



Behavioral Based Interviews

Tips for Turning Job Interviews into Job Offers

What is the Behavioral Based Interview?

Behavioral based interviewing focuses on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are job related. It is based on the belief that past behavior and performance predicts future. Your work experience, activities, hobbies, volunteer work, or school projects illustrate examples of your past behavior. Current employment literature indicates that there is a strong trend towards this type of interviewing.

What Do Employers Evaluate In An Interview?

Employers are looking for three types of skills:

- **Content Skills**—Knowledge that is work specific such as computer programming, accounting, reading blueprints, etc. Content skills are also identified as specific degrees (BA, BS, MBA, etc.) or certifications (MCSE, CPA, etc.) These are normally expressed as nouns.
- **Functional or Transferable Skills**—Used with people, information or things such as organizing, managing, developing, communicating, etc.—expressed as verbs.
- **Adaptive or Self-Management Skills**—Personal characteristics such as dependable, team player, self directed, punctual, etc.—expressed as adjectives.

How are Behavioral Questions Different from Other Types of Interviewing Questions?

There are three types of questions typically asked in interviews:

- **Theoretical Questions**—Questions that place you in a hypothetical situation. These questions are more likely to test your skill at answering rather than doing a good job. Example: How would you organize your project team to begin work?
- **Leading Questions**—Questions that hint at the answer the interviewer is seeking by the way they are phrased. Example: Working on your own doesn't bother you, does it?
- **Behavioral Questions**—Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behavior from your past experience and concentrate on job related functions. They may include:

Open-Ended Questions - These require more than a "yes" or "no" response. They often begin with "Tell me...", "Describe...", or "When..." Example: "Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a workload."

Why Questions - Used to reveal rationale for decisions you have made or to determine your level of motivation. Example: "Why did you decide to major in this program at Emory rather than somewhere else?"

How Can I Best Answer Behavioral Based Questions?

Use the **PAR** technique:

Problem. Give an example of a situation or problem you were involved in that resulted in a positive outcome.

Action. Talk about the various actions involved in addressing the situation or problem.

Results. Describe what results followed as a result of your actions.

An Example Of A Complete PAR Story

Q: Tell me what techniques you would use to build effective relations with customers?

A: "In my last position, we had a number of customers who couldn't make up their minds about the product. They would place an order and then call and change it the next day. (**Problem**)

So, I developed a procedure with my customers to call them first, then go over the order a second time and answer all their questions again. (**Action**)

It took extra time, but it saved money in the long run because we didn't have to repackage as many orders. (**Results**)

I think patience is an important tool when you're developing relationships with customers. Since your customers are making very difficult decisions, I think being patient will be an asset when I serve them."

How Can I Prepare For A Behavioral Interview?

Analyze the type of positions for which you are applying. Try to get an actual job description. What skills do employers require? Analyze your own background. What skills do you have (content, functional, and adaptive) that relate to your job objective?

Identify examples from your past experience when you demonstrated those skills. Can you tell a story about your use of particular skills or knowledge? Concentrate on developing complete PAR answers and remember that a good story has a beginning, middle, and end. Wherever possible, quantify your results. Numbers illustrate your level of authority and responsibility. Be prepared to provide examples of when results didn't turn out as you planned. What did you do then?

Before starting the interview process, identify 10 to 15 of your top selling points and determine how you will convey these points (with the demonstrated PAR story) during the interview. Once employed, keep a personal achievement diary to help document demonstrated performance (PAR stories).

Examples Of Behavioral Based Questions & Requests

- Tell me about a time when your work or an idea of yours was criticized.
- Describe a difficult problem that you've had to deal with and how you resolved it.
- Describe a situation in which you were required to work under pressure and how you reacted.
- Describe a time that you showed initiative.
- Tell me about a time when you put your foot in your mouth.
- Describe a situation when you found yourself challenged.
- How did it work out?
- How do you feel about delegating?
- What systematic steps have you used in meeting an objective?