

Behavioral Interviews

Behavioral Interviews vs. Technical Interviews

Behavioral Interview Questions: This type of interview consists of questions to determine if a candidate has demonstrated a particular skill or behavior. The premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. When asked a behavioral question, it is important to provide specific examples rather than general ones. Prepare to answer questions related to the skills and characteristics the company is seeking. For example, if leadership skills are relevant to the position, be prepared to describe a positive situation when you acted as a leader.

Examples of behavioral questions:

- Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.
- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

STAR Method: A helpful strategy to use when answering Behavioral Interview Questions is the STAR Method. Using the STAR Method will ensure that you provide a concise answer. In response to the interviewer's behavioral question, first give an example of a relevant **S**ituation you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome. Second, describe the **T**asks involved in dealing with that situation. Emphasize the various **A**ctions taken to solve the problem or achieve the accomplishment. Close by describing the **R**esult or outcome of the actions taken.

Example of a STAR Answer:

Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.

S: Upon entering USC graduate school, I set a goal to graduate in two years with a high GPA, while also becoming involved on campus and gaining work experience in my field.

T: In order to accomplish my goal, I knew that I needed to network in the field of EE, look for an internship, and set up a disciplined study schedule to manage school, work and campus activities.

A: I immediately looked into campus organizations and joined IEEE, found an internship working at Company A for the summer. In addition, I set up a study group for the weekends.

R: As a result, I learned valuable time management skills, while completing work and classroom deadlines on-time. I achieved my original goal and can now focus on future goals in my career.

Behavioral & Technical Interviews

Examples of Behavioral Questions:

Behavioral questions can be difficult if you are not prepared. Always try to be conscious about what the recruiter is trying to find out about you by asking you a particular question. Remember to use the STAR Method (see Interview Tips Handout). Here are some examples:

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.
- Describe a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communications skills in order to get an important point across.
- Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).

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Technical Interview Questions: This type of interview consists of technical questions in your field. Prepare for brainteasers or riddles designed to measure your analytical and problem-solving skills. Review specific concepts you have learned that are relevant to the position.

Examples of technical questions:

- The following script or programming code will not compile. Please explain why.
- How would you improve this pen?
- Why are manhole covers round?