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From the Team

Earlier this year ([February](#)) we shared information about changes in the ever-evolving world of job assessments. Many of these evaluate a candidate's innate strengths, and you can't do much to prepare. But one type of assessment, called a competency-based interview, is drawn from your experience.

With a competency-based or behavioral-style interview, your success in landing the job is based largely on your ability to translate past achievements in a way that demonstrates your knowledge, aptitude, and core characteristics. Are you dependable? A natural leader? Does your determination keep you going until you've balanced the budget or solved a coding error? Do you handle pressure with grace?

Which competencies are best suited to a particular job is up to the company to decide. Each organization must determine what success in a given role looks like, and what their most successful employees have in common. From there, they build a list of ideal characteristics. They also identify traits that won't be a good fit.

If you've gone through a pre-assessment interview with us, you've already experienced a competency-based interview. We think it's a great way to determine both the candidate's fit to the job and the job's fit for the candidate.

We'd love for you to find your ideal job in your ideal company. We'll tell how a competency-based interview can help you do just that. And when you're ready to make a career move, please let us know. We'd love to help!

The Welsh & Associates Team

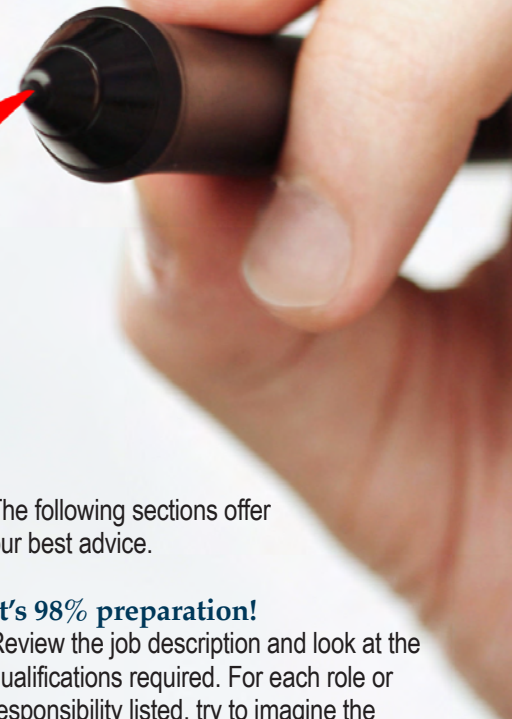
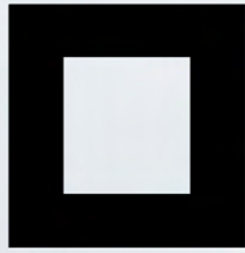
Your new job is just a click away:
<http://welshandassociates.net/jobseekers.html>



"My past equals my future."...absolutely not. The past is just training. It doesn't define you.

— Jeff Haden, *Inc. Magazine*, Contributing Editor

THE COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW



What is a competency-based HR model?

Competency models have been around since the 1970s when Harvard University psychologist David McClelland introduced the idea as a way to predict hiring success. He focused on identifying and measuring individual qualities rather than technical skills. Experts agree that skills are the most trainable quality an employee can have.

Today, competency-based models have been applied to all aspects of human resource management, from recruitment to employee development, training, and promotion. The approach begins with the creation of a set of core competencies for each job and the company. This list identifies the knowledge, skills, traits and behaviors that workers need for success.

The difference between competency-based hiring models and talent assessments

Talent assessments, like the Gallup Strengths Finder, identify innate or core strengths. For example, at W&A, our president Sheri Welsh has both WOO (winning others over) and Relator among her top five strengths. Combined, these have given her an incredible edge in developing and maintaining a network. But let's assume Sheri is applying for a job at another company. Knowing she has WOO doesn't guarantee she'll be a good fit for the position or the organization.

A good fit depends on what job skills and abilities are required. It depends on the company culture and whether or not her attitude and knowledge are a good match. These are answers a competency-based assessment draws out.

Competency-based interviews versus unstructured interviews

A traditional or unstructured interview feels more like a conversation than a competency-based interview. Answering questions in the competency-based style is still a great idea — you can demonstrate what you know and how you'll apply your experience and expertise to the job you're seeking. But a company that doesn't use this approach won't be evaluating you in a structured manner the way a company that uses a competency-based model will.

How to ace a competency-based interview

There are lots of examples of competency-based interview questions and recommendations for answering them on the web. But it's important to remember that the interviewer is trying to determine if you have the competencies they've identified as important to this job and their organization. Answers to these types of questions must also be drawn from your specific experience. So answers from a book aren't enough.

The following sections offer our best advice.

It's 98% preparation!

Review the job description and look at the qualifications required. For each role or responsibility listed, try to imagine the characteristics or qualities they might be seeking in a successful applicant. For example, does the description talk about leading teams? They're probably looking for someone who is a team player, can motivate others, has led teams before and has demonstrated measurable success achieving team goals.

Consider your experience and list examples of ways in which you've demonstrated the characteristics you think the company might be seeking. This is important. We speak with candidates all the time who tell us, "The job description says they're looking for a team leader, but I've never been a team leader." But when we dig a little deeper, that candidate has stepped into leadership roles on several projects — or led volunteer teams or sports teams. It doesn't matter if you've never held the title, as long as you've demonstrated the characteristics of a team leader.

Write a brief summary of each example and be sure to include what you did and what the results were. Include behaviors that demonstrate the characteristics you think the interviewer will be looking for.



The Interview

You'll be asked questions like, "Tell me about a time when you led a team," or, "How do you manage up?" Your answer should be drawn from your summary and should last one-to-two minutes. It's OK to bring notes, but don't read from them verbatim.

When the interview is over, the manager or HR representative will score your answers and compare them to other candidates. For each answer, they've written something down that might look like this:

Positive Indicators

- Shows a positive attitude
- Sees problems as opportunities
- Approaches the problem strategically
- Recognizes personal limitations
- Demonstrates willingness to compromise
- Seeks help when needed

Negative Indicators

- Is unwilling to seek help
- Sees challenges as problems
- Is unable to see the wider situation
- Deals with pressure and stress inappropriately

What competencies are companies looking for? Here's a very brief list.

- Communication
- Organization
- Emotional intelligence
- Decision-making
- Motivation
- Temperament
- Creativity and innovation
- Coachability
- Work standards
- Leadership
- Risk taking
- Integrity
- Planning and organization
- Adaptability
- Problem solving
- Reliability

Top 4 competencies managers should look for

According to a 2012 study by [Leadership IQ](#), the competencies most associated with a new employee's failure in the first 18 months are 1) coachability, 2) emotional intelligence, 3) motivation and 4) temperament. That means exhibiting these traits gives you an edge in the interviewing process. If you have them, be sure to work them into your examples of past performance.

