

THE STRUCTURED BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

What is a Structured Behavioral Interview?

Unlike traditional interviews, which include such questions as:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What are your strengths and weaknesses?
3. Why are you interested in working for us?

Behavioral interviewing emphasizes past performance and behaviors. As a consequence, candidates unprepared for the rigor of behavioral interviewing have not fared well. Simply practicing the list of common interview questions no longer works.

How is this interview approach different from traditional interviews?

Traditional interviewing techniques tend to focus on general concepts. Our interviewing approach is more structured and focuses on examples of how you've performed in previous work-related situations. The following comparison illustrates some of these differences:

Traditional: Where do you see yourself in five years?

Behavioral: Tell me the last time you handled a customer complaint?

Traditional: What are your three strengths and weaknesses?

Behavioral: Describe an example of when you became frustrated with a peer/team member.

Traditional: Why should we hire you for this job?

Behavioral: When was the last time you gave feedback to an employee who was not performing up to standards? What did you do?

Traditional: What do you think is important in being a good manager/team member?

Behavioral: Tell me about the last creative idea that you implemented in your work area.

How should I answer these types of questions?

When you answer, there are three pieces of information the interviewer will collect for each behavioral example- a STAR:

The **S**ituation or **T**ask that you faced

The **A**ctions that you took

The **R**esults or changes caused by the action

It is okay (and usually much appreciated!) to spell out your answers to the interviewer. By starting an answer or section of an answer with "The situation I was facing was..." "The action I took was..." and "The result of that was..."

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- 1. This is your opportunity to sell yourself for this position. Why should we hire you?**
- 2. Describe a situation in which you were speaking to a difficult customer and you did not know what they wanted. How did you handle it?**
- 3. Describe an instance when you were asked to do something at work that you didn't agree with and what was the end result?**
4. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
5. Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
6. Describe a time when you had to use your written communication skills to get an important point across.
7. Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills
8. Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
9. Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
10. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
11. Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
11. Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head." Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.
12. Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his or her share of the work. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it? Did the manager take any steps to correct your colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager's actions?
13. Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.
14. We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.

15. In a supervisory or group leader role, have you ever had to discipline or counsel an employee or group member? What was the nature of the discipline? What steps did you take? How did that make you feel? How did you prepare yourself?
16. Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?
17. Recall a time when you were assigned what you considered to be a complex project. Specifically, what steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What one step would you have done differently if given the chance?
18. Tell of some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?
19. Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

How should I prepare for this interview?

Practice sharing examples in the STAR format. The next time you're telling someone about an experience you've had or what happened on your favorite TV show, tell the story by sharing the three parts of a STAR: describe the situation or task, tell what action was taken, and describe the result. In addition, you might want to think about challenging, difficult, and rewarding experiences in your past work history and write them down.

In addition, keep these tips in mind:

During the interview, it is expected that you will need some time to think back to specific experiences. Don't feel pressured to answer the question quickly or feel uncomfortable asking the interviewer to repeat the question.

If you are unable to think of a specific experience in the past, let the interviewer know that you may need to come back to that question, or that you haven't had that situation happen to you. However, be sure you are able to give discuss enough experiences so the interviewer can assess your skills accurately.

There may be questions included in your interview that seek experiences that didn't work out the way you intended. This information gives the interviewer a balanced, realistic picture of your background and shows how you have learned from those experiences.