



What exactly is behavioral interviewing?

Behavioral interviewing is a new style of interviewing that more and more companies and organizations are using in their hiring process. The basic premise behind behavioral 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 behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently.

Important Points About Behavioral 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, talk with alumni, read the company literature carefully, and listen closely during the company’s 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.
- The interviewee tells a story for a few minutes; typically the interviewer will pick apart the story to try to get at the specific behavior(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 behaviors for a given company.
- 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 behaviors may be proven in many ways. Use examples from past internships, classes, activities, team involvements, community service and work 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 painting in an art show, climbing half of the high peaks in the Adirondacks, biking across country, etc.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

These are often difficult questions to answer on the fly. 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 behavioral interview. Setting up an appointment for a behavioral mock interview with a Career Consultant is an excellent way to practice. Call Career Services at (518) 580-5790 for available times.

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