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***Competency Investigator*®
*Fifth Edition***

**Competency-Based Interviewing®
Program Summary and Key Teaching Points**

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Competency Investigator

The *Competency Investigator* embodied in this booklet is a selection tool. It applies the principles of the Competency-Based Interviewing system by guiding you in determining the specific technical and personal competencies needed to do a particular job in a specific setting or organization and above all to do that job successfully. Using this instrument will enable you to develop a structured interview that is based on how an applicant has acted in past situations. That interview will then be used to evaluate the applicant's skills for the job. Although we stress the term "structured," do bear in mind that this structure is not rigid. A systematic job skills analysis is required to define clearly which competencies are necessary for successful job performance. Once you have identified these competencies, you will be able to carry out an accurate and unbiased assessment of a candidate's abilities. Moreover, federal and state law mandate that you use a consistent, structured and predefined interviewing process that is based on objective data.

Broadly speaking, two fundamentally different groups of competencies are assessed during any job interview—technical competencies and personal/interpersonal competencies. Technical or job competencies are the specific skills, knowledge and abilities required to accomplish any given job. They represent the minimum critical level of competency required to perform at a satisfactory level. People typically acquire these competencies through education, on-the-job training and previous work experience. They are specific to a particular job and are quite different from an individual's personal/interpersonal competencies. The assessment of a candidate's technical competencies begins by reviewing a résumé, application form, or internal personnel record. It continues with an evaluation of previous work experience, education and training, or other special technical expertise gathered over time. Reference checking may also provide valuable data about candidates' technical competencies. Therefore, less time is needed in the interview for assessing technical competencies. Furthermore, pre-screening to ensure that the person has at least the stated minimum basic qualifications for success always precedes the interview process.

Personal/interpersonal competencies refer to an individual's personality or behavior. They consist of clusters of habits, abilities and skills that transfer from job to job and permeate all aspects of a person's life and behavior. Personal and interpersonal competencies are generally acquired early in life and reflect, among other things, one's attitudes about work and the accomplishment of work. The Competency-Based Interviewing system uses CLUES[®], which represent the five most basic personality elements or skills, to describe an individual's personal/interpersonal competencies. These five elements or interpersonal skills are present in varying degrees in all people and they are important in varying degrees to any given job.

The structured interview that you will develop with the help of the *Competency Investigator* consists of two sections. The first section addresses the technical competencies needed for success on a given job. In addition, the *Competency Investigator* guides you in determining how to measure these competencies. If you will be using interviews to evaluate a candidate's technical competencies, the *Competency Investigator* will help you to develop appropriate questions. The second section provides a process that will allow you to identify the personal/interpersonal competencies required for success in that job. Then it guides your development of specific, job-related interview questions that permit candidates to describe their competencies by discussing their work histories in behavioral terms. Finally, the *Competency Investigator* assists you in the definitive evaluation of each candidate's qualifications for the position to be filled.

HOW TO USE THE *COMPETENCY INVESTIGATOR*

The *Competency Investigator* must be completed accurately and honestly, for it is your basic working tool. Its purpose is to stimulate your thinking so that you have an in-depth understanding of the competencies, both technical and personal, required to perform a particular job successfully.

To use this tool successfully and develop a useful and structured job interview, you must become at least generally familiar with the basic requirements of the job for which you will be interviewing. You may need to augment your understanding and knowledge of the job through several avenues. For example, you could review any written job description and take time to observe the work actually being done. Even a brief conversation with a veteran worker will give you a great deal of information about what it takes to succeed on the job. Another valuable source of information about what is required for success on that job is the immediate supervisor who oversees that position. Or you may interview people who have successfully held the job in the past and any former supervisors who still have a thorough understanding of the job. Regardless of the route you take, a complete and careful analysis of the technical competencies necessary for job success is the first step in Competency-Based Interviewing.

It is desirable to have at least three people who are familiar with the job complete the entire *Competency Investigator*. No doubt there will be some divergence of views regarding what is really essential for success in any position, but some negotiation and discussion should resolve such differences of opinion. The lead interviewer will be responsible for resolving these differences.

When completing the *Competency Investigator*, keep your critical thinking skills well sharpened at all times. As you begin the process of analyzing a job with the *Competency Investigator*, it is important to keep the following questions in mind—questions that will need to be answered as you complete the *Competency Investigator*.

1. What does a person in this job have to do on a regular basis to succeed?
2. What are the competencies and skills of the most successful individuals who hold this job or have held it in the past?
3. What necessary competencies and skills will the person need in order to achieve continued success on this job?
4. How will a person hired for this job know that he or she is succeeding?
5. Why have people left this job?
6. In what ways have the responsibilities of this job changed over time and how might they be different in the future?

COMPETENCY INVESTIGATOR

Job Title (Job Being Investigated):

Your Name:

Your Title: _____ Date: _____

Part I. GENERAL BACKGROUND AND BASIC QUALIFICATIONS

A. General Background

Now, literally or figuratively, lean back in your chair and give some thought to the people who have held this job in the past. Think about both the superstars and the marginal performers, then about the vast majority of average people who have held the position. On the lines below, fill in the names of two of the strongest people who have ever held the job, two of the weakest and two who exemplify the "average worker." If only a few people have held this job, do the best you can, completing the spaces at the bottom of this page using your best judgment. If the position is newly created, simply skip to the lower spaces and, again, use your best judgment. Do the same as you continue through the *Competency Investigator*.

1. Strongest _____
2. Strongest _____
3. Average _____
4. Average _____
5. Weakest _____
6. Weakest _____

Using the space below, review the work behavior of each of the six people you have listed. What about each person's approach to work, interpersonal habits, technical skills and abilities made you rank him or her in the strong, weak, or average range? What distinguishes the superior performers from the average and the average from the weak?

STRONGEST

AVERAGE

WEAKEST

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Part III. PERSONAL/INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCY ANALYSIS

A. Developing Personal/Interpersonal Competency Criteria

The following pages will assist you in determining the relative importance of the five CLUES[®] for success on this job. Each of the Big Five CLUES is a personality dimension or behavioral continuum.

Before we consider the five CLUES directly, simply think about the work behavior of the two strongest job-holders you listed in Part I. Which behaviors stand out as the most significant personal/interpersonal competencies contributing to their success? Depending upon the nature of the position, these behavioral competencies might include such things as initiative and the ability to work without close supervision, empathy and the willingness to reach out and assist others, stress tolerance and the ability to stay cool under pressure, independence and a preference for working alone, as well as precision and attention to detail and accuracy. Also, consider the behavioral skills of the average jobholder and the weaknesses or gaps in those skills shown by the weaker performers. In all likelihood, none of those people, nor any other example individuals you may recall, will share an identical array of personal/interpersonal strengths, weaknesses or gaps. Recalling them, however, should enable you to list various behavioral competencies or hindrances below.

List the most typical personal/interpersonal behaviors required on this job on a daily basis.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

List the most important personal/interpersonal weaknesses that could cause a technically competent person to fail on this job.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

In order to assist you in identifying the personal/interpersonal competencies required for success on this job, next you will complete the Competency-Based Interviewing[®] Descriptors found on pages 14 and 15.

C

Conscientious refers to a person's degree of organization, persistence and commitment to work; a continuum from highly dependable, well-disciplined and deliberate, to carefree, spontaneous and easy-going.

L

Likable represents the degree to which a person sees others in a positive light, ranging from trusting, agreeable, good-natured and concerned for others, to tough-minded, cautious, suspicious and critical.

U

Undogmatic involves openness to new experience from both the outer and inner world; a continuum ranging from imaginative, original, curious and venturesome, to down-to-earth, traditional, conventional and structured.

E

Extroverted refers to a person's preferred level of social stimulation. It also refers to the primary source of energy and drive, especially for work activities. This continuum runs from sociable, dominant, friendly, energetic and outgoing, to reserved, retiring, quiet, self-contained and introverted.

S

Stress Tolerant involves a person's degree of resilience and coping skills ranging from calm, relaxed, poised, confident and unemotional, to anxious, nervous, worrying and pessimistic.

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEWING® DESCRIPTORS

Instructions

On this and the following page, you will find a list of adjectives, descriptors and terms that relate to each of the five CLUES®. These descriptors are listed in twenty-two groups of five descriptors each. Choose the two most relevant descriptors from the five given for each group. Each descriptor should be viewed in its most positive, work-enhancing fashion. Record your choices on the Descriptor Response Form on page 17. You may find it easier to first circle the descriptors on pages 14 and 15 and then transfer your choices to the Descriptor Response Form. To help select the two most important descriptors, you might ask yourself, "To what extent does the job being investigated require the person to be _____?" Remember, in order to make an accurate assessment, you must choose two and only two, descriptors from each set of five. You should assume the most positive definition, in a business setting, of each descriptor.

GROUP A	GROUP B	GROUP C	GROUP D
1. Detail-oriented	1. Quality-focused	1. High-integrity	1. Responsible
2. Amiable	2. Accommodating	2. Supportive	2. Helpful
3. Creative	3. Imaginative	3. Original	3. Flexible
4. Active	4. Outgoing	4. Dominant	4. Forceful
5. Calm	5. Well-adjusted	5. Secure	5. Even-tempered
GROUP E	GROUP F	GROUP G	GROUP H
1. Trustworthy	1. Dependable	1. Cost-conscious	1. Exact
2. Compromising	2. Collaborative	2. Friendly	2. Empathetic
3. Spontaneous	3. Open-to-new-ideas	3. Independent	3. Curious
4. Enthusiastic	4. Assertive	4. Persuasive	4. Energizing
5. Self-assured	5. Unflappable	5. Resilient	5. Poised
GROUP I	GROUP J	GROUP K	
1. Disciplined	1. Committed	1. Cautious	
2. Empowering	2. Congenial	2. Easygoing	
3. Untraditional	3. Venturesome	3. Uninhibited	
4. Entrepreneurial	4. Ambitious	4. Risk-taking	
5. Composed	5. Self-confident	5. Optimistic	

GROUP L

1. Casual
2. Cynical
3. Conventional
4. Self-contained
5. Calm

GROUP M

1. Easygoing
2. Shrewd
3. Down-to-earth
4. Task-oriented
5. Well-adjusted

GROUP N

1. Passive
2. Calculating
3. Concrete
4. Quiet
5. Secure

GROUP O

1. Undisciplined
2. Suspicious
3. Traditional
4. Restrained
5. Even-tempered

GROUP P

1. Nonchalant
2. Decisive
3. Unoriginal
4. Formal
5. Self-assured

GROUP Q

1. Cursory
2. Unbending
3. Routine-oriented
4. Unassuming
5. Unflappable

GROUP R

1. Superficial
2. Confrontational
3. Practical
4. Reserved
5. Resilient

GROUP S

1. Spontaneous
2. Strong-willed
3. Predictable
4. Impersonal
5. Poised

GROUP T

1. Free-flowing
2. Unyielding
3. Methodical
4. Cautious
5. Composed

GROUP U

1. Indifferent
2. Distrustful
3. Systematic
4. Thoughtful
5. Self-confident

GROUP V

1. Informal
2. Tough
3. Planful
4. Detached
5. Optimistic

RESPONSE FORM

Directions: Verify that you have two checks in each column. Then, count the number of checks in each row. Write the number of checks in each row in the space provided at the far right. If no checks appear in a row, put a zero (0) in the space.

											TOTAL NUMBER OF CHECKS	
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	
C →	1. ___	2. ___	3. ___	4. ___	5. ___	6. ___	7. ___	8. ___	9. ___	10. ___	11. ___	C _____
L →	1. ___	2. ___	3. ___	4. ___	5. ___	6. ___	7. ___	8. ___	9. ___	10. ___	11. ___	L _____
U →	1. ___	2. ___	3. ___	4. ___	5. ___	6. ___	7. ___	8. ___	9. ___	10. ___	11. ___	U _____
E →	1. ___	2. ___	3. ___	4. ___	5. ___	6. ___	7. ___	8. ___	9. ___	10. ___	11. ___	E _____
S →	1. ___	2. ___	3. ___	4. ___	5. ___	6. ___	7. ___	8. ___	9. ___	10. ___	11. ___	S _____

											TOTAL NUMBER OF CHECKS	
	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	
C →	12. ___	13. ___	14. ___	15. ___	16. ___	17. ___	18. ___	19. ___	20. ___	21. ___	22. ___	C _____
L →	12. ___	13. ___	14. ___	15. ___	16. ___	17. ___	18. ___	19. ___	20. ___	21. ___	22. ___	L _____
U →	12. ___	13. ___	14. ___	15. ___	16. ___	17. ___	18. ___	19. ___	20. ___	21. ___	22. ___	U _____
E →	12. ___	13. ___	14. ___	15. ___	16. ___	17. ___	18. ___	19. ___	20. ___	21. ___	22. ___	E _____
S →	12. ___	13. ___	14. ___	15. ___	16. ___	17. ___	18. ___	19. ___	20. ___	21. ___	22. ___	S _____

You will later return to this page to select and develop the actual questions that you will use to assess a candidate's personal/interpersonal competency. The numbering system used on this page will enable you to find the appropriate CLUES[®] interview questions in Chapter 8 of your *Guide to Competency-Based Interviewing*[®].

B. Evaluating the CLUES®

As you now know, each of the five CLUES was represented in each of the twenty-two groups of descriptors. Thus, each Item 1 was a descriptor of **Conscientiousness**; Item 2 described **Likableness**; Item 3 described **Undogmatic** behavior; Item 4 was a descriptor of **Extroversion**; and Item 5 described **Stress Tolerance**. Remember that each of these elements is a dimension or a continuum. Therefore, with the exception of **Stress Tolerant**, it is not necessarily "good" to be high on one dimension or "bad" to be low on another. Rather, the particular requirements of a given job will dictate whether high, low, or middle scores are the most likely to predict success in a job. Later, we will discuss the implication of high or low scores; but first you must calculate the final totals. So, now enter the total number of checks from the right hand columns of the carbonless Response Form in the space provided below:

TOTALS	Score C	Score L	Score U	Score E	Score S
Items A-K	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Items L-V	- _____	- _____	- _____	- _____	+ _____
Arithmetic Total	_____	_____	_____	_____	(_____) ÷ 2 = _____

For the first four scores (**C,L,U,E**, but NOT **S**) subtract all totals in Items L-V from the totals in Items A-K. You may end up with a negative number (e.g., -3, or -7). Then simply total the scores on the two **Stress Tolerant** items and divide only that sum by two (2) to keep the five CLUES® on the same scale. You may get a fractional score (e.g. 6.5, 8.5).

As we noted above, all the items numbered "1" were descriptors of **Conscientiousness**; all items numbered "2" were descriptors of **Likableness**; all those numbered "3" described **Undogmatic** behavior; all items numbered "4" were descriptors of **Extroversion**; and all those numbered "5" described **Stress Tolerant**. In the case of Conscientiousness, Likability, Undogmatic and Extroversion, behavior at either end of the continuum can be a personal/interpersonal competency; therefore, the arithmetic total will indicate the direction that describes the personal/interpersonal competency. High positive scores indicate that successful individuals need to strongly exhibit behaviors in the direction of the descriptor name; that is, a high positive score (e.g., +7) on **Extroverted**, means that you have described successful jobholders as being rather extroverted while a high negative score (e.g., -7) means that you have described successful jobholders as rather introverted.

Now complete the following form by transferring the arithmetic totals from the top of this page to the lines under "Total" below. Then, using those totals, rank the five CLUES in order of their importance to the success of new hires on the job. Disregard the positive (+) or negative (-) sign when making your rankings.

	Total	Rank Order
C onscientious	1. _____	
L ikable	2. _____	
U ndogmatic	3. _____	
E xtroverted	4. _____	
S tress Tolerant	5. _____	

C

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Compromising	Perseverance
Not rule bound	Policy/Procedure
Situational	Organize/Schedule

L

LIKABILITY

Tough-minded	Rapport-building
Decisive	Collaborative
Shrewd	Team building

U

UNDOGMATIC

Systematic	Creative
Consistent	Flexible
Specified Objectives	Spontaneous

E

EXTROVERTED

Self-sufficient	Energizing
Task-oriented	Leadership
Listener	Communication

S

STRESS TOLERANCE

Low tolerance for stressful situations	Ability to cope in stressful situations
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SAMPLE CLUES® INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following pages provide you with a wide array of suggested interview questions to measure candidates on each of the five CLUES® dimensions. Five complete sets of interview questions or “probes” are included. These are provided as a starting point for you to use in increasing your interviewing skills. You may, however, want to customize these questions so that they feel more natural to you. As well, you may wish to tailor the probes with language similar to that used in your organization.

These questions have the potential of providing abundant information on each of the “Big Five” personal/interpersonal competencies. Often, it will be necessary to follow up the candidate's initial answer with further questions until you feel you fully understand how the person handled the situation involved. Also, remember that these questions or “probes” were intended to tap a particular CLUES® dimension and your follow-up questions should focus on helping you understand where the candidate stands on that particular dimension or continuum.

These questions represent a broad spectrum of the specific personal/interpersonal dimension involved. You cannot possibly ask all of these questions during an employment interview, and you would be ill advised to do so. Rather, you should choose questions that best focus on those aspects of the dimension that are involved in the job to be filled. In other words, if being “detail-oriented” and “productive” are the most important elements of being Conscientious on this job, then use some of the questions that focus on those aspects of Conscientious behavior in a work setting. The key concept here is to continuously adjust your interview focus so that it produces solid, reliable and consistent information about an applicant's skills and abilities.

CLUES Set 1

Conscientious:

1. We often need to document what we have done at work in written form. Give me an example of how you've done that in the past. (Detail-oriented)

Likable:

6. Developing a close, positive relationship with a customer, either internal or external, is often crucial for success. If you can, give me an example of how you have been able to develop such a relationship with one of your customers. (Collaborative)

Undogmatic:

11. Saying what comes into mind can produce unexpected results. If you can, tell me about such a time. How did it turn out? (Uninhibited)

Extroverted:

16. There are times when we know what is proper. Tell me about a situation where your sense of what was right proved to be an advantage to you. (Formal)

Stress Tolerant:

21. There are times when a person has to maintain a firm, businesslike attitude in dealing with an irate boss, co-worker, or customer. If you can, tell me about a time when you were in such a situation and how you handled it. (Self-confident)

CLUES Set 2

Conscientiousness:

2. Tell me about a time in which you found it necessary to point out a decline in company standards because it posed a real or potential risk to the company's reputation. (Quality-focused)

Likable:

7. Tell me about a specific situation when you were able to achieve success through a good relationship that you had established with another person. (Friendly)

Undogmatic:

12. Sometimes doing things in a traditional or conventional manner is the most effective way to get a job done. Tell me about a recent situation in your work life where this was the case. (Conventional)

Extroverted:

17. There are times when modesty in the workplace is prudent. If you can, tell me about a time when you made a judgment about modesty. (Unassuming)

Stress Tolerant:

22. Tell me about a time at work when you were able to remain optimistic about a project or idea in spite of the reservations of fellow workers. How did things turn out? (Optimistic)

CLUES Set 3

Conscientiousness:

3. On many occasions, employees have opportunities to take advantage of the employer without being held individually accountable. Tell me about a time when you have been tempted by this situation and how you handled it. (High-integrity)

Likable:

8. Tell me about a time when you had to step back and be understanding of another person's unusual situation. How did you do this and what was the outcome? (Empathetic)

Undogmatic:

13. Sometimes high-pressure situations can cause individuals to lose sight of the more tangible, practical goals of the company. Tell me about a time when you have helped align or realign a co-worker's focus. (Down-to-earth)

Extroverted:

18. We often encounter situations when we are pulled from different directions. Describe a time when you faced a similar situation and how you responded. (Reserved)

Stress Tolerant:

1. Work situations can be demanding on your limited resources, skills or time. Tell me about a job where you had to manage a similar situation. What was the outcome? (Calm)

CLUES Set 4

Conscientiousness:

4. Tell me about a time when you had to defend a decision you made because other important people at work thought it was the incorrect decision. (Responsible)

Likable:

9. Give me an example of when you were able to instill confidence or self-esteem in someone to accomplish a goal. (Empowering)

Undogmatic:

14. Sometimes we tend to overcomplicate things by putting alternative spins and interpretations on situations. In so doing we overlook the basic and most simple aspects of the situation. Give me an example of this from your recent work history. (Concrete)

Extroverted:

19. Tell me about a time when you felt it necessary to separate yourself from the social activity going on around you. (Impersonal)

Stress Tolerant:

2. If you can, tell me about a time when you were able to accomplish the same routine tasks, but using your own personalized method. (Well-adjusted)

CLUES Set 5

Conscientiousness:

5. Tell me about a time when you had to defend a decision you made because other important people at work thought it was the incorrect decision. (Responsible)

Likable:

10. Tell me about the job where the atmosphere was the easiest for you to get along and function well. Describe the qualities of that work environment. (Congenial)

Undogmatic:

15. Many organizations encourage participative management and employee contribution. Sometimes it appears that management changes just for the sake of change. Describe a situation where staying with the established approach to work was more effective? (Traditional)

Extroverted:

20. When a deadline is approaching, interpersonal relations may become strained in the office. Thus, it is often important to exercise caution and restraint. If you can, give me an example of when you were able to do this. (Cautious)

Stress Tolerant:

3. Tell me about a job or work situation that genuinely shook your self-esteem. How did you handle this situation and what did you learn about yourself? (Secure)