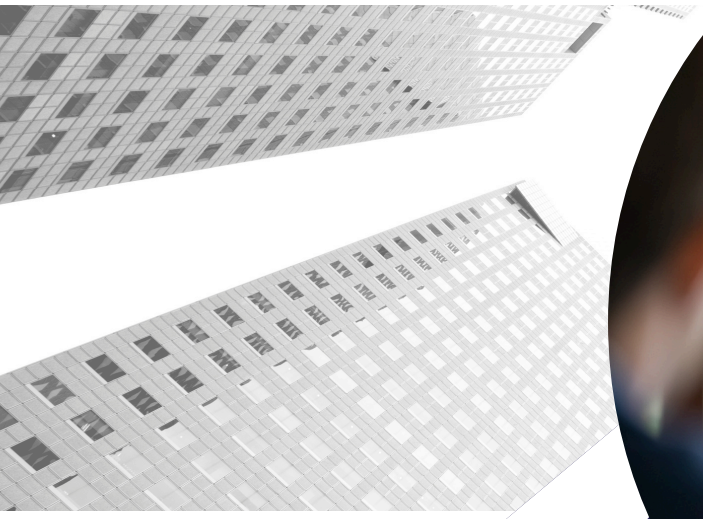
The Ultimate Guide For Competency Based Interviews





Unlocking Potential, Driving Growth

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More Information

www.resourceondemand.com

Introduction

A job interview can be a nerve-wracking experience at the best of times.

Finding the perfect role through a specialist recruitment company like ourselves is one thing, then excelling at the interview process is something else; especially when organisations consistently use competency based interviews.

Today's employers are searching for effective ways to improve their recruitment procedures, increasing the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the overall hiring process. The more accurate their search for a candidate is, the more likely they are to find the perfect fit for their corporate culture first-time around.

Competency based interviews, otherwise known as "situational" or "behavioural" interviews, are an increasingly popular solution for companies in search of efficient recruitment strategies. Unfortunately, if you are not prepared for a competency-based interview, you could easily miss out on the role you have set your sights on.

Here, we'll offer a comprehensive guide to everything you need to know about the competency-based recruitment process so that you can nail that next interview.

In this guide, we share a step by step approach from:



- **Practice and preparation**
- **Example scenarios to use**
- **Body language and on-screen**

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What is a Competency Based Interview?

A “competency based interview” or “CBI”, is a style of interviewing designed to give an employer greater insight into how well you demonstrate the “key competencies” required in the role you have applied for. Employers are looking for you to demonstrate your skills, knowledge, and attitude towards your work.

In other words, it’s about looking beyond the skills and certificates on your CV and instead examining how you have responded to real-life situations.

Traditional job interviews might focus on asking questions about your previous industry experience and what you would do in certain situations. Competency based questions ask you to present examples of how you’ve used specific skills and knowledge to:

- Complete projects
- Meet deadlines
- Overcome challenges
- Work collaboratively

This style of interview is particularly valuable for companies in search of critical skills and characteristics in new employees.

Competency based questions ask you to present examples of how you’ve used specific skills and knowledge



The Benefits of CBIs for Employers

Competency based interviews are not merely a way for hiring managers to "filter out" prospective employees who've learned how to respond correctly to standard interview questions. They help employers to refine and improve the recruitment process, by choosing the right Salesforce candidates based not just on their education, and technical skills but also the unique characteristics and abilities that match each role, be that a cloud consultant, project manager or data architects.

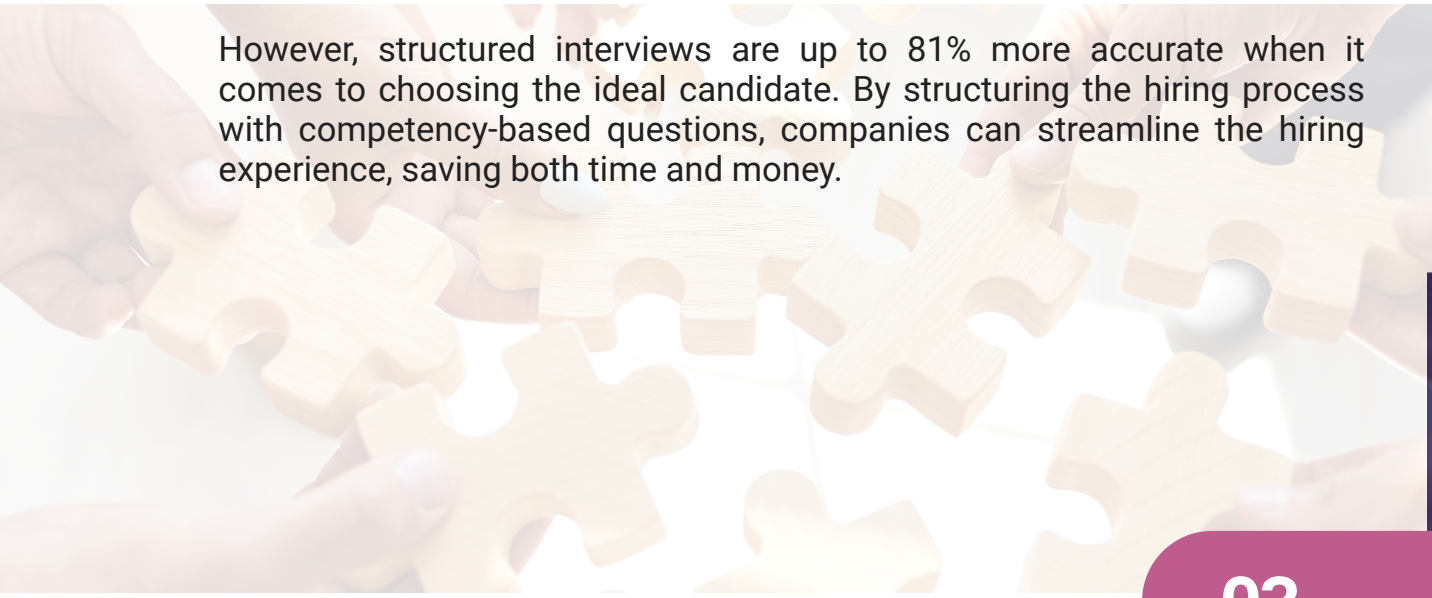
Some of the main advantages of CBIs for employers include:

The ability to reduce bias: While a lot of today's companies know that diversity can contribute towards a more efficient workforce, many are also susceptible to the practice of consistently hiring the same people, from the same backgrounds, to avoid disruption to company culture.

Competency based scoring and interviewing allows recruitment professionals to reduce bias and focus on identifying employees that have fundamental skills while sharing essential behaviours, and attitudes, rather than demographics and backgrounds.

The chance to simplify the hiring process: The search for the ideal candidate can be a complicated and time-consuming task for hiring managers. Tracking the right potential applicants, conducting interviews, and following up with each possible employee is a significant investment of resources and time.

However, structured interviews are up to 81% more accurate when it comes to choosing the ideal candidate. By structuring the hiring process with competency-based questions, companies can streamline the hiring experience, saving both time and money.



The Benefits of CBIs for Employers

Improve candidate feedback: One of the most important things a business can do to attract key talent to their doors is to make sure that they give potential hires the best possible candidate experience.

Whether an applicant receives an offer or not, feedback is essential. In fact, 94% of candidates say they would appreciate input after their interview. Competency based interviews allow HR and recruiting managers to provide informative feedback that supports the company's decisions.

Reduce employee turnover: By using competency-based recruitment and selection processes, businesses can benefit from a significantly lower attrition rate. After all, once a company has evaluated the requirements of the open position and identified the competencies most relevant to the role, they can focus on finding a candidate that's the perfect fit for the job.

By structuring the hiring process with competency based questions, companies can streamline the hiring experience



The Benefits of CBIs for Candidates

Importantly, competency-based interviews are also beneficial for candidates. In a world where employees are always searching for a better cultural fit from their workplace, CBIs can help applicants to determine whether they are a good match for the job at hand, or whether they might be better suited to another position. Additionally, they help to ensure candidates don't fall victim to the temptation of saying what they think the prospective employer wants to hear just to get the job.

It's not unusual for applicants to exaggerate their skills, experiences, and results to increase their chances of an offer, only to discover that they are out of their depth and struggling in their new position as a result.

For candidates, competency-based interviews can:

Outline clear expectations as to what a role entails, and what the employee will be expected to do during their time within the company.



Help team members understand the fundamental values of the organisation that they will be working in, which allows a candidate to be sure that these values match their own. As a result, this helps to confirm in their mind that this is the company for them.

Let a candidate demonstrate, using evidence from previous and current roles, that they have the knowledge, skills, attitude, and desire to succeed in the position they are applying for.

What Candidates Should Know about Competency Based Interviews



- Evidence Based
- Demonstrated Ability

Although competency based interviews have been around for several years now, many individuals will be less familiar with the structure and types of questions asked in this style of interview. The best way to prepare for a competency-based experience is to know what you can expect.

Typically, these interviews include a range of questions that help your potential employer understand how you might respond to a situation. The response you outline will determine whether you appear to have the core competency your hiring manager is looking for.

What Candidates Should Know about Competency Based Interviews

Sometimes, this kind of interview will include questions that explore how much a candidate knows about their potential new employer. Usually, these questions are asked to determine how committed the applicant is to their prospective new role.

The competencies that an employer will test for will vary from one position to another. However, some of the most common core competencies include:

- Technical ability
- Functional skills
- Consulting experience
- Implementation knowledge
- Business analysis and analytical skills
- Complex problem solving
- Project management
- Conflict resolution
- Stakeholder management
- People management skills
- Negotiation and influencing skills



The Competency Based Interview Structure

The questions you are asked in such an interview means you will need to refer to experiences you have had in your current and previous roles. How you contribute to various cloud communities especially Salesforce related ones, as well as other hobbies and voluntary work can help you to demonstrate your skills and expertise.

For instance, if you were asked for an example of your ability to work in a team, the question might sound like “describe a recent situation when you were involved with a team inside a client organisation”.

Most competency-based questions will begin in a similar way, such as:



Tell us about a time…

Describe for us a situation…

How would you respond to…

Give an example of…

The interviewer may also follow up with additional questions designed to clarify some of the points you’ve made, or give you a chance to expand on your answer if you haven’t demonstrated your ability to use the specific skill the prospective employer referring to.

Take the time to brainstorm experiences that you can use as examples in your interview. Additionally, remember that it is usually acceptable to ask your interviewer for a few moments to think about your answer before you respond.

How to Ace Your Competency Based Interview

To make sure that you have the best chances of success in this style of interview; be well-prepared. Just as you might plan for traditional interviews by asking your friends and family members to quiz you about common questions, find out which competencies your potential employer is looking for in advance, and plan your answers carefully. Think about the most appropriate examples that will demonstrate your unique skills.

The easiest way to check what competencies will be assessed is to refer to the job description. Make a note of any critical skills or characteristics that are listed. For instance, if the job description states that the employer is looking for someone with “project management experience”, you will know that project management is one of their core competencies.

Thorough research before your interview will also help you to demonstrate your “motivation” and “commitment”, which in turn highlights your interest in the business, their services and client base.

You may even call and talk to someone on the team you could be joining or learn more about what the business values and looks for in employees. It is a great way to show you are dedicated to getting the role.

If you struggle to find the information that you need online, remember that you can always call your recruitment company for advice, or reach out to the company itself.



Preparing for Competency Based Questions

The job specification is one of the best places to get more information about which competencies you might be tested on during an interview. Look at the "personal specification", or "person spec" segment for more information on the skills, abilities, and characteristics that the business desires.

The type of question you are asked during the interview will depend primarily on whether you are applying for a functional, technical or leadership position. Each question posed will be designed to allow you to demonstrate your specific skills, knowledge and attitudes and how they might relate to your new position in a particular business.

To demonstrate your competencies, you can draw from your current and previous roles, your contribution to the broader technology community, personal life, or voluntary work.

Here are some examples of the questions that you might be asked to demonstrate different skills:

Verbal skills: Tell us about a situation where your communication skills resolved a problem.

Listening skills: Outline how your listening skills have helped contribute to a specific business outcome.

Conflict management: Tell us about a time when you felt that conflict was a problem on a project/ in your organisation, and how you managed this conflict to get the best results.

Creativity: Describe a project or situation where you felt that a conventional approach would not be suitable. How did you use your creativity, and what were the results?

Decisiveness: What would you say the most important decision you have made recently has been? How did you go about making that decision?



Preparing for Competency Based Questions

Delegation: How would you determine how specific responsibilities in your new role should be delegated? How have you made use of delegation in the past?

Flexibility: Describe a situation where you had to change your plan halfway through a project.

Leadership: Tell us about a situation where you had to use your skills to get a team to improve their performance. What were the problems you had to address?

Teamwork: Describe a situation where you acted as a member of a team. What was the outcome of the group project and how did you contribute to it?



The key to ensuring the best outcome of your competency-based interview is to make sure that you prepare your answers in advance. Take the time to sit down with the list of competencies that you have recorded, and ask yourself how you can demonstrate those competencies through past experiences. The more you can relate examples to what you have learnt about the company, their client base and what's important to them, the more impactful your answers will be.

Ensure your responses are precise and accurate, which means that interviewers will quickly be able to see what you are capable of achieving.

Using the STAR Approach

One of the best ways to make sure that you are well-prepared for such an interview is to familiarise yourself with the "**STAR**" model for answering questions. The STAR model is frequently recommended by recruitment experts as the best way for candidates to communicate points about themselves in a way that's clear, concise, and transparent.

The STAR approach asks you to identify four parts in your response:



This will help you to formulate your answer into a quick, concise response that addresses all your key messages and ideas. For most people, the STAR formula can be a solution that helps them to avoid going off on a tangent with their answers or losing the interest of their interviewers.

Here's an example: the candidate is applying for a Salesforce Integration Architects role. The interviewer's question is: "*Tell me about a time that you were asked to design a new technical solution on the Force.com platform*"

Answering this question with the STAR model might look something like this:

Using the STAR Approach



Situation: set the context for the story - “I was asked to come up with a technical solution for a business problem where a potential answer may or may not already exist on the Salesforce AppExchange



Task: what was required of you - “It was my responsibility to research and collate possible suitable applications on the AppExchange to see if they could solve the business problem.



Actions: what did you do - “I researched all potential solutions and evaluated the options to identify any gaps within them that could impact the results. I then compared the final options with the alternative of designing our own bespoke solution from scratch. I then presented my findings to all stakeholders with recommendations of what we should do, how long the project would take and how much it would cost.”



Result: how well the situation played out - “The stakeholders were happy with my findings and agreed with my plan to design a bespoke technical solution, which was implemented and completed within six months. Within four weeks of go-live, the client started to see a positive customer engagement with their products and services. In addition to this, sales of their products stopped declining and plateaued. Within six weeks of go-live, sales increased by 25% and two months later they were back to the same level as before the ‘issue’ occurring.”

Key points: it’s important to speak in specific rather than general terms and quantify your success. In this example, we mentioned percentage declines, increases and time frames.

From a listener’s perspective, this makes the story interesting, and they are more able to gauge your success. Nameless people and unquantified achievements make the answer less convincing.

Plan to Make the Right Impression

Planning for your competency-based interview does not just mean making sure that you take the time to learn as much as you can about the company before your interview. It's like any other interview in the sense that it allows you to make that all-important first impression on a potential employer.

When you first meet, your employer will often make a snap judgement on you based on how you carry yourself, how you present yourself, and even how you dress.

According to numerous studies, referred to in the Wall Street Journal and Scientific American over 70% of hiring managers would be reluctant to offer a job to a candidate who turns up to an interview wearing the wrong 'attire'. The same research shows that 22% of hiring managers had already rejected an applicant based entirely on the way they presented themselves in an interview. Although you may think that a competency-based interview would be less focused on your appearance than a traditional interview, the truth is that impressions still count.

It's no secret that the tech industry is known for being more casual yet when you are still at interview stage what do you do? You could put on a suit and feel over dressed and out of place or go casual and end up being under dressed and uncomfortable.

So again, what do you do?



The truth is that impressions still count.

Plan to Make the Right Impression

In our experience, it is always wise to research your future employer to get an idea of their dress code.

Look at the company's social media. Notice what people are wearing day to day. If this does not help, have a look at the company website. Often the About Us, Meet the team or Work for Us pages will have photos and will give you a good idea what's ok.

Having said that, there are two things to remember;

- Your style of dress does need to reflect the role you are applying for. A behind the scenes Salesforce developer would be different to a Lead Salesforce Consultant who is generally client facing.

- However casual the company dress code is, it is recommended that you dress one level up.

So if it is jeans and a t shirt, wear dark jeans a smarter collared t shirt and add a jacket. For ladies, choose a smart blouse to compliment your jeans with a jacket.

If you are still not sure, talk to your recruitment consultant who will have a thorough understanding of the employer in question, their culture and general dress code.



Remember to Watch Your Body Language

There are plenty of different factors that can impact the way an interviewer or hiring manager perceives you when you are applying for your dream job. For instance, while an informal dress code might make you seem lazy and unprofessional, poor body language could cause you to appear bored, disrespectful, lacking in confidence with low self-esteem, or even untrustworthy in the eyes of your potential employer.

Statistics on the importance of body language vary, with some people claiming that our body language accounts for 50-65% of all communication, while others suggest that the number is closer to 80%. Either way, it's safe to say that everything from eye contact, to how you shake your interviewer's hand, could have a part to play in the success of your interview.

Here are a few quick body language tips to be mindful of during the interview experience:



1. Be Careful When Shaking Hands: One of the first things you're likely to do in an interview scenario is shake the hand of the hiring manager. The handshake is a straightforward and shared form of introduction, but it can also be a way for your interviewer to gauge your personality. Many hiring managers believe that a firm handshake communicates confidence and self-assurance. If you know yours can be on the soft side, practice your handshake before you go.



2. Be Genuine: Make sure that you smile when possible to show your interviewer that you're genuinely pleased to be with them.

Be yourself; the interviewer will notice if it looks like you are forcing yourself to act out of character. You can only keep up an act for so long.

Remember to Watch Your Body Language



3. Watch Your Posture: The way that you walk into the interview room and how you sit or stand during the meeting is essential. Even if you are focused on thinking of which of the many examples you have prepared you will share when answering questions, make sure that you are not slouching, or crossing your arms. These actions can communicate a lack of confidence in what you are saying.

This may cause the interviewer to wonder how much of what you are saying is true. It can also communicate disinterest in the role and company. Keep your posture straight with your shoulders back and your head up. A comfortable position for your hands is to have them on your lap when you aren't using them to gesture.



4. Be Aware Of Your Eye Contact: While you don't necessarily want to stare at your interviewers so hard that they end up feeling uncomfortable, you do want to use enough eye contact to connect and build rapport. Good eye contact also shows the person you are talking with that you're deeply involved in the conversation.

If there are three or more people in your interview, avoid giving eye contact only to the individual who is asking the question. Instead, direct around 60% of your attention towards the person who asked the question, while sharing the remaining 40% of your eye contact with the other panel members.

Think About How You Use Your Voice

We have talked about using body language, and it's worth remembering that your words are important too. When it comes to earning the attention and respect of hiring managers, it's not just what you say that matters, but also how you say it.

Your vocal delivery can make a massive difference to the way that you are perceived. A strong, stable voice communicates competency and confidence, while a quiet stuttering voice conveys a lack of confidence and even anxiety. Begin by listening carefully to the volume and pace of the person who's asking you the questions. Look to match their volume and speed more closely. Increase or slow down your own pace and volume, so that you are at about a 75% match.

Forcing yourself to match their voice 100% will look and sound strange. It may also make the hiring manager believe that you're ridiculing them.

Other ways to ensure you have an employable voice include:



1. Handle Your Nerves As Best You Can: Nerves can cause your tone of voice to go up and down almost at random. To ensure that you appear confident and relaxed, practice a few breathing exercises before you go into the interview.

Additionally, remember that preparing for your competency-based interview with the steps that we have outlined above will help you to feel more relaxed about the experience so that you can keep anxiety at bay.



2. Use the Right Volume: As previously mentioned, match the volume of your voice to the volume your interviewer is using. While a whisper might be appropriate for some situations - it's not a good idea when you are trying to get your sought after next role. A clear voice with reasonable volume will help to show your authority and outline that you are confident about the subject matter. Too quiet, and you could be disregarded as being nervous and uncertain.

Remember Setting Counts Too

Remote interviews have become a normal part of today's hiring process. Whether you are interviewing for consultant role, or searching for your next leadership position, being able to interview confidently online is now an essential professional skill.

While remote interviews offer flexibility and convenience, they also introduce new challenges. Technology issues, distractions at home, poor preparation, and a lack of engagement can all impact the outcome of an interview before the conversation has even truly begun. The reality is this - a remote interview still creates a first impression within seconds.

How you prepare your environment, present yourself on screen, communicate, and engage with others can influence the hiring decision just as much as your experience and technical capability.

The more prepared you are, the more natural and confident your interview will feel.

After all, preparation creates confidence, and confidence creates opportunity.

Remote interviewing is no longer simply an alternative option for businesses. For many organisations, it is now the standard first stage of the recruitment process.

Companies increasingly rely on remote interviews to:

- Speed up hiring decisions
- Reduce recruitment costs
- Access wider talent pools
- Improve flexibility for candidates and interviewers
- Coordinate international and hybrid teams more effectively

For candidates, remote interviews offer convenience and accessibility. However, they also require a slightly different approach compared to traditional face-to-face interviews.

A strong remote interview is not simply about answering questions well.

Remember Setting Counts Too



1. Technology Matters: One of the quickest ways to disrupt an interview is poor preparation with technology. Before your interview:

- Check your internet connection is stable
- Fully charge your laptop or device
- Test your microphone and camera
- Ensure your conferencing software works correctly
- Familiarise yourself with mute, camera and screen-sharing controls

If you are using software you have never used before, practise beforehand. Small technical issues can create unnecessary stress and distract you from focusing on the interview itself. Remember, confidence often comes from familiarity.



2. Create The Right Environment: Your surroundings communicate more than you may realise. A cluttered, noisy, or distracting background can shift attention away from your experience and achievements.

Ideally, choose a quiet, private space where you are unlikely to be interrupted. Before the interview:

- Remove distractions from view
- Turn off television and music
- Silence mobile devices and desktop notifications
- Check lighting so your face is clearly visible
- Position your camera at eye level

Take time to view your setup from the interviewer's perspective. Professional surroundings help create a professional impression.

Remember Setting Counts Too



3. Dress Correctly: One of the biggest mistakes candidates make during remote interviews is assuming that because the interview is online, standards become more relaxed. They do not. Dress exactly as you would for an in-person interview.

Professional clothing helps you:

- Feel more confident
- Create the right mindset
- Demonstrate professionalism
- Make a stronger first impression

Even if only your upper half is visible on screen, dress fully and appropriately. Unexpected situations happen, and professionalism should remain consistent throughout. As we often say: "*Confidence starts long before the first interview question is asked*."



4. Eye Contact Matters: During remote interviews, eye contact feels slightly different. Instead of constantly looking at yourself on screen, focus on engaging naturally with the interviewer by occasionally looking directly into the camera when speaking. This creates stronger connection and rapport.

Good communication online also means:

- Listening carefully
- Avoiding interruptions and being mindful of delays
- Speaking more clearly
- Maintaining positive energy
- Remaining engaged throughout

Remember, remote interviews can sometimes feel less personal. Your enthusiasm and warmth help bridge that gap.

Remember Setting Counts Too



5. Avoiding Distractions: One of the most noticeable mistakes in remote interviews is divided attention.

Interviewers can easily spot when candidates:

- Read notes excessively
- Check phones
- Monitor emails
- Look at other screens

While brief notes can help you stay organised, avoid relying on them too heavily. The goal is conversation — not presentation.

Be present, engaged, and attentive throughout.



6. Have A Backup Plan: Even with excellent preparation, technology can occasionally fail.

Before the interview begins, confirm:

- What happens if the connection drops
- Whether the interviewer will call you back
- Alternative contact details
- Backup platforms if required

Planning for problems before they occur demonstrates professionalism and adaptability.

Finally, be aware of time delays. Even strong internet connections can experience slight delays. Allow brief pauses after asking questions and avoid speaking over others too quickly. Sometimes silence simply means the connection is catching up. Patience helps conversations flow more naturally.

What If...

You might be asking yourself: “What if I don’t know that part of the interview is going to be competency based?”

Ultimately, it’s difficult to know for sure whether you are going to be taking part in a competency-based interview. Unless your interviewer tells you that this will be the situation in advance, the best thing you can do is ask your recruitment consultant first or contact the company ahead of time, and if all else fails, prepare anyway.

Preparing for a competency-based interview means that you can evidence your skills, knowledge, and capabilities without merely restating whatever is written on your CV. At the same time, the research that you will do, to plan answers to the types of questions asked in this style of interview will give you a better understanding of the company and the role that you are applying for - which is always an excellent way to impress a hiring manager.

As with any interview process, the outcome you experience will often be dependent on how much effort and time you put into being prepared. The more you work on ensuring that you make the best possible impression on the interviewer - regardless of what type of questions they ask you, the more likely you are to nail the experience and get the job you have been working hard towards when the opportunity arises.

Ready to get going?

All the Best

Lee and Theresa

The outcome you experience will often be dependent on how much effort and time you put into being prepared.

About Resource On Demand

Let's grow together.

Resource On Demand is Europe's first specialist Salesforce Recruitment Company.

We've been working in the Salesforce and SAP space since 2007, assisting innovative and disruptive organisations to grow their digital transformation teams. We've been supporting companies of all sizes to fill roles that span across Salesforce, SAP, digital transformation, marketing automation, data management, Human Capital Management, both contract and permanent.

The team at Resource On Demand have access to an extensive database of key talent, across the UK, Europe and the US.



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