

The Behavioral Interview

Traditional interviews are becoming less utilized in today's economy; this is mainly due to the fact that the competition in the job market is increasing dramatically. Employers are now taking the behavioral interview approach. A behavioral interview is based on the fact that a person's past performance is significant to how he/she will perform in the future. Behavioral interview questions are based on a certain situation that you may have experienced at a previous job, internship or organization. The point of a behavioral question to get insight on how you dealt with a certain situation and what was the result.



Why exactly are employers holding behavioral interviews?

*The standard interview is slowly being replaced with behavioral based interviews for many reasons, one of those reasons are due to the fabrication of interview answers. On the internet, you can now search and find common answers to the standard interview questions such as **tell me about yourself**, **what's your greatest weakness**, why you want this job etc. and use the exact answers. The problem with these questions is that you can easily fabricate an answer you've heard elsewhere, and make it sound like your own. Keep in mind, if you lie your way to a job then you will not last long, employers will soon see through the nonsense you pitched them. Because of this, employers are starting to conduct more behavioral type interviews, these interviews allow employers to foresee how you will handle certain situations if they know how you handled those situations in the past. When conducting behavioral interviews, employers want details on how you handled a certain situation and what was the outcome. Unfortunately for most, they will not be able to memorize any answers beforehand because the questions are situational and at random. Although you will not be able to memorize any answers for these types of questions, there are a ton of things you can do in order to prepare for them come interview day.*



How to prepare for behavioral interview questions?

Although behavioral interview questions cannot be pre-recorded per se, there are still ways that you can prepare for them:

- 1. Review the job description in which you are applying for – It is likely that you interviewer will ask you behavioral questions that are based on certain skills or characteristics you must possess in order to be successful in the job you are applying for. For an example, if you're applying for an accounting job, you know that you have to be great with numbers, be timely, work efficiently and be able to work long hours, so think of a time in your past when you had to display these attributes. Another example, if you're applying for a sales job, you know that it is a must that you are comfortable with speaking to people, so think of a time in your past in which you handled situations like this. The job you are applying for will depend on the type of behavioral interview questions you will be asked. More than likely, those questions will be based off of specific skills it takes to be successful in that position> Make sure that you do research on the position and do your best to understand what type of individual they're looking for.*
- 2. Make a list – Make a list of situations in any of your previous positions in which you had to be timely, or you had to meet a deadline, or you had to work with someone who was not pulling their weight, or a time you showed initiative. Make the list and become comfortable with discussing these situations in great detail because more than likely you will run into questions that are based around similar situations.*

When you've thought of these different situations, it is now time to learn how to showcase them in your answers. When giving your answer, it is important that you use what interviewers call the "STAR" Method.

*Use the STAR Method- Once you are comfortable with the job description and you made your list of different situations you have been in, it's time to execute your answers. Remember, your interviewer is trying to figure out if you can handle situations that they know will arise in the position you are applying for, they are using your past actions to dictate how you will handle a certain situation in the future. The best way to answer these questions is in the **STAR** format.*

SAMPLE

For this example we will use this behavioral based question, “Tell me about a time in which you were the team leader and you were working with someone who was not pulling their weight”. When you hear the words “Tell me about a time” or “Give me an example when” just think **STAR**.

- **Situation/Task** – Give the interviewer details on what the situation or task you was given. For an example, while I was at _____, my team was assigned a task in which we had to _____. We had 2 weeks to complete the project, so as team leader I assigned certain tasks to certain individuals based off of their strengths and comfort zones. There was this one guy who was working with the _____ which was an extremely important part in getting this task completed successfully, every day he will show up with another excuse on why he did not complete his assignment as I had instructed him to.
- As you can see, you gave the interviewer a detailed description on what the task was and how you planned on executing it.
- **Action** – Now that you’ve told the interviewer what the task was and how you had a team member that wasn’t pulling their weight, tell the interviewer what you did about this situation, what action did you take? The team and I soon noticed that _____ was not pulling his weight, and as team leader it was a must that I solve this problem for the benefit of the team and the completion of the project. I waited until _____ was alone and I pulled him to the side and asked him did he feel like he was putting his all into this project. He was honest and told me no, he then went on to explain how a close friend of his passed away and he was not as focused as he should be. After hearing him out, I then went on to explain to him that his efforts are a reflection of the team. I also explained the importance of work life and personal life and how the two don’t mix well. He understood and appreciated me for hearing him out.

As you can see, I gave the interviewer a detail description on how I took action on this situation, notice how I first asked my teammate did he feel like he was pulling his weight and what was wrong instead of calling him out in front of the group and jumping to conclusions. I showed the interviewer that I have great communication skills in this example.

- **Result** – Finally, you want to talk about the result of your action, how did this team member take what you said? Did he change his ways? Did he decide against you?

After having the talk with my team member, he greatly appreciated me taking the initiative to talk to him and he never missed any deadlines after that, in fact, he was the first guy to show up during our weekly meetings from that point.

As you can see you showed the interviewer that the action you took resulted in positive change for not only you but the team.

Just remember, it is important to listen for when the interviewer says ‘tell me about a time’ or ‘give me an example when’, these are behavioral based and it is imperative that you answer these using the star method.

Lets go over the STAR Method one more time to ensure you have a basic understanding of it:

S/T – Situation or Task – Talk about the situation or task you were involved in

A – Action – What action did you take??

R – Result – What was the result of your action?

So make sure you think of some situational examples in which you had to display a certain trait or solve a certain problem. When you have one in mind just practice using the STAR Method.

*Below are examples of the most common behavioral interview questions. Practice each and every one of them using the **STAR** method so when it comes time for your next interview, you will NAIL it.*

Examples of Common Behavioral Interview Questions

Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

How do you handle a challenge? Give an example.

Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?

Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.

Describe a decision you made that wasn’t popular and how you handled implementing it.

Give an example of how you set goals and achieve them.

Give an example of how you worked on team.

What do you do if you disagree with someone at work?

Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or co-workers.

Have you handled a difficult situation? How?

Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.

Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.

Give an example of a goal you didn’t meet and how you handled it.

Describe a stressful situation at work and how you handled it.

Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

Have you been in a situation where you didn't have enough work to do?

Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?

Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you handled implementing it.

Did you ever make a risky decision? Why? How did you handle it?

Did you ever postpone making a decision? Why?

Have you ever dealt with company policy you weren't in agreement with? How?

Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?

When you worked on multiple projects how did you prioritize?

How did you handle meeting a tight deadline?

Give an example of how you set goals and achieve them.

Did you ever not meet your goals? Why?

What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.

Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they weren't thrilled about? How did you do it?

Give an example of how you worked on team.

Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or other students?

Have you handled a difficult situation with a professor? How?

Have you handled a difficult situation with another person?