

# Interview Guide

This guide has been put together to explain Northern's interview process in a little more detail and to help you prepare for what will happen on the day. We hope that by reading this guide you will be well prepared for your interview and that it will help you to perform at your best.

## Example Based Interviews

Example based interviews enable us to understand your past behaviour and how you have handled and dealt with different situations. By understanding your past behaviour, this gives us a good indication of how you will deal with and approach situations in the future. Example based interviews are designed to assess you against the skills, behaviours and knowledge required for the role.

The skills, behaviours and knowledge assessed in an interview, differ from role to role depending on what is required.

Example based interviews are also referred to as Competency Based Interviews (CBI).

Some examples of areas that may be assessed are:

- Working with others/Teamwork
- Personal qualities
- Handling difficult situations
- Customer service skills
- Prioritising
- Communication style

## How are example based interviews conducted?

An example-based interview is a structured interview made up of specific questions which relate to the skills, behaviours and knowledge required in the role. There will be at least two people on the interview panel. The interviewers will ask you questions that begin with "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of...". The panel may ask you for some additional detail in the examples that you give. This is so that they have a full and detailed understanding of your answer.

Here is an example of a typical question with two types of answers:

**Question: "Tell me about a time when you have dealt with an angry customer"**

**Candidate 1**

*"Well, I'm always dealing with angry customers. That is what you get working at a station in rush hour. Customers are always angry when they miss their train or if it's running late. I'm very good at dealing with them."*

This candidate has given a very broad and general answer. Although the candidate is experienced in dealing with angry customers, they haven't told the interviewer about a specific occasion when they have done this.

Compare this answer to the following:

## Candidate 2

*"I deal with many with angry customers. One particular time was when a customer had missed her last train from an out station on the line because a website had given her incorrect information. I explained to her that because of Christmas the timetables had changed.*

*I asked her where she was trying to get to. I advised her that if she travelled the short distance on the bus that stopped outside the station, she could get to the main interchange station where she would be able to pick up a train to her destination. I double checked my timings first as I did not want to anger her further. I also telephoned ahead and described her so someone could help her on to the train to put her mind at rest, as she was not used to the big stations.*

*She thanked me for my time and help and I heard back from my colleague that she had got on the train okay at the main station."*

This candidate has given a more in depth answer. They have fully demonstrated their skills in communication, checking and providing information, use of their own initiative, and excellent customer service skills.

## How to prepare for an example based interview

A useful technique to use when preparing for and answering example based questions is the 'STAR' technique. The STAR technique acts as a reminder to you as to how to structure your response.

- **Situation** – what was the context / situation?
- **Task** – what was required of you in terms of aims / objectives / challenges?
- **Action** – what did you do (as opposed to your colleagues / team mates / supervisor)?
- **Result** – what happened / what was the outcome of your actions?

The only way to get better at answering questions using the STAR technique is to practice, practice, and practice! Another tip is to keep a record of when you have used a particular skill or demonstrated your ability in your day to day work. This way, you will have a bank of ready-made answers to draw on when preparing for an interview.

Now that you have some insight into what an example based interview is and how it will be conducted, you can begin to prepare and practise for one.

## Hints and Tips

- It is important that you get to know what is required of the role you have applied for. Spend some time looking at the job advert and any further information available on the website. Look for keywords and phrases such as 'team player', 'strong analytical skills', 'ability to deliver to tight deadlines', 'excellent communication skills' and so on. From these keywords you can start to think of some good examples to demonstrate when you have shown these skills and behaviours.
- Think back over your past experiences and situations you have been involved in, that might demonstrate to an interviewer the behaviours they are looking for. The examples might be from work, college, sports, volunteer roles or other groups or teams you may have been a part of.
- You are more likely to make a strong impression if you structure your responses to provide a fully rounded story, with a positive outcome that demonstrates the importance of **your** contribution.
- You might find it useful to practice being interviewed with the help of a friend or family member. It's a good idea to familiarise yourself with your previous experiences to help you remember what you did in these situations, rather than trying to memorise your answers.

## Top Tips

- Don't be afraid to take time to collect your thoughts and think of your best example to fit the question before speaking.
- It's ok to ask questions – remember it's a two-way conversation.
- It's also ok to ask the interviewer to repeat a question, or clarify your understanding of what you are being asked.
- Your interviewers will be busy taking notes during the interview and may not be able to maintain eye contact with you; don't let that distract you or put you off. It's their job to get everything down, so they have an accurate record of what you have said in the interview – it does not mean you are giving bad examples.
- It's important to try to keep your answers as clear and concise as possible; try not to waffle!
- Make sure you are comfortable and feel confident in your clothes.
- Be yourself – act naturally, the interviewers want to get to know you.

**Good luck with your interview.**