



BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Behavioral questions are questions that focus on how you handled specific situations in the past. They are structured to elicit descriptions of your skills, and to help the organization determine the degree of alignment between your skills and their identified needs. Behavioral questions most often measure “soft” skills, e.g., adaptability, initiative, leadership, motivation, negotiation, teamwork, planning, decision-making, conflict management, and handling change.

The philosophy behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance. It has been shown that behavioral interviewing is 55% predictive of future behavior vs. 10% for traditional interviewing.

We recommend that you use this model to prepare for behavioral interviews:

P-A-R-K: Problem, Action(s), Result(s), Knowledge gained

To prepare effectively for behavioral questions, it’s important to identify and think about situations you’ve been in and the results you accomplished. In your response to a behavioral question, you should tell a story. First set a framework for the interviewer by explaining the situation or problem (P). Secondly, describe the actions (A) or steps you took to resolve the problems and/or move toward the goal. You might also consider explaining what you were thinking – what alternatives you considered and why you made the choices you did. Then, state the results (R) of your actions. Finally, explain what knowledge (K) you gained from the experience and how you may apply it.

Here is an example of moving beyond a “good” response to a “PARK” response:

Question: *Give me an example of a time when you assumed a leadership role when working on a team.*

Response #1 (poor): I feel that I always contribute to a team in different ways. I’m never content to sit back and wait to be told what needs to be done.

Response #2 (good): In my senior year I worked on a team project for a marketing class that required research, a class presentation and a 20-page paper. There were four of us on the team. We all contributed and I took the lead in presenting our work to the class.

(over)



Response #3 (best):

P = In my senior year I worked on a 4-person team project for a marketing class that required a great deal of work: research, a class presentation and a 20-page paper. No one was taking a clear leadership role and we were floundering.

A = Since no one was taking a leadership role, I stepped up. I suggested that we each identify our strengths, weaknesses and interests so that we could determine who should work on what. From that, I led the team in outlining the essential elements of the paper. We discussed them and agreed on a focus for our research.

R = My classmates seemed relieved to have a structure and clear goal. This was the best team project I was involved in because we were all on the same page. We respected each other, and we knew how we needed to contribute – no one felt stepped on. Our professor was impressed and gave us the highest grade in the class.

K = I'd never really thought about the value of good leadership before that project. It makes so much difference! I discovered that I'm comfortable in that role and, since then, I've taken on leadership roles more frequently.

Examples of behavioral questions:

- Give me an example of a time when you showed initiative.
- Describe a time when you were faced with a problem that you did not anticipate.
- Describe a difficult decision you made in the last year.
- Tell me about a time when you voiced a concern or disagreement to a co-worker or supervisor.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to coordinate the work of several people to achieve a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you worked on a team and things were not going well.
- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas.
- Tell me about a time when you had to determine priorities in scheduling your time.
- Tell me about a time when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose.
- Tell me about time when you had to deal with a difficult customer.
- Walk me through a time when you had to deal with a conflict at work.
- Describe a time when you were the least satisfied at work.
- Describe a time when you were most satisfied at work.
- Describe something creative that you have done.
- Describe one of your most disappointing experiences.
- Describe one of your most satisfying experiences.