

OVERVIEW

“Tell me about a time when...”

Behavioral interviewing is considered one of the most effective types of interviews to find and select the right candidate for a job opening. As you conduct your job search, preparing for behavioral interview questions is imperative. Behavioral interview questions are questions that ask you to recall previous experiences and relate them to the current job opening. Employers don't just want to know what you accomplished, but also how it was accomplished. Questions that begin with the phrases such as “describe a time when” or “give me an example of” are considered behavioral interview questions since the focus is on how you behaved in the past. Past performance typically serves as the best indicator of future performance, so having strong, confident answers to behavioral questions will set you up for success during the interview process.

S.T.A.R. METHOD

The S.T.A.R. method is a framework that you can use to craft your answers to behavioral interview questions. S.T.A.R. stands for Situation, Task, Action, Result. Utilize the formula below to organize your responses, stay focused, and provide a compelling narrative. Be concise – one to two sentences per step is usually sufficient. Ensure your story is focused on your accomplishments as an individual. Avoid using team-based language like “we” as often as possible. The focus of your narrative should be on the Action and Result steps since this is where your performance is highlighted, rather than describing a story or situation.

Situation

- Set the scene and give the necessary details of your example
- Keep all details relevant to the prompt; No unnecessary background information
- Be specific when providing key details to ensure the results are emphasized later

Task

- Describe what your responsibility was in the situation
- Focus on what objectives or goals were expected of you before the situation occurred

Action

- Showcase your contribution to the situation; Highlight your strengths when talking about your actions
- What steps did you take to solve the problem? What decision-making processes were utilized?
- Avoid being vague - focus on specific details and processes

Result

- Share what outcomes your actions achieved and quantify, if possible
- Explain why what you did mattered
- Discuss what you learned, how you grew, and how you became a stronger employee

Tell Me About a Time When You Provided Excellent Customer Service

“I worked for AT&T as a Manager in Training. During this program, we were expected to meet monthly sales goals. By greeting the customer in a warm and friendly manner, repeating their name whenever possible, giving the customer undivided attention, and staying positive even during frustrating interactions, I was able to gain a loyal client base, many of whom became repeat clients. As a result of my customer service, I was able to exceed my sales goals by 20% within one fiscal year.”

HOW TO PREPARE

To prepare for a behavioral interview, brainstorm some examples of professional situations for each of the categories below. You will want these examples to highlight your professional successes, challenges, and growth as an employee. Brainstorm situations that can be relevant in a variety of contexts.

Leadership

These questions will assess your ability to lead others and manage a team.

Sample Questions

1. Have you ever been in a position in which you had to lead a group of peers? How did you handle it? Tell me about problems you had and how you handled them.
2. Describe a time when you had to make a very important and difficult decision that affected everyone in your department.



Client-Facing

These questions will address your ability to successfully represent your organization or company.

Sample Questions

1. Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to give great service to a customer.
2. Tell me about a project you worked on and how it helped the organization meet its business goals.



Teamwork

These questions will assess your ability to work on a team and resolve conflict.

Sample Questions

1. Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.
2. Describe a time when you needed to work as part of a team on a project or initiative. What was your role on the team and what actions did you take to contribute to the team in that role?



Communication

These questions will assess your preparation, thought-process, and communication style.

Sample Questions

1. Tell me about your proudest professional accomplishment.
2. Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.



Time Management & Adaptability

These questions will focus on your organizational and time management style.

Sample Questions

1. Think of a time when you had to work on multiple projects simultaneously. How did you manage your time?
2. Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some change. How did that impact you, and how did you adapt?



Values & Motivation

These questions will assess your ability to motivate yourself or others.

Sample Questions

1. Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you go about ensuring that you would meet your objective?
2. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake at work. How did you deal with this situation and what was the outcome?

