

Security Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for security manager roles typically assess your ability to lead teams, manage risk, and handle incidents under pressure. Expect a mix of behavioural questions, scenario-based problems, and technical discussions about security systems and compliance.

- **Behavioural:** Questions that ask you to describe past experiences, such as leading a team or handling a security breach. Use the STAR method to structure your answers.
- **Scenario-based:** Hypothetical situations that test your judgement, problem-solving and ability to prioritise safety. Think aloud and explain your reasoning step by step.
- **Technical:** Questions about security technology, risk assessment methodologies, and regulatory requirements. Be ready to discuss specific systems like Genetec or Milestone.
- **Client-facing:** Questions about managing stakeholder expectations, reporting to clients, or working with police and emergency services. Focus on communication and relationship-building.

The interview usually starts with introductions and an overview of the role. Then you will face a mix of behavioural and scenario questions, often with a technical component where you discuss systems or compliance. Some employers include a site walk-through or a practical assessment. The interview may be conducted by a panel including a hiring manager, a senior security officer, and sometimes a client representative.

1. Tell me about a time you had to manage a security incident that escalated quickly. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This tests your ability to remain calm under pressure, lead your team, and communicate effectively during a crisis.

How to structure your answer

Use the STAR method: describe the Situation, the Task you needed to accomplish, the Action you took, and the Result. Focus on your leadership and decision-making.

Example answer

"At a previous shopping centre, a fight broke out between two groups in the food court. I was the duty security manager. I immediately dispatched two officers to separate the groups while I monitored CCTV and called police. I then coordinated with centre management to close nearby stores and guided customers away from the area. The situation was contained within five minutes, and no one was seriously injured. Police commended our quick response, and we later reviewed the incident to improve our crowd control procedures."

2. A VIP is visiting your site, and you receive a credible bomb threat. What do you do?

Why they ask

This assesses your ability to prioritise safety, follow emergency procedures, and coordinate with authorities under extreme pressure.

How to structure your answer

Walk through your immediate actions, then your communication and evacuation steps. Explain your reasoning for each decision, showing you can balance safety with business continuity.

Example answer

"First, I would take the threat seriously and immediately notify police and emergency services. I would activate the emergency response plan, which includes initiating a controlled evacuation of the area while avoiding panic. I would ensure the VIP is moved to a secure location, and I would brief the site's crisis team. I would then coordinate with police on a search and provide them with access to CCTV. Throughout, I would keep clear records for later investigation. After the all-clear, I would lead a debrief to review our response and update procedures if needed."

3. How do you approach a risk assessment for a new site? What tools or frameworks do you use?

Why they ask

This tests your technical knowledge of risk management and your familiarity with industry standards and software.

How to structure your answer

Explain your methodology step by step, from identifying assets to assessing threats and vulnerabilities, and mention any specific tools or frameworks you use.

Example answer

"I start by identifying the assets that need protection: people, property, and information. Then I conduct a threat assessment, looking at historical incidents, local crime data, and site-specific factors. I walk the site to identify vulnerabilities in access control, lighting, and surveillance coverage. I use a risk matrix to prioritise risks based on likelihood and impact. For tools, I might use Noggin for incident management and reporting, and I review CCTV coverage using Genetec or Milestone. I also consult with stakeholders to understand operational needs. The output is a risk register with recommended controls, which I present to management for approval."

4. Describe a time you had to deal with an underperforming security officer. How did you handle it?

Why they ask

This assesses your people leadership and ability to manage performance issues while maintaining team morale.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR. Focus on the steps you took to address the issue, such as additional training, clear expectations, and follow-up.

Example answer

"One of my officers was consistently late for shifts and had a poor attitude with customers. I met with him privately to discuss the issues and listened to his side. We identified that he was struggling with the roster due to personal commitments. I worked with him to adjust his shifts temporarily and arranged additional customer service training. I set clear expectations and a review date. Over the next month, his punctuality improved, and his customer interactions became more positive. He remained a valued team member, and the rest of the team noticed the fair and supportive approach."

5. How would you develop and implement a security plan for a large event or venue?

Why they ask

This tests your planning, stakeholder management, and ability to translate risk assessments into practical procedures.

How to structure your answer

Walk through the process in stages: initial consultation, risk assessment, plan development, training, implementation, and review.

Example answer

"First, I would meet with the event organisers and venue management to understand their objectives and concerns. Then I would conduct a risk assessment, considering crowd size, entry points, and potential threats. I would develop a security plan that covers access control, screening, patrolling, and emergency response. I would roster appropriately trained officers and coordinate with police and emergency services. Before the event, I would run a briefing and tabletop exercise. During the event, I would monitor operations and adjust as needed. Afterward, I would debrief with all stakeholders and update the plan for future events."

6. How do you manage a client who is unhappy with your security services?

Why they ask

This assesses your communication, problem-solving, and ability to maintain relationships while addressing concerns.

How to structure your answer

Describe your approach to listening, investigating, and resolving the issue, then following up to ensure satisfaction.

Example answer

"I would start by listening to the client's concerns without becoming defensive. I would thank them for the feedback and ask for specific examples. Then I would investigate internally, reviewing incident reports, rosters, and CCTV if relevant. I would identify the root cause and propose a solution, such as adjusting patrols or providing additional training. I would present a clear action plan with timelines and commit to a follow-up meeting. After implementing changes, I would check in to ensure the client is satisfied. My goal is to turn a complaint into an opportunity to improve service and strengthen the relationship."