

Behavioral Interviewing

Behavioral Interviewing is a technique used by employers in which the questions asked assist the employer in making predictions about a potential employee's future success based on past behaviors.

Unlike traditional interviews, where the candidate is asked to "tell about him/herself" or where questions are about hypothetical situations, these interviews deal with "real life" examples.

What to Expect in a Behavioral Interview:

Candidates are asked to give *specific* examples of situations in which they demonstrated a particular behavior or skill. They must explain how they dealt with the situation and what the outcome was.

An employer will ask questions directed to see if the candidate possesses certain skills necessary for the job.

The interview is structured with "open-ended" questions.

These interviews are typically longer than the traditional interview, as long as two hours.

How is a Behavioral Interview Different from a Traditional Interview?

Instead of asking how a candidate **would** behave in a situation, the interviewer asks how **did** the candidate behave.

The interviewer can structure the interview to concentrate on areas important to him/her, not necessarily to the candidate.

Interviewer can question and probe candidate responses.

Candidates usually have to talk more and provide more details.

Interviewer can target specific information more easily.

Interviewer is more interactive with candidate.

Candidate may have less control over telling prepared stories.

Why is Behavioral Interviewing used?

It is based on the belief that "the most accurate predictor of the future is past performance in a similar situation."

This type of interview allows the interviewer to go into greater depth and determine with greater certainty if the candidate has the skills and characteristics needed to be successful on the job.

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview:

Read the organization's literature, including their website, research the specific position sought and try to determine from the job description what skills are necessary for the position. Anticipate questions geared in that direction.

While preparing, identify examples of events where you demonstrated the skills or behaviors sought by the organization. Use examples from classes, team activities, past internships, etc.

Brainstorm, test yourself and write down examples.

How to answer questions:

Keep your response **specific and detailed**. Use a three step process: 1) situation 2) action 3) result/outcome. Always cite a **specific** event and briefly fill the employer in on the situation.

Have a thorough understanding of the questions. Ask for clarification if needed.

Deal with all questions positively; some questions give you the chance to acknowledge your failures while showing how you have learned from them. Just as in a traditional interview setting, make the negatives into positives. Don't be lulled into disclosing your weaknesses.

Don't be afraid to take a few moments to think about the question--it's better than making something up! Always spend the necessary time to process the question in your head **before** you start talking. Don't begin talking *hoping* that an answer will eventually "pop up." They generally don't and you will not impress the interviewer by a lot of disjointed words. Remember that the interviewer understands that you don't know what will be asked of you.

Never lie. Interviewers have been trained to recognize fake stories and it will come back to haunt you someday!

Sample Interview Questions & the Traits/Skills Sought

Focus and Dedication: Why did you choose your major and career?

Professional Knowledge: 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.

Teamwork: Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

Analysis: 1) What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision? 2) We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example of how you have done this.

Adaptability: How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular problems?

Perseverance: Describe for me a time when you failed at something and how you responded.

Work Standards: Describe some times when you were not satisfied with your work. What did you do about it?

Job Motivation: What type of supervisor do you work best for? Provide examples. (ANSWER: 1) type 2) why this preference)

Organization & Planning: How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples. Describe the process you went through to choose West Texas A&M University.

Conclusion

The behavioral interview targets a candidate's past performance as the best indicator of the type of employee he/she will likely be. It differs from other interviews in its focus on facts and specific information. Candidates can best prepare for such an interview by concentrating on specific past experiences that show certain skills or behaviors.

