



SI Career Services

Mastering the Behavioral Interview



What is a Behavioral Interview?

A Behavioral Interview is an employment interview during which a job applicant is asked to demonstrate his or her knowledge, skill and abilities, also known as competencies. The applicant must tell about specific experiences when he or she demonstrated these competencies.



Why are Behavioral Interviews Done?

- The purpose of the behavioral interview is to allow the interviewer to determine whether a candidate possesses the competencies to perform a particular job.
- Behavioral Interviewing asserts that “the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation.”



During a Behavioral Interview...

- Instead of asking how you *would* behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you *did* behave.
- Expect the interviewer to question and probe.
- The interviewer will ask you to provide details, and will not allow you to theorize or generalize about a situation.



How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

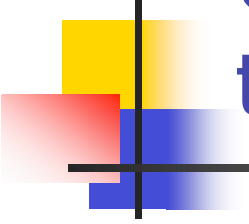
- The company determines the skill sets they want to see in a qualified candidate by doing a detailed analysis of the position they are seeking to fill.
- You must also go through this same process.
 - What are the necessary skills to do this job?
 - What makes a successful candidate?
 - What would make an unsuccessful

Determine what

competencies the employer is

looking for:

- Use the job description--Companies that employ behavioral interviewing have predetermined the skill sets they require for a particular position.
- If you don't have job description—research the company
- Look at other similar job postings



Core competencies that employers want to see evidence of:

- Decision making and problem solving
- Leadership
- Motivation
- Communication
- Planning and Organization
- Critical thinking
- Team building
- Ability to influence others
- Interpersonal skills



How to Prepare...

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving course work, formal work, DFE's/internships that demonstrate core competencies.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, middle and end (use the STAR technique)
- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed account of one event.
- Be honest, Don't embellish or omit. The interviewer is trained to ask the questions that can bring this out.



How to answer behavioral interview questions

- Use the STAR
Technique!



STAR

- S/T-Describe the **SITUATION** or **TASK**
- A- Describe the **ACTION** you took
- R- What was the **RESULT** or outcome



Sample Response

Tell me about a time when you were on a team and a member wasn't pulling his/her weight.

- "I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe out of concrete. One of our team members wasn't showing up for our lab session or doing his assignments. **(Situation/Task)** I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the team, and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn't passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. **(Action)** He not only was able to spend more time on our projects, but he was also grateful to me for helping him out. We finished our project



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.



Sample Behavioral Interview

Questions

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



Sample Behavioral Interview

Questions

- 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 action of others.



Sample Behavioral Interview

Questions

- Communication
 - Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
 - Have you ever had to “sell” an idea to your co-workers or group? How did you do it? Did they “buy” it?



Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- 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.



Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- 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.



Follow-up Questions

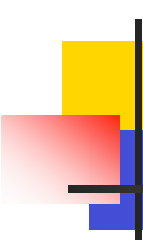
Follow up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation.

- Can you give me an example?
- What did you do?
- What did you say?
- What were you thinking?
- How did you feel?
- What was your role?
- What was the result?



Probing Questions...

- How did you feel when you confronted the person?
- Exactly what was the project?
- What was his responsibility as a team member?
- What was your role?
- At what point did you decide that you should confront him?



More Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with two co-workers who didn't get along with one another.
- Describe a situation when you had to get a job done in spite of an unforeseen problem.
- Discuss a time when you had to use your powers of persuasion to get someone to do something.



...and more questions.

- Tell me about a time you made a successful presentation to a prospective client.
- Give me an example of a time you had to convince others to confirm to a policy you didn't believe in.
- Tell me about a time you did not properly handle a disagreement with a co-worker well.