

Behavioural Interviewing

What exactly is behaviour based interviewing?

Behavioural based interviewing is a new style of interviewing that more and more companies and organisations are using in their hiring process. The basic premise behind behavioural interviewing is this: The most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. It provides a more objective set of facts to make employment decisions than other interviewing methods. Traditional interview questions ask you general questions such as "Tell me about yourself." The process of behavioural interviewing is much more probing and works very differently.

Important Points About Behaviour Based Interviewing:

- Employers predetermine which skills are necessary for the job for which they are looking and then ask very pointed questions to determine if the candidate possesses those skills. To assess which skills the employer is seeking,, read the organisations literature carefully, visit their WWW site and listen closely during the organisations information session.
- In the interview, your response needs to be specific and detailed. Tell them about a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Tell them briefly the situation, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome. Frame it in a three step process:
 1. situation,
 2. action,
 3. result/outcome.

For example;

Question:

Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to satisfy a customer.

Situation/Task

I was working in the production department of a large publishing company. We received a letter from a nine-year-old girl who was unhappy because the gold design had worn off the cover of a book we had published. She wanted a refund. My boss gave the complaint to me to handle.

Action:

I immediately requested a refund cheque from our accounting department. I also called our printer, who investigated and identified one run of books in which the covers had been improperly printed. I obtained a copy of the book with a properly printed cover and sent the book, the refund cheque and a personal letter to the girl, thanking her for pointing out the problem and apologising for the inconvenience.

Result:

The girl's mother called to thank me for the response. She told me she would recommend our books to all her friends with children.

- The interviewee tells a story for a few minutes; typically the interviewer will pick apart the story to try to get at the specific behaviour(s). The interviewer can probe further for more depth or detail such as "What were you thinking at that point?" or "Tell me more about your meeting with that person," or "Lead me through your decision process."
- Always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary, and make sure you answer the question completely.
- Your interview preparation should include identifying examples of situations where you have demonstrated the behaviours for a given organisation.

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- o Your resume will serve as a good guide when answering these questions. Refresh your memory regarding your achievements in the past couple of years. Demonstration of the desired behaviours may be proven in many ways. Use examples from past placements, work experience, employment, classes, activities, team involvements, community service and sporting experience. In addition, you may use examples of which you may be especially proud such as running a marathon, running for student body president, exhibiting paintings in an art show, abseiling, biking across country etc.

Sample Behaviour Based Interview Questions

These are often difficult question to answer. Use this sheet to jot down examples of stories in your past that you would use to answer these questions. Careful preparation is the key to an effective behavioural interview. Further information on Behavioural Interviews is available at the Careers and Employer Liaison Centre. You may want to book an appointment to practice answering Behavioural Interview questions.

Some typical questions are listed below:

- o Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- o Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- o Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- o By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.
- o Describe a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- o Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- o Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- o Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- o Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- o Describe the most significant or creative presentation which you have had to complete.
- o Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- o Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).