

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS



In today's job market, you will likely face a behavioral interview. The premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate a candidate's experiences and behaviors so they can determine the applicant's fit with the company and potential for success. Fit is determined by **behavior, strengths, and character**. When deliberately and compellingly put together these create a personal brand story; a brand. It is this story that needs to be presented in interviews.

Behavioral-based interviewing 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 behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently.

In a behavioral interview you will need to back up your words with examples to demonstrate your knowledge, skills, and abilities, by giving specific examples from your past experiences. The interviewer wants to know, not that you can do something, but that you have done it. He or she, prior to the interview, determines what competencies are required for the position. Then the interviewer develops a series of questions that will allow him or her to find out if you, the job candidate, possess the necessary competencies to perform the job.

Many candidates are intimidated by this method. However, a behavioral interview gives you the opportunity to demonstrate to a prospective employer why you are well suited for the job. Rather than merely telling the interviewer what you *would* do in a situation, as in a more traditional interview, in a behavioral interview you must describe, in detail, how you handled a situation in the past.

Behavioral interview are based on S.T.A.R. -Situation, Task, Action, Result. If you've worked with MORE THAN A RESUMÉ then the S.T.A.R. exercise has been completed, and your resumé was crafted based on the strengths and accomplishments you identified. You are well on your way to being prepared for a behavioral interview.

### Three types of questions typically found in interviews

1. **Theoretical questions** -- Questions that place you in a hypothetical situation.  
*Example: How would you organize your friends to help you move into a new apartment?*
2. **Leading questions** -- Questions that hint at the answer the interviewer is seeking by the way they are phrased. *Example: Working on your own doesn't bother you does it?*
3. **Behavioral questions** -- Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behavior from your past experience and concentrate on job related functions. They may include:
  - **Open-ended questions** -- require more than a yes or no response. They often begin with "Tell me...", "Describe...", "When...".  
*Example: Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a workload.*
  - **Close-ended questions** -- Used mostly to verify or confirm information.  
*Example: You have a degree in psychology, is that correct?*
  - **Why questions** -- Used to reveal rationale for decisions you have made or to determine your level of motivation.  
*Example: Why did you decide to major in this program at UW- Eau Claire rather than at a small private college or larger university?*

For example, if an interview wanted to understand how you work with people they could ask in different ways.

Leading: *"Do you like working with people"* The answer is implied. The candidate would be foolish to respond with any other answer but yes.

Theoretical: *"If you had to work with an annoyed customers, what would you do?"* Not best because it calls on you - the candidate - to speculate. It's hypothetical.

Behavioral: *"Tell me about a time that you had to deal with a disgruntled individual in a work situation."* This is best for the interviewer and the candidate because it draws on past behavior (interviewer) and gives the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate a skill, strength, quality and/or an accomplishment.

It' the difference between asking....

**Traditional:** "Tell me about a class project."

**Behavioral:** "How did you go about deciding on your class project recommendation?"

In a behavioral interview, you should:

- Share personal experiences to illustrate your critical skills, strengths and accomplishments
- Describe experiences reflected in your resume
- Focus on the positives of all your past experiences and remain optimistic
- Use this discussion to learn more about the company
- Relax, be yourself, and help the interviewer get to know you
- Use your time wisely; it's your time, make sure you get your points across
- Be specific: give specific examples where you had an impact and made a difference