Leadership Toolkit

Behavioral Based Interviewing:
Improve Your Hiring Success and Candidate Experience

Selecting a new colleague to join your team requires skill and planning. This tool's purpose is to help build your interviewing skill in hiring top talent and to avoid surprises for you and new team members upon hire.

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Behavioral-Based Interviewing (BBI)
The premise of behavioral-based interviewing is that past behavior is the most accurate predictor of future behavior in similar situations. When asking candidates to discuss past experiences related to critical job responsibilities and competencies, hiring managers and search teams can develop a "read" on candidates' probable job performance. In a nutshell:

- These interview questions focus on how candidates handled past and real situations
- BBI questions lead to a conversational interview approach. Yet, the structured nature of your questions helps interviewers compare candidate experiences and responses in an objective manner
- As the interviewer, you ask questions to determine if the candidate performed well in his/her stated area of expertise
- Questions usually begin with **"Tell me about a time when……."** or **"Describe a situation where you….."**
- After initial responses, interviews can always probe further by asking questions such as **"What happened next….."** or **"Tell me more about……."**

Throughout the BBI process, you'll be looking for the **"STAR"**. STAR stands for:

- The "**Situation**" related to the your questions
- The **"Thoughts"** of the candidate throughout the situation
- The **"Action"** the candidate took
- The **"Result"** of the situation or action

Behavioral-Based Interview *Pick List* of Sample Questions
The following table provides sample questions related to skills important to Franklin Pierce. Each set of questions provides ideas of what you'll look for in positive responses or what you may need to watch out for in how a candidate describes past experiences. D**on't forget to customize the questions to match the specific needs the role you're discussing.**

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	
1. Tell me about a time when you had to plan a complex project. 2. Tell me about a major obstacle you had to overcome in your current or a past job. How did you approach it and manage it? 3. Think about a problem you addressed where you had to focus on the underlying process rather than on one isolated event. Talk about how you approached this. 4. Describe a challenging goal you set and how it was accomplished.	
Positive Responses	**Red Flag Responses**
• Can see both big and small picture when addressing problems • Applies past learning to new situations • Is able to "stretch" own skills to achieve a good result	• Not able to be decisive • Fails to learn from past experiences • Isn't able to see connections between similar issues
Student Centeredness	
1. Tell me about one or two student-centered initiatives you've been involved in that you're particularly proud of. 2. Tell me about a time when you've used student feedback, positive or constructive, to modify your approach 3. Describe how you engage your students, particularly in courses of non-majors? 4. In what ways have you integrated multi-cultural issues in your teaching? What was the outcome?	
Positive Responses	**Red Flag Responses**
• Holds him/herself accountable for improving the student experience • Proactively seeks ways of enhancing learning outcomes • Demonstrates cultural awareness	• Acts as lone ranger. Doesn't see how actions impact effectiveness with students • Does not seek to improve based on feedback. May not be open to learning • Doesn't understand effects of cultural diversity in classroom or workplace
Getting Results that Matter	
1. Tell me about a time when you had to manage a difficult student or colleague situation. What did you specifically do? 2. Tell me about a time when you were given an assignment that you thought you would not be able to complete. How did you accomplish it? 3. Describe what was important to you when you transitioned to your last position. 4. Describe how you've balanced your teaching, research and scholarly responsibilities. What barriers have you had to overcome?	
Positive Responses	**Red Flag Responses**
• Takes appropriate responsibility for actions • Able to formulate a solid strategy • Demonstrates the ability to persevere	• Struggles with role he/she can play in improvement • Unable to devise effective solutions on his/her own • Doesn't show drive to achieve meaningful results

Fostering Collaboration/Teamwork	

1. Describe a time when you worked with someone whose personal beliefs were different than yours. How did you manage the work and relationship?
2. Share with me a situation in which you accomplished a goal as a member of a team. What was the team's purpose and what was your role?
3. Describe a time when you had to help a colleague solve a problem or improve his/her performance.
4. Interdepartmental cooperation involves give and take. Tell me about a time you collaborated with others to achieve a mutual goal.

Positive Responses	Red Flag Responses
• Shares information up, down and across	• Doesn't value team efforts. May prefer to work alone
• Maintains a "can do" approach in light of difficult situations	• Uses "I" vs. "we" when discussing work situations
• Sees the value of and is proud of team accomplishments	• Doesn't understand/value differing view points
• Takes ownership for own role on team	

Drives Toward Improvement and Innovation	

1. Tell me about a time when you led or participated in a process improvement initiative. What was your role in the effort and what was the outcome?
2. Tell me about a time when you were faced with a situation where there was not clear policy/procedure to follow. What did you? What was the result?
3. Describe the pedagogical changes you see on the horizon in your discipline. Explain how you plan to adapt your teaching to these changes.
4. Describe what technology applications you have introduced in your classroom in the last five years.

Positive Responses	Red Flag Responses
• Can function well without structure when required	• Doesn't take responsibility for the whole; only sees his/her own role
• Assumes responsibility for the whole and for improving personal and organizational performance	• Isn't familiar with process improvement methodologies or approaches
• Brings reason/logic to situations; adapts to new learning tools	• Doesn't keep up with technology or advancements in his/her field

Personal Accountability	

1. Describe how you have demonstrated accountability in the workplace?
2. Tell me about a time when you were responsible for an error or mistake. What was the outcome? What would you do differently?
3. Tell me about a time when your supervisor criticized your work. How did you respond?
4. Tell me about a time when you discovered a problem in your own work performance. What was your course of action?

Positive Responses	Red Flag Responses
• Takes ownership of his/her actions	• Deflects responsibility
• Can admit mistakes	• Makes excuses or assigns blame
• Is able to learn from past mistakes	• Doesn't sound truthful

Pick List of Sample BBI Questions for Leadership Positions

Interviewing and selecting leaders takes the selection process to a new level. Leadership means you get work done through others, have responsibility for establishing a vision and setting goals, developing budgets, managing lots of change, keeping team members motivated, coaching teams, recognizing great work and managing performance.

Below are additional BBI questions you can probe with candidates for academic and administrative leadership positions. Use what works for you and add your own.

Leadership	

1. Describe a time you established a vision for your department/division/area. What process did you use?
2. Tell me about specific experiences that demonstrate your ability to influence others, both those who directly report to you and those who don't.
3. How would your staff and colleagues describe your leadership style? Provide an example that supports this feedback.
4. Describe a situation when you had to gain commitment from your team. What was the result?
5. Tell me about a situation when you were disappointed in your own leadership results. What was the situation and what did you learn from it?
5. Describe how you've been able to bring a student-centric focus to your department/division/area. What were the improvements you made?
6. Tell me how you have fostered diversity in your current/previous roles with students, staff and faculty.
7. Describe how you've managed poor performers in your past roles.
8. Tell me what you've done to evolve your own leadership skills.
9. Describe the actions you've taken to develop your faculty and staff?
10. Tell me about a time when you had to step into a situation, take charge, muster support and achieve a good result.
11. Tell me what you've done to attract a more diverse team. What are your results.
12. Tell me about an experience as a leader when you had to build credibility and trust with the faculty in your department. What did you do?

Positive Responses	Red Flag Responses
• Sees people and the team as creating the advantage for an organization	• Doesn't know how to garner support
• Applies past learning to new situations	• Ignores performance issues
• Sees that hiring the right talent can either extend or change the culture	• Doesn't see the benefits of working as a team
• Explicitly takes action to attract/retain a diverse tam	• Not able to make decisions
• Knows ongoing learning is key to future success	• Shows that people issues are not as important to the department's or organization's success

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