



Hiring Guide: Project Manager

Everything You Need to Hire Great Talent



What's Included in This Guide?

1. **The State of Hiring:** How behavioral interviews help address some of the challenges facing HR professionals as they recruit talent today
2. **Behavioral Interviews 101:** What are they? Why use them? Tips and tricks
3. **How to Evaluate:** Tips on evaluating behavioral interviews
4. **Summary Job Description:** A sample job description for the Project Manager role, including:
 - Job summary
 - Responsibilities
 - Competency names, levels, definitions
 - Knowledge Areas
 - Education
 - Certifications
5. **Interview Questions:** 5 Behavioral interview questions related to job requirements
6. **Interview Guide Rating Scale:** Description of each level of the rating scale
7. **Summary Interview Rating Sheet:** Summary sheet to pull all competency ratings together

State of Hiring

Hiring has undergone a fundamental shift in recent years, as companies are finding it more difficult to fill key positions with the right people.

A number of trends have contributed to this shift. The modern workforce is far more transient than generations past, so organizations are putting more emphasis on recruiting their next great candidate than developing them from within.

It has gotten so out of control, that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 95% of external hiring is done to fill existing positions due to people voluntarily leaving. And this shortage of candidates has left HR in a difficult situation.

Talent is likely to be the main driver of business success in the coming years, and HR needs to drive a strategic hiring process that actively seeks out candidates with the right competencies to support the achievement of business goals.

The best way to explore a candidate's skill-set and fit with a particular job is using behavioral interviewing techniques.

Read on to find out how behavioral interview questions can help you make better hiring decisions and get the tools you need to hire your next top candidate!



Behavioral Interviews 101

Behavioral interview questions (also known as competency-based interview questions) are designed to elicit information about the candidate's past experience and accomplishments that relate to the competencies required in the target job.



The Goal: Behavioral Examples



Knowing a candidate's actions is of little use if you do not understand the circumstances surrounding the actions and the results produced by those actions. To fully understand a candidate's past behavior, make sure to explore the following three components in order to make an informed judgement about whether the candidate has displayed the level and quality of behavior required:

- The **Situation or Task** in which the candidate was involved;
- The **Action** which the candidate took to complete the task or address the situation; and,
- The **Result** of the candidate's action.

When the information provided by a candidate addresses all three areas, then the information is called a **behavioral example**.

Deciding What to Evaluate:

When selecting the competencies to evaluate during an interview, it is important to consider two factors:

- What competencies are included on the competency profile for the target job?
- What other assessments methods will be used during the selection process?

A competency profile – *the collection of competencies used together to represent the most critical aspects of a job* – typically contains seven to ten competencies covering both the behavioral (soft-skills) and the technical requirements of the job.

It can be overwhelming to ask questions addressing every associated competency, so we recommend asking no more than five questions during a standard interview. This means that you will need to select the five most critical competencies to focus on for the interview.

For this interview guide, we have included five questions that provide coverage across the soft skills and technical requirements for the job.

If you will be including other aspects in your interview process, like a simulation or work samples, you may find that technical competencies are more easily assessed by those means.

What to Watch Out For

When interviewing candidates, be careful not to let candidates provide **false behavioral examples**, which can be misleading. There are three common types of false behavioral examples to look out for:

Theoretical or Future-Oriented Statements:

These statements indicate what a candidate thinks they would do, not what they have done, and provide no information about past behavior.

False Behavioral Example:

"I would make sure the client received the support needed to ensure on-time delivery."

Behavioral Example:

"The client needed extra support to ensure their shipment arrived on time. To help with this, I made sure I understood when the shipment was required, I coordinated with the production and shipping departments on my end, and as a result, everything was delivered on time."

Feelings or Opinions:

These statements are simply an individual's emotional reaction to a situation or event, and provide no insight into behavior.

False Behavioral Example:

"I am really good at teaching myself new software packages."

Behavioral Example:

"When I joined ACME Corp, they used a CRM that I had never used before. With no internal resources available to train me, I was able to learn the tool using online tutorials and videos. I became so well versed in the product, I ended up the go-to internal expert."

Vague Statements:

These are typically summaries or descriptions of several past actions reported in a general way, requiring you to probe further.

False Behavioral Example:

"I always had the customer's best interest in mind and never got pushy or argumentative."

Behavioral Example:

"As an Implementation Specialist, I always had the customer's best interests in mind. In one situation, a client was feeling pressured to purchase an upgrade. I stepped in to ensure our team understood the client's needs. Although the Sales Rep was angry with me for stepping in, I explained the client's perspective and got everyone on the same page. Three months later, the client upgraded anyway."

The Structure of Behavioral Interview Questions

The interview questions included in this guide are all structured in the same format. Each question applies to the specific competency being evaluated. Follow-up questions are included to help you probe further into a candidate's past experiences, and behavioral cues are provided to illustrate examples of what to look for in a candidate's answer.

Question 1: Creativity and Innovation – Level 3

Generating viable, new approaches and solutions.

Competency name and definition

Question:

Describe the most complex problem that you were faced with and how you generated a new approach or explanation or solution.

Job specific question

- What was the problem?
- What was complex about it?
- What new approach or explanation did you come up with?
- What was new about it?
- How did this benefit your work (or the work of others)?

Probes to help elicit greater specificity from candidates

What to look for:

Identifies new approaches.

- Creates new ideas, solutions or approaches to ongoing challenges.
- Uses unconventional areas as sources of inspiration and insight into new options and solutions.
- Solves complex problems through developing new explanations or applications.

Behavioral indicators to look for the specific competency at the required level of proficiency



Rating scale (See Appendix A for details)

How to Evaluate the Interview



All of the energy and effort devoted to capturing good job-related information during the selection interview will be lost if this information is not evaluated consistently for all candidates. Use the following instructions to evaluate candidate information from a behavioral interview.

Step 1: Classify All Behavioral Examples

Each behavioral question is designed to elicit information relevant to a **specific competency**.

However, candidates may provide information that goes beyond the specific competency, resulting in one of the following situations:

- A question will be asked focusing on one competency area, but the candidate provides a behavioral example that demonstrates another.
- Examples are provided that relate to more than one competency area.
- Examples that relate to the required competencies will be provided during the introductory phases of the interview, or during the close of the interview.

The whole interview should, therefore, be reviewed carefully for evidence of the competencies being assessed.



Tip

When reviewing a behavioral example given by the candidate, make clear notes along-side the example the competency actually demonstrated.

This can then easily be cross referenced in the section of the Interview Guide devoted to that competency.

Step 2: Weigh the Behavioral Examples

The next step is to weigh each example in terms of its overall contribution to the rating for each competency. This is not simply a process of averaging all of the positives and negatives to arrive at an overall rating. The following factors should be taken into account:

- **Significance:** The importance of the examples provided should be carefully considered. If the candidate provides two examples, one from a trivial situation, and one from a situation that had significant impact, the example with greater importance should be considered more significant.
- **Recency:** The more recent the behavior, the better it predicts future behavior. If the candidate provides a number of negative examples of a competency earlier in their career, but also provides several more recent positive examples, then the recent examples should be given more weight in the overall rating of the competency, other things being equal.

- **Trends:** Consistent with the concept of recency, examples which show a trend either positively or negatively should be taken into account. It is likely that a trend would continue if the candidate were selected for the target position.
- **Job-Relatedness:** How closely related is the behavioral example to the job that they are interviewing for? In cases where the candidate gives more than one example, the most relevant behavioral example to the job they're interviewing for should be considered most significant.



Tip

When assessing relevance, carefully consider the situation.

A candidate may provide good examples of team building skills in volunteer situations involving children, but a number of negative examples with adults on the job.

Although volunteer experience is perfectly acceptable, the latter examples must be given more weight if the candidate is expected to demonstrate this skill with adults on the job.

Step 3: Assign a Rating to Each Competency

The next step is to assign a rating to each competency based on the candidate's demonstration of the relevant behavioral indicators.



Tip

When running a panel interview, have each interviewer complete a summary interview rating sheet to save time when reviewing results.

A summary rating scale is provided in [Appendix A](#).

Job Description: Project Manager

Job Summary

The Project Manager executes projects according to the project plan by working with stakeholders to understand requirements, developing project management plans, and maintaining project documentation.

Job level: Manager



Responsibilities

Product & Project Management

- Execute the project according to the project plan
- Develop project proposals, project charters, and project management plans
- Work with project stakeholders to understand project requirements, and ensure that deliverables satisfy these requirements
- Clarify and communicate the project scope and ongoing progress to project team members
- Engage project stakeholders and communicate project updates to ensure buy-in and project success
- Monitor and track project execution against project plan and budget
- Control and manage project execution to mitigate project risks
- Ensure that all project estimates are prepared in accordance with the requirements of the project
- Develop post-project support to ensure measurement of project objectives
- Ensure that project decisions are formally documented and that project deliverables are stored in the official project repository



Competencies

Project Management (Level 4)

Planning, implementing, monitoring and completing projects, ensuring effective management of scope, resources, time, cost, quality, risk and communications.

Attention to Detail (Level 3)

Working in a conscientious, consistent and thorough manner.

Collaborating with Others (Level 3)

Working together with others in a cooperative and supportive manner to achieve shared goals.



Competencies – Continued

Managing Project Communications (Level 3)

Managing, controlling and monitoring the nature of project information and communication directives to ensure that information needs are met.

Project Risk Management (Level 3)

Identifying, assessing, prioritizing, documenting and managing risk and its impact.



Knowledge Areas

- Agile Methodology (Intermediate)
- Change Management (Intermediate)
- Lean Project Management Principles (Intermediate)
- Microsoft Office Suite (Intermediate)
- Microsoft Project (Intermediate)
- Microsoft SharePoint (Intermediate)
- Microsoft Visio (Intermediate)
- Project Management Software (Intermediate)
- SAP (Intermediate)
- Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC) (Intermediate)



Education

- Business and Commerce (College diploma) **or**
- Business Administration (College diploma)



Certification

- Lean Six Sigma-Black Belt
- Project Management Professional (PMP)

Project Manager Interview Guide

Candidate: _____

Interviewer: _____

Date of interview: _____

Question 1: Project Management – Level 4

Planning, implementing, monitoring and completing projects, ensuring effective management of scope, resources, time, cost, quality, risk and communications.

Question:

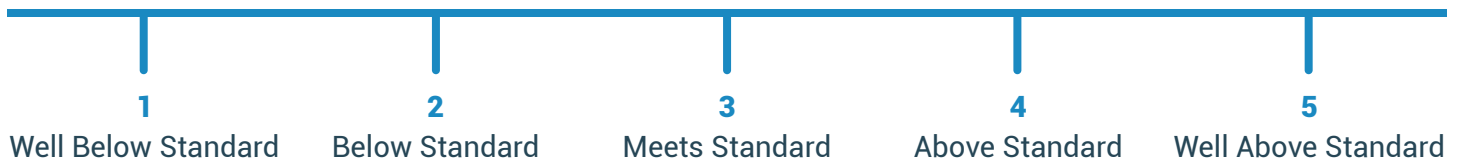
Describe a time when you managed interrelated and multi-faceted or multi-stage projects.

- What were the projects and your role in managing them?
- What were the challenges that you encountered?
- How did you deal with these challenges?
- What were the results?

What to look for:

Manages complex projects.

- Manages complex, multifaceted/interrelated projects that span own area or department boundaries.
- Determines resource requirements for multi-faceted or multi-stage projects.
- Applies recognized project management methodology to manage scope, resources, time, cost, quality, risk and communications.



Notes (Situation, Action, Results):

Question 2: Attention to Detail – Level 3

Working in a conscientious, consistent and thorough manner.

Question:

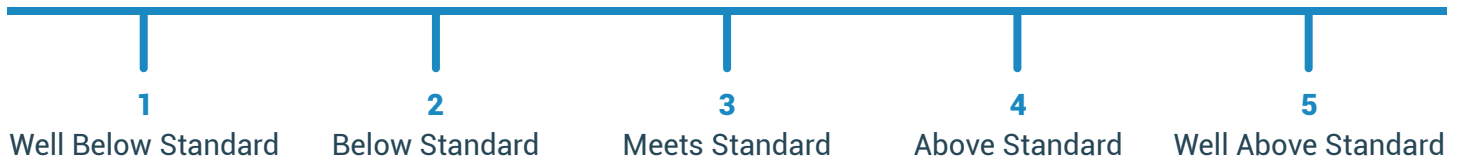
Tell me about a time when you reviewed the work of others.

- What were you working on?
- What steps did you go through in reviewing your colleague's work?
- What did you find?
- What problems were avoided as a result of finding errors (if any) immediately?

What to look for:

Monitors and verifies the work of others for accuracy and completeness.

- Identifies multiple sources/approaches of information to ensure that details are addressed.
- Reviews the work of others for accuracy and thoroughness.
- Follows up to ensure tasks are completed and commitments are met by others.
- Verifies that work has been done according to procedures and standards.



Notes (Situation, Action, Results):

Question 3: Collaborating with Others – Level 3

Working together with others in a cooperative and supportive manner to achieve shared goals.

Question:

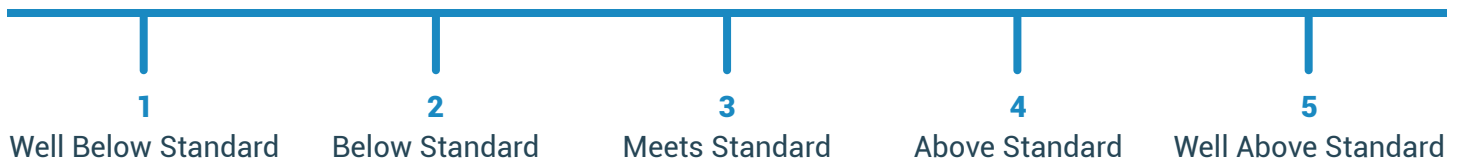
Describe a situation where you recognized others for their contributions to a project.

- What was the situation?
- What was your role?
- What did you do?
- What was the outcome?

What to look for:

Fosters collaboration.

- Gives credit and acknowledgement for contributions and efforts of others.
- Provides constructive feedback to others.
- Helps build consensus among members of groups.
- Provides opportunities for all group members to contribute to group discussions.



Notes (Situation, Action, Results):

Question 4: Managing Project Communications – Level 3

Managing, controlling and monitoring the nature of project information and communication directives to ensure that information needs are met.

Question:

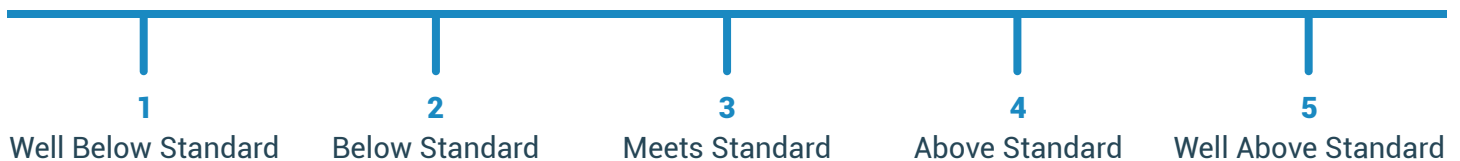
Describe a time when your communication skills helped you to deal with a difficult stakeholder or team member.

- Who was involved?
- What was the difficulty?
- What skills did you employ to deal with the situation?
- What was the outcome?
- How would the other party describe your relationship today?

What to look for:

Applies the competency in the full range of typical situations, requiring guidance in only the most complex or new situations.

- Prepares external communication materials (e.g., advertisements, press releases).
- Prepares a communication plan.
- Prepares written communication for internal and external distribution.
- Translates communication strategy into specific messaging.
- Develops escalation procedures for communication issues.
- Surveys stakeholders periodically and analyzes results of their feedback.



Notes (Situation, Action, Results):

Question 5: Project Risk Management – Level 3

Identifying, assessing, prioritizing, documenting and managing risk and its impact.

Question:

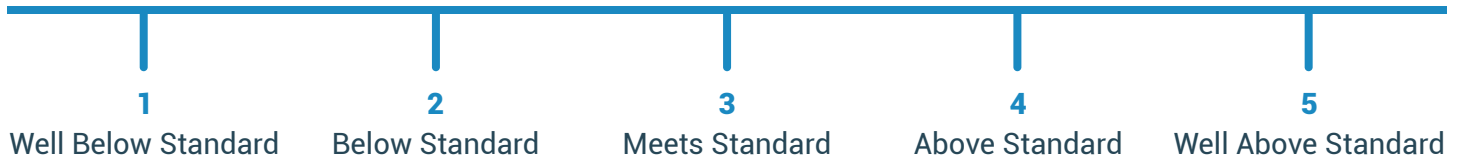
Describe a project where there was a high volume of changes, or where priorities changed quickly.

- What were the types of changes and priority shifts?
- How did you perform the root cause analysis?
- What adjustments were required to address the changes and shifting priorities?
- Did the changes impact the project baselines?
- What was done to ensure the volume of changes did not occur in subsequent projects?

What to look for:

Applies the competency in the full range of typical situations, requiring guidance in only the most complex or new situations.

- Qualifies and quantifies known risks.
- Develops risk response plan, including strategies for each defined risk.
- Uses advanced risk tools to analyze risk on highly complex initiatives.
- Identifies project barriers that can impact other projects.
- Identifies risk trends.
- Recognizes when a new or unknown risk occurs and establishes workarounds and mitigation plans.



Notes (Situation, Action, Results):

Appendix A: Interview Guide Rating Scale

Level	Description	Weight
Well Below Standard	Falls significantly below requirements. Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is far from adequate in all or most respects.	1
Below Standard	Below expected requirements. Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is inadequate in key respects.	2
Meets Standard	Meets requirements. Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency meets expectations and reflects an adequate ability to perform; candidate may have demonstrated minor weaknesses in some aspects of the competency, but non of major significance.	3
Above Standard	Exceeds requirements. Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is above average and reflects more than an adequate ability to perform; all or most aspects of the competency are demonstrated at an above average level.	4
Well Above Standard	Significantly exceeds requirements. Evidence of candidate's demonstration of the competency is exceptional and reflects superior ability to perform; all aspects of the competency are demonstrated to a high degree.	5

Appendix B: Summary of Interview Ratings

Candidate:

Position:

Date of interview:

Interviewer:

Competency	1 Well Below Standard	2 Below Standard	3 Meets Standard	4 Above Standard	5 Well Above Standard
Project Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Attention to Detail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborating with Others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Managing Project Communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Project Risk Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommendation:

Continued Consideration

Reject

General Comments:

About HRSG

For three decades, HRSG has delivered products and services to define talent needs, address skill deficiencies and improve individual and organizational performance.

Our Products division has distilled that 30 years of expertise into a competency, job description and career management software solution. Leveraging the power of AI, CompetencyCore™ is unlike any other product on the market, bringing together the power of competencies and the utility of job descriptions.

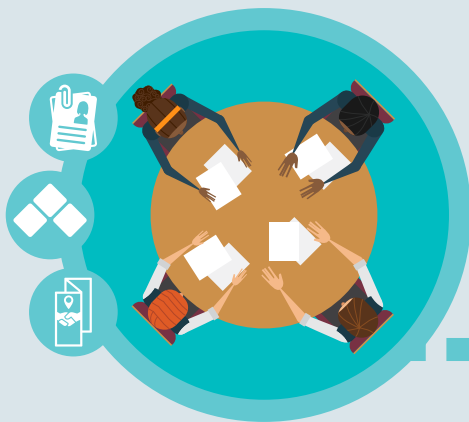
Our Talent Management Solutions division delivers best practice professional services in competency-based management, testing and assessment. In addition, we train HR professionals worldwide in our competency-based management methodologies.



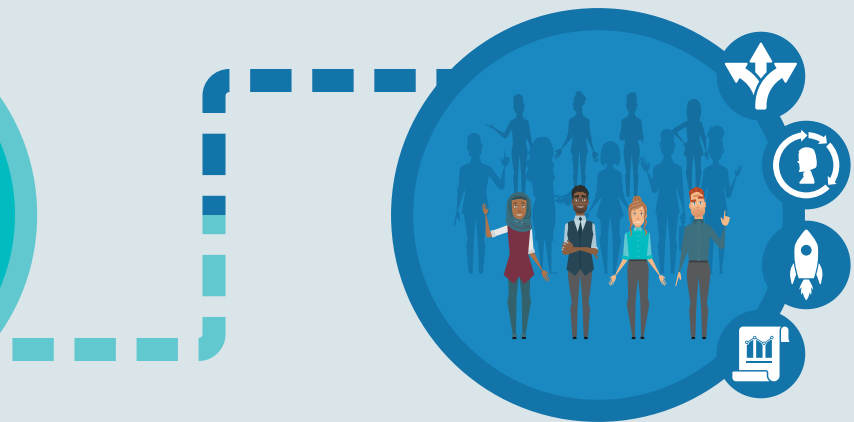
CompetencyCore by HRSG makes use of our exclusive **Smart Job Description Technology** to power every stage of the employee lifecycle through competencies.

Start with *Mapping* to map your jobs and competencies, then add *Navigating* to engage your employees.

MAPPING



NAVIGATING



Use Smart Job Description Technology to unify your company's **job descriptions**, **competencies** and **interview guides**.

Empower your talent with career management software that offers competency-driven **career pathing**, **assessment**, **development** and **insights**.

See it in Action

Schedule a live demo to see the easiest way to start using behavioral interviewing across your organization.