

# Sample Interview Questions

**General Work Experience/Background**

**Education**

**Career Goals**

**Competencies**

Accuracy/Attention to Detail

Analytical Thinking

Being Managed

Change Management

Communication Skills (Oral)

Communication Skills (Written)

Cooperation/Teamwork Skills

Creativity

Customer Service Skills

Decision Making Skills

Delegation

Handling Deadlines (see also: Time Management)

Initiative

Interpersonal Skills

Leadership

Management (see also: Supervisory Skills)

Negotiation Skills

Planning / Organizing

Prioritization

Presentation Skills

Problem Solving

Self-Development

Staff Development

Supervisory Skills (see also: Management)

Telephone Skills (see also: Communication)

Time Management (see also: Handling Deadlines)

## General Work Experience/Background

- What were the most important responsibilities in your most recent position?
- What achievements were you most proud of in your most recent position?
- Tell me about a typical day in your job at \_\_\_\_\_.
- What special skills did you utilize in your position at \_\_\_\_\_.
- Tell us a bit more about the frequency of job changes on your resume.
- Tell us about your interest in this role at Clemson University.
- Why are you looking to leave your current position?
- What are you looking for in a job/position?
- What do you consider your greatest strength? Your greatest weakness?
- What did you like most/least about your last job?
- What other information should I know about you that would be helpful to me in making my decision?
- What makes you the best candidate for this position?
- What qualities do you possess that would help you to be successful in this job?
- What questions do you have for us?

## Education

(Also for applicants coming directly out of school)

- How did you select your major in college?
- Tell us about the jobs you held in college.
- What was your biggest challenge in these positions?
- What has been your least and most valuable work experience?
- What extracurricular activities did you participate in? What did you learn from these activities?
- How did you stay organized in school?
- While in school, how did you prioritize tasks?
- What courses did you excel in at school? Why?
- What courses have you taken that are directly transferable to the job?
- What sets of skills have you acquired as a result of your education?

## Career Goals

- Where do you see yourself career-wise five years from now?
- What are your career goals?
- What kind of work interests you most?
- What are you looking for in this (your next) job?
- How do you measure success on the job?
- How do you keep up with changes in your field?
- What keeps you motivated?
- In what areas would you like to develop?

## Competencies

### ACCURACY/ATTENTION TO DETAIL

- Give me an example of a time when you found errors in your work. What caused the errors? How did you correct your mistakes?
- Have you ever had to proofread or check detailed information? How well did you do?
- Tell me about how you make your work as accurate as possible.
- How do you manage details so that they don't fall through the cracks?
- Have you had to handle a lot of details in your previous positions?

### ANALYTICAL THINKING

- Tell me about a time when you've had to use your analytical skills to solve a problem.
- Developing and using a detailed procedure is often very important in a job. Tell about a time when you needed to develop and use a detailed procedure to successfully complete a project.
- Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Tell us about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? What was your reasoning behind your decision?

### BEING MANAGED

- How do you take direction?
- What kind of supervisor do you appreciate? How do you like to be supervised?
- Give me an example of something that you and your boss have disagreed about. How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever disagreed with a decision that your boss has made? What did you do?
- Which of your bosses managed you the best? Why?
- Describe the best boss you have ever had.
- Tell me about a time when you were reluctant to talk with your supervisor about something.
- When do you need help from your supervisor? Give me a recent example.
- What are the characteristics of an effective manager?
- What was the management style of the last person you worked for? How did you like this style?
- What kind of direction do you like to receive from your supervisor?
- What kind of manager do you find most difficult to work for?

### CHANGE MANAGEMENT

- Tell me about a change that you have had to manage within your organization.
- Describe a time when you have had to respond quickly to something within a changing environment.
- Have you ever had to introduce a change into your department that was met with resistance? How did you handle the situation?
- Have you ever worked hard on something and then had your priorities change mid-stream? How did it make you feel? What did you do?

- How have you had to adapt your work style to fit the needs of others?
- Tell me about a difficult adjustment that you have had to make in a job/position.
- How often has your work been interrupted by unforeseen circumstances? What do you do when this happens?

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS (ORAL)

- Tell me about a time when you didn't communicate things as clearly as you should have. What would you do differently now?
- What is the worst communication problem you've ever experienced? Please explain.
- Give me an example of a time when your communication skills saved a situation for you.
- Describe a time when you've had to communicate difficult information to someone. Were you successful at it? Why or why not?
- How would you describe your communication style?
- In what scenarios do you have difficulty communicating with people?
- How do you ensure that you communicate clearly and effectively?

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS (WRITTEN)

- What types of writing did you have to do in your previous jobs?
- How do you go about writing a lengthy or involved document?
- Tell me about the most difficult piece that you have ever had to write.
- What information do you think is important to document?

## COOPERATION/TEAMWORK SKILLS

- Give me an example of a time when working with others produced something more successful than if you had completed it on your own.
- We all have parts of our jobs that we don't especially enjoy doing. Tell me about a situation when you were asked to perform one of those tasks.
- Have you ever needed to gain cooperation from individuals who weren't in your department? Were you successful at getting their help? Why or why not?
- Tell me about a difficult group of people that you have had to work with. How did you resolve the situation?
- Tell us about the most recent success that your team has had. How did you help them to achieve success?
- Give me an example of a time when you pulled your team together under difficult circumstances. Have you ever had a team effort that was unsuccessful? How do you think you might have contributed to its failure? How might you handle it differently now?
- Have you ever had to lead a team on a project? Describe your approach.
- What do you consider to be the advantages of working on a team? The disadvantages?
- Describe a specific time when you emerged as a leader of a group.
- Describe a time when you had to work on a project with people outside of your immediate work group. How were you successful in gaining their cooperation?
- Do you prefer to work independently or on a team? Please explain.

- What measures have you taken to make someone feel comfortable in an environment that was obviously uncomfortable with his or her presence?
- Give a specific example of how you have helped create an environment where differences are valued, encouraged, and supported.

## CREATIVITY

- What is the most creative idea you have ever come up with?
- Tell me about a time when you approached an issue creatively.
- I'm going to present you with a problem. Tell me what creative approaches you might use to solve it.

## CUSTOMER SERVICE SKILLS

- Tell me about a challenging customer service situation and how you handled it.
- What does customer service mean to you?
- Who are your customers (internal and external)?
- Give me an example of a time when you made an extra effort to service a customer.
- Tell me about the best compliment you've ever received from a customer.
- How often do you interact with customers in your position at \_\_\_\_\_ ?
- How do you ensure that your customers are satisfied?
- What does good customer service mean to you?
- Tell us about a time you had to deliver bad news to a customer. What was the result?

## DECISION MAKING SKILLS

- What is the most difficult decision you have had to make on the job?
- What kinds of decisions have you had to make in your previous positions?
- Have you ever had to make an unpopular decision? Walk me through how you handled it.
- What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you to make?
- Describe a time when you had to make a decision under severe time constraints.
- Walk me through your process for making an important decision.
- Have you ever had to make an important decision when your boss was away? Explain the circumstances.
- Have you ever had to bend a rule to accomplish something? Please explain.
- Give me an example of a time when you weren't comfortable making a decision. What did you do?

## DELEGATION

- What are some examples of tasks, etc. that you consider inappropriate to delegate?
- What kinds of things do you delegate?
- What are some projects, tasks, etc. you would like to delegate but cannot?
- Do you think you delegate responsibilities as effectively as you should?
- Walk me through the process you use to delegate work to your employees.
- Who is in charge of your area when you are gone?
- Have you ever delegated something that you wish you hadn't?

## HANDLING DEADLINES (SEE ALSO: TIME MANAGEMENT)

- Give me an example of a time when you had to work on a project under an immediate deadline. How did you handle it? Were you successful at meeting the deadline? Why or why not?
- How do you handle working under pressure and immediate deadlines? Please explain.
- Describe a time in which you were unable to meet a deadline. What were the circumstances?

## INITIATIVE

- What have you done in your position that demonstrates initiative?
- Tell me about a time when you went the extra mile.
- Have you ever suggested an idea that saved the organization time or money?
- What are some examples of situations where you improved something in your department?
- If there was a decision to be made and no procedure existed for it, what would you do?

## INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- Tell me about a time you worked on a project requiring interaction with different levels at the company.
- Have you had any interpersonal challenges? How did you handle them?
- In working with new people, how do you get to know their work styles?
- What are your interpersonal strengths?
- Do you prefer working alone or with others?
- How do you interact differently with different people?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with? How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a situation where you wish you had acted differently with someone at work.
- Has your boss ever given you feedback about a concern that you weren't aware of?

## LEADERSHIP

- Give an example of a time in which you felt you were able to build motivation in your coworkers or subordinates at work.
- Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? Did it work?
- Have you ever been a member of a group where two of the members did not work well together? What did you do to get them to do so?
- Is the toughest group that you have had to get cooperation from? Describe how you handled it. What was the outcome?

## MANAGEMENT (SEE ALSO: SUPERVISORY SKILLS)

- Describe the management/supervisory responsibilities in your most recent position.
- How would you describe your management style?
- How do you lead by example?
- How do you motivate your employees?

## NEGOTIATION SKILLS

- Tell me about a successful negotiation that you have conducted.
- Walk me through the steps you use for successful negotiation.
- Have you ever had an unsuccessful negotiation? Why wasn't it successful? What would you do differently next time?
- If I was negotiating with you for \_\_\_\_\_, walk me through how you would handle the negotiation.
- Tell me about a time when you have had to compromise significantly during a negotiation. • Have you ever suggested an idea that saved the organization money?

## PLANNING / ORGANIZING

- Do you believe more in planning, or in “diving in head first” and starting to work immediately? Why?
- Give me an example of when this strategy has worked for you.
- How do you organize your day?
- What kinds of tools do you use to stay organized?
- How far ahead do you plan?
- How has planning ahead benefited you in the past?
- Describe a time when you planned well in advance and things changed at the last minute. How did you react?
- Which would you say you are better at doing, planning or implementing?
- What experience do you have with scheduling and coordinating?
- Give me an example of a situation when you had to follow through on work being done by others. How did you do it?
- It's almost the end of your day and your boss gives you a project that is due first thing in the morning. What would you do?

## PRIORITIZATION

- How do you prioritize your work?
- Give me an example of a time when you had multiple priorities and explain how you handled them.
- You have several projects that are all “high priority.” How do you manage them all?

## PRESENTATION SKILLS

- What experience do you have giving presentations? What kinds of presentations have you delivered (i.e. on what topics did you present)? Did you present to large or small groups? What was the level and size of your audience?
- Tell me about a stressful time that you had delivering a presentation. How did you handle it?
- How do you typically prepare to deliver a presentation?
- Have you ever had a time where you weren't successful in delivering a presentation? Why wasn't it successful? What would you do differently now?
- Give me an example of a time when you've had to give a presentation to a group on very short notice. How did you prepare? How well was it received?

## PROBLEM SOLVING

- Describe a time when you felt you were resourceful in solving a problem.
- What do you do when you're having trouble solving a problem?
- How do you stay aware of problems in your work area?
- Describe a complex issue that you've had to resolve and tell me the steps you took to handle it.
- What sources of information do you use to solve difficult problems?
- What are the biggest problems you have faced in the last six months? What did you do to overcome them?

## SELF-DEVELOPMENT

- What have you done to be more effective in your position? What are you currently doing to improve your overall performance?
- How do you stay current in your field?
- In what areas do you think you need to develop? What do you consider to be your weaknesses?
- During past performance appraisals, what areas have been cited as your developmental areas?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What motivates you?
- What are your major strengths?
- When compared to others in your field, where do you excel?
- As you look at your qualifications for this position, what do you see as some of your development needs?
- What do you need to accomplish to feel successful?
- How do you know that you are doing a good job?

## STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Tell me about your most recent employee development success story.
- How important do you consider staff development?
- What are some ways that you've developed your staff?
- Do you concentrate on developing your employees' weaknesses or strengths?
- Have you ever tried unsuccessfully to improve the performance of an employee? Why do you think it was unsuccessful?
- What are you doing to prepare a back-up for yourself?
- Do you focus on developing poor performers or outstanding performers?
- How would you handle an employee who has been performing his/her job successfully for 15 years and doesn't want to develop?
- Have you ever had to develop an employee when you had no budget to do so? What did you do?

## SUPERVISORY SKILLS (SEE ALSO: MANAGEMENT)

- Tell me about a time when you had to discipline an employee. Explain the situation and describe what you did. Were there lessons learned?



- Describe how you make your thoughts known to a group or an individual when you disagree with their view?
- What types of work situations frustrate you and why?
- Describe the most challenging employee discipline situation you've had to handle.
- Walk me through the steps you use when dealing with a difficult employee.
- How do you give your staff feedback? How often do you give your staff feedback?
- How did you communicate with your employees?
- What has turnover within your team been like in your most recent position?
- Have you ever had to terminate an employee? Walk me through the situation and how you handled it.
- How many people have you hired? What steps do you take to make sure you hire effective employees?
- Tell me about typical issues that your staff brings to you. How do you handle these issues?
- Have you ever had to communicate information to your staff that you didn't agree with? How did you handle the situation?
- Did you have responsibility for a budget in your department? How did you make budgetary decisions?
- Were you involved in long-range, organizational planning? How were you involved?
- How many people reported to you? What were their titles and responsibilities?
- What are some of the day-to-day problems you have faced when supervising others?
- How do you ensure your employees are equipped with skills and resources necessary to do their job effectively?
- How do you recognize positive results of your employees?
- Describe your management style.
- What do you like most and least about managing others?
- How often do you meet with your employees? How do you track your employees' projects?

## TELEPHONE SKILLS (SEE ALSO: COMMUNICATION)

- What percentage of time do you spend on the phone?
- How do you handle difficult people over the phone?
- Tell me about a challenging situation that you have had to handle over the phone.

## TIME MANAGEMENT (SEE ALSO: HANDLING DEADLINES)

- Tell me about a time when your time management skills really paid off for you.
- How do you manage your time?
- Tell me about an especially busy time on your job at \_\_\_\_\_. Explain how you made it through that time.
- How often are you presented with unexpected projects or priorities in your current job? How do you handle them?
- Walk me through an unusually crazy day for you? How did you manage everything?
- How do you handle interruptions at work?
- We've all had times when we couldn't complete everything on time. When has this happened to you, and how did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline. How did you handle it?
- What systems, processes, procedures, etc. have you set up in your department to make things run more efficiently?
- What causes the most stress for you on the job? How do you manage this stress?

- Give me an example of a time when you felt excessive demands were placed on you. How did you handle the situation?
- What kind of deadlines have you had to work under? How did you manage these deadlines?