

## Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is a fairly new technique used by employers to evaluate a candidate’s experiences and behaviors in order to determine their potential for success. The interviewer identifies desired skills and behaviors, and then structures open-ended questions and statements to elicit detailed responses. The premise for this style of interviewing is that past behavior is a good predictor of future work performance.

Behavioral interviewing provides the interviewer with a clearer understanding of an individual’s behavior in a work setting by putting the focus on problem solving skills and quantitative results. Focus on describing the situation, how you approached it, what you learned from the experience, and the results. *Behavioral interviewing focuses on detailed information about your experiences as opposed to generalized information in a traditional interview.*

A behavioral interview response should follow a very simple formula: **S-A-R**.  
Situation, Action, Result

### Preparing for Behavioral Interviews

- Identify 6 to 8 examples from your past experience where you demonstrated top behaviors and skills that employers typically seek. Think in terms of examples that will exploit your top selling points.
- Some of your examples should be positive, focusing on specific accomplishments or meeting Goals. The others should be situations that started out negatively but either ended positively or you made the best of the outcome.
- Vary your examples; use examples from internships, classes and school projects, activities, community service, hobbies, and work experience.
- Use fairly recent examples. If you’re a college student, examples from high school may be too long ago.
- Describe examples in story form and follow the **S-A-R** formula. Always have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- Wherever possible quantify your results.

### Behavioral Interviewing Tips

The key to successful behavioral interviewing is preparation and practice. Attend an interview workshop, meet with a career counselor to discuss interviewing, network with people in your targeted industry, and schedule a mock interview.

- Be prepared to give detailed examples of related/non-related experiences.
- Listen to the question being asked.
- Every example must have a beginning, middle, and a positive ending.
- Remember a simple formula to tell your story. **S-A-R = Situation, Action, Results**
- Focus on situations that highlight positive behaviors.
- Remember the interviewer will carefully scrutinize your response to see if it matches the key components the employer is looking for.
- Keep a record of your achievements and accomplishments so you will be ready for any upcoming interviews.

## Self-Assessment

- Review your resume and identify the key competencies that your resume demonstrates.
- Be able to draw from a variety of experiences including volunteer work, clubs and organizations, sports, and school.
- Be familiar with the job description and the skills the company is looking for and match your experiences to those skills.
- Develop and practice your **S-A-R** examples.

## Employer Research

- Research the employer, industry, and field.
- Read company's mission statement, financial reports, and other literature.
- Familiarize yourself with the organizational structure.
- Use the Internet to review the homepage of the organization.
- Review newspapers and journals for unbiased information about the organization.

## Practice

- Speak with a counselor about behavioral interviewing.
- Develop questions for the interview.
- Schedule mock interviews and review interviewing tapes.
- Practice! Practice! Practice! Practice!

## Behavioral Interview Key Competencies

Adaptability	Analysis	Assertiveness
Attention to Detail	Communication-oral	Communication-written
Control	Decisiveness	Delegation
Development of staff	Energy	Entrepreneurial Insight
Fact Finding-oral	Financial Analytical Ability	Flexibility
Impact	Independence	Initiative
Innovation	Integrity	Judgment
Leadership/Influence	Listening	Motivation
Negotiation	Organizational Sensitivity	Participative Management
Planning and Organization	Practical Learning	Presentation Skills
Resilience	Risk Taking	Safety Awareness
Sales Ability/Persuasiveness	Sensitivity	Strategic Analysis
Stress	Teamwork	Technical/Professional Knowledge
Technical Professional Proficiency	Tenacity	Time Management
Training	Work Standards	

\*\*\*Each question the employer asks is likely to be based on one or more of the key competencies listed above. Make sure to look at the sample questions and try to identify the competencies each question is looking for.

## Sample Questions

- 1.) Have you ever been part of a group where a member was not completing their share of the work? Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it? Did that manager/professor take any steps to correct your colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager/professor's action?
- 2.) Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?
- 3.) What are your standards of success in school? What have you done to meet these standards?
- 4.) Describe a time in school when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
- 5.) Talk about the most difficult customer service experience that you have ever had to handle – perhaps an angry customer. Be specific and describe what you did and what the outcome was.
- 6.) Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- 7.) Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- 8.) Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.
- 9.) How do you deal with conflict? Give me an example.
- 10.) Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
- 11.) Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.
- 12.) Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
- 13.) Tell me about an important presentation that you had to make in the past few years.
- 14.) Walk me through a time when you had to deal with a major change in your life?
- 15.) What did you do in your last position that helped facilitate teamwork or the quality process?
- 16.) Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- 17.) What tricks or techniques have you learned to make school or a job easier, or to make yourself more effective? How did you learn that?

## Behavioral Interview Practice Questions

- 1.) Sometimes it is easy to get in “over your head.” Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.

**Situation:**

**Action:**

**Result:**

- 2.) Describe a team project that you are particularly proud of and what was your contribution to the project?

**Situation:**

**Action:**

**Result:**

- 3.) Tell of a situation in which you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you and those around you?

**Situation:**

**Action:**

**Result:**

*\* For more information on behavioral interviewing, visit the Career Services Office and/or check out our website: [www.salemst.edu/careersvs](http://www.salemst.edu/careersvs) for additional resources.*

*\* To make an appointment, or schedule a mock interview call 978.542.6406*