. What do you do to alleviate stress? (Look for exercise, quiet periods, etc.)
- c. How do you handle yourself under stress and pressure?
- d. Describe yourself in terms of emotional control. What sort of things irritates you the most or gets you down?
- e. How many times have you “lost your cool” in the past couple of months? (Get specifics)
- f. Describe a situation in which you were the angriest you have been in years.

## 18. SELF-AWARENESS

- \*a. Have you gotten any sort of systematic or regular feedback (360-degree or otherwise) from direct reports, clients, peers, supervisors, etc., and if so, what did you learn?
- b. How much feedback do you like to get from people you report to, and in what form (written, face to face)?
- c. What are the biggest mistakes you’ve made in the past (10) years, and what have you learned from them?
- d. What are your principal developmental needs and what are your plans to deal with them?
- e. What have been the most difficult criticisms for you to accept?

## 19. ADAPTABILITY

- \*a. How have you changed during recent years?
- b. What sort of organization changes have you found easiest and most difficult to accept?
- c. When have you been so firm people considered you stubborn or inflexible?

## INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES

### 20. FIRST IMPRESSION

- a. (Judge directly in interview.)
- b. What sort of first impression do you think you make at different levels in an organization?

### 21. LIKABILITY

- \*a. When were you so frustrated you did not treat someone with respect?
- b. How would you describe your sense of humor?
- c. Tell me about a situation in which you were expected to work with a person you disliked.

### 22. LISTENING

- a. Are you familiar with the term “active listening”? How would you define it? What would coworkers say regarding how often and how effectively you use active listening?

### 23. CUSTOMER FOCUS

- a. If you were to arrange confidential reference calls with some of your major clients/customers, what is your best guess as to what they would generally agree are your strengths and areas for improvement?
- b. Relate an example of your partnering with a client/customer – helping the client/customer to achieve its goals and financial results?
- c. Give examples of your going beyond what was normally expected to enhance your company’s reputation or image.
- d. Describe your methods of diagnosing client/customer needs.
- e. What is your “track record” in both acquiring and retaining clients/customers?
- f. Tell me about the most frustrated or disappointed client/customer you have had in recent years.

### 24. TEAM PLAYER

- a. What will reference checks disclose to be the common perception among peers regarding how much of a team player you are (working cooperatively, building others’ confidence and self-esteem)?
- b. Describe the most difficult person with whom you have had to work.
- c. When have you stood up to a boss?
- d. Tell me about a situation in which you felt others were wrong and your were right.

### 25. ASSERTIVENESS

- a. How would you describe your level of assertiveness?
- b. When there is a difference of opinion, do you tend to confront people directly, indirectly, or tend to let the situation resolve itself? (Get specifics.)
- c. Please give a couple of recent specific examples in which you were highly assertive, one in which the outcome was favorable, and one where it wasn’t.

### 26. COMMUNICATIONS – ORAL

- \*a. How would you rate yourself in public speaking? If we had a videotape of your most recent presentation, what would we see?
- b. Describe the last time you put your “foot in your mouth.”

c. How do you communicate with your organization?

## 27. COMMUNICATIONS – WRITTEN

a. How would you describe your writing style in comparison with others' styles?

## 28. POLITICAL SAVVY

- \*a. Describe a couple of the most difficult, challenging, or frustrating company political situations you have faced.
- b. How aware are you of company political forces that may affect your performance?

## 29. NEGOTIATION

a. Describe situations in which your negotiation skills proved effective and ineffective.

## 30. PERSUASION

- a. Describe a situation in which you were most effective selling an idea or yourself.
- b. Describe situations in which your persuasion skills proved ineffective.

## 31. SELECTING “A” PLAYERS

- \*a. What have your most recent two teams looked like (how many A, B, C players) and what changes were made?
- b. Explain your selection process in terms of job analysis, job description, behavioral competencies, amount of structure to interviews, if there is an in-depth chronological interview, and how reference checks are done.

## 32. COACHING/TRAINING

a. How would subordinates you have had in recent years describe your approaches to training and developing them? (Look for coaching, challenging assignments.)

## 33. GOAL SETTING

- a. How do you go about establishing goals for performance (bottom up, top down, or what...and were they easy or “stretched”)?
- b. How are your expectations communicated?

## 34. EMPOWERMENT

a. How “hands-on” a manager are you? (Get specifics.)

## 35. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

- \*a. Tell me about the performance management system you now use.
- b. How effective have your methods been for following up on delegated assignments?
- c. Tell me about accountability. What happens when people fail to perform?
- d. What do you say or do when someone reporting to you has made a significant (serious, costly) mistake?
- e. Cite examples of your giving negative feedback to someone.

### 36. REMOVING “C” PLAYERS

- \*a. How many non-performers have you removed in recent years? What approaches were used? (Look for regular, honest feedback, sincere training/development/coaching efforts, “C” players more apt to ask for a different job or quit than to be fired, and redeployment in months, not years.)

### 37. TEAM BUILDER

- a. How have you tried to build teamwork?
- b. Which of your teams has been the biggest disappointment in terms of cohesiveness or effectiveness?

### 38. DIVERSITY

- \*a. When have you actively confronted indications of discrimination or prejudicial behavior?
- b. How have you added to diversity (ethnic, cultural, racial, gender) in a workplace?
- c. Have there been any successful employment charges against you (EEOC, sexual harassment, etc.)?

### 39. RUNNING MEETINGS

- \*a. How productive are the meetings you run? How could they become more productive?
- b. How would you describe your role in meetings – ones which you have called and those in which you have been a participant?

## LEADERSHIP

### 40. VISION

- a. What is (was) your vision for your present (most recent) job? How was the vision developed?

### 41. CHANGE LEADERSHIP

- a. In what specific ways have you changed an organization the most (in terms of direction, results, policies)?
- b. What has been your approach to communications in changes? (Look for communicating like mad!)

### 42. INSPIRING “FOLLOWERSHIP”

- a. Are you a “natural leader”? If so, cite indications.
- b. Give examples of when people might have readily followed your lead and when they did not.

### 43. CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

- a. Describe a situation in which you actively tore down walls or barriers to teamwork.
- b. Describe situations in which you prevented or resolved conflicts.
- c. If two subordinates are fighting, what do you do? (Look for bring them together now to resolve it.)

### 44. ENERGY

- \*a. How many hours per week have you worked, on the average, during the past year?
- b. What motivates you?

45. ENTHUSIASM

- a. How would you rate yourself (and why) in enthusiasm and charisma?
- b. Describe the pace at which you work – fast, slow, or moderated – and the circumstances under which it varies.

46. AMBITION (see Plans and Goals for the Future)

- a. Who have been recent career influences, and why?

47. COMPATIBILITY OF NEEDS

- a. Is there anything we/I can do to help you if there is a job change (relocation, housing, etc.)?

48. BALANCE IN LIFE

- a. How satisfied are you with your balance in life – the balance among work, wellness, community involvement, professional associations, hobbies, etc.?

49. TENACITY

- a. What are examples of the biggest challenges you have faced and overcome?
- b. What will references say is your general level of urgency?