

Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is a relatively new style of interviewing that was developed in the 1970's by industrial psychologists. Behavioral interviewing asserts that "the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation." Currently, more than 30 percent of all organizations are using behavioral interviewing to some degree.

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. It no longer works to simply practicing the list of common interview questions.

Why should you prepare for behavioral interview?

- Candidates who prepare for behavioral interviews are better prepared - even for traditional interviews.
- Using behavioral answers works well with inexperienced interviewers.
- Companies that invest the time and energy in developing behavioral interviews often attract top candidates. Top candidates make the company a more desirable place to work.

How do I prepare for a behavioral interview?

Companies that employ behavioral interviewing have predetermined the skill sets they require for a particular position. These skill sets could include: decision making and problem solving, leadership, motivation, communication, interpersonal skills, planning and organization, critical thinking skills, team building and the ability to influence others. The company determines the skill sets by doing a detailed analysis of the position they are seeking to fill. Job seekers also must go through this same process. To conduct a job analysis the job seeker should ask questions such as:

1. What are the necessary skills to do this job?
2. What makes a successful candidate?
3. What would make an unsuccessful candidate?
4. What is the most difficult part of this job?
5. Why have people left this position previously?

Once you have landed the interview, keep in mind the following points:

- Be detailed and specific.
- Develop at least three stories that illustrate your past performance and demonstrate skills that are valuable to employers.
- Remember that the interviewer will be operating under the premise that "past performance in a similar setting is the best predictor of future performance."

The best way to accomplish this is to use the S.T.A.R. process. S.T.A.R. stands for:

1. Situation/ Task
2. Action
3. Result (or Outcome)

For example, you might recount a time when communication within your work group had broken down (situation). To resolve the problem, you organized informal lunch meetings for people to discuss relevant issues (action). Morale then improved, as did the lines of communication (result). Using this three step STAR process is a powerful way for you to frame your experiences and accomplishments for the interviewer.

Some other things to be aware of in behavioral interviews are:

- Limit rambling and tangents. While you can't control what is asked, you can control what you say.
- Listen carefully to each question. If you are unsure, rephrase the question and ask for clarification. When you respond, be sure to recall your past accomplishments in detail.
- Practice your behavioral stories using real-life examples. It is very difficult to make up behavioral stories, which is why behavioral interviewing is becoming more popular. By practicing, you will be able to recall with confidence your past accomplishments.

See the following pages for sample questions.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Decision Making and Problem Solving

Give me an example of a time when you had to keep from speaking or making a decision because you did not have enough information.

Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision.

Leadership

Tell me about a time when you had to work with an uncooperative group of people.

Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? Did it work?

Motivation

Give me an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.

Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.

Communication

Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get an important point across.

Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your co-workers or group? How did you do it? Did they "buy" it?

Interpersonal Skills

What have you done in the past to contribute toward a teamwork environment?

Describe a recent unpopular decision you made and what the result was.

Planning and Organization

How do you decide what gets top priority when scheduling your time?

What do you do when your schedule is suddenly interrupted? Give an example.

Other Behavioral Questions

Give a specific example of a policy you conformed to with which you did not agree.

What techniques do you use when dealing with stress? Tell me about a time you used them.

Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.

Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.

TABLE OF PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Listed below are key behaviors you may be evaluated on		
Adaptability	Analysis	Attention to Detail
Communication-Oral	Communication-Written	Control
Decisiveness	Delegation	Development of Subordinates
Energy	Entrepreneurial Insight	Equipment Operation
Fact Finding-Oral	Financial Analytical Ability	Flexibility
Impact	Independence	Initiative
Innovation	Integrity	Judgment
Leadership/Influence	Listening	Motivation
Negotiation	Organizational Sensitivity	Participative Management
Planning and Organizing	Practical Learning	Presentation Skills
Process Operation	Rapport Building	Resilience
Risk Taking	Safety Awareness	Sales Ability/Persuasiveness
Sensitivity	Strategic Analysis	Stress
Teamwork	Technical/Professional Knowledge	Technical/Professional Proficiency
Tenacity	Training	Work Standards