Values-Based Questions

Let's explore what values-based questions are in this lesson.

Introduction

Values-based questions openly examine whether or not your values are a good match with the organization's values.

The good news is that the responses you've prepared for the "prior experience" questions can also work well for values-based questions. This is the time for you to refer to your list of the organization's values from your homework.

Yes, you will want to use the organization's lingo (can be found on their website and/or social media) in your responses as it shows an understanding of the organization and an ability to meld into their culture.

Please do not confuse this with being phony, it is not the same thing. Instead, you are simply placing your knowledge and experiences into a framework that is familiar to the interviewer.
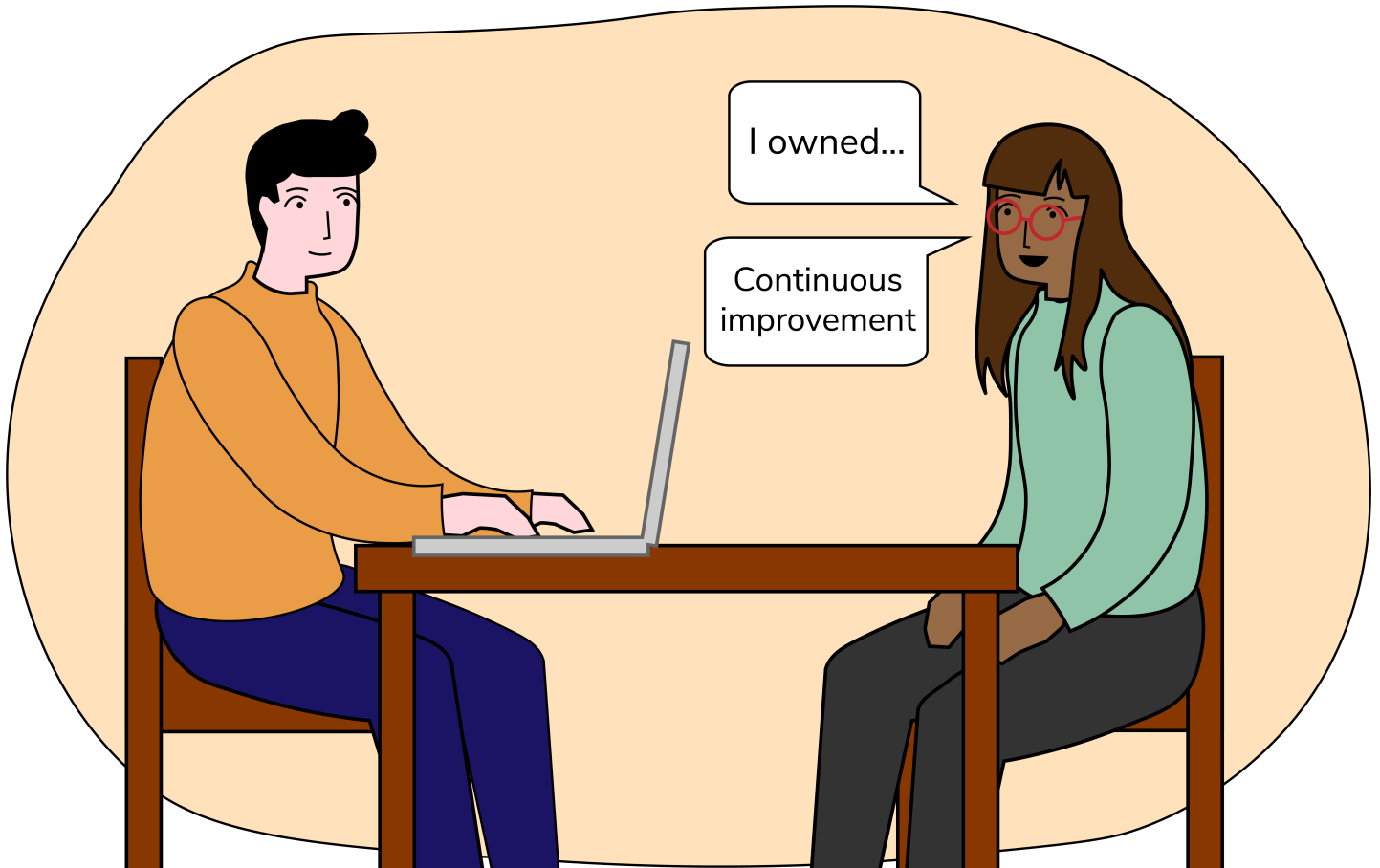
Example

If one of the organization's values is, "Act like an owner," and you are sharing a time when you were responsible for something, you can describe it by saying, "I owned…".

If the organization's value is, "Continuous Improvement," and you are giving an example of a problem you solved, it might fit to say something like, "this was a one-time fix for the problem, but in order to continuously improve, we monitored the results daily to understand early indicators."

Sample answers

Q: Give me an example of an org culture where you felt like you could do your best work. What was it about the culture that allowed you to perform well?

When I was at ABC Foundation, there was a real focus on sharing

information. We worked in teams of 8-10 people, each with a Lead. Leads reported up to managers that had two or three teams. The culture was very collaborative. Everybody worked on everything, so you got to know each other's code and areas of expertise. If you discovered a new problem or way to do something, you were expected to add it to the KB. There was less reliance on tribal knowledge than there is at other places I've worked. There was no pressure to act like you know everything. If you had a question, you owned the question until it was answered, and then you were responsible for documenting the answer so others would have it. It wasn't ok to just pose a question and be stuck if nobody responded. I got better at writing code other people could follow. My documentation really improved. We debated things and tested new ideas, but it wasn't about something being right or winning an argument. It was about finding the best way to do something, which is really satisfying to me. If I were to join your company, I would hope to foster the same behaviors.

If you were an interviewer who was listening for certain values in this response, what would you hear?

⚬ Hide

When you're a project manager, you have all of the accountability and none of the authority. You're responsible for delivering work done by cross-functional teams and none of the resources report to you. It's all about your ability to influence others. At both S Compnay and W Corp, projects required a sponsor or champion. This wasn't just the person providing the budget. The project sponsor was an executive who was accountable for delivering the project. This person was on the hook for results as much as I was. The portfolio was prioritized rigorously, so we all knew which projects trumped others. Culturally, this created support for cross-functional teamwork and collaboration. This meant that someone who wasn't your boss could have your back or be a champion for your work. The sponsor was an escalation point for negotiating tradeoffs. Sponsors were evaluated on their ability to deliver, and every leader had projects, so they were motivated to work with each other. There was a lot of communication about the status of active

each other. There was a lot of communication about the status of active projects, which created transparency. It was easy to understand what work was important to the company, and you felt like you were contributing to all of it. There were lots of opportunities to build relationships with leaders across the organization and high perfomers were more visible. Sponsors listened to team members, asked for recommendations, and respected the people on the ground. I was empowered because there were lots of examples of leaders getting things done through influence rather than direct authority.

If you were an interviewer who was listening for certain values in this response, what would you hear?

·♡· Hide

At XYZ healthcare, the passion for the mission drove everything. Everyone was encouraged to empathize with the patient – all the time, for every part of the experience. We took the patient journey very seriously. In meetings, it was common to hear, "Would you be ok if this was your loved one?" "How might we solve this if this was your mother?" Everyone was empowered to ask those questions. The constant focus on a real person improved our design decisions. We always said "patient," never "user." We had a lot of freedom for rough prototyping, and we spent time imagining we were 8 or 80, experiencing different health problems. I learned a lot about how different people perceive and report pain or discomfort or fear. My admiration and respect for healthcare workers really grew. They often helped us experiment. Sometimes we were solving for their pain points and it was still clear that we were serving the patient. It was very motivating to be part of a shared commitment to a high standard of service, and I would bring that commitment to this role.

If you were an interviewer who was listening for certain values in this response, what would you hear?

In my current job, two of the company values are ownership and shared responsibility. I've been able to leverage these in the way that I manage my team. For example, we run 3-week sprints. For every sprint, we rotate the Sprint Manager role. This means that every team member has the experience of being responsible for a release from sprint planning through to the retrospective. They all gain faciliation skills which makes them more accountable to each other because they know it will soon be their turn. We also do a lot of mentorship. When we onboard a new engineer, I ask a senior engineer to be that person's mentor for the first 6 months. The mentor is expected to be their go-to person to make sure they are comfortable asking for help. The mentor also includes the new person in meetings, as an observer, so that they can see processes in practice. Mentors introduce new employees to people across the organization and help get their internal network started. The mentorship opportunity can be a stepping stone to a Team Lead or Manager role. The company values of shared responsibility and ownership allow me to distribute leadership tasks across the team, which empowers them and leads to growth and development.

If you were an interviewer who was listening for certain values in this response, what would you hear?

Asking good questions is just as important as giving good answers! Let's learn how to do that in the next lesson.