

## What is Behavior Based Interviewing?

Behavior 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 experience, activities, hobbies, volunteer work, school projects, family life - anything really - as examples of your past behavior. Current employment literature indicates that there is a strong trend towards this type of interviewing. In addition to questions found in many current resources, you should also consider the following in your interview preparations.

## What Do Employers Evaluate in A Behavioral Interview?

Employers are looking for 3 types of skills: Content Skills, Functional - also called Transferable Skills, and Adaptive - also called Self Management Skills.

**Content Skills** -- Knowledge that is work specific such as computer programming, accounting, welding, etc. 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 3 types of questions typically found in interviews:

**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?

**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...", "When...".  
*Example:* Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a work load.
- **Close-ended 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 UWEC rather than at a small private college or larger university?

## 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, the specific action you took, and 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)** -- I designed a new promotional packet 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 signed 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 got 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 got there. They were pleased I had taken time from my own weekend to help them. Our chapter advisor congratulated me for keeping a cool head and handling the situation. I've since decided to run for chapter office.

## Questions for behavioral interviews

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
- What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- Tell me about a time you were able to successfully deal with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- Give me an example of a time when something you tried to accomplish and failed.
- Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Tell me about a recent situation in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
- Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Please tell me about a time you had to fire a friend.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).
- Describe a time on any job that you've held in which you were faced with problems or stresses which tested your coping skills. What did you do?
- Give an example of a time in which you had to keep from speaking or not finish a task because you did not have enough information to come to a good decision.
- Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your verbal communication skills in order to get a point across that was important to you.
- Tell me about a job experience in which you had to speak up in order to be sure that other people knew what you thought or felt.
- Give me an example of a time in which you felt you were able to build motivation in your co-workers or subordinates at work.
- Give me an example of a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Describe a situation in which you felt necessary to be very attentive and vigilant to your environment.
- Give an example of a time in which you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem—then tell me how you analyzed the information to come to a decision.
- Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Describe your most significant written document/report/presentation which you had to complete.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person, even when that individual may not have personally liked you.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively "read" another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values.
- What did you do in your last job in order to be effective in you organization and planning? Be specific.
- Describe the most creative work-related project which you have carried out.
- Describe a time in which you felt it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to carefully analyze another person or situation in order to be effective in guiding your action or decision.
- What did you do in your last job to contribute toward a teamwork environment? Be specific.
- Give me an example of a problem which you faced on any job you have had and tell me how you went about solving it.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.