**Suggested Questions for Evaluating Competency**

Select questions that relate to the sub-competencies and behaviors you are looking for in your analysis of the employee or candidate. This is not an all-inclusive list. These questions may trigger others you can ask.

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| **Question** | **Answer ideas** | **Your notes** |
| **Competency: Communication** | | |
| At one time or another, we have all had some problems getting our point across when talking with another person (directly or on the telephone). Give me some examples of when this may have happened to you. | Answer should include a focus on listening to the other person, determining what motivates the other person, and then asking clarifying questions. May include waiting for the person to calm down if he or she is upset. |  |
| What different approaches do you use in talking with different people? (How do you know you are getting your point across?) | Listen for an understanding that people differ in understanding based on intellect, original language, life experience, education, etc. |  |
| Tell me about a time you had to coach a manager who was having a problem with an employee. What happened? | Best answer should be a serious situation with positive results. Examples of less success with some “learning” are also good. |  |
| Describe a time when you used your listening skills to “sell” an idea to your boss. | Example is best if it shows an understanding of the boss’ perspective and motivations as well as the culture and business needs. |  |
| HR professionals need to keep good documentation. What does this mean? | Listen for a focus on clear and concise written communication as well as detailed information to protect the company from legal risks. |  |
| **Competency: Global and Cultural Effectiveness** | | |
| What does “diversity” mean? | Answer should include the realization that diversity is not just race or gender but that everyone is diverse as all individuals are different in some way. |  |
| Tell me about a time that you had to help an employee who was “different” become a part of an organization. | Listen for efforts to educate employees about the value of differences or different thinking. |  |
| Describe a time when others disagreed with you. What did you do? | Look for a willingness to listen and change based on input from others. |  |
| What is the biggest challenge in a diverse working environment? What steps would you take to meet this challenge? | Listen for an understanding of diversity and direct involvement in dealing with diversity problems. |  |
| How did/does your current/ former employer approach diversity and inclusion? How have you participated in/supported this approach? | Listen to hear if the past/current environment is like the one at your company. Listen for candidates’ feelings about the diversity environment and how they improved the situation. |  |
| **Competency: Relationship Management** | | |
| If I asked the managers and employees at your past positions about you, what would they say? | Answer should include specific information about how they came to the person for help and collaboration. Great answer would include a time when they won a manager or employee over who was skeptical. |  |
| How would you approach becoming a part of our team, if you got this job? | Listen for a plan to meet with and listen to the needs of the managers and offer of “how can I help” type questions. |  |
| Describe your professional network and how you maintain it. | Expect to hear about a large network of professionals from human resources and the industry as well as outside both. Good answer would include regular efforts to reach out and grow the network. |  |
| What is HR’s role in an organization? Why is it important? | Answer should include reference to how HR should understand the business and contribute to it from the HR perspective. Might include recognition that an HR professional must always maintain a balanced focus on the organization and the employees alike. |  |
| What does customer service mean in HR? | Listen for an understanding that HR needs to serve both management and employees by helping each understand the other to support the organization. |  |
| **Competency: Business Acumen** | | |
| Give me an example of a time when your knowledge of the business operations was helpful in getting something done. | Answer should include information on how the knowledge was acquired and negotiating abilities. |  |
| How do you use financial, economic or industry information to get support for HR needs? | Look for a true understanding of financial and economic data, not just popular terms. |  |
| How have you made a memorable difference in past jobs? | Answer is best if the action saved the organization in terms of money or time or helped make money. |  |
| What type of organizational structure (centralized or decentralized) do you prefer and why? | Consider your structure. Centralized would be when decisions are made from the top and there are lots of controls. Decentralized departments are those that are given a lot of latitude to make decisions based on their needs, goals. A company that wants to control costs might be more centralized, a creative customer responsive company less so. |  |
| What do you see as the relationship between “corporate culture” and business success? | Expect a recognition that the culture needs to support the business mission and goals. |  |
| **Competency: Consultation** | | |
| Give me an example of a workforce issue you solved. | Listen for the level or difficulty of the problem and the application of HR knowledge. |  |
| Tell me about a time you provided your HR expertise/skills to help solve a company problem. | Look for recognition from other managers and employees that the person is an expert in HR. |  |
| What do you think the phrase “creative problem-solver” means in HR? | Answer should include a perspective that includes inviting ideas from others, not just being “rule” oriented, etc. |  |
| **Competency: Critical Evaluation** | | |
| What was one of the toughest problems you ever solved? What process did you go through to solve it? | Consider the depth of the answer, and look for a step-by-step approach using critical thinking and research. |  |
| How do you analyze different options to determine which is the best alternative? | Answer should include analysis of each alternative, research, working with others. |  |
| Describe for me how your prior positions required you to be proficient in the analysis of technical reports. | Determine if the type of reports is similar to the kind you use. |  |
| How have you approached solving a problem that initially seemed insurmountable? | Look for the business importance of the problem and a logical approach to the resolution as well as collaborating with managers. |  |
| How do you approach researching information to help you make important decisions? | Answer may include professional organizations, experts, managers, employees who do the job, the Internet, professional publications. Look for multiple sources, not just one. |  |
| **Competency: Ethical Practice** | | |
| Tell me about a time when you have come across a questionable business practice. How did you handle the situation? | Listen for efforts to resolve the problem by investigating confidentially, working with legal counsel and working with managers. |  |
| Have you ever faced a significant ethical problem at work? How did you handle it? | Look for HR and legal knowledge like efforts to resolve the problem by investigating confidentially, working with legal counsel and working with managers. |  |
| Describe a time when you made a mistake at work.How did you deal with this situation, and what was the outcome? | Seriousness of the mistake is important as well as self-acceptance and learning going forward. |  |
| How have you handled situations where someone—an employee, vendor or supplier—had a conflict of interest? | Look for understanding of values within the particular industry and including them with the problem resolutions as well as educating others about reducing business risk. |  |
| Explain the phrase “work ethic.” How would you describe your work ethic? | Answer should include a dedication to being honest. Listen for a balanced view on dedication to the job and a personal life. |  |
| **Competency: Leadership and Navigation** | | |
| Tell me about a time when you used collaboration to solve a problem. | Expect a workplace problem that included listening, engaging others, and flexibility. |  |
| When should you use consensus decision-making versus voting or directing in HR? | Answer should include an acknowledgement that at times due to business needs or legal restrictions, you need to make a directive decision, but that consensus is often better because all agree to accept the decision. |  |
| How have you considered your company’s culture when participating in a new project or program? | Listen for an example that clearly shows an understanding of the business and the value of selling an idea or moving something forward using that. |  |
| Tell me about a time when you participated in a company-wide project or initiative. What role did you play? | Look for leadership roles and understanding of the business and culture. |  |
| Tell me about a time when you were responsible for an unpopular change, how you approached it and what you learned from it. | Answer should include reference to determining why it was unpopular as well as efforts to engage the people who were dealing with the change in making some decisions. |  |
| **Competency: HR Expertise** | | |
| How do you stay current on changes in labor laws and regulations? | Listen for recent legal training/education or development program attendance, membership and participation in related HR organizations, references to reading books, websites, HR blogs, etc. |  |
| Tell me what you know about our company/business. | Expect detail based on what might be available via websites or contacts. Reference to similar businesses is good too. |  |
| If you got this position, what would be your biggest challenge as far as learning the business? | Answer should include recognition of areas of lack of experience or knowledge. |  |
| What have you done in the last two years to keep up to date with changes in the HR field? | Listen for recent HR training/education or development program attendance, membership and participation in related HR organizations, references to reading books, websites, HR blogs, etc. |  |