Behavioral Interviews- Use the STAR Interviewing Technique for Success

The STAR acronym represents Situation, Task, Action and Result. Recruiters and hiring managers favor the STAR technique because it provides a better explanation of your past performance, how you handle workplace challenges and whether you're able to articulate your experiences. STAR behavioral interviews are quickly becoming the most popular and common form of interview.

**Situation or Task**

Describe the **situation** that you were in or the **task** that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the **interviewer** to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

**Action you took**

Describe the **action** you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a **group project** or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

**Results you achieved**

What happened? How did the **event end**? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

For examples of past behavior, use examples from:

- Internships
- Work experience
- Class projects
- School activities/organizations you are involved with
- Sports
- Volunteer/community service
- Hobbies

Think about your accomplishments, what are you most proud of that you want to share with the employer.

**How to prepare for behavior-based interviews:**

- Identify 3-6 examples that demonstrate your top skills. Look through the job description, pinpoint the skills they are seeking. Pick experiences that demonstrate top behaviors of those skills.
- Prepare how you will “tell your story” using STAR
- Pick examples that will be positive; accomplishment.
- Most behavioral questions try to reveal the negative situations; so be prepared with those examples. However, try to pick examples that had a positive outcome.
- Try not to pick examples from only one topic. Pick a variety of examples choosing examples from work, class, community services, etc.
- Typically the best examples are situations that happened within the last year.
- Go over your resume and review the accomplishments you have listed and/or skills; this could assist you with identifying examples.
- LISTEN to the full question. Be sure the example is an appropriate description of how you demonstrated what they are asking for.
Sample Behavior-based Questions

Communication Skills:
1. Give me a specific example of a time someone didn’t agree with your work. How did you respond?
2. Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information. How did you ensure that everyone understood what you were saying?
3. Give an example about a time where written communication was needed.

Decision Making Skills:
1. What is the biggest decision or risk you’ve made in the past year on the job? Describe the process you used to make those decisions. Would you do it again?
2. Describe a time you overcame a challenge with an innovative solution. What was the challenge? What role did you play?

Planning/ Organization/ Time management Skills:
1. Please give an example of a time you didn’t meet your deadline. Why did you fail to meet your deadline? What did you learn from that experience?
2. Give an example of how you keep track of multiple projects. How do you stay on track and meet deadlines? How do you stay focused?
3. Describe a goal you’ve had. How you set it and achieved it?

Flexibility Skills:
1. Tell us about one of the toughest situations with which you’ve had to deal with. How did you handle the stress or pressure of the situation?

Leadership Skills:
1. Describe a time when you disagreed with a directive given by your supervisor. What happened and how did you handle it?
2. Give an example of a situation where team members, or co-workers, didn’t get along. This could include you and someone else or two other people. How did the project turn out? What did you do to resolve the issue so everyone was able to work together?
Questions to think about prior to your interview

1. Why do you want to work at this facility, and what specific job/areas am I interested in?
   a. To Prepare: research the facility
      i. Mission
      ii. Population served
      iii. Financial stability
      iv. Management style

   b. Learn about the job
      i. Job description
      ii. Occupational outlook
      iii. Handbook
      iv. Employees

2. What qualities make me a good candidate
   a. To prepare: self assessment
      i. What are my strengths and weaknesses?
      ii. What are my interests?
      iii. How do I know?
      iv. What kinds of results demonstrate my abilities?

3. What type of shift, working conditions, salary and fringe benefits are most important to me? (12 hours, 10 hours, 8 hours, weekends, flex-time, insurance)
   a. To prepare: clarify values and lifestyle choices
      i. What are my values?
      ii. What kind of lifestyles do I want for myself and those close to me?

4. How will I be trained?
   a. To prepare: How do I learn best?
      i. Do I need immediate feedback or can I learn well on my own?

5. What are my goals? Where do I want to be in 10 years?
   a. To prepare: Identify and prioritize career and life goals and objectives
      i. Am I interested in supervision, training, management?
      ii. How do I plan to reach these goals?

6. What are the major issues and current events facing this specific field, job, occupation, and company today?

7. What can you bring to the organization?
Other Common Questions Asked by Employers

**Personal**
1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose to interview with our organization?
3. Describe your ideal job.
4. What can you offer us over another candidate?
5. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths?
6. Can you name some weaknesses?
7. Define success. Failure. How did you learn from your failures?
8. Name a couple accomplishments you most proud?
9. Who are your role models? Why?
10. How does your college education or work experience relate to this job?
11. What motivates you most in a job?
12. Have you ever spoken before a group of people? How large?
13. What do you know about our organization (products or services)?
14. Do you plan to return to school for further education?
15. What would you change about yourself and why?

**Education**
16. Why did you choose your major?
17. Why did you choose to attend your college or university?
18. Do you think you received a good education? In what ways?
19. In which campus activities did you participate?
20. Which classes in your major did you like best? Least? Why?
21. If you were to start over, what would you change about your education?
22. Do your grades accurately reflect your ability? Why or why not?

**Experience**
23. What job-related skills have you developed?
24. Did you work while going to school? In what positions?
25. What did you learn from these work experiences?
26. What did you enjoy most about your last employment? Least?
27. Have you ever quit a job? Why?
28. Give an example of how you have solved a problem in the workplace?
29. How do you resolve conflict on a team project?
30. Give an example of a time in which you worked under deadline pressure.
31. Have you ever done any volunteer work? What kind?
32. How do you think a former supervisor would describe your work?

**Career Goals**
33. Do you prefer to work under supervision or on your own?
34. What kind of boss do you prefer?
35. Would you be successful working with a team?
36. Do you prefer large or small organizations? Why?
37. What other types of positions are you considering?
38. How do you feel about working in a structured environment?
39. Are you able to work on several assignments at once?
40. How do you feel about working overtime?
41. How do you feel about travel?
42. Are you willing to relocate?

*Think about these questions before an interview and what your response will be. You may want to have a mock interview to be sure your answers are communicated clearly and professionally.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>LAWFUL (Questions employers can ask)</th>
<th>UNLAWFUL (Questions employers cannot ask)</th>
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</table>
| Name     | Have you ever worked for this company under a different name  
Is any additional information relative to change of name, use of an assumed name or nickname necessary to enable a check on your work record? If yes, explain. | What is your maiden name?  
Is the name on your application your real name? |
| Address  | Where do you live?  
How long have you lived there? | Where were you born?  
Where were your relatives born? |
| Birthplace | | |
| Age/birth date | Are you 18 years of age or older?  
What is your birth date?  
Prove your age by submitting your birth certificate, baptismal record, naturalization papers, etc. (see citizenship) | How old are you?  
When did you acquire citizenship?  
Please produce naturalization papers or green card. (employers must verify citizenship or the right to work after they’ve decided to extend an offer) |
| Photograph | Requirement or option that applicant affix a photograph to employment form at any time before hiring. | |
| Citizenship | Are you a citizen of the United States?  
If not, are you authorized to work in the U.S.?  
Can you verify U.S. citizenship or your right to work in the United States? | Of what country are you a citizen?  
Are you a naturalized or a native-born citizen?  
When did you acquire citizenship?  
Please produce naturalization papers or green card. (employers must verify citizenship or the right to work after they’ve decided to extend an offer) |
| Sex or Marital Status | | Are you male or female?  
Are you married?  
What are your living arrangements? |
| Relatives | Do you have relatives (other than a spouse) already employed by the company?  
What are their names? | What are the names (addresses, ages, number or other information) of your relatives not employed by the company? |
| Children | Do you have children or plans to have children in the future?  
Do you have the capacity to reproduce?  
Do you advocate any form of birth control or family planning?  
What are your child care arrangements?  
How old are your children? | |
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<tr>
<td><strong>Disability</strong></td>
<td>Do you have any impairment (physical, mental or medical) which would interfere with your ability to perform the job for which you have applied?</td>
<td>Do you have any disabilities or diseases not related to job performance?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Arrest record</strong></td>
<td>Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense other than minor traffic violations? If yes, explain fully.</td>
<td>Have you ever been arrested?</td>
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<td><strong>Experienced</strong></td>
<td>Please describe your work experience</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Travel/Overtime</strong></td>
<td>This position requires X amount of overtime/travel. Would you be able to meet this requirement? Who will care for your children when you travel or work overtime? Would your spouse object if you traveled or worked overtime?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Language</strong></td>
<td>What languages do you speak and write fluently? What is your native language? How did you learn to read, write or speak a foreign language?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Please describe your academic, vocational or professional education and the public and private schools you attended. What are the dates of attendance? (To permit verification.)</td>
<td>What are the names and addresses of people to be notified in case of accident or emergency? (can be asked after hire)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Notice in case of emergency</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Military experience</strong></td>
<td>Have you served in the U.S. Armed Forces or in the National Guard? Describe your experience. Do you have any military experience? (other than in the United States)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organizations</strong></td>
<td>Do you belong to any organizations which you consider relevant to your ability to perform this job? Please explain</td>
<td>Are you a member of any clubs, societies or lodges? Which ones?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Race or color</strong></td>
<td>What race/color are you? Are you a minority?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Religion or creed</strong></td>
<td>What is your religion? To which parish/church do you belong? What religious holidays do you observe?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>National Origin</strong></td>
<td>What is your (or relatives) lineage, ancestry, national origin, descent, percentage or nationality?</td>
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**Questions to Ask Employers**

An interview is a two-way street. Employers get an impression of you from the questions you ask. Are you a critical thinker? Did you comprehend and correctly process everything in the interview? Have you done research and have a good grasp of the company and the scope of the position? Your questions should be intelligent, insightful, and polite. Have at least 3-5 custom questions in mind. Employers look for someone who shows interest, confidence, and is well organized.

1. Please describe (or ask them to clarify specifics) the duties of the job for me.
2. Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
3. What do you like best about your job/company?
4. What kinds of assignments might I expect the first six months on the job?
5. What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
6. Does your company encourage further education?
7. Do you have plans for expansion?
8. What are your growth projections for next year?
9. Have you cut staff in the last three years?
10. In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?
11. What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) now?
12. Has there been much turnover in this job area?
13. Will I have the opportunity to work on special projects?
14. Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?
15. How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
16. What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you or may I contact you?

**Interview Checklist**

**Preparation:**
Research, research, research! Knowing more about the organization as a whole and the particular position you are applying for will be helpful in the interview. It will help you understand questions that may be asked and will give you a chance to come up with questions to ask them. The more research you conduct, the more confident and comfortable you will feel in the interview. It will also demonstrate to the employer how determined and pro-active you are about their company and the position you seek. Get specific directions to the location. If possible, go there the day before and check out parking and the location of the office where your interview will be held.

**First Impression:**
Put your best foot forward. Remember the decision to hire you may be made in the first 5 minutes. Always wait until they sit or invite you to be seated.

**Dress code:**
Dress more formal than you would in the actual position. Women should wear a suit or dress with a jacket. Men should wear a suit or sport jacket and slacks. It's a good idea to have an interview outfit ready and waiting (cleaned, neat, no threads or missing buttons) hanging in your closet. Don't wear anything too trendy or faddish. (ladies, no miniskirts). Check all zippers for closure and ladies should always have an extra pair of hose for emergencies. Your style of dress communicates too, what do you want it to say? (See page 38)

**Arrival:**
Arrive a few minutes early to check out the location and parking. Stop by the restroom and check your appearance. Again, you may want to check out the location the day before if you are unsure of the area.

**What to bring:**
Always have an extra copy of your résumé, note paper and pen. You will want to jot down questions as they may come about as well as information about the position. Also, write down the names of each person you interview with, so you can mail a thank-you note.

**Application:**
Read through the entire application before you begin. Follow the directions. Give specific titles. You may leave the salary question blank, or fill it in with a reasonable salary range. Use N/A where answers are not applicable. Proofread the application before returning it.