

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Anyone who has had an interview recently knows that the interviewers would rather ask, "Describe a situation in which you had to solve a problem," than ask general questions, such as, "Tell me about yourself". The reason for asking the first question instead of the latter is the changes in interviewing techniques during the past 10 years. In the 90s, the majority of companies interviewed by asking a set of standard questions designed to determine how the candidate performs on the job. Otherwise known as behavioral interviewing, this type of interview can be a little trickier to prepare for than a traditional interview of the past.

Behavioral interviewing became a popular style of interviewing due to research conducted by industrial psychologists during the 70s. Researchers concluded that traditional interviews were not effective in selecting the right candidates for positions. The results of this research formed the rationale for behavioral interviewing which focuses on analyzing the *candidate's past performance to predict future performance*.

There is no question that preparing for a behavioral interview is more difficult than preparing for a traditional interview. However, do not fret. You are not at the mercy of your interviewer, and there are effective ways to prepare yourself before the interview. If you follow a few recommended tips, you can greatly increase your performance in a behavioral interview.

What exactly is behavioral interviewing?

What should a candidate know about behavioral interviewing?

Performance skills and sample questions.

Behavioral interviews can be quite a disconcerting experience the first few times, but, like anything else, practice makes it perfect. If you follow these key tips, you can become better at the behavioral interviewing and even get to like it. In a behavioral interview, you actually have an advantage since it is up to you to decide what experiences you would like to talk about in order to answer a question. By recalling these experiences ahead of time, you can increase your chances of succeeding in a behavioral interview. When you receive your dream job offer, you will consider the time you spent preparing well worth it.

What exactly is behavioral interviewing?

Behavioral interviewing is a style of interviewing that more and more companies and organizations are utilizing in their hiring processes. The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is: **The most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation.** It provides more facts, on which employment decisions are based, than other interviewing methods do. Traditional interviewers ask general questions, such as, "Tell me about yourself." The process of behavioral interviewing is much more probing and tries to pinpoint certain characteristics.

Behavioral interviewing is a technique used by employers in which the questions asked assist the employer in making predictions about the employee's future success based on past behaviors. In behavior-based interviews, candidates are asked to give **specific examples of situations** when they demonstrated particular behaviors or skills. General answers about behavior are not acceptable; the candidate must describe in detail a particular event, project, or experience, as well as the way he/she dealt with the situation and the outcome.

Listed below are examples of questions used by employers to target specific skills needed for the job.

- Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job and tell me how you solved it.
- Describe a situation when you faced problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
- Give me an example of an instance when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Give me an example of an important goal you had set and tell me about your progress in reaching it.
- Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed.

- Tell me about a situation in the past year when you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Give me an example of a case when you had to show good leadership.

What should a candidate know about behavioral interviewing?

Employers predetermine what skills are necessary for the job and then ask very pointed questions to determine if the candidate possesses those skills. To assess which skills the employer is seeking, talk with alumni, read the company literature carefully and listen closely during the company's information session.

In the interview, your responses need to be specific and detailed. Tell interviewers about a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Briefly describe the situation, your specific actions, and the positive result or outcome. Frame it in a three-step process:

1. situation
2. action
3. outcome

You are supposed to tell a story for a few minutes. Typically, the interviewer picks apart a story to try to get at the specific behavior(s). The interviewer can probe further for more depth or detail, for example, "What were you thinking at that point?" or "Tell me about your meeting with that person" or "Lead me through your decision process."

You always have to listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary and make sure you answer the question completely.

Your interview preparation should include identifying examples of situations where you have demonstrated the behaviors sought by a company.

Your resume will serve as a good guide when answering these questions. Refresh your memory regarding your achievements in the past couple of years.

Use examples from past internships, classes, activities, team involvement, community service, and work experience. In addition, you may use examples that you are especially proud of, such as participating in a marathon, running for student body president, exhibiting paintings at an art show, climbing half the high peaks in the Adirondacks, or biking across the country.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What are your long range and short range goals and objectives?
3. What do you really want to do in life?
4. What are your long range career objectives?
5. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
6. What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
7. How well do you work with people? Do you prefer working alone or in teams?
8. How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict?
9. Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor? How did you resolve the conflict?
10. How would a good friend describe you?
11. Describe the best job you've ever had.
12. Describe the best supervisor you've ever had.
13. What would your last boss say about your work performance?
14. What motivates you to go the extra mile on a project or job?
15. What makes you qualified for this position?
16. What qualifications do you have that make you successful in this career?
17. How do you determine or evaluate success?
18. In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our school?
19. Do you have any hobbies? What do you do in your spare time?
20. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
21. Do you consider yourself a leader? Why?
22. Which is more important: creativity or efficiency? Why?
23. What's the most recent book you've read?
24. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
25. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
26. In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
27. How do you work under pressure?
28. What's one of the hardest decisions you've ever had to make?
29. How well do you adapt to new situations?
30. What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
31. What criteria are you using to evaluate the school for which you hope to work?
32. What major problem have you encountered in your life and how did you deal with it?
33. What have you accomplished that shows your initiative and willingness to work?