

## Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral Interviewing is a style of interviewing that more and more organizations are using in their hiring process. The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is this: the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. It focuses on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related. Traditional interviewing questions ask you general questions such as "Tell me about yourself." The process of behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently. Employers predetermine which skills are necessary for the job for which they are looking and then ask very pointed questions to determine if the candidate possesses those skills. For example, if successful leadership is necessary for a position, you may be asked to talk about an experience in which you were a leader as well as what you think makes a good leader. To assess which skills the employer seeks, review employer literature, speak with alumni, family and friends who work for the employers, and listen carefully during the organization's information session.

- 1.) During a behavioral interview, always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary, and make sure you answer the question completely.
- 2.) Your interview preparation should include identifying examples of situations from your experiences where you have demonstrated the behaviors a given company seeks.
- 3.) During the interview, your responses need to be specific and detailed. Tell them about a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Briefly tell them about the situation, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome.
- 4.) Your answer should contain these four steps (Situation, Task, Action, Result -> "STAR") for optimum success.

## STAR Answering Technique

<b>S</b> <b>ituation and</b> <b>T</b> <b>ask</b>	Describe the situation that you were in and the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand the situation completely. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
<b>A</b> <b>ction you took</b>	Describe the action(s) you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. You may want to lead with "I" to convey to the interviewer that you specifically completed those tasks. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what YOU did -- not the efforts of the team. Do not talk about what you might do. Be confident when talking about the actions you took in the situation. You might want to explain the reason why you chose that particular course of action.
<b>R</b> <b>esults you achieved</b>	What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Before the interview process, identify two or three of your top selling points and determine how you will convey these points (with demonstrated STAR stories) during the interview.

It is helpful to frame your answer as a story that you can tell. Typically, the interviewer will pick apart the story to try to get at the specific behavior(s) they seek. They refer to this as "digging a well." The interviewer will sometimes ask you open ended questions to allow you to choose which examples you wish to use. When a part of your story relates to a skill or experience the interviewer wishes to explore further, he/she will then ask you very specific follow-up questions regarding your behavior. These can include "What were you thinking at that point?" or "Tell me more about your meeting with that person." or "Lead me through your decision process."

Whenever you can, quantify your results. Numbers illustrate your level of authority and responsibility. For example: "I was a shift supervisor." could be "As a shift supervisor, I trained and evaluated 4 employees."

Be prepared to provide examples of when results didn't turn out as you planned. What did you do then? What did you learn? Your resume will serve as a good guide when answering these questions. Refresh your memory regarding your achievements in the past couple of years. Demonstration of the desired behaviors may be proven in many ways. Use examples from past internships, classes, activities, team involvements, community service and work experience.

### Example of a STAR Answer

**Situation:** During my internship last summer, I was responsible for managing various events.

**Task:** I noticed that attendance at these events had dropped by 30% over the past 3 years and wanted to do something to improve these numbers.

**Action:** I designed a new promotional packet to go out to the local community businesses. I also included a rating sheet to collect feedback on our events and organized internal round table discussions to raise awareness of the issue with our employees.

**Result:** We utilized some of the wonderful ideas we received from the community, made our internal systems more efficient and visible and raised attendance by 18% the first year.

## Star Method Exercise

Under each heading, cite examples of your own using the STAR method. Develop short stories around your experiences to describe your strengths and possible obstacles you had to overcome.

### Teamwork

S  
T  
A  
R

### Interpersonal Skills

S  
T  
A  
R

### Communication Skills

S  
T  
A  
R

### Technical Skills

S  
T  
A  
R

### Problem Solving Skills

S  
T  
A  
R

### Organizational Skills

S  
T  
A  
R

### Strong Work Ethic

S  
T  
A  
R

### Flexibility/Adaptability Skills

S  
T  
A  
R

### Motivation and Initiative

S  
T  
A  
R

### Integrity

S  
T  
A  
R

## **“30-SECOND TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF”**

Almost every job interview begins with this question – *“Tell me about yourself”* – and it’s best to prepare the content of your answer before the interview. This question will most likely set the tone for the entire interview.

### Things you might want to include:

1. Brief introduction – share that you recently graduated from Shepherd and your degree
  2. Your key accomplishments
  3. Relevant credentials
  4. Education
  5. Career start/progress/goals
  6. Key strengths demonstrated by your accomplishments
  7. Relevant work and internship experience
  8. The importance of your strengths and accomplishments to your prospective employer.
  9. Where and how you see yourself developing in the position for which you are applying – What you want (tempered with the right amount of modesty)
- Think of this answer as your 30-second professional highlight while keeping in mind the employer, the position requirements and objectives. If you were to make a 30-second video to sell yourself to an employer and that is all they would base their decision on, what would you make sure to include?
  - Your highlight might be different depending on the company/organization because you choose to include the most applicable “selling points”.
  - By working on this answer, you will get a clear focus as to the skills you possess and what you would like to do with them. This will also boost the self-confidence you project, which is vital to ensure a good interview.

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWERS**

Obviously, in any interview you don't want to interrogate your interviewer. But by posing thoughtful questions, you can create a meaningful discussion so that both sides get a better idea of whether hiring you is the right thing.

Below are a few suggested questions. Add your own based on your research and conversations. Most employers appreciate the time and interest you’re investing in the process: by hiring right, they avoid the high cost and headache associated with turnover.

- a) **I understand the primary duties of this position. What are some of the secondary responsibilities?** (Secondary work can often account for the bulk of your time if an employer doesn't staff effectively. Know what's expected before saying yes.)
- b) **Has this position been vacated or recently created?** (You're hoping to hear that the previous employee was promoted—meaning the firm likes to promote from within. Perhaps it's a newly created position because of growth. On the flip side, there might be a high turnover and the company struggles to find the right fit.)
- c) **How did previous employees excel in this position?**
- d) **How would you and your direct supervisees characterize your management style?** (Your prospective boss may be a micromanager or he or she may be totally hands off. Probe a bit to understand what you'd be dealing with.)
- e) **If you could change one thing about the culture of the department, what would it be?** (Another way of asking, "What's wrong with this place?" without being rude.)
- f) **Are there any new initiatives a person in this position will be a part of/ expected to lead?**
- g) **Are there opportunities for professional development? If so, what kind?**
- h) **What challenges will someone in this position face?**
- i) **What makes your organization unique?**
- j) **What is the next step in the hiring process?**
- k) **How is my performance going to be evaluated? By whom?**
- l) **What are some challenges facing the department in the next 90 days?**

# Questions to Expect

*...and tips to responding to these questions*

## **Relax and tell me a little about yourself.**

Talk about your experiences, qualifications, and accomplishments (as they relate to the position). Don't talk about your childhood, family, or hobbies.

## **Why do you want to work as a ...?**

Talk about the interesting details of the position and why they fascinate you.

## **What skills does this job require?**

Use your fingers to count off the skills. 1...2...3...

## **What qualifications do you have?**

Using your fingers, name a skill, list your qualifications, then move on to the next skill.

## **Tell me about my company.**

You can contact the Chamber of Commerce, look on the internet, and talk to your network of contacts. Get information on the company size, its key products or services, the markets where it competes, and its overall reputation.

## **Why do you want to work for us?**

You're on your own. Researching the company before the interview can help you with this. A thoughtful, well-researched answer will go a long way.

## **How did you learn about us?**

Friend, relative, newspaper story, advertisements – anything to show that they are not a random choice. Then, back that up with talking about some of the additional research you have done on the company.

## **How many other companies have you approached?**

Example: "Several for back-up, but this is where I really hope to work (and provide a reason why)."

## **How many employers have you worked for during the last five years?**

Tell the truth.

## **You seem to switch jobs a lot. Why?**

Job stagnation, demotions due to down sizing, career exploration, etc. Do not speak negatively about another company, supervisor, or salary.

## **How long do you plan to work here?**

Express your intentions to stay for a substantial amount of time and your enthusiasm/ hopes that you get the job.

## **Tell me about your current (or last) job.**

The interviewer is probably looking at your resume and asking you to discuss a previous experience in detail. Choose to talk about the most relevant aspects.

## **What will your manager say when you give notice that you're leaving?**

Explain why you'll be missed. Don't give the impression that they'll be glad to be rid of you.

## **What did you like most about that position?**

Talk about your responsibilities, challenges, accomplishments, and the people.

## **What would you change about that job?**

Do not bad-mouth the job. You could explain that you'd want more responsibilities. This shows initiative.

## **Did you ever have a disagreement with a boss? Why? Why not?**

Answer "yes" and you're a troublemaker, "no" and you're a wimp. Find the middle ground. For example: "Sure we disagree. But we worked well together. For example..."

You do not have to give an example of a large conflict; it could be a difference in opinions.

## **Tell me about your education or training.**

Explain your education or training and how it helped to prepare you for this position.

## **Did you enjoy school? Why?**

The manager may want to know if you enjoy learning and whether you might benefit from further education and/or a more in depth training program.

## **Which course did you find most difficult? Why?**

The manager may want to know if you have perseverance. "I got a D in my first term in Algebra. My study skills needed improvement. I joined a study group. By third term I pulled it up to a B and kept it there." Talk about why you disliked it and/or struggled and how you changed your attitude/outcome. What you learned (that was positive) from this negative experience.

## **Did you join any school activities? Why?**

School activities show that you're sociable; that you enjoy being part of a group, and that you can work with others. This is important in the workplace. It also looks favorable if you held offices and/or assumed leadership roles in these activities.

## **Do you plan to continue your education?**

Continuing education courses suggest growth, ambition, promotability – and may qualify for tuition assistance.

## **What do you do to relax after work?**

Don't brag about car racing, sky diving, scuba diving, or any other sport that might be dangerous. They suggest the likelihood of injury and absence from work.