

Interview Questions that Procurement Professionals should be ready to answer



The team at Beaumont have put their heads together to give some insight as to the type of questions you should be ready to answer as a Procurement Professional going to that all-important interview, whether it be first or final.

Our consultants at Beaumont, partner with many of the world's major Blue Chip Organisations in Financial Services, Manufacturing, Pharmaceuticals, Technology and Consultancy; we have a wealth of experience on what Hiring Managers and HR Professionals are seeking from their Procurement Candidates; and how they interview to ascertain whether they 'make the grade'.

These are our thoughts on the top twelve questions, guided by our clients... You need to be able to answer them and cite *great examples* in your previous experience, in the best tradition of competency-based interviewing!

At the end of our '12 best interview questions', there is some background information on competency-based interviews and how you should approach them.

Beaumont's 'top twelve' interview question...

For starters....

- 1) "What do you know about our business and our procurement function?"
- 2) "How will your experience, skills and motivations; fit with *a)* this role *b)* the culture and needs of our organisation?"
- 3) "What do you love/hate about procurement?"

Demonstrate your Competencies by citing great examples from your experience....

- 4) "Tell me when you've dealt with a very difficult stakeholder, how did you get them to take on board your ideas? What was the result 6 months after?"
- 5) "Tell me when you've had a major setback on a project"
- 6) "What has been the biggest achievement in your career?"
- 7) "Tell me about when you have driven through a change process, what was the biggest challenge and how did you resolve it?"
- 8) "Tell me about when you've lead a full project, end-to-end"
- 9) "How do you ensure your personal professional development and keep up to date with the latest trends in the industry?"
- 10) "What techniques or tools would you use to implement a company-wide change program, driven by a procurement? How would identify stakeholders and get their buy-in?"
- 11) "How would set-about managing a new Category that you have had no previous experience of?"
- 12) "How do you see your procurement career developing over the next 3 years? Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?"

Competency Interview Success! ...

A skilled interviewer will ask questions that are designed to ascertain your competencies for specific situations and tasks; and find out about the actions you took and the results of those actions. Known as the “STAR” approach (**Situation & Task; Action & Result**) it would be handy to remember the following, to present yourself to best advantage: -

STEP 1: Demonstrate the Situation or Task - Describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished. With the STAR approach you need to set the context. Make it concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story.

STEP 2: Demonstrate the Action taken - This is the most important section of the STAR approach as it is where you will need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing. Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain what you did. In doing so, you will need to remember the following:

- Be personal, i.e. talk about you, not the rest of the team.
- Go into some detail. Do not assume that they will guess what you mean.
- Steer clear of technical information unless it is crucial to your story.
- Explain what you did, how you did it, and why you did it.

STEP 3: Demonstrate Result - Explain what happened eventually – how it all ended. Also, use the opportunity to describe what you accomplished and what you learnt in that situation. This helps you make the answer personal and enables you to highlight further skills. This is probably the most crucial part of your answer. Interviewers want to know that you are using a variety of generic skills to achieve your objectives. Therefore, you must be able to demonstrate in your answer that you are taking specific actions because you are trying to achieve a specific objective and not simply by chance.

Some Final TIPS for Answering Competency Based Interview Questions ...

1. When answering competency questions, you can give examples from work, study or personal life, but make sure you give a wide variety of examples and a different example to answer each question.
2. Don't go into too much background detail when answering competency questions. Your interviewer only wants to know about your past behaviours; further detail is redundant.
3. Make sure your answers and examples you use are the most relevant to the questions asked, rather than the most impressive or elaborate.

And a couple of final pointers ...

- Always use. “I” and “me” and **not** “us” and “the team”
- Don't make your answers up! Your interviewer will find this very easy to spot.

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