



Alter

your trajectory

Career Trajectory Series

5. How to prepare for
a competency based
interview



At Alternatives we connect with precision the best with the best, and all the time with unrelenting integrity, passion and expertise.

To help you on your career journey, we have developed the **Alternatives Trajectory Toolkit**. Whether you are simply planning or reviewing your career; taking an initial look at potential opportunities; applying for a specific role or actively interviewing, we have tips and insights to share with you, accumulated by our team, over many years.

In our **Career Trajectory** series we share:

1. How to plan your career

2. Evolving marketing competencies and how to build them

3. How to write a winning cv

4. How to succeed at interview

5. **How to prepare for a competency based interview**

And of course, you can contact our **specialist talent team** at any time to advise you along the way. They are industry and talent specialists of standing, who recognise the complex and rapidly evolving world of marketing, digital, and customer focused careers. They can advise, and at times challenge you. They will go the extra mile to ALTER your trajectory.

We hope you find these insights useful and we look forward to hearing from you.

From all of the team at Alternatives



How to Prepare for a Competency Based Interview

A Competency based interview is a structured interview approach which aims to gather evidence of how well a candidate will perform in a particular role. Past behaviour is believed to be a strong predictor of future behaviour.

Competency based questions are either:

Behavioural – which work on the basis that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour,
Situational – where the candidate is presented with a potential future scenario and asked how they would be likely to handle it, or

To prepare, you should write down 2-3 strong and compelling examples for all competencies. When preparing your answers one useful tool is the S.T.A.R acronym:

- **Situation** – The context of the market
- **Task** – The task that you are faced with
- **Action** – The process you put in place to achieve the objective
- **Result** – The (successful) outcome that you achieved

Rehearse/review answers with a peer or mentor.

During the interview:

- Listen to and answer the questions
- Distinguish the "I" from the "Team"
- Provide recent examples of achievements
- Demonstrate your passion and enthusiasm for the role

Competencies that may be explored:

Competencies will relate to the role in question, so take your guidance from the job description to ensure you can reassure on the key areas of responsibility. Also consider the type of organisation it is culturally. If it is highly entrepreneurial for example, questions are more likely to relate to competencies that reflect that.

The competencies outlined below (in alphabetical order) are ones we regularly see included in interview panels. This is however a non-exhaustive list, so do check online for other examples and potential questions.



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Focus Area	Examples
<p>Achievement and Results Orientation</p> <p>Displays a strong desire to achieve results, and has strong sense of urgency, setting stretching targets and working hard to achieve challenging goals. Makes best use of own and other’s skills.</p>	
<p>Commercial Awareness</p> <p>Understands and applies commercial and financial principles. Views issues in terms of costs, profits, return, markets and added value. Looks at overall business financial and commercial return, not just own areas of responsibility.</p>	
<p>Confidence, Resilience and Self-Awareness</p> <p>Demonstrates self-confidence in the business environment, shown in terms of direction, drive, self-confidence and conviction that a good job will be done, thereby giving others reassurance. Maintains effective work behaviour in the face of setbacks or pressure. The ability to stand up for what one believes is right. Is clear and in control, states own position strongly.</p>	
<p>Creativity and Innovation</p> <p>Creates new and imaginative approaches to work related issues. Identifies fresh approaches and shows a willingness to question traditional assumptions.</p>	
<p>Customer Focus</p> <p>The desire and willingness to address the needs of others. Pays close attention to internal and external customers’ needs with the aim of establishing long-term relationships, striving for ‘partnerships’ rather than traditional customer-supplier interface.</p>	
<p>Flexibility/ Change</p> <p>Successfully adapts to changing markets, demands and conditions.</p>	
<p>Judgement and Decision Making</p> <p>The ability to seek out and sift relevant information and assess the issues. Makes rapid decisions that respond to the short-term pressures yet do not compromise company’s longterm strategies. Identifies and evaluates relevant information, draws logical conclusions based on objective evidence.</p>	
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<p>Negotiating, Influencing, Persuading</p> <p>Able to gain agreement or acceptance for ideas or action plan through influence, persuasion or negotiation; looks for win/win solutions.</p>	
<p>Planning and Organising</p> <p>Establishes future priorities and visualises all foreseeable changes required to meet future requirements. Identifies appropriate resource requirements, including staff, to achieve longterm objectives.</p>	
<p>Problem Solving and Analysis</p> <p>The ability to identify a problem and break it down into its constituent parts. Linking together and evaluating information from different sources and identifying possible causes of the problem.</p>	
<p>Strategic Thinking</p> <p>The ability to maintain a broad overview of business challenges. Drives the business forward to achieve long-term goals while realising short-term goals. Can recognise new patterns and creates new concepts or models to explain situations. Identifies, develops and communicates new ideas or processes which challenge established methods and prompt new opportunities for the business. Identifies key or underlying issues in complex situations.</p>	
<p>Teamwork and Leadership</p> <p>Achieves results by working with others. Able to collaborate effectively across different functions/areas in the organisation. Appropriate style and approach to leadership -involves others and demonstrates support. Leads by example, gains respect from others through merit rather than status.</p>	

Competencies that may be explored:

- Take me briefly through your CV/career summary
- What are your key achievements?
- Can you give me an example of a situation where you achieved against the odds?
- Describe the biggest work-related problem you have faced in the last year? How did you handle it? What steps did you take to resolve the problem?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to work through others to achieve a particular objective.
- Describe the most satisfying experience you have had in getting others to support an idea of yours.
- How would your friends / colleagues describe you?
- What are your weaknesses?
- What would you do in the role in the first 100 days? What would success look like for you?
- What areas of the new role would you find most challenging?
- Why should we choose you?



Contact us

We hope you find these career insights useful. For further guidance on how to plan your marketing career, contact our specialist team at Alternatives.

Call us on **+3531 6618889** or email us at **hello@alternatives.ie**
We look forward to hearing from you.

From all of the team at Alternatives



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new ways of working