

# The Behavioral Interview

## Be prepared!

## Following these guidelines and practicing will help you develop well-rounded interviewing skills:

### Behavioral interviewing

Behavioral interviewing is a common type of interviewing for employers who believe that past behavior predicts future behavior. Behavior-based questions are designed to demonstrate how you applied specific competencies (skills, personal characteristics, or knowledge) in an actual situation. Most employers will feature at least a few behavioral questions during their interviews, and some will use behavioral interviewing throughout the entire interview. Your answers show how well you think on your feet.

### Some examples of potential behavioral questions:

- Specifically describe when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Provide an example when your people or coping skills were put to the test.
- Give an example of a situation in which you had to make a decision quickly.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your written communication skills to make an important point.
- Describe an occasion when you conformed to a policy you did not agree with.
- Provide an example of a past goal; and explain your success in reaching it.
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation you completed.
- Elaborate on an experience when you performed beyond the call of duty to get a job done.
- Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity. What did you do?

The interviewer asks behavioral questions to gather important details about your work style. Honesty and preparation are crucial. You cannot invent answers on the spot when these probing

questions require you to relate details. If you think that you need to prepare carefully for a behavioral interview, you are right!

### How to prepare for a behavioral interview

First, analyze the position and identify the key assets that you want to emphasize during the interview. Think of at least six specific situations that demonstrate these qualities that you can share with an employer during an interview. These examples can be from past jobs, classroom or internship activities. Half of the situations need to involve a positive outcome and the other half need to demonstrate that you overcame obstacles to achieve the best possible outcome.

### Practice

Practice for a behavioral interview by role playing with a career counselor or a friend. Practice customizing your example stories to match the interviewer's question. Use the STAR method when answering behavioral questions:

- S** - First, describe the **situation** or problem. Use a **specific** example. Rather than answering questions about what you would do in a hypothetical situation, you are asked how you handled a situation in the past. The employer is interested in learning about one specific instance, not several different situations.
- T** - What were the **tasks** at hand? What challenges did you face in this situation? Again, be specific.
- A** - Relate the **action** you took as a result of the situation or problem. Remember to focus on the role you played in the solution, and do not discuss what others did in too much detail.
- R** - Finally, talk about the **outcome** or **result** of your action. If possible, back up your result with quantifiable information, such as statistics and examples.