

Interview questions that test your aptitude

CareerBuilder.com

Employers in the customer service industry invest significant time and money interviewing and hiring candidates. The end goal is always the same: find the best people who have the skills and capabilities to perform their jobs well and create satisfied customers.

One technique that many hiring managers use during the interview process is behavioral interviewing. Jim Davis, owner of Chicago, Ill.-based JD Training Solutions, says, "Behavioral interviewing helps interviewers learn about something specific that a candidate did in the past, and provides insight into how that candidate might behave in future situations." Davis has trained hundreds of managers and small business owners on using this interview process to evaluate job applicants' customer service skills, critical thinking and relevant experience.

Davis says that most behavioral interviewing questions begin with either, "Give me a specific example of a time when you did..." or, "Describe a situation in which you were able to..." How candidates answer these types of questions will reveal a lot about how they think on their feet, interact with customers and respond to the pressures of the job.

One of the most often-posed questions is, "Describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult customer. What did you do? How did you handle it?" This multi-part question not only helps the interviewer gain an understanding of your problem-solving and customer service skills, it also provides insight into your definition of "a difficult customer."

"Managers are also looking for candidates who can demonstrate good judgment and who can handle the day-to-day pressures of a customer service position," notes Davis. He says a common question used to learn about these skills would be, "Tell me about a time when you were faced with a stressful situation. How did you deal with that and what was the outcome?"

As a follow-up question, the interviewer might also ask, "Would you do anything different if faced with that situation again?" It's OK to say that you might handle the situation differently in the future. This shows that you recognize opportunities for improvement and have learned from your experience.

Many jobs require collaboration and teamwork. In these cases, an interviewer may ask a question such as, "Describe a situation when you were part of a great team. What was your role?" Depending on your answer, you can demonstrate your leadership and communication skills, your willingness to take responsibility and, above all, whether or not you are a team player.

Davis also says that, "In customer service positions, workers often have a great deal of autonomy, and managers rely on their employees to make good decisions without close supervision." A possible question one might ask is, "Give me an example of when you had to make a decision on the spot, or difficult decision in a work situation." The interviewer is hoping to gain an understanding of your decision-making process, your ability to think for yourself and to make decisions that will reflect well on the company as well as provide great service to their customers.

Last Updated: 05/07/2011 - 2:30 PM

Related Articles

- When working from home works for -- or against -- you
- Don't give away your entire story in the cover letter
- The family business: Is it for you?
- The new office etiquette: Rules for today's workplace

Article Reprints

Permission must be obtained from CareerBuilder.com to reprint any of its articles. Please send a request to toreprints@careerbuilder.com.