

# Guide to Conducting Behavioral-Based Interviews

## Overview

This tool helps leaders implement effective behavioral-based interviewing (BBI) processes. After upgrading position descriptions to require new technical skills and professional competencies, leaders need to update their interviewing practices to assess candidates for these skills. While hiring managers can evaluate technical skills through assessments and exercises, they may find it more difficult to evaluate professional competencies. BBI provides a framework to evaluate professional competencies in the interviewing process. This tool includes a comprehensive list of interview questions to assess candidates' aptitude in 15 key competencies. The tool also includes directions for interviewers on how to evaluate candidates' responses.

The tool is comprised of four sequential components:

Component 1: Role Competency Selector

Component 2: Competency Question Picklist

Component 3: Interview Note Sheet

Component 4: Multi-Interview  
Evaluation Template

## Goal

Use this tool to update existing interview practices to assess professional competencies when backfilling roles and/or hiring staff into new roles.

## Intended User

Chief Business Officer

Chief Financial Officer

Chief Procurement Officer

HR Manager

HR Business Partners

# Component 1: Role Competency Selector

## Overview

This resource provides a framework for translating job functions into behavioral competencies and technical skills.

## Instructions

Use the template on the following page to list the top three to four critical job activities for the open position. Then, for each critical job activity, list the essential technical skills (evaluated through traditional interviewing methods) and professional competencies (evaluated through BBI) needed to successfully complete the activity.

Select behavioral competencies from the following list, which captures the most commonly desired competencies for procurement staff:

- Attitude
- Communication
- Conflict resolution
- Critical thinking
- Customer service
- Decision-making
- Diversity awareness
- Flexibility
- Integrity
- Leadership
- Mentorship
- Personal development drive
- Problem-solving
- Process improvement
- Teamwork

EAB recommends narrowing the critical competencies to three to five per position and allowing about 10 minutes to discuss each competency during an interview.

## Sample Position: Procurement Analyst

<i>Critical Job Activity</i>	<i>Required Behavioral Competencies</i>	<i>Required Technical Skills</i>
1. Help academic leaders make purchasing decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficiency using procurement software, ERP, and other financial systems and tools</li> </ul>
2. Convey spend data to academic leaders through financial reports and in-person meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Customer service</li> <li>• Problem-solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data visualization and presentation</li> </ul>
3. Adhere to university policies for expense recording	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrity</li> <li>• Process improvement</li> <li>• Problem-solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of accounting principles</li> </ul>

# Role Competency Selector (cont.)

## Role Competency Selector

Position:		
<i>Critical Job Activity</i>	<i>Required Behavioral Competencies</i>	<i>Required Technical Skills</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

# Component 2: Competency Question Picklist

## Overview

This resource provides a list of potential behavioral-based interviewing (BBI) questions for the 15 competencies most commonly sought in procurement staff. Each question is designed to elicit details from the candidate of an actual past experience that tested the targeted competency. To guide candidate evaluation, the tool also outlines ideal and red-flag responses for each question set.

## Instructions

After defining role competencies using Component 1: Role Competency Selector, select appropriate BBI questions from the following lists.

## Attitude

### Questions to Ask

- Can you give an example of a time when you have received negative feedback about your job performance? How did you react?
- What frustrates you most about your current position? Can you give an example of how you have dealt with this frustration in the past?
- When was the last time you made a big mistake? What did you do?
- Have you ever taken a substantial risk that has failed? What was it? What did you learn?
- Have you ever had an experience turning a problem into a success? Tell me about it.

### Positive Answers

- Accepts criticism well
- Takes accountability for actions
- Tries to rectify unpleasant situations
- Is generally positive and upbeat about work situations

### Red Flags

- Overly defensive in response to criticism
- Unable to offer rational justification for actions
- Blames failures on others

# Competency Question Picklist (cont.)

<b>Communication</b>	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give me an example of a time you had to explain a financial concept to a non-financial audience. What were the results?</li> <li>• Sometimes we are misunderstood by other people. Has this ever happened to you? How did you respond, and what were the results? What did you do to prevent this from happening again?</li> <li>• Describe a time when you communicated some unpleasant feelings to your supervisor. What happened?</li> <li>• Tell me about a specific experience that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally. Feel free to use an example that involves changing an attitude, selling a product/idea, or being persuasive.</li> <li>• Has there ever been a time when your listening skills really paid off, maybe a time when other people missed the key idea in what was being expressed? Tell me about it.</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to communicate ideas to team members</li> <li>• Has good verbal skills and ability to influence listeners</li> <li>• Uses skills such as reflection, restatement, and paraphrasing</li> <li>• Values humor</li> <li>• Disagrees with authority when appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses slang or poor grammar</li> <li>• Does not have any questions during or at the conclusion of the interview</li> <li>• Offers short answers with little explanation</li> <li>• Mumbles or offers incomplete answers</li> <li>• Frequently misunderstands the point of questions</li> </ul>

<b>Conflict Resolution</b>	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about the last argument you had with a coworker. What was it about?</li> <li>• Describe a situation when someone put you in the middle of an ongoing argument. What did you do?</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a decision by your manager or other leaders. Why did you disagree? What did you do about it?</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reasons through multiple viewpoints</li> <li>• Listens to concerns from all sides</li> <li>• Works to improve situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blames others for personal difficulties</li> <li>• Consistently takes sides</li> <li>• Appears passive aggressive</li> </ul>

## Competency Question Picklist (cont.)

Critical Thinking	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe an organizational goal not easily applied to your office. What have you done to work toward this goal in your office's daily activities?</li> <li>• Give me an example of a time when you developed or recognized new thinking or trends that were helpful to your organization.</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you had to plan a complex project.</li> <li>• Think of a problem you have addressed by focusing on the underlying process rather than on an isolated event. Describe the approach you took.</li> <li>• Tell me about one major obstacle you overcame in your last job. How did you deal with it?</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to transfer ideas from one problem to another</li> <li>• Learns from past successes and failures to improve performance</li> <li>• Can see both the bigger and smaller pictures to address problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appears to waffle about decisions</li> <li>• Fails to see connections between similar problems</li> </ul>

Customer Service	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think of a time when you had to deal with an unhappy customer. Describe the situation and how you handled it.</li> <li>• Have you ever had to change your approach to accommodate the needs of a customer? What happened?</li> <li>• Have you ever had an angry customer who wanted you to do something that you did not have the authority to approve? How did you handle it?</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond normal expectations to improve a customer's experience.</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can empathize with customer needs</li> <li>• Recognizes importance of service excellence</li> <li>• Can show evidence of restraint under a difficult situation</li> <li>• Has a mature problem-solving attitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complains about customers</li> <li>• Adheres blindly to established procedures</li> <li>• Does not often volunteer assistance</li> </ul>

# Competency Question Picklist (cont.)

Decision-Making	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever had to implement an unpopular decision? What steps did you take? What was the outcome?</li> <li>• Have you ever been in a seemingly impossible position with resource constraints, such as lack of staff, time, or budget to complete a project? How did you handle that?</li> <li>• Describe a situation that illustrates your delegation style.</li> <li>• Tell me about a hard decision you had to make and how you went about making that decision.</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you took a calculated risk in a recent position. What were your considerations?</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes decisions without undue anxiety</li> <li>• Solicits appropriate input from peers or managers</li> <li>• Makes decisions based on all available evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Makes unilateral decisions without consulting supervisors</li> <li>• Procrastinates decision-making</li> </ul>

Diversity Awareness	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to work with a person from a different cultural background. What did you do and what were the results?</li> <li>• Give me an example of a time when communication with a customer or coworker was difficult. How did you handle it?</li> <li>• Describe a situation when you worked with a person whose personal beliefs were the opposite of yours. How did you deal with it?</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you were able to step into another person’s shoes in order to discover his or her unique perspective.</li> <li>• Have you ever had a time when you felt it necessary to compromise your own immediate interests in order to fulfill another person’s needs? Tell me about it.</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is sensitive to the feelings of others</li> <li>• Makes a special effort to demonstrate respect in terms of actions as well as words</li> <li>• Is adaptable to customers and coworkers with different needs, values, and opinions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expresses stereotypes or biases about people different from him/herself</li> </ul>

# Competency Question Picklist (cont.)

<b>Flexibility</b>	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give me an example of a time when you changed an opinion or action plan after receiving new information.</li> <li>• Give me an example of a time when you needed to balance your needs and concerns with the needs and concerns of another person.</li> <li>• Sometimes it is necessary to work in unsettled or rapidly changing circumstances. When have you found yourself in this position? Tell me exactly what you did.</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you had way too much to do and you had deadlines to meet. How did you handle it?</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to transfer ideas from one problem to another</li> <li>• Learns from past successes and failures to improve performance</li> <li>• Can see both the bigger and smaller pictures to address problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constantly justifies own actions in spite of prevailing evidence</li> <li>• Appears to be consistently "hard-headed"</li> </ul>

<b>Integrity</b>	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell me about a situation in which you were called upon to keep a promise or confidence.</li> <li>• Give me an example of a time when you chose to speak up for others when they were not present.</li> <li>• When was the last time you "broke the rules"? Why did you do so?</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you asked forgiveness for doing something wrong.</li> <li>• Share an example of a problem created for you by someone else. How did you handle it? What were the results?</li> <li>• Have you ever had no control over circumstances, yet were responsible for the final outcome? What did you do? What were the results?</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes personal responsibility for his or her actions</li> <li>• Takes personal pride in professionalism</li> <li>• Respects confidentiality of customers and peers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denigrates peers behind their back</li> <li>• Is unable to think of situation</li> </ul>



# Competency Question Picklist (cont.)

Leadership	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the most striking example of staff conflict or dissent you have experienced. How did you handle it?</li> <li>Describe how you have involved staff in performance improvement initiatives and other decisions pertinent to their work.</li> <li>Give me an example of how you establish goals, responsibilities, and accountabilities for others.</li> <li>Tell me about a past experience developing and building a leadership team.</li> <li>What has been your experience in dealing with poor performance of employees? Give me an example.</li> <li>Have you ever had to implement an unpopular decision? What steps did you take? What was the outcome?</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Naturally assumes a leadership role</li> <li>Solicits input from others, both superiors and subordinates</li> <li>Appropriately manages expectations for self and others</li> <li>Is proactive in seeking problems and solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaks poorly of subordinates</li> <li>Communicates reasoning poorly</li> <li>Is unable to describe making a conclusive decision</li> </ul>

Mentorship	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give me an example of a time when you came up with a clever way to motivate your colleagues.</li> <li>Tell me about a time when you acknowledged or celebrated the success of yourself or others.</li> <li>Have you ever mentored a peer? Describe a situation when you worked with an employee or colleague to successfully improve his/her performance.</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works collaboratively with peers</li> <li>Has a positive and upbeat attitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expresses no interest in teaching</li> <li>Speaks poorly of subordinates or colleagues</li> </ul>

## Competency Question Picklist (cont.)

Personal Development Drive	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you done anything over the past year to develop yourself? What was it? How did you go about it?</li> <li>• Tell me about a specific goal you set for yourself in the past. Why was it important to you? How did you achieve it, and what were the results?</li> <li>• We all get negative feedback from time to time. Tell me about a time you received feedback that indicated an opportunity for you to improve your job performance. What did you do?</li> <li>• Have you ever been in a situation in which you made a mistake that no one else knew about? How did you handle it?</li> <li>• Give me an example of a time when you went beyond your employer’s normal job expectations in order to get a job done.</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepts constructive criticism</li> <li>• Distinguishes between own efforts and contributions made by others</li> <li>• Displays openness to developing new skills</li> <li>• Works extra hours to accomplish task</li> <li>• Is proud of his or her commitment to get the job done</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not seek help or ask questions of coworkers or supervisors</li> <li>• Offers no specific examples regarding learning new tasks on the job</li> <li>• Articulates negative comments regarding training</li> <li>• Implies dislike of overtime</li> <li>• Implies that money is his or her primary motivator</li> </ul>

Problem-Solving	
<i>Questions to Ask</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you ever had a time when your supervisor was away from the workplace and you had to complete a project or make a decision independently? Tell me about what happened.</li> <li>• Tell me about a time when you thought it was necessary to alter procedure. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?</li> <li>• We have all had projects or situations that have not worked out as they should have. Tell me about a time when this happened to you. How did you handle it?</li> <li>• Walk me through the last big decision you had to make. What happened?</li> <li>• Have you ever been in a situation that seemed to go “wrong” from the beginning? What did you do, and what were the results?</li> </ul>	
<i>Positive Answers</i>	<i>Red Flags</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to take action based on available information</li> <li>• Exhibits maturity, ability to learn, and emotional control</li> <li>• Makes good decisions even under stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paralyzed in stressful situations</li> <li>• Procrastinates decision-making</li> <li>• Relies heavily on input of others</li> <li>• Does not incorporate all available information into decision-making process</li> </ul>

Source: Business Affairs Forum interviews and analysis.

## Competency Question Picklist (cont.)

### Process Improvement

#### Questions to Ask

- Have you ever made suggestions for improving your work process? Describe what you did and how you achieved results.
- Tell me about a time when your supervisor presented you with a new process for doing something and gave you the task of implementing and evaluating that process. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you were faced with a situation where there was no clear policy or procedure to follow. What did you do? What were the results?
- Have there been any large changes within your current organization? Tell me about one change that affected your job. How did you react?
- Tell me about a problem that you identified and resolved by using a systematic approach.

#### Positive Answers

- Applies a systematic, logical, and reasonable approach to analyzing situations
- Feels confident in assuming authority
- Can function comfortably without a structured agenda

#### Red Flags

- Takes no responsibility for own actions
- Is unfamiliar with basic process improvement methods
- Is satisfied with the status quo

### Teamwork

#### Questions to Ask

- Describe a situation in which you accomplished something as a member of a team. What was the team's purpose? What was your role?
- Describe a time when you were able to help a coworker solve a problem or improve his or her performance.
- What is the main strength or "natural style" that you bring to a team? Describe a specific situation and how your work style affected the team's decision.
- Give me an example of a time when you confronted a negative attitude successfully, with the result of building teamwork and morale.
- Give me an example of an occasion when you have done something for others in the organization without being asked or told to do so.

#### Positive Answers

- Distinguishes between own efforts and contributions made by others
- Is proud of team accomplishments
- Maintains a positive attitude in light of disagreements
- Is able to appropriately resolve conflicts
- Shares critical information up, down, and across the organization
- Follows through on explicit/implicit promises and commitments

#### Red Flags

- Does not see benefits of working in a team
- Prefers to work alone
- Uses "I" responses rather than "we" when discussing teamwork
- Does not understand differing viewpoints
- Disparages teammates
- Unable to delegate

Source: Business Affairs Forum interviews and analysis.

# Component 3: Interview Note Sheet

## Overview

This resource provides a place for interviewers to record notes and evaluations in a structured, easy-to-follow format. Establishing a standard evaluation template ensures a consistent methodology is maintained across interviews.

## Instructions

After determining appropriate competencies using Component 1: Role Competency Selector and selecting appropriate BBI questions using Component 2: Competency Question Picklist, interview coordinators should transpose the questions, ideal responses, and red-flag information for each competency into the template on the following page. The template includes a space to record follow-up questions, interviewer notes, and a score (with included scoring guidance) evaluating the amount of evidence the candidate provided about the competency in question. Each interviewer should use the same version of the interview note sheet for each candidate he or she evaluates.

## Sample Interview Note Sheet

Candidate Name: Nick Bulstrode Interviewer: Mary Garth  
 Position: Senior Budget Analyst Interview Date: January 1, 2019

### Competency Score Key:

1. Candidate provides evidence showing past behavior contrary to competency
2. Candidate provides no evidence of past behavior related to competency
3. Candidate provides some evidence (1–2 examples) of past behavior related to competency
4. Candidate provides significant evidence (3+ examples) of past behavior related to competency

Critical Competency	Questions	Ideal Responses and Red Flags	Interview Notes and Score
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give me an example of a time you had to explain a financial concept to a non-financial audience</li> <li>• Tell me about a specific experience that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally. Feel free to use an example that involves changing an attitude, selling a product/idea, or being persuasive.</li> </ul>	<u>Ideal Responses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Able to communicate ideas to team members</li> <li>• Has good verbal skills and ability to influence listeners</li> <li>• Disagrees with authority when appropriate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Nick told a story about walking a dean through a report on the college's current spending behavior and savings opportunities</i></li> <li>• <i>Provided details showcasing how he translated complex financial language into layman's terms to ensure the dean understood</i></li> </ul> Score: <u>  4  </u>
	<u>Follow-Up Questions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What did you do?</li> <li>• What was the result?</li> </ul>	<u>Red Flags</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offers short answers with little explanation</li> <li>• Frequently misunderstands the point of questions</li> </ul>	

Source: Business Affairs Forum interviews and analysis.

# Interview Note Sheet (cont.)

## Interview Results Summary

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Competency Score Key:*

1. Candidate provides evidence showing past behavior contrary to competency
2. Candidate provides no evidence of past behavior related to competency
3. Candidate provides some evidence (1-2 examples) of past behavior related to competency
4. Candidate provides significant evidence (3+ examples) of past behavior related to competency

Critical Competency	Questions	Ideal Responses and Red Flags	Interview Notes and Score
		<u>Ideal Responses</u>	
	<u>Follow-Up Questions</u>	<u>Red Flags</u>	
			Score: _____
		<u>Ideal Responses</u>	
	<u>Follow-Up Questions</u>	<u>Red Flags</u>	
			Score: _____

# Interview Note Sheet (cont.)

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## Interview Results Summary (cont.)

Would you recommend hiring this candidate?  Yes  No

Why would you recommend this candidate?

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What training would this individual need to be a successful member of this unit?

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Do you have any additional thoughts or notes?

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# Component 4: Multi-Interview Evaluation Template

## Overview

This resource provides a document to aggregate evaluations from multiple interviewers. Use with candidates that complete multiple interviews or participate in panel interviews.

## Instructions

Collect and consolidate feedback from multiple interviewers in the template. After aggregating the feedback, return the completed form to the hiring manager for review. Note that where there is strong divergence of opinion, HR business partners and hiring managers may need to facilitate conversations to achieve consensus.

## Sample Multi-Interview Evaluation Template

Candidate Name: Jarvis Lorry Position: Procurement Analyst Interview Date(s): 1/18/19-1/19/19

### Competency Score Key:

1. Candidate provides evidence showing past behavior contrary to competency
2. Candidate provides no evidence of past behavior related to competency
3. Candidate provides some evidence (1–2 examples) of past behavior related to competency
4. Candidate provides significant evidence (3+ examples) of past behavior related to competency

Interviewer	1	2	3	Average	Notes
<b>Competencies</b>					
Communication	4	4	2	4	Conversation between interviewers alleviated #3's concerns
Critical thinking	4	4	N/A	4	
Customer service	4	3	3	3	
Decision-making	4	4	4	4	
<b>Overall Interview</b>	4	4	3	4	
Would you recommend this person for hire?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
What additional training would he or she need?	Technical training in using campus data warehouse and Tableau				

# Multi-Interview Evaluation Template (cont.)

## Interview Summary

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Interview Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_

*Competency Score Key:*

1. Strong evidence that candidate does not possess competency
2. No evidence that candidate possesses competency
3. Some evidence that candidate possesses competency
4. Strong evidence that candidate possesses competency

Interviewer	1	2	3	Average	Notes
<b>Competencies</b>					
<b>Overall Interview</b>					
Would you recommend this person for hire?					
What additional training would he or she need?					
Additional Notes:					
<b>Consolidated Remarks:</b>					
<b>Was this candidate hired?</b>					