

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

What is Behavioral Interviewing?

Behavioral interviewing is a technique employed by interviewers to evaluate your past behavior in order to predict your future behavior in a particular position. Answering behavioral questions can be challenging, however thorough preparation will assist you in answering them successfully. Utilizing the S.T.A.R. Model will help you construct an organized, specific, thoughtful, and concise answer.

Five Steps to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview:

1. Analyze the position you are being interviewed for; determine the skills required.
2. Evaluate and reflect upon your background to identify your skills and experiences related to the position.
3. Develop brief scenarios or “STAR stories” prior to your interview that demonstrate your leadership, teamwork, communication, initiative, etc. Each “story” should explain the situation, task, action and result (STAR).
4. Be specific in your stories. Giving generalizations will not help the employer understand and evaluate your behavior and skills. Employers want to know what you DID do rather than what you WOULD do in a given situation.
5. Identify three to five top selling points that set you apart from other candidates - and be sure to make the opportunity to point them out during the interview.

<u>S</u>ituation and <u>T</u>ask	Describe the situation that you were in and the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific project or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from your current position, a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
<u>A</u>ction you took	Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
<u>R</u>esults you <u>a</u>chieved	What happened? How did the project end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

COMMUNICATION

- Tell me about a time when the ability to communicate effectively was critical to the success of a task or project. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation you observed or were a part of where you feel communication was handled particularly well by someone else. What did they do? Why do you think it was effective?
Interviewer will evaluate your bias for written or oral communication and match this to the needs of the position. Recruiter will observe the role of listening and your description of effective communication. Interviewer will assess your ability to communicate in a clear, concise, understandable way.

INITIATIVE

- Describe a situation where initiative on the part of you or someone else was critical. Why was it important? How was it handled?
- Tell me about a situation where your own initiative made a difference in the outcome.
Recruiter will determine how you value pro-activity over re-activity. Interviewer will assess judgment in the selection of the situation calling for initiative, and the activities used to respond to it. Recruiter will determine your willingness to go beyond a given parameter if that is what is required to do the job.

BEHAVIORAL FLEXIBILITY

- Describe an example of a time when you had to approach several people for support or cooperation, whom you considered quite different from one another. What did you have to do differently with each person? How did you know what to do differently?
- Describe a situation in which your first attempt to sell an idea failed. How did you react to this? What other approaches did you try?
Interviewer will assess your ability to cooperate and negotiate with different personalities.

LEADERSHIP/INFLUENCE

- Tell me about one of the toughest groups you have had to get cooperation from. Did you have formal authority? What did you do?
- Of the people you have encountered or know about in public positions of leadership, who do you look to as a model and why?
Interviewer will assess your ability and willingness to influence and be influenced by others. Recruiter will determine your willingness to confront issues honestly. Interviewer will determine to what degree you model the behaviors expected from others.

PLANNING/ORGANIZING

- Describe a task or project you were in charge of, and tell me how you set it up and followed it through.
- Tell me about a situation you observed or were a part of where there were time and/or resource constraints. What happened? Why?
- Describe a situation that required things to be done at the same time. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?
Interviewer will assess your recognition of the need to plan. Recruiter will determine your effectiveness in gathering and organizing information. Interviewer will assess your willingness and ability to prioritize. Recruiter will assess your identification of potential obstacles and ways of dealing with them. Interviewer will assess the candidate's effective use of time and resources.

PROBLEM SOLVING/DECISION MAKING

- Describe a situation where a prompt and accurate decision on your part was critical. What did you consider in reaching your decision?
- Describe two examples of good decisions you have made in the last six months. What were the alternatives? Why were they good decisions?
- Tell me about a decision you made in the past that later proved to be a wrong decision. Why was it wrong? What would you do differently now, if anything, in making that decision?

Interviewer will assess your willingness and ability to gather and analyze information. Recruiter will determine your anticipation and consideration of potential problems/opportunities. Interviewer will assess your judgment and logical assumptions in light of what was known prior to the decision. Recruiter will assess your readiness to make a decision and act on it.

SALES ABILITY/PERSUASIVENESS

- What are some of the best ideas you have sold to others? What was your approach?
- Describe a selling experience you have had. Give me a specific example of a successful or unsuccessful sale. Why was it successful or unsuccessful?

Interviewer will assess the candidate's ability to select the appropriate style for the situation. Recruiter will assess your ability to gain agreement or acceptance of his/her idea or plan.

SENSITIVITY/TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

- When dealing with individuals or groups, how do you determine when you are pushing too hard?
- Tell me about a team where you were the leader. How did you promote the effectiveness of your team? What were the results?
- Describe some situations where you wished you had acted differently with someone at work/school. What did you do? What happened?

Interviewer will assess your consideration of decisions on other team members. Recruiter will consider your objectivity in looking at different points of view and a willingness to confront difference of opinion from other team members.

WORK STANDARDS

- Is there a particular experience that stands out as one you never want to repeat because you did not meet your normal standards of performance? What, and why?
- What is the best job you have ever done on an assignment, the standard of your own performance that you used as a benchmark? (The candidate should be specific about the task; the interviewer will not settle for a general discussion of what is good.)

Interviewer will determine the degree to which poor performance is unacceptable and will determine your motivation to do a good job consistently. Recruiter will assess work habits and methods to achieve results. Interviewer will assess the effectiveness of the candidate's critique of his/her own performance as the means of self-improvement.

Below is a list of additional behaviors that employers may evaluate during a behavior-based interview:

Adaptability	Financial/Analytical	Impact
Control	Independence	Innovation
Analysis	Integrity	Judgment
Attention to Detail	Influence	Listening
Decisiveness	Motivation	Negotiation
Delegation	Participative	Management
Development of Subordinates	Presentation Skills	Process Orientation
Energy	Rapport Building	Resilience
Entrepreneurial	Risk Taking	Tenacity
Equipment Operation	Strategic Analysis	Training Ability

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING WORKSHEET

When preparing for an interview it is best to consider how you would respond to certain questions. Recall that a behavioral interview question is attempting to assess your proficiency with a particular skill. You can identify the skills an employer may try to assess by reviewing the position description. Below are examples of transferrable skills that are desired by employers. While the questions you are asked during an interview may be different, try to identify an example for each of the skills below. Write your responses in the spaces provided or type on a separate sheet. Bring your answers, on paper, to your mock interview appointment.

SKILL	SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT
<p>Communication Tell me about a recent miscommunication you had with someone. What did you do to resolve or correct the communication?</p>				
<p>Problem-solving What's one of the biggest problems/challenges you have had to solve?</p>				
<p>Conflict resolution What are some of your strengths in dealing with people? Tell me about the last time you used one of those strengths to resolve a conflict.</p>				
<p>Project Management Tell me about a time when you had many competing priorities and deadlines. How did you manage them?</p>				

EXAMPLE OF HOW TO USE THE S.T.A.R. MODEL

Interviewer Question:

You indicated on your resume that leadership is one of your strengths. Please describe an experience in which you used your leadership abilities to manage a recent challenge.

Situation:

During my third year of college, I was elected Vice President of Professional Programs for my student association. The duties of the position included securing speakers for our meetings, advertising the programs to the campus community, introducing speakers and evaluating each program.

Task:

Previous attendance at meetings had decreased substantially due to a decrease in the overall student population. The goal was to implement programs to address the professional development of our association and increase attendance by 25% compared to the prior year's figures.

Action:

I assembled a team to help with the program design and speaker selection. I developed a survey to determine the members' professional interests and ideas for possible speakers and topics. My team and I had each member complete the survey. Then we randomly selected members for a focus group interview. I had learned about this research technique in my marketing class and thought it would help us identify why attendance had dropped.

Result:

Because of the information we gathered from the surveys and interviews, we selected speakers for the entire year, produced a brochure describing each program and the featured speaker. Under my leadership, attendance increased 150% over the previous year.