



## **INTERVIEWING 101: HOW TO ANSWER BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

Now more than ever before, interviewers are asking candidates about past work experiences with broad, open-ended questions. Known as behavioral questions, these questions can trip up even the savviest candidates. It doesn't have to be that difficult! By following a basic guideline, you can be ready to answer any behavioral question — and to shine at your next interview.

### **What Are Behavioral Questions?**

Behavioral questions (also called STAR or Situation, Task, Action, Result interview questions) seek information about your past work behaviors. These

types of queries have become increasingly popular as companies attempt to go beyond a candidate's resume to find out how that person will perform as an employee.

These questions can take many forms, but they often start with “tell me about a time when...” or “describe a situation in which you...”. The interviewer is usually trying to learn about a difficult situation in the candidate's work history — and most importantly, how he or she dealt with it. By doing this, the interviewer hopes to predict the candidate's future behavior based on past performance.

### **How to Answer Behavioral Questions**

Understanding why potential employers ask behavioral questions is the key to answering them effectively. The interviewer isn't simply looking to expose your weaknesses; he or she wants to know how you have handled adversity or how you have learned from challenges or mistakes. With that in mind, answering behavioral questions becomes a matter of preparation.

There are three components to a successful answer for behavioral questions:

1. The Story
2. How You Overcame The Issue and Outcome
3. What You Learned

Putting these items into action is straightforward. If an interviewer asks you to tell her about a time that a project went over budget, you start with the story of when that happened. Then you move into how you overcame that issue, giving specific examples. Finally, you talk about what you learned from this problem, including what you did to make sure that it didn't happen again. Keeping these three elements in mind will help you handle any behavioral question — no matter how difficult!

This framework will also help you in situations where an interviewer might not ask you any follow-up questions. It will help you answer the initial question, and to provide additional information to highlight what you want the interviewer to know about you, such as how you can solve problems, work with difficult personalities, or overcome challenges.

Of course, there may be times when an interviewer asks you about a situation that you have not encountered. In those situations, it's best to answer honestly rather than making up a story or answering in hypotheticals. Remember that these questions are designed to find out what you did in the past, so answer truthfully if you have not had a particular experience.

Keeping these three components in mind can help you navigate even the most challenging behavioral questions. You can prepare in advance by making notes on difficult work situations, how you overcame them, and what you learned from each instance. By taking these steps, you will be able to demonstrate to your interviewer that you would be an incredible addition to the company.