



Skills for Success Interview Questions

How to use Cornell's *Skills for Success* model to gauge a candidate's behavioral competencies.

INTEGRITY	INCLUSION	VISION	COMMUNICATION	INITIATIVE	JUDGMENT	GROWTH
Interact With Integrity	Contribute Positively To An Inclusive Environment	Support The Organization's Shared Vision And Mission	Communicate Clearly And Consistently	Act And Take Initiative	Display Sound Judgment In Problem Solving	Proactively Seek Growth Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff foster a workplace in which people are respected and engaged.Leaders support and model integrity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff act to help others feel like they belong.Leaders promote a culture of belonging.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff are excited to move forward and team goals forward.Leaders inspire and articulate connection of the team's goals to the university mission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff advance a workplace where people are informed and heard.Leaders facilitate communication between staff, colleagues, and leadership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff take ownership of their work and results.Leaders empower staff with the support to take initiative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff find solutions to deliver results.Leaders use sound judgment to balance innovation with results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Staff are committed to continuous development.Leaders coach staff in their professional growth.

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Integrity

Definition

Interact with integrity, so people feel respected and engaged.

- Be honest and trustworthy, demonstrate high standards of personal conduct.
- Have a positive attitude.
- Involve others as appropriate when outcomes impact their work.
- Be diplomatic in your interactions with customers and stakeholders.
- Admit your mistakes and learn from them.
- Acknowledge the support and contributions of others.

Behavioral Indicators

What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this competency?

Positive Indicators

- Operates with **integrity**—**Demonstrates honesty; keeps commitments; behaves in a consistent** manner.
- **Discloses own positions**—Shares thoughts, feelings, and rationale so that others understand personal positions.
- **Remains open to ideas**—Listens to others and objectively considers others' ideas and opinions, even when they conflict with one's own.

- **Supports others**—Treats people with dignity, respect, and fairness; gives proper credit to others; stands up for deserving others and their ideas even in the face of resistance or challenge.
- Is proactive in identifying and addressing issues.
- Is sensitive and tactful when raising difficult issues.
- Is aware of the risks associated with inaction.

Negative Indicators

- Irrational and defensive.
 - Does not openly participate or share opinions.
 - Defers responsibility to others
 - Jumps to conclusions.
 - Seeks to blame others and find fault in people, programs, departments, etc. without offering a solution.
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Questions

There are many ways to show respect to others. What ways work best for you? Give me a specific example.

Give me an example of what you have done to earn others' trust.

Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.

Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem. Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

In the work situation, we must all compromise to make things happen. Tell me about a time when you felt it necessary to compromise your own immediate interests in order to be socially flexible and tolerant of another person's needs.

Tell me about a situation in which you found it important to 'take a stand' and be decisive on an issue of health/safety/human welfare.

Tell me about a situation when you had to 'stand up' for a decision you made even though it made you unpopular.

Sometimes interacting with others at work can be difficult. Describe the most stressful interaction you've had with your manager/supervisor/team leader or a peer/team member. How did you respond?

What have you done to promote collaboration and cooperation in a way that supported the overall objectives of a partnership?

In a partnership, responsibilities must be shared so that mutual objectives can be met. Describe how you have worked with a partner to determine each other's responsibilities.

Tell me about a time when your manager/supervisor/team leader asked you to do something that you didn't think was appropriate. How did you respond?

Followup Questions

- Why was it important to address this situation?
- What was the outcome?
- How did you feel about addressing the situation and the outcome?
- How did you perceive your colleague's reaction?

Inclusion

Definition

Contribute positively to an inclusive environment so people feel like they belong.

- Communicate across difference to create a collaborative, collegial, and caring community.
 - Be cooperative, open and welcoming to all.
 - Show respect, compassion and empathy for others, even in difficult situations.
 - Engage and support others regardless of background or perspective.
 - Speak up when others are being excluded or treated inappropriately.
 - Actively support work-life integration.
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Behavioral Indicators

What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this competency?

Positive Indicators

- Frequently seeks opportunities to put people at ease and feel accepted.
- Takes initiative to create a welcoming environment.
- Actively seeks and considers different perspectives.
- Strive to build trust, relationships and collaborations.

Negative Indicators

- May demonstrate a lack of respect for others.
 - May have trouble in establishing effective working relationship with certain members of the community.
 - Is dismissive of others' input and views.
 - Seeks to make independent decisions without input.
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Questions

Describe your understanding of diversity and inclusion and how it's related to this position.

Describe what you consider as an ideal work culture.

Give us an example of a time when you needed to understand the perspective of a colleague who had a background different from yours. What were the circumstances and what was your approach?

How have you strived to make others feel included in your day-to-day activities?

Tell us about a time when you were an ally to someone in the workplace. What were the circumstances and what specific action did you take?

Can you recall a time when you gave feedback to a colleague who was not accepting of others? What was your approach and what was the outcome?

How has your background and experience prepared you to be effective in an environment that holds diversity and inclusion as core to our mission and values?

How would you address a situation where a colleague was demonstrating culturally insensitive, sexist, racist, or homophobic behaviors?

Have you ever realized that you said or did something that may have been offensive to a colleague? How did you respond to that realization, and what was the outcome?

What have you done to further your knowledge and understanding of diversity related topics? How have you demonstrated your learning?

Followup Questions

- What was the situation e.g. why did you have to treat them differently?
- What was the outcome?
- What did you learn as a result of the experience?
- What would you have done differently and why?

Vision

Definition

Support the organization's shared vision and mission - I am trusted to move university and team goals forward.

- Show commitment to unit and university goals in delivering results.
- Anticipate, embrace, promote and implement change.
- Balance short-term gains with long-term vision.
- Be open and receptive to new information, ideas and approaches.
- Modify your preferred way **of doing things when it benefits the whole.**
- Support ideas, solutions and changes to process to ensure high-quality outcomes.

Behavioral Indicators

What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this competency?

Positive Indicators

- **Demonstrates resiliency** – is flexible to change.
- **Able to articulate line of sight** – between their role within the organization and the mission and vision of the organization.
- **Remains open to ideas**—Listens to others and objectively considers others' ideas and opinions, even when they conflict with one's own.

Negative Indicators

- Resistant to change.
- Motivated by self-interest.
- Seeks to blame others and find fault in people, programs, departments, etc. without offering a solutions.

Questions

What do you expect or imagine for yourself in the future?

What process do you use to set personal goals?

Share with me how your current position aligns with the mission of the organization (line of sight).

Can you share a time when you advocate the mission and vision of the department throughout the organization/system?

Tell me about a time you had to make a personal sacrifice in order to produce outcomes you needed to.

Give me an example of a time you needed to utilize resources within your team or department to help you accomplish your task and how you sought out the help.

Tell me about a time when you did not produce the outcomes, you had planned and why this happened.

Tell me about a time when you were on a team and had to involve other team members in decisions and actions. What was your approach?

What are some specific tasks that you have completed that directly contributed to the accomplishing a team goal.

Sometimes we comply with a team decision, even though we have personal reservations. Describe a time when this happened to you.

People often feel threatened by change. Tell me about a specific situation and some actions that you took to smooth the process of change for others. Which actions were successful, and which were not?

What was the last workplace change that you experienced? How was it for you?

Followup Questions

- Tell me about that...
- How was that for you?
- What was the outcome?
- Is there anything that you would have done differently?

Communication

Definition

Communicate clearly and consistently - people feel informed and heard.

- Seek to understand and then to be understood.
- Demonstrate active listening skills.
- Express thoughts clearly, both verbally and in writing.
- Share knowledge and information.
- Give, receive and act upon helpful and timely feedback.

Behavioral Indicators

What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this competency?

Positive Indicators

- Writes and speaks frequently in varied settings and styles to convey messages in a persuasive, efficient and inspiring manner.
- Exhibits talented balance in listening to, seeking and drawing out information in others' views; accurately synthesizes individual and group conclusions.
- Builds trust and confidence through active listening and communicating effectively with others.
- Shares information freely
- **Organizes the communication**—Clarifies purpose and importance; stresses major points; follows a logical sequence.

- **Maintains audience attention**—Keeps the audience engaged through use of techniques such as analogies, illustrations, an appealing style, body language, and voice inflection.
- **Adjusts to the audience**—Frames message in line with audience experience, background, and expectations; uses terms, examples, and analogies that are meaningful to the audience.
- **Ensures understanding**—Seeks input from audience; checks understanding; presents message in different ways to enhance understanding.
- **Adheres to accepted conventions**—Uses syntax, pace, volume, diction, and mechanics appropriate to the media being used.
- **Comprehends communication from others**—Attends to messages from others; correctly interprets messages and responds appropriately.

Negative Indicators

- Writes and speaks in ways that hamper effectively conveying messages and ideas.
- Challenged with hearing other views and effective listening.
- Distracted, exhibits disinterest, over reactive response, interrupts conversation, inability to restate others' views.
- Inability to share information that could assist others.

Questions

Describe the most difficult conflict you have been involved in. What actions did you take to resolve the conflict? What happened?

How do you signal other people that you are listening to what they say? Provide an example.

How do you ensure that you accurately understand verbal information given to you? Give an example.

People in a conflict sometimes can not separate issues from personalities. Tell me about a time when personal issues (yours or someone else's) got in the way of resolving a conflict.

Tell me about a time when you took positive action to resolve a conflict. What did you do? What happened?

Building rapport is sometimes a very challenging thing to do. Give an example of a time when you were able to build rapport with someone at work, even when the situation was against you.

Being sympathetic to another person's problems entails putting forth a special effort to understand the situation of dilemma. Give me an example of a time when you were able to give sympathy. How did this contribute to a work outcome?

Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you – maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.

Tell me about a time during negotiations when your perceptiveness helped you to make sense out of another person's behavior.

Tell me about a time when you were proud of your ability to recognize how another person feels. Describe what happened in a way which will illustrate your ability to 'read' another person.

This job will require you to spend a large amount of time writing. Tell me about your writing experiences that you think will contribute to your ability to do this job well.

Followup Questions

- Tell me more about that.
- What led you to . . .
- What eventually happened?
- How did others see it?

- What did you learn?
- Looking back, what would you do differently now, if anything?

Initiative

Definition

Act and take initiative - I take ownership of my work and results.

- Adopt a culture of sustainability and efficiency.
 - Strive to develop and implement best practices.
 - Take responsible risks to innovate seeking advancements in products, processes, services, technologies or ideas.
 - Identify opportunities in challenges and show initiative.
 - Reach out in a timely and responsive manner to resolve problems and conflicts.
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Behavioral Indicators

What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this competency?

Positive Indicators

- Adopt a culture of sustainability and efficiency.
- Strive to develop and implement best practices.
- Take responsible risks to innovate seeking advancements in products, processes, services, technologies or ideas.
- Identify opportunities in challenges and show initiative.
- Reach out in a timely and responsive manner to resolve problems and conflicts; goes above and beyond.
- Implements new ideas or potential solutions without prompting; does not wait for others to take action or to request action.

Negative Indicators

- Identifies only with the obvious well-worn alternatives.
 - Waits for others to give answers.
 - Can only see the immediate problem
 - Is only able to spot very obvious connections.
 - Is content with the status quo and does not challenge it.
 - Continues to apply flawed approaches and models.
 - Gets bogged down in detail and cannot see the bigger picture.
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Questions

Have you suggested any new ideas to your manager/supervisor/team leader recently? Give me an example. What happened to the idea(s)?

Have you taken any steps to make your job easier/more efficient/more productive? Give me an example.

Describe a time when you went beyond your job requirements to achieve an objective. What did you do? What happened?

Can you share with me examples of projects/tasks you started on your own?

What types of projects have you generated that required you to go beyond your job description?

What has been your biggest achievement in your current role? What steps did you take to achieve it?

Describe a situation in which you identified a problem and took action to correct it rather than wait for someone else to do so.

Tell me about a time when you took action to exceed an internal/external customer's expectations. Specifically, what did you do?

Give me an example of when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Describe a time when your quick response to a problem or situation made a difference. What happened?

Followup Questions

- What was the situation e.g. why did you have to treat them differently?
- What was the outcome?
- What did you learn as a result of the experience?
- What would you have done differently and why?

Judgment

Definition

Display sound judgment in problem solving - people seek me out to find solutions to deliver results.

- Exercise sound judgment to make decisions and meet deliverables.
- Assess environmental, economic, compliance and social impacts in decision-making.
- Demonstrate innovative, creative and informed risk taking.
- Apply analytical thinking, data and metrics to synthesize complex information.
- Anticipate obstacles and generate alternatives.
- Negotiate to find and orchestrate win-win solutions.

Behavioral Indicators

What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this competency?

Positive Indicators

- **Identifies issues, problems, and opportunities**—Recognizes issues, problems, or opportunities and determines whether action is needed.
- **Gathers information**—Identifies the need for and collects information to better understand issues, problems, and opportunities.
- **Interprets information**—Integrates information from a variety of sources; detects trends, associations, and cause-effect relationships.
- **Generates alternatives**—Creates relevant options for addressing problems/opportunities and achieving desired outcomes.
- **Chooses appropriate action**—Formulates clear decision criteria; evaluates options by considering implications and consequences; chooses an effective option.
- **Commits to action**—Implements decisions or initiates action within a reasonable time.
- **Involves others**—Includes others in the decision-making process as warranted to obtain good information, make the most appropriate decisions, and ensure buy-in and understanding of the resulting decisions.

Negative Indicators

- Inability to recognize root problem or that an issue exists.
- Challenged with analyzing and pulling together data.
- Challenged with seeing other points of view or opinions
- Inability to be flexible and adaptable.
- Difficulty in evaluating implications and consequences of multiple approaches.
- Difficulty in committing to a decision and following through.
- Is not able to gain commitment of others or is unwilling to share in the work or project.

Questions

If we are lucky, sometimes we can identify a small problem and correct it before it becomes a major problem. Can you give me an example of a time when you identified a small problem before it became big?

Describe the most complex problem you have recently been asked to solve. What did you do? What alternatives did you consider?

Walk me through a situation in which you asked a lot of questions of several people to get the information you needed to make an effective decision. How did you know what to ask?

Give me an example of a good decision you made recently. What alternatives did you consider? Why was it a good decision?

Tell me about a time when you had to analyze or interpret numerical or financial information.

Describe a time when you weighed the pros and cons of a situation and decided not to take action, even though you were under pressure to do so.

Think about a good decision you made recently and one you wish you hadn't made. Describe the process you followed in making each decision.

Tell me about a recent problem you uncovered in your job at _____.
What sources of information did you use to identify this problem?

Describe an occasion when you decided to involve others in making a decision. Why did you do so? To what extent did you use their contributions?

What sources of information have you used to monitor/uncover problems in your work area? Tell me about a situation in which you used one of those sources.

Describe the most successful troubleshooting you have done. Contrast this with a time when you were unsuccessful. What did you do differently?

We all make decisions that turn out to be mistakes. Describe a work decision you regret making.

Followup Questions

- Tell me more about that.
- What led you to . . .
- What eventually happened?
- How did others see it?
- What did you learn?
- Looking back, what would you do differently now, if anything?

Growth

Definition

Proactively seek self-development and coaching opportunities - people see my commitment and passion to continuously develop.

- Be self-aware.
 - Work to continuously learn and improve.
 - Take measures to ensure personal well-being and balance.
 - Seek and act upon performance feedback.
 - Apply learning to evolving assignments.
 - Actively manage your career.
 - Encourage others to develop themselves.
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Behavioral Indicators

What would you expect to see in someone demonstrating this competency?

Positive Indicators

- Be self-aware.
- Work to continuously learn and improve.
- Take measures to ensure personal well-being and balance.
- Seek and act upon performance feedback.
- Apply learning to evolving assignments.
- Actively manage your career.
- Encourage others to develop themselves.
- Keeps up-to-date on current research and technology in one's work focus.
- Reviews, selects, and disseminates information regarding key technologies, best practices, and tools to others in the group.

Negative Indicators

- Dwells on setbacks or things that have gone wrong.
 - Allows short term or minor failures to obscure longer-term goals.
 - Reduces efforts in the face of disappointment or rejection.
 - Rarely takes opportunities to build confidence by celebrating success.
 - Refuses requests for training.
 - Does not take advantage of learning opportunities provided (e.g. courses, feedback from supervisor or peers) to meet requirements of current job.
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Questions

What continuing education classes have you completed recently?

What new skills have you gained in the last 3 years?

Learning new skills is not always easy or fun. Tell me about the last time you volunteered to work on a project even though it seemed intimidating to you.

How do you stay current on developments in your industry?

What was the most difficult task you had to learn at your previous/current position? How did you learn it?

In any new job there are some things we pick up quickly and other things that take time. Think about your last job, and tell me about something you learned quickly and something that took more time.

Describe a situation in which you capitalized on an opportunity to learn a new skill.

We have all had the experience of trying a new technique or process we've learned in training, only to have difficulty making it work. Tell me about a time when this happened to you. What did you do? What happened?

Followup Questions

- What was the situation e.g. why did you have to treat them differently?
- What was the outcome?
- What did you learn as a result of the experience?
- What would you have done differently and why?
- What was the impact on you/or others?

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