

How to Brave Behavioral Based Interviewing

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One of the most effective interview tools hiring managers use to identify quality potential employees is the behavioral interview. Behavioral questions solicit specific examples of on-the-job success of the candidate. It also provides insight on how the candidate would fit in the company and the role. It is a great indicator of how a potential employee will react to future challenges. Why? Because it is founded on the principle that past performance is the best predictor of future performance.

Behavior-based questions are open-ended questions that typically begin:

- Tell me about a time when you...
- Describe a situation in which you...
- Provide an example of how you...

Behavioral interviews are successful because they force interviewees to think about their experiences and how they relate to the new job opportunity. They probe deeper into a candidate's background and experience, laying bare their true motivations. At least, that's the idea.

So how do you answer such deep, probing questions? Let the SAR method be your guide. This method is a common approach used to answer behavioral questions. Essentially, you tell a story that highlights your skills, accomplishments and capabilities.

So what does SAR mean? It's short for: Situation, Actions, and Results.

Situation: A brief but specific description of the circumstances and background info about an event or situation.

- Ask yourself: What was the situation at hand? How does it relate to the question asked?
- Answer by: Providing details and specifics from your own experience. Do not generalize.

Actions: An account of key actions you took to manage the situation and achieve the desired objectives.

- Ask yourself: What actions did you take to solve the situation?
- Answer by: Describing a team project, focusing on what you contributed to achieve the end result. Keep your answers in the past tense.

Results: An explanation of the outcome indicating the consequences of your actions, preferably highlighting success and/or lessons learned.

- Ask yourself: What result did your actions have on the situation? How was it resolved?
- Answer by: Stating what you learned from the situation.

When answering behavioral questions, use action words such as 'demonstrated', 'achieved', 'increased', and 'encouraged' to highlight that you took a measured, calculated action in dealing with the situation. It's also important to not memorize answers, as this will likely sound insincere.

The key to a successful behavioral interview is to be prepared, confident, and ready to describe how you behaved in specific challenging situations.