

QUESTIONS ABOUT BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

What is a Behavior 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 behavior and performance. You may use work, school projects and family life as examples of your past behavior. Current employment literature indicates that the majority of employers use this type of interviewing style.

What do Employers Evaluate in a Behavioral Interview?

Employers are looking for 3 - types of skills:

- Content Skills.
- Functional also known as Transferable Skills.
- Adaptive also known as Self-Management Skills.

Content Skills – Knowledge that is work specific such as computer programming, accounting, welding and expressed as nouns.

Functional or Transferable Skills – Used with people, information or things such as organizing, managing, developing, communicating and expressed as verbs.

Adaptive or Self-Management Skills – Personal characteristics such as dependable, team player, self directed, punctual and expressed as adjectives.

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

There are 3 - types of questions typically found in interviews:

1. Theoretical Questions – Questions that place you in a hypothetical situation. These questions are more likely to test your skill at answering questions rather than in doing a good job.

Example: How would you organize your friends to help you move into a new apartment?

2. Leading Questions – Questions that hint at the answer the interviewer is seeking by the way they are phrased.

Examples: Working on your own doesn't bother you does it?

3. Behavioral Questions – Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behavior from your past experiences and concentrate on job related functions. They may include:

- **Open-end questions** – These require more than a yes or no response. They often begin with “Tell me...” “When...”

Example: Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a workload.

- **Close-end questions** - Used mostly to verify or confirm information.

Example: You have a degree in psychology, is that correct?

- **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 UWP rather than at a private college or larger university?

A Quiz on Behavioral, Theoretical and Leading Questions

- A. How would you resolve a customer service problem where the customer demanded an immediate refund?
- B. Tell me about a time when you had to juggle a number of work priorities. What did you do?
- C. You can work weekends occasionally can't you?

Answers: A. Theoretical; B. Behavioral; C. Leading

How Can I Best Answer Behavior-Based Questions?

Think of “PAR for the Course.” A complete answer to a behavior-based question must:

- Explain the task or problem for which you were responsible.
- Discuss the specific action you took.
- Explain the results of your actions.

Your answer must contain *all of these components to be a PAR answer. Tell the interviewer a “story” (with a beginning, a middle, and an end) about how you used a practical skill.*

Problem (P) – Advertising revenue was falling off for the Daily News and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

Action (A) – We designed a new promotional package to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of DN circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a College of Business professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

Result (R) – We designed contracts with fifteen former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by twenty percent (quantities are always good) over the same period last year.

Can You Give Me an Example of a Complete PAR Story?

Right before Thanksgiving break; most of the guys had gone home for the weekend break. Our fraternity president and vice president had already left for home when we received a call that one of our brothers had been involved in a car accident. I volunteered to go to the hospital to be with him and then called his parents. I also made arrangements for them to stay at the Hospital Hospitality House when they arrived. They were pleased I had taken time from my own weekend to help them. Our chapter advisor congratulated me for keeping a cool head handling the situation. I've since decided to run for chapter office.

How Can I Prepare for a Behavioral Interview?

- Analyze the type of positions for which you're 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 where you demonstrate those skills. How 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.]
- Whenever 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 2 to 3 of your top selling points and determine how you will convey these points (with demonstrated PAR stories) during the interview.
- Once employed, keep a personal achievement diary to help document demonstrated performance (PAR stories).

Materials adapted from materials developed by Larry Beck Ball State University.

Information on the Web About Behavioral Interviews

www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/interview/Behavioral.htm

www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/interviewing/19990420-hirsch.html

www.careerplanning.about.com/library/weekly/aa080900a.htm

www.rit.placementmanual.com/interviewing/interviewing-14.html

www.brockport.edu/career/behave.htm

www.careerfair.com/tips/behavioralinter.asp

www.bc.edu/offices/careers/skills/interview/types/

www.geocities.com/optimalbiz/interv.html