



What is a Behavioral Interview?

Behavioral interviews, also called Dimensional, Competency, or Targeted interviews, are based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior. During the interview, you will be asked in depth questions about specific situations or tasks you have encountered in the past. Interviewers look for situations similar to those of the target position then probe your responses for clues to determine if your behavioral patterns meet their needs. Interviewers are looking for examples of things like a time when you worked on a team, how you managed your time in a specific situation, or how you dealt with conflict or stress in a specific situation.

Behavioral vs. Traditional Interviews

Behavioral interviewing has been gaining popularity among recruiters and is quickly replacing the traditional interview. The behavioral interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information and works from a profile of desired behaviors that are needed for success on the job.

- You will be asked to describe how you did behave instead of how you would behave in a particular situation.
 - “Describe a creative/innovative idea that you produced which led to a significant contribution to the success of an activity or project.”
 - “Tell me about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes/operations worked. What was the result?”
 - “Give me specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle the subsequent situation?”
- The interviewer will expect detailed responses and results of the situation, and will view canned, vague or hypothetical answers negatively.
- You will notice an absence of such questions as, “Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses.”

Ten ways to Impress an Interviewer

1. Come to the interview prepared
2. Know about the company
3. Be an excellent listener
 - Listen without interrupting and answer questions specifically
4. Be positive
5. Don't ramble
 - An interviewer will ask if more information is required
6. Cite specific examples and results
7. Identify company challenges and offer solutions
8. Ask great questions
 - Don't ask about salary, benefits, or vacation
 - Do ask about company challenges, goals, and new products
9. Tell the interviewer you really want the job
10. Write a thank you note

“Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her weight.”

If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you might be in the middle of a behavioral interview.

Preparing for a Behavioral Interviews

Because a candidate's previous behavior is a good indication of how that individual will perform in the future, you will be asked to share situations that demonstrate the desired behaviors the interviewer is looking for. Advanced preparation is vital to your success during the interview.

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially those involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning and customer service.
- Prepare a short description of each situation and be ready to give details if asked.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle and an end. Practice responding to behavioral questions using the **S.T.A.R.*** Concept by Stating the:
 - Situation or Task
 - Action taken
 - Result or outcome

The Behavioral Interview

Don't feel anxious or threatened by the prospect of a behavioral interview. Think of it as an opportunity to display your accomplishments and skills.

- It is perfectly acceptable for candidates to take some time to evaluate the question and identify the example that best illustrates their attributes.
- Be sure the outcome or result you describe reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.
- Be conscious of derailment factors such as:
 - Overdependent on one strength
 - Resistant to change
 - Difficulty adapting
 - Poor detail orientation
 - Insensitive to the needs of others
 - Not a team contributor

*Stimac, D.J. (1997). Job Search Handbook: A concise, step-by-step guide to successful career transitions: SEATON Corp. *The STAR Concept is a registered copyright of Development Dimensions International, Inc., Pittsburgh, PA.*

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Traditional Interview Questions

Review these questions before the interview and think about how you might respond. Remember, your answers should demonstrate the **Ten Personal Characteristics Employers Seek**:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Integrity | 6. Interpersonal Skills |
| 2. Motivation/Initiative | 7. Strong Work Ethic |
| 3. Communication Skills | 8. Teamwork Skills |
| 4. Self-Confidence | 9. Leadership Skills |
| 5. Flexibility | 10. Enthusiasm |

Personal

- Tell me about yourself?
- What are your long-range and short-range goals?
- What are your major strengths? Weaknesses?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What are your salary expectations?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel that you will be successful in your field?
- What personal characteristics are necessary for success in your chosen field?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- How do you spend your spare time? What are your hobbies?
- What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?

Company and Position

- Why are you interested in our company?
- What do you know about our company?
- What type of position are you most interested in?
- What position in our company do you want to work toward?
- What qualifications do you have that will allow you to be successful with this company?

Work Experiences

- What jobs have you held? How were they obtained and why did you leave?
- What did you learn about yourself from some of the jobs you have held?
- What jobs did you enjoy most? Least?
- Do you prefer working with others or by yourself?

Education and Campus Activities

- Why did you choose your college major?
- Why did you select your college or university?
- What subject did you like best? Why?
- Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
- Do you think that your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
- How has your college experience prepared you for a career?
- What school activities have you participated in? Why? Which did you enjoy most?
- What extracurricular offices have you held?

Questions to Ask Employers

- Please describe the duties of the job for me.
- What kinds of assignments might I expect for the first six months on the job?
- Are salary adjustments geared to the cost of living or job performance?
- Does your company encourage further education?
- How often are performance reviews given?
- What are your growth projections for the next year?
- How do you feel about creativity and individuality?
- In what ways is a Career with your company better than one with your competitors?
- Is this a new position or am I replacing someone?
- What is the largest single problem facing your staff (department) now?
- Does your company offer either single or dual career-track programs?
- What do you like best about your job/company?
- Has there been much turnover in this job area?
- What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?
- What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?
- Where does this position fit into the organizational structure?
- How much travel, if any, is involved in this position?
- What is the next course of action? When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?