

## THE BEHAVIORAL-BASED INTERVIEW

When interviewing candidates for a position at your facility, it is important to remember that it is important to ask questions beyond what can be found on a Curriculum Vitae. Behavior type characteristics are identifiers that can predict future behavior and performance in your facility's cultural climate.

**Four types of questions are typically used during interviewing:**

1. Fact-finding questions verify stated information such as what is on a candidate's resume.
2. Technical questions assess an applicant's job-related expertise.
3. Hypothetical questions seek to predict performance by asking candidates to imagine how they might respond to 'what if?' questions that relate to a possible future situation.
4. Behavioral-based questions evaluate a candidate's potential effectiveness in a new position by asking him or her to share past experiences that are relevant to the new opportunity.

Proponents of the behavioral approach contend that past performance is the best predictor of future performance (can do, will do again). In fact, behavioral interviewing is said to be 55% predictive of future on-the-job behavior, while factual interviewing is only 10% predictive.

Behaviors are actions or reactions to a situation. To function effectively in the work environment, a candidate must demonstrate appropriate behaviors in three areas – skills, motivation and 'fit' or emotional quotient – all of which must be considered during the interview process. You can discuss skills in the interview process and specifically test for those skills, but it is much more difficult to test for motivation and fit.

Behavioral questions are a means to evaluate motivation and fit by linking past or current work-based behaviors to required behavior in the client organization. They often begin with "Tell me a time when..." or "Describe a situation..." Examples include:



- Give me a situation where your persistence paid off.
- Describe a situation when you needed to get an understanding of another's viewpoint before you could get your job done. What problems did you encounter and how did you handle them?
- Describe a situation when you failed to reach a goal. How did that affect you?
- Describe a situation when you had a personal commitment that conflicted with an emergency business meeting. What did you do?
- Have you ever had to make an unpopular decision/announcement? Describe it and tell me how you handled it.

The questions are a means to seek further insight regarding a candidate's relationships with superiors and subordinates, projects and tasks (both positive and negative) and other relevant work experience.

Be sure to let the candidate know that there are no right or wrong answers and that the best way to respond to behavioral-based questions is with the **'STAR' approach** – a tool that's been used for years by psychologists and criminal/legal specialists to uncover motives. This approach allows interviewers to begin to understand why an action was taken, how the candidate dealt with the action and what resulted from it. The elements of the STAR approach and how a candidate should address each element follow.

### Situation or Task leading to an action.

- Give an example of a situation in which you were involved that resulted in a positive or negative outcome.
- Describe the tasks involved in that situation.

**Actions or behaviors demonstrated, specifics and 'how.'** This is where behavioral traits are uncovered.

- Talk about the various actions involved in the situation's tasks.
- Describe specific actions taken or not taken.
- Use 'I' vs. 'we.'



Result – specific, tangible conclusion that completes the picture.

- What results followed due to your actions?
- Conclude each story.
- Use specific, measurable terms.

To illustrate how the STAR process might be followed, assume that a hiring authority asked a candidate to provide an example that demonstrates why he feels he is a good manager.



**Situation:** *“Relocation expenses in the company were out of control and quickly exceeding the budget...”*

**Task:** *“... when I took on this responsibility.”*

**Action:** *“I focused on reviewing the reports and working with tenured staff to determine key entry points to maximize efforts and contain specific expenses. The staff assisted me by making a series of cost effective recommendations and together we drafted a plan.”*

**Result:** *“We then jointly developed a work flow system to maximize the effectiveness of the new procedure that became the company standard and is still in place and maintained.”*

Such pre-interview preparation is time well spent – it offers an opportunity for the candidate to view his or her experience from a different aspect... an aspect they may not have previously considered.

## Conducting a Behavioral-Based Interview

The following are guidelines for conducting behavioral-based interviews:

- Provide a safe environment in which the candidate can speak freely.
- Listen for consistency and confidence.
- Listen for ‘we’ and ‘I’ to determine team orientation, if appropriate.
- Listen for tone, inflection and delivery. Are you sensing stress? Is the candidate fully answering you? Deflecting? Putting a positive spin on everything?
- Do not lead, help or interrupt the candidate.
- Do not react. It can be misconstrued as a judgment on your part.

- Listen for responses that follow the STAR approach. A false STAR occurs when the candidate gives:
  - Feelings or opinions.
  - Theoretical or future-oriented statements.
  - Vague responses.

Always thank the candidate and make the observation that you are fully aware this process can be difficult and stressful. Assure the candidate that you are focused on placing them in a ‘right-fit’ organization.

Assess the information and measure the candidate’s responses against the criteria of what makes for a successful hire. Based on your assessment, determine the next steps in the interview process; that is, decide if the candidate will move forward or if you will prepare another candidate.

## 13 Desirable Skills and Behaviors

The majority of our clients seek employees who:

- Display enthusiasm for the company, its mission and its people.
- Believe that they can do the job and have well-matched skills.
- Are coachable and strive to make an immediate contribution.



Clients also factor in chemistry, personality match, experience, relocation, salary expectations, good references, etc., which may make you wonder, ‘What more could anyone want?’ The ‘what’ consists of 13 predictive skills and behaviors that employers evaluate through behavioral-based interviewing techniques in order to make solid hiring decisions. The 13 skills and behaviors and sample behavioral-based questions for each follow.

### 1. Focus and dedication to the industry

Does the candidate’s resume reflect enough experience, knowledge and growth in a chosen field?

- Why did you choose your major and career?
- At what point did you make this decision?
- Specifically, what attracts you to this industry as a career?

## 2. Technical and professional knowledge

Does the candidate have an appropriate level of understanding of technical skills and professional knowledge and the ability to apply both?

- Tell me about a time when you had to use Pro-E to customize components for your automotive accounts.

## 3. Teamwork

Does the candidate work effectively with others in the organization and outside the formal lines of authority (e.g., peers, other departments, senior management) to accomplish organizational goals and to identify and resolve problems? Does he or she consider the impact of his or her decisions on others?

- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

## 4. Analysis

Is the candidate able to relate and compare data from different sources, identify issues, secure relevant information and determine relationships?

- Describe for me a situation when you had to determine the most pertinent content for your training program.

## 5. Adaptability

Does the candidate maintain effectiveness in varying environments, tasks and responsibilities, and with various types of people?

- Tell me about a situation when you had to work with other departments to solve a common problem.

## 6. Work standards

Has the candidate set high goals or performance standards for him or her, subordinates, others and the organization? Is he or she dissatisfied with average performance?

- Tell me how you measure your performance. How do you set goals for yourself in your current role?
- How have you differed from your manager in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?



## 7. Job motivation

To what extent do activities and responsibilities available in the job overlap with activities and responsibilities that result in personal satisfaction?

- Give examples of what provides you with job satisfaction and why.
- Give examples of what causes you to feel dissatisfied in your job and why.
- Describe the type of manager with which you do your best work. Why?

## 8. Initiative

Does the candidate make active attempts to influence events and achieve goals? Is he or she self-starting rather than passively accepting? Does he or she go beyond what is necessary?

- Describe some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were implemented or successfully carried out primarily due to your efforts.
- Describe a situation that required a number of tasks to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
- Have you found any ways to make your job easier or more rewarding? Describe them.

## 9. Ability to learn

Does the candidate assimilate and apply new job-related information promptly?

- What techniques have you learned to make your job easier or more effective? How did you learn them?
- Tell me about a time when you had to quickly assimilate new information to solve a problem or perform well in your current role.

## 10. Planning and organizing

Does the candidate establish a course of action to accomplish specific goals? Do they plan proper assignments for personnel and allocate resources appropriately?

- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time?
- Describe a time when numerous projects were due at the same time. What steps did you take to complete your tasks?



## 11. Communication

Does the candidate clearly express ideas in speaking and writing, via his or her grammar, organization and structure?

- Tell me of a time when your listening skills really paid off... maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed by the speaker.
- What has been your experience in giving presentations to small or large groups? What has been your most successful experience in either situation?
- Describe for me the way in which you know you've presented information effectively.

## 12. Customer service orientation

Does the candidate make efforts to listen to and understand the customer (both internal and external), anticipate customer needs and give high priority to customer satisfaction?

- Tell me about the most difficult customer service experience you have handled, perhaps with an angry or irate customer. Be specific, discuss what you did and explain the outcome.

## 13. Sensitivity

Does the candidate act out of consideration for the feelings and needs of others?

- Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How did you handle that?
- Describe a situation in which you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle that?

## Additional Behavioral Questions

1. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
2. Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
3. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
4. Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.

5. Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
6. Give me a specific example of a time when you had to conform to a policy with which you did not agree.
7. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
8. Tell me about a time when you had too many things to do and you were required to prioritize your tasks.
9. Give me an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision.
10. What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
11. Tell me about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.
12. Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed.
13. Give me an example of a time when you showed initiative and took the lead.
14. Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.
15. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
16. Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.
17. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
18. Describe a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).
19. Tell me about a time when you were/were not satisfied with your own performance. Why were you unsatisfied/satisfied and how did you respond?



20. Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone with whom you found difficult. What made that person difficult? How did you handle it?
21. Describe a work situation in which you had to take a risk. What was the outcome?
22. Describe the most creative work-related project that you have carried out.
23. Tell me about your role in a project team. What did you do to contribute toward a team environment? Be specific.
24. Has anyone ever asked you to do something unethical? What did you do?
25. Give me an example of a time in which you felt you were able to build motivation in your co-workers or subordinates at work.

