



The Behavioral Interview: Interview Questions and Answers

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By Jennifer Jeffries, Esq.

What Is a Behavioral Interview?

After reading the title of this article, you may be asking yourself, "What exactly is a behavioral interview?" A behavioral interview is one aimed at evaluating an applicant's past behavior in previous employment situations. The theory is that past performance is the most accurate predictor of future performance.

How is this different from a traditional interview? In a traditional interview you are asked a series of questions which typically have straightforward answers like "What are your biggest weaknesses?" or "Describe your ideal workday." With a behavioral interview the employer has already determined the skill set he or she is looking for, and he or she asks the questions to find out if the applicant possesses those skills. Instead of being asked to predict your behavior in a hypothetical situation, you will be asked to describe how you behaved in the past.

Sample Questions

Behavioral interview questions will be more pointed, more probing, and more specific than traditional interview questions. Here are a few examples of questions you might encounter in a behavioral interview:

- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Give me an example of how you have worked effectively under pressure.
- Tell me about a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about a time when you went beyond the call of duty to ensure that a job got done.
- Describe a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Discuss an important written document you were required to complete.
- Give an example of a time when you had a lot of work on your plate and were required to prioritize your tasks.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split-second decision.
- 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).
- Give me an example of a time when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to deal with a very upset client or coworker.
- 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.



- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

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Preparing for a Behavioral Interview

It's important to note that you won't always be aware of the type of interview that will take place, so your preparation should also include formulation of answers to traditional interview questions. Because you never know exactly what situations you will be asked about in a behavioral interview, it may be helpful to make a list of some unique situations you have dealt with or noteworthy accomplishments you have made prior to the interview. This will supply you with a good starting point to help form your responses.

Prepare stories that illustrate times when you were commended for your performance or went above and beyond what was expected of you. If possible, take a look at the job description. It can be very helpful in determining what skills and characteristics the employer is seeking.

During the Behavioral Interview

When formulating a response during an interview, it is helpful to use the STAR approach to organize your answer:

- S: specific situation
- T: tasks that needed to be accomplished
- A: actions that you took
- R: results

Remember: there are no right or wrong answers. The interviewer is simply trying to understand how you behaved in a given situation. How you respond will determine if there is a fit between your skills and the position the company is seeking to fill.

Therefore, listen carefully, be clear and detailed when you respond, and, most importantly, be honest. If your answers aren't what the interviewer is looking for, the position may not be the best job for you anyway. Don't describe how you would behave. Describe how you actually behaved. If you later decided you should have behaved differently, explain this. The employer will see that you learned something from the experience.

Best of luck in your interview!