



— **BEHAVIORAL** INTERVIEWING — QUESTIONS AND TEMPLATES

Introduction

Getting the right people in the door is crucial to your company's success. Finding the best fit for each role helps you hire employees who can drive innovation, productivity, customer satisfaction and profits.

With the average cost of hiring at \$4,000 per employee¹, good hiring practices are essential to keeping recruiting costs as low as possible.

But the cost of a bad hire relates to more than just replacement recruiting costs. A bad hire can decrease productivity and customer service ratings, reduce employee morale, increase spending on unsuccessful initiatives, or — even worse — cause legal problems. Bad hires can also adversely affect your employer brand by spreading negative word of mouth.

The interview process is where you have the most control over who fills your employee roster. **Behavioral-based interviewing is a technique used by many companies to find out more about a candidate's skills, attitudes and values.** In this guide, we'll show why behavioral-based interviewing is important, how to include it in your interview process, and how to craft your own questions. We also provide examples of questions for assessing common employee competencies.

Source: ¹ Talent Acquisition Factbook, Bersin by Deloitte, 2015

SECTION 1:

What Are Behavioral Interview Questions





Behavioral interview questions seek to predict a candidate's suitability for a role based on their behavior in past jobs. By finding out more about how a candidate behaved in similar situations in the past, employers have a way to predict how they will perform in the future.

Another common interview technique is called situational interviewing. **Situational interview questions probe the candidate on how they would respond to a hypothetical scenario in the future.** Because candidates don't actually know how they would respond to a situation that might not happen, querying past behavior is thought to be a more reliable way to predict future behavior.

Behavioral interview questions can help you uncover a candidate's approach to problems, conflict and stress, as well as illuminate values that are important to your company's culture.

SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTION



Example: How would you approach a new product launch?

Goal: To get a sense of how the candidate would approach the task for your company.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTION



Example: Tell me about a successful product launch you worked on.

Goal: To learn about how the candidate approached that task at a past company.

The Benefits of Asking Tough Questions



On Glassdoor, candidates can rate their interview process, providing clues to other candidates on what to expect when interviewing at a given company as well as giving constructive feedback and praise to employers. In 2015, Glassdoor conducted a study comparing the interview ratings to satisfaction ratings of those who were hired. The study found:¹

Overall, a **10% more difficult job interview process** is associated with **2.6% higher employee satisfaction** later on.

On a five-point scale, the **optimal or “best” interview difficulty** that leads to the highest employee satisfaction is **4 out of 5**, with 5 being the most difficult.

Candidates who go through a rigorous (but not too rigorous) interview process can perceive that the company places a high value on finding employees who are a good match for both the position and the company culture. **Remember, difficult should mean rigorous, not deflating or confusing.**

Candidates want to feel as though their experience and intelligence is valued. When combined with other interviewing techniques, behavioral-based questions can give candidates the impression that your company is doing its best to find the right fit for the role rather than just checking off a list of qualifications.

Source: ¹ Glassdoor Economic Research, October 2015

SECTION 2:

Oddball Interview Questions

Asking unorthodox interview questions is a way to **illuminate a candidate's experience** and get a sense of how well he or she deals with unexpected situations.





One type of atypical question is a situational question based on an unlikely hypothetical event. These questions can be used to **gauge problem solving ability, creativity and cultural fit**.

Another type of oddball question **asks the candidate to solve a problem** that they are unlikely to encounter in real life.

Unconventional behavioral interview questions can be used to **learn about the candidate's sense of humor** or approach to making work enjoyable.



"If you were the CEO, what are the first three things you check about the business when you wake up?"



"How many square feet of pizza were sold in the last year?"



"Tell me about the most fun job you ever had."

"Describe the most fun team project you worked on."

Adding creative questions to your interview plan can show candidates that you have a sense of humor about work. For best results, **make sure to ask the same question to every candidate applying for a given position**.

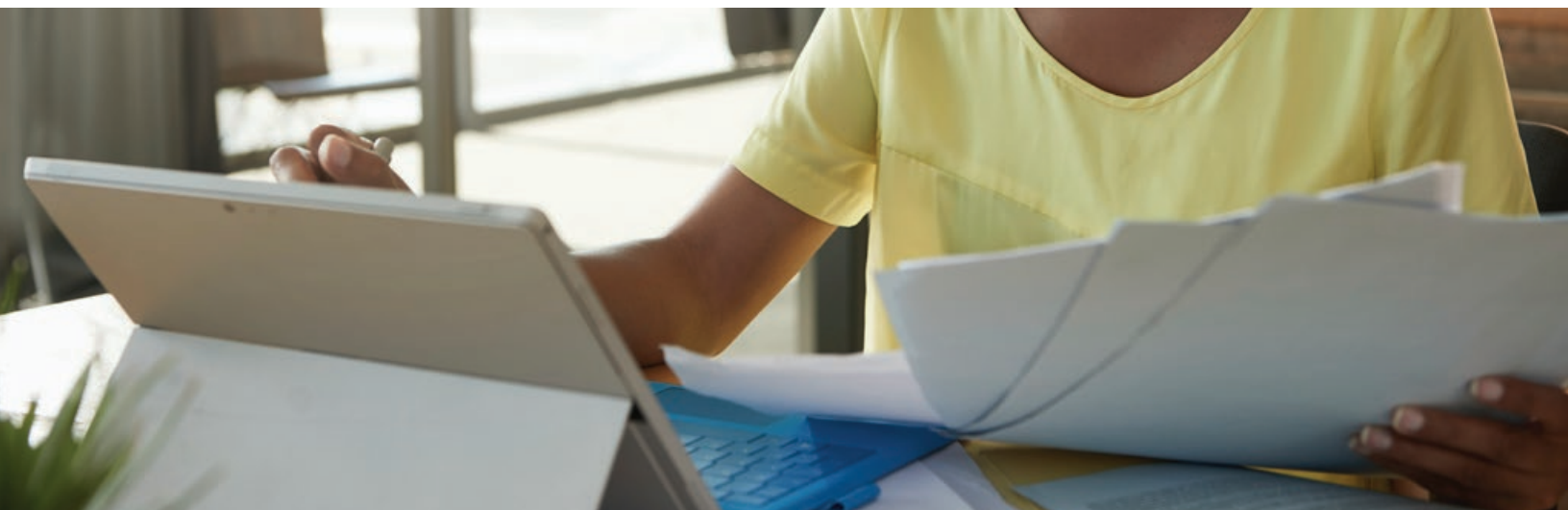
Review Glassdoor's annual list of [Top Oddball Questions](#).

SECTION 3:

Mapping Out Behavioral Interview Questions



Because your time with each candidate is limited and you want to find out the most relevant information about their experiences, it's important to **choose your behavioral interview questions strategically**.



To focus your behavioral-based questions, think about them in these two ways:

1 JOB FUNCTION

Look at the job description and **determine key competencies** required to successfully perform the role. What knowledge, skills and abilities does the position require? Pick out 3–5 areas of focus.

Competencies could include teamwork, problem-solving, customer service, communication, negotiation, leadership, initiative, adaptability, time management, etc. See our [Sample Question List](#).

2 CULTURE AND VALUES

Because your company has a unique culture, it's worthwhile to ask candidates behavioral questions that will indicate if they could **thrive in your workplace**.

Look at your values list and think about how they translate into behavior. Then craft questions based on that behavior. See the [How to Craft Your Own Questions](#) section following.

SECTION 4:

Organizing the Interview Process





Your interview process is **part of your employer brand**. Candidates who research companies and jobs on Glassdoor have the opportunity to look at interview reviews as they prepare for an interview with your company.



MORE THAN 3 IN 4 JOB SEEKERS

say that ratings and reviews from those on the inside are influential when deciding where to work.¹

THE MAJORITY OF JOB SEEKERS

read at least 6 reviews before forming an opinion of a company.²

Source: ¹ Glassdoor Survey, September 2014; ² Glassdoor U.S. Site Survey, January 2016

Getting organized about your interview process will not only show candidates that you respect their time, it will **make your hiring decisions easier**.



Follow these tips as you incorporate behavioral questions into your interviews.

✓ **BE CONSISTENT**

Prepare a list of questions for each role. Ask all candidates the same questions, in the same wording and the same order. This way, you'll be **comparing apples to apples** when it comes time to evaluate the candidates.

✓ **DIVIDE AND CONQUER**

To prevent the candidate from having to repeat answers to multiple interviewers, **divide up questions based upon the interviewer's area** of focus or interaction with the particular role.

For example, an engineering candidate's hiring manager could focus on problem-solving behavioral questions, while a project manager asks teamwork questions. Some companies choose to assign cultural fit behavioral questions to HR or senior leaders.

✓ **EVALUATE AND MEASURE**

Whenever possible, create a checklist and scoring system for each question or area of focus. **Objective measures will help reduce any unconscious interviewer bias** when it comes time to make the hiring decision.

How to Create Your Own Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral-based interview questions rarely come in the form of questions. They are usually **statements that guide candidates** into sharing a situation from their past experience, and have two to three parts.

1 THE OPENING

Following are some **common sentence openers**:

- ✓ “Tell me about a time when...”
- ✓ “Give me an example of...”
- ✓ “Describe a situation when...”
- ✓ “Walk me through...”

2 THE SITUATION OR PROBLEM

The second part of the behavioral question suggests the **type of situation or problem the interviewer would like to find out more about**.

For example, if a cultural value is “resourcefulness,” you could say, “Describe a project you had to complete with very limited resources.”

3 ADDING SPECIFICS

While many behavioral questions stop with only two parts, **adding a qualifier allows you to find out more specific information relating to the candidate’s role**.

For example, if you want to know more about how a candidate deals with conflict, you could ask, “Tell me about a time you had a conflict at work,” and get a wide array of answers. By adding a qualifier, you can focus the candidate’s answer: “Tell me about a conflict you had with a customer / a manager / a colleague / an employee.” Each of these options will lead the candidate down a different path, giving you the information you need that is most appropriate to the role and your objective.

How to Probe

Candidates may or may not be trained in the commonly used **STAR (Situation, Task, Action, Result) method** of sharing their experience.

But you can leverage this popular method as a guide when interviewing candidates who give answers that may seem to short or incomplete. As you consider a candidate's answer, think about what other information you would like to get a complete picture of the how they approached the situation.



Following are some examples of probing questions relating to STAR:

✓ SITUATION

What was the business problem or goal? Who was involved? What were the budgetary considerations? What were the time constraints?

✓ TASK

What did you hope to achieve? How did you come to that conclusion? Who did you consult? What information did you review to come to that conclusion?

✓ ACTION

What did you do? What tools or resources did you use? Who did you work with? What skills or experience did you draw upon? What obstacles did you encounter?

✓ RESULT

What were the business results? What positive feedback did you receive? What did you learn from the experience?

SECTION 5:

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions



PROBLEM-SOLVING

- Tell me about a time when you had limited resources and were able to bring a project to the finish line.
- Describe the most challenging work problem you faced in your last job.
- Walk me through a scenario of a process you invented or improved.

TEAMWORK

- Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a colleague's working style in order to complete a project successfully.
- Describe a situation when working with others produced more successful results than if you had completed the project on your own.
- Tell me about a time when you were in competition with a co-worker.
- Recount a time when you worked with a colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Describe a situation where you've had to deliver bad news to a customer.
- Tell me about a time when you've resolved a problem for a disgruntled customer.
- Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to satisfy a customer. What was the outcome?

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- Explain a time when you've had to deliver tough feedback to a colleague.
- Tell me about how you delivered project results to your manager.
- Tell me about a time when you had to get someone else to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you resolved a conflict with a colleague in your past role.
- Name a time you had to convince someone to do something they did not want to do.

PROJECT OR TIME MANAGEMENT

- Describe a time when you've had to delegate work to others.
- Explain how you kept your work organized in your last role.
- Tell me about a time when you had multiple competing deadlines and how you managed it.

ADAPTABILITY

- Describe a time when you've had to learn a new process or skill.
- Tell me about a time when you've had to pivot away from a current project to address a "fire drill."
- Tell me about a time when you dealt with ambiguity.

WORKING UNDER PRESSURE/STRESS MANAGEMENT

- Tell me about a stressful situation and how you dealt with it.
- What did you do in your last role when your workload was enormous?

INITIATIVE

- Tell me how you set goals and monitored progress in your last position.
- What did you do in your last role if you knew that you might fall short of hitting a goal?
- Tell me about a time when you were given little direction on a project and how you were able to complete it?
- Describe a situation in which you exceeded requirements.

LEADERSHIP

- Tell me about a time you were leading a group, were assigned a goal, and did not reach it.
- Describe a time when you've had to train someone.
- Tell me about a time you had a poorly performing team member.

Summary



By conducting thorough, behavioral-based interviews that go deeper than simply checking off relevant skills, you can make an **enormous impact on the success of your team and the overall advancement of your business goals**. Finding candidates who have the right skills and who are also great culture fits with the ability to weather adversity, manage stress, deal with ambiguity, work constructively as a team, and demonstrate resourcefulness will serve you well in both the short and long term.

It takes a little planning ahead — choosing what interview format you'll use, what questions to ask, and who will ask them — but the payoff is high. **Finding the right fit for each role will drive innovation, productivity, customer satisfaction and profits.**

For more tips on interviewing:

CHECK OUT OUR BLOG

About Glassdoor

With millions of company reviews, salary reports, interview reviews and benefits reviews on more than 600,000¹ companies worldwide, Glassdoor is a trusted and transparent place for today's candidates to search for jobs and research companies. Glassdoor helps employers across all industries and sizes advertise their jobs and promote their employer brands to a well-researched, highly selective candidate pool. By advertising jobs via mobile devices, email alerts and throughout Glassdoor, employers influence candidates at the moment they're making decisions. This results in **better applicant quality** at a significantly **lower cost-per-hire** compared to traditional job boards.²



To get involved in the conversation on Glassdoor and start managing and promoting your employer brand, email employers@glassdoor.com, call (415) 339-9105 or visit www.glassdoor.com/employers.

For the latest in recruitment marketing tips, best practices and case studies, follow us on Twitter: [@GDforEmployers](https://twitter.com/GDforEmployers).

Sources: ¹Glassdoor Internal Data, October 2016; ²Brandon Hall Group Report: Understanding the Impact of Employer Brand, November 2014