

Answering Behavior-Based Interview Questions Using the STAR Method

Tell me about a time when....

Please describe how you handled...

Give an example of...

Behavioral-based interview questions are perhaps some of the more challenging questions you'll encounter in an interview. They are based on the theory that past experiences are a better indicator of future behavior rather than hypothetical situations. Rather than an employer asking you how you **would** handle certain situations, they will ask you how you **did** handle situations.

Remember, they are looking for specific examples. If you can't immediately think of an answer to a question, do NOT answer it "Well, I would...". Instead, say something like "Let me think a moment so I can give you a specific example. A seasoned recruiter does not mind silence, and s/he will be relieved to know that you are heading in the right direction!

To help you give the best answer, think of giving your example (or telling your story) using **STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result.**

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Situation: Set the scene, such as where you were working, your job title, or the class project you were assigned. Describe a situation in which you were involved that perhaps had obstacles, but which had a positive outcome. This could be from class, work, internships, leadership roles, etc. Of course, be sure it is related to the question!

Task: Describe your responsibilities in this situation, the problem you were facing, or the challenge you had to overcome.

Action: Specify what actions you took in this situation to overcome the obstacles and achieve your results. Who did you work with? What steps did you take to accomplish this task?

Results: What happened? What were the results of your actions? Be sure to highlight the positive outcomes. Were you recognized for your efforts? Did you receive a high grade? Was the problem solved?

Example Question

You indicated on your resume that leadership is one of your strengths. Please describe an experience where you used your leadership abilities to manage a recent challenge.

Situation:

During my third year of college, I was elected Vice President for Educational Programs with my student professional association. The responsibilities of the position included securing speakers for our meetings, advertising the programs to the campus community, introducing speakers, and evaluating each program.

Task:

Attendance at meetings last year had decreased substantially due to a decline in the overall club membership. The goal was to implement programs to address the professional development of our association members and to increase attendance by 25% compared to last year's figures.

Action:

I assembled a team to help with the program design and speaker selection. We developed a survey to assess the members' professional interests and gather ideas for possible speakers and topics. We had each member complete the survey. Then we randomly selected members for a focus group interview. I had learned about this research technique in my Marketing Research class and thought it would help us identify why attendance had dropped.

Result:

Because of the information we gathered from the surveys and interviews, we selected speakers for the entire year and produced a brochure describing each program and the featured speaker. Under my leadership, attendance increased 150% over the previous year.

*For assistance responding to tough interview questions,
schedule a mock interview –
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