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# Interview Information Behavioral Interview Questions

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Behavioral interviewing is based on the notion that the best predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. The interviewer will identify the skills necessary for the particular job opening and then ask you to give examples of when you used those skills in previous work situations. Open ended questions are often asked to give you the opportunity to describe your experience.

## **Tips for Answering Behavioral Questions:**

- Employers expect your responses to be specific and detailed. Answer using specific anecdotes and examples.
- The interviewer is interested in what your thoughts were at the time and what your decision-making process was.
- If you are not sure what the employer is asking, restate the question or ask for clarification. (Can you be more specific? I am not sure what you are asking for.) After providing your answer, you may ask if that is what the interviewer was looking for and if your responses answered the question adequately.
- Prepare ahead of time by reviewing your own resume. If you put experience or events in your resume or cover letter, be prepared to discuss them in detail. Often interviewers will pull some detail from your resume and ask you to describe a particular situation.
- Develop short (2-3 minute) stories that highlight the skills you possess. No story is too boring if it highlights your skills. Use examples from volunteer experiences, academic situations, etc.
- You may find one story fits a variety of different questions. Don't overuse an example, but it is all right to reuse one if a different skill can be highlighted a second time.
- If your answers include any negatives, make sure to explain what you learned from the experience and how you have been able to change that behavior or response.

If asked a question about which you have no experience to recount, tell the interviewer just that. Don't make up an example to fit a situation. You are not expected to have experienced every possible scenario.

## **Below are some examples of Behavioral Questions:**

Tell me about the time when you...

Give an example of a time when you...

Describe a time when you...

- Were disappointed in your performance.
- Made a major sacrifice to achieve an important goal.
- Worked effectively under a great deal of pressure or stress.
- Were really bothered by the actions of another coworker.
- Were especially creative in solving a problem.
- Organized or planned an event that was very successful.
- Had to deal with a personality conflict with a boss or coworker
- Felt really good about the decision you made and the process you went through
- Used facts and reasons to persuade someone to accept your recommendation
- Utilized your leadership ability to gain support for what initially had strong opposition
- Were able to build team spirit in a time of low morale
- Were able to gain commitment from others to really work as a team

- Were particularly perceptive regarding a person's or group's feelings and needs
- Built rapport quickly with someone under difficult conditions
- Were particularly effective on prioritizing tasks and completing a project on schedule
- Were highly motivated and your example inspired others
- Found it necessary to tactfully but forcefully say things others did not want to hear
- Were particularly effective in a talk you gave or presentation you taught
- Had to make a decision you knew would be unpopular
- Made a mistake and learned from it
- Made an intentional effort to get to know someone from another culture
- Set an important goal and were successful in reaching it
- Were able to successfully communicate with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you
- Conformed to a policy with which you did not agree
- Had to deal with an irate customer
- Failed and how you handled it
- Made a bad decision
- Surmounted a major obstacle
- Had to adapt to a different situation

**One strategy for responding to behavioral questions is to use the STAR technique:**

- Situation or Task: Describe the situation you were in or the task you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you had done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
- Action you took: Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did, not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
- Results received: What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?