



**You've had an interview request, great news! But the client has said that the interview is competency based – What's that?**

Competency-based interview questions are increasing in popularity. Interviewers probe your skills and experience with a series of 'tell me about' prompts. The idea is to gain a better understanding of your behaviour as an individual and how you might react in future situations, but the thought of a competency-based interview is often daunting.

They're designed to make the application process as objective as possible, removing any conscious or subconscious bias by the interviewer by asking each candidate the same questions. Some people feel this type of interview is a little formulated and that there can be less opportunity to build rapport. However, they are very common, especially in large organisations, MoD and public sector, so it's worth refining your technique.

Questions tend to start with a variation of "Tell me about a time when you..."

**A good way to keep on track and consistently deliver a structured and full answer to questions such as these is using the STAR acronym - which stands for Situation, Task, Activity and Result.**

**Situation.** Set the context for your story. For example, "We were due to be delivering a presentation on a new Cyber Security strategy to the board and John, the employee due to deliver it, called in sick the evening before

**Task.** What was required of you. For example, "It was my responsibility to find an alternative so it didn't reflect badly on the team and we didn't waste the opportunity that we had with the board."

**Activity.** What you actually did. For example, "I spoke to the team and ascertained who best could deliver the presentation in John's absence and assisted the other team member get up to speed.

**Result.** The presentation went very well, the employee that stepped in did a great job and the board were impressed with the content as well as the fact that they knew that John had not been able to make the presentation.

The STAR methodology is tried and tested - Just try not to sound like a robot if you're asked to recite them, by thinking through examples before, they will sound smoother and more natural.

Never resort to fiction - There's no point lying.

Turn situations into a positive. Interviewers quite often want you to tell them about failures, but you can spin these into positives. If you failed to deliver a project on time, don't become defensive in justifying your actions, but explain clearly the other pressures which meant the deadline moved and the steps you took to overcome any consequences.

Remember, these are not trick questions. They want to get to know you and hear about your experience and skills, not trip you up. Simply try to relax, be yourself, be prepared follow the STAR!