



Helping leaders optimize their talent.

## Behavioral Interview Questions

Maximizing your interview with PI



### When you are targeting **High A** and...

- Candidate is High A (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is Low A (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Managing Objections (sales)	During a sales call, tell me about a time when you kept getting a “no” from your prospect. How do you respond to move the “no” to a “yes?”
Performance Management	Think of a time when you had an employee who needed behavior or performance feedback and direction. Tell me about the situation and describe when and how you handled it. What was the outcome?
Performance Management	Have you ever had to fire someone? Why? How did you manage it? How did you feel?
Managing Confrontation	Describe a conflict situation you have had with a co-worker, subordinate, your manager, prospect, customer or supplier. How did you manage it?
Self-Assertion	Tell me about a time you had to make an unpopular decision. How did you handle it with your staff or employee? How comfortable were you? What was the outcome?

### When you are targeting **Low A** and...

- Candidate is Low A (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is High A (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Team	Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist him/her? What was the result?
Team	Tell me about a time when you had to change your behavior to work successfully with others.
Listening	Describe a time when you had to withhold your opinion or idea to better encourage and understand the opinions and ideas of others.
Listening	We all have different styles of communication. Tell me about a time when you caused a breakdown in communication at work. What aspect of your communication style precipitated the breakdown? How did you manage the situation? What did you learn?
Support/Encouragement	What forms of day-to-day recognition, reward or support did you provide your staff to stimulate productivity, moral and/or job-satisfaction? What was the outcome?



### When you are targeting **High B** and...

- Candidate is High B (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is Low B (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Trust, Delegation	Tell me about a time when you had to delegate your work to an employee that you were not fully confident in his/her abilities, skills, or knowledge. How did you communicate, coach, and support that employee? What were the results?
Communication	What do you think is more important, “What you say” or “How you say it”? Tell me about a time when you needed to modify “how” you said something to better meet the needs of your audience.
Communication	Often our work relies upon phone and email communication in place of face-to-face interaction. Describe a phone or conference call you have had with a client, co-worker, or prospect. How did you compensate for non-verbal signs of communication? Describe an email you have sent to a co-worker, client, or prospect. How did you compensate for non-verbal signs of communication?
Sales	When prospecting, some people are more responsive to hearing about the “sizzle” or “bells and whistles” while others prefer to hear about the “steak” or the facts. Tell me about a time when you had to sell the “sizzle.” How did you go about it? What was the outcome?

### When you are targeting **Low B** and...

- Candidate is Low B (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is High B (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Communication	When describing a (technical) concept, some people are more responsive to hearing about the “steak” or the facts, while others prefer the “sizzle” or “bells and whistles”. Tell me about a time when you had to communicate the “steak”. How did you go about it? What was the outcome?
Working Independently	Tell me about a task-focused job/project or role you have had in the past that required you to work independently for most of the day. How did you manage the work? (How did you keep the work interesting?) How did it feel?
Working Independently	When are you most productive - in a team or working independently? Why? Give me an example.
Communication	We all have different styles of communication. Tell me about a time when you caused a breakdown in communication at work. What aspect of your communication style precipitated the breakdown? How did you manage the situation? What did you learn?



### When you are targeting **High C** and...

- Candidate is High C (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is Low C (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Working in a stable environment	Tell me about an administrative job (task-focused, repetitive work) or role you have had in the past that required you to work consistently and in one location for most of the day. What did you enjoy about the work? What did you find frustrating? In the areas that you found frustrating, what did you do to keep the work interesting? (Or how did you overcome this?)
Listening	We all have different styles of communication. Tell me about a time when you caused a breakdown in communication with a customer or co-worker. What aspect of your communication style precipitated the breakdown? How did you manage the situation? What did you learn?

### When you are targeting **Low C** and...

- Candidate is Low C (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is High C (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Change Management	To better meet the needs of our customers and business, sometimes the work we do changes. Tell me about a time when a change occurred to a process, a system, or a job function in your area of expertise. How did you manage that change?
Change Management	Tell me about a project you initiated on your own that was implemented in your department. How did you overcome resistance?
Proactivity	Think of a time when you were faced with a difficult situation (conflict, confrontation, making a decision, meeting a deadline) that needed your immediate attention and you were unsure how to proceed. Tell me about the situation and describe when and how you handled it. What was the outcome?
Proactivity	Tell me about a specific time when you were learning something new. What training resources, tools did you seek out to accelerate your learning? (How do you learn best? Describe your learning style.)
Multi-Tasking	Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you organize (prioritize) additional assignments? How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines?
Multi-Tasking	Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?



### When you are targeting **High D** and...

- Candidate is High D (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is Low D (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Organization	Describe the system you have used to organize your work. How have you tracked tasks, documented details and followed-up on your progress?
Organization	Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline or follow-up on a customer or detail? What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
Following the Rules	Tell me about an occasion where you conformed to a policy even though you did not agree with it.
Attention to Detail	Tell me about a time when you failed to provide (or obtain, or document) all the details (information) during a customer-service transaction or while working on a project. What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
Developing Expertise	Tell me about a specific time when you were learning something new. What training resources, tools did you seek out to accelerate your learning? (How do you learn best? Describe your learning style.)

### When you are targeting **Low D** and...

- Candidate is Low D (listen for confirmation of behavior and management)
- Candidate is High D (listen for adaptation ability)

Area to explore	Questions
Decision-Making	Tell me about a time when you struggled making a timely decision or meeting an important deadline. What was the struggle? How did you overcome it? What was the outcome? What did you learn?
Risk/Decision-Making	Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a difficult assignment or make a quick decision outside your area of expertise. What did you do? What was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience?
Risk/Delegation	Tell me about a time when you had difficulty delegating your work to an employee. How did you overcome this? What were the results? (What did you learn?)
Risk-Taking	Would you consider yourself a specialist or a generalist? (Do you want to be recognized as an expert, responsible for one major function? Or a generalist, who handles a variety of different issues, but is not necessarily the expert in all the issues?) Why? Give specific examples.



When the candidate has competing drives **A=D** (self or synthesis) ...

Location	Area to explore	Questions
Equal anywhere	Making decisions under pressure	Tell me about a decision you made while under a lot of pressure. What did you do? How did you make the decision? What was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience?
A=D both high	Indecision (when to stop analyzing)	Tell me about a time when you had a difficult time completing an assignment or meeting a deadline because you didn't have all the information. What did you do? What was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience?
A=D both low	Indecision (where to begin)	Tell me about a time when you had a difficult time starting an assignment because you were not certain where/how to approach the project. What did you do? What was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience?
A=D norm	Indecision (when to stop analyzing and where to begin)	Give me an example of when missed a deadline or meeting? How did you resolve it?



### When the candidate has a **very low E** factor...

Extremely Low E will manage situations differently depending on how s/he feels at the time. Predictably unpredictable. May tend to be naïve, overly optimistic, emotional, hopeful or wishful. May make decisions based on whom s/he spoke with last. It's important to explore/listen for:

- Consistency in decision making
- Level of emotional attachment/involvement
- Depth of facts in the thinking and decision-making process

#### Questions

Tell me about a time when you were prospecting a client and you thought the deal was 'closed' when in fact it was not. What did you do differently the next time to secure the sale?

Tell me about a time when you made a decision outside a standard policy or bent the rules to (to make a sale, to close a deal, to satisfy a client, etc.). What led to that decision, what were your reasons, what was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience?

### When a candidate has a **very high E** factor...

Extremely High E will manage situations consistently, predictably, based on their reality of the situation, without any bend or consideration of the "gray." Can be heartless, cold, argumentative, rigid, inflexible, and hardheaded. May not understand people. Listen for/explore:

- Consideration of the people-side of the issue
- Depth of feeling in the thinking and decision-making process
- Thinking out of the box-the unknown-the untried

#### Questions

Describe a conflict situation when you compromised on an issue to move towards a "win-win" solution for all parties involved.

Tell me about a time when you had difficulty understanding someone else's point of view. What was the situation? How did you manage it? What was the outcome?

Describe a time when someone else did not understand your point of view. What was the situation? Were you able to positively influence his/her understanding? If so, how did you do this?





## When the job requires: **Coaching & Developing Others**

### Questions

How do you help your team perform to the best of their abilities? Give some examples along with the outcome(s) and impact(s) on the organization.

How do you create clear goals for the people you lead/manage/supervise to work toward and achieve? Tell me about a time when you put this into action.

From your experience, what are the main factors that boost the morale of your fellow workers? How would you generate these factors in this organization?

How important is it for your team to constantly update their skills? Give me some examples of what you have done to encourage the growth and development of those who work directly for you.

How can you motivate a staff member who is not interested in working? What can be done to get him/her to contribute to the organization? Give an example if you have done something similar in the past.

Tell me about a time when you coached someone on your team, and they had difficulty understanding or buying into the needed changes or new direction. What did you do?

Give me an example of some on-the-job training you delivered to your team. How did you decide on the best approach and delivery method to ensure they got the most out of the training? Please be as specific as possible. How did you determine whether or not the training was effective?

Describe a time when you helped a staff member enhance their social skills.

## When the job requires: **Leading & Managing Change**

### Questions

Describe a time when you were involved in implementing a company-wide policy change. What was your strategy, what tactics did you use, and what was the outcome?

How do you lead/manage change in an organization? What are the important factors you need to manage during times of change? (*Frequent and timely information flow, staying in touch with the pulse of the customers, internal staff, and all stakeholders?*)

Tell me about a time when you were involved in a changing organization. What was your role? What did you do? What did you learn that would change what you would do the next time?

Describe a time when you have gathered input, feedback, and/or criticism regarding a change you were considering. Describe the circumstances, your approach and how you responded? What did you learn from this experience?

What is most important to gain buy-in? Describe a time when you have had to manage resistance to change. What is required to derive good solutions from those affected?





## When the job requires: **Time-Management, Task/Detail-Management, Project-Management**

Questions
Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? How do you stay focused? (commitment to task)
Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
Think of a specific project you were working and describe how you managed the details and follow-through.
Give two examples of things you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate (meeting a deadline, follow through with the details, follow through with a customer, your willingness to work hard)
Describe the most creative (or significant, or challenging, or most enjoyable, or most difficult) work-related project you completed. Why was it creative? (or significant, or challenging, or enjoyable, or difficult?)
How do you organize your daily work? Give specific examples.
Have you ever been able to structure your own schedule and how did you do it?
Tell me about a situation where your supervisor gave you something to do and you weren't sure how to do it (sure you were going to do it right). What did you do?

## When the job requires: **Written Communication**

Questions
Describe a situation in which you had to use reference materials to write a research paper. What was the topic? What journals did you read?
Give me an example of a problem you solved that required documentation.
Describe the most significant written document, report, or presentation that you've completed.

## When the job requires: **Oral Communication**

Questions
Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker or classmate criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others?
Tell me about a time when you caused a breakdown in communication (verbal or written) at work. How did you manage the situation? Or Tell me about a time you had a miscommunication and what you did about it?
Tell me about a time you had to do some public speaking or give a presentation, in front of groups or team members. How did you prepare and deliver the presentation? What was the outcome?



## When the job requires: **Problem-Solving, Decision-Making, Assertiveness**

Questions
Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer or professor. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?
Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a difficult assignment even though the odds were against you. Probing: What did you do? What was the outcome? What did you learn from that experience?
Tell me about a suggestion you made on the job to improve the way things worked. What was the result?
Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor or professor on an idea or concept. How did you proceed? What was the result?
Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your company or class was facing. What was the challenge? What role did others play? (creativity and imagination)
Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job and tell me how you solved it.
Tell me about a project you initiated on your own that was implemented in your department.
Describe a major challenge or problem you faced in a position. How did you manage it?
Tell me a time when many people were counting on you and you failed to solve the problem.
Tell me about a decision you made while under a lot of pressure.
Tell me about an occasion where you conformed to a policy even though you did not agree with it.
Tell me about a time when you needed a 'yes' and kept getting a 'no' how did you respond?
Tell me about a time when you had a difficult time making a decision? What about the decision was difficult? How did you resolve it?
When making decisions, are you more comfortable thinking through and making a decision yourself, or would you rather get others involved in more of a 'team' decision?

## When the job requires: **Goal Setting**

Questions
Describe two specific goals you set for yourself and how successful you were in meeting them. What factors led to your success in meeting your goals?
What are your 1 to 3-year career goals?
Give me an example of an important goal you had set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.



When the job requires: **Conflict Management, Relationship Building, Teaming**

#### Questions

- Describe a time when you got co-workers or classmates who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker or classmate understand a task. How did you assist them? What was the result?
- Describe a conflict situation and how you handled it.
- Describe a conflict situation you have had with a team member and how did you deal with it.
- Describe the worst customer or team member you have ever had and tell me how you dealt with him or her.
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with a very difficult person.
- Tell me about a time you had a conflict in your position with a team member or supervisor. How did you resolve it?
- Describe a conflict situation you have had with a co-worker, prospect, customer or supplier and how you managed it.
- Think of a time when you dealt with an unhappy customer (or a customer with a complaint). Tell me about the situation and describe how you handled it. What was the outcome?
- Describe a co-worker whose behavior/performance you found frustrating, using keywords and phrases?
- What keywords and phrases would that person use to describe you?
- Describe a co-worker whose behavior/performance you found enlightening (refreshing), using keywords and phrases? What keywords and phrases would that person use to describe you?
- Tell me about the most complimentary working relationship you have experienced and why?
- Tell me about the most difficult working relationship you have experienced and why?
- Tell me about a time when you went beyond your regular job responsibilities to help on a group project. What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you had to change your behavior to work successfully with others.

When you want insight on: **Self-awareness, Self-management, Humility**

#### Questions

- When you think about yourself as a professional early in your career, and who you are as a professional today, how have you changed? What behaviors are different now? Why?