

# Behavioral Questions: A New Trend in Interviewing

Employers are initiating a new trend in employment interviewing. You won't get the typical "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses" questions in a behavioral interview. Instead, you'll be asked to provide specific examples highlighting skills that are necessary for the job. Here are some examples of behavioral interview questions:

1. Describe a time when you tried to persuade a person or group to do something they didn't want to do.
2. Give me an example of a time when you faced a lot of obstacles to achieving a goal.
3. Talk about a stressful situation you've experienced.
4. Describe a time when you had trouble seeing eye to eye with a colleague.
5. Tell me about a project or role that you've taken on that is outside your job description.
6. Give me an example of when you worked with a group or team of people to complete a project.
7. Talk about a time when you were faced with a difficult decision and describe how it turned out.
8. Describe a time when you had to cope with strict deadlines or time demands.
9. Give me an example of a time when you were forced to make an important decision without all of the necessary information.
10. Tell me about a time that you made a presentation at work that received a significant amount of critical feedback, much of it negative. How did you handle the situation?

## Sample Behavioral Question

Career counselors recommend you use the "STAR" method to answer these types of probing questions. That's ST for situation/task, A for action, and R for result. Bill Byham, author of "Landing the Job You Want," gives an example of a successfully answered question:

**Question:** Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to satisfy a customer.

**Situation/Task:** I was working in the production department of a large publishing company. We received a letter from a 9-year-old girl who was unhappy because the gold design had worn off the cover of a book we had published. She wanted a refund. My boss gave the complaint to me to handle.

**Action:** I immediately requested a refund check from our accounting department. I also called our printer, who investigated and identified one run of books in which the covers had been improperly printed. I obtained a copy of the book with a properly printed cover, and sent the book, the refund check and a personal letter to the girl, thanking her for pointing out the problem and apologizing for the inconvenience.

**Result:** The girl's mother called me to thank me for the response. She told me that she was going to recommend our books to all her friends with children.

## Preparing for the Behavioral Interview

1. Think about a situation which matches the questions listed above.

2. Write about your experience using the STAR method.
3. Practice talking about the experience. You may wish to tape yourself.
4. During the interview, answer questions succinctly. Avoid rambling.

From "The New Job Interview" by Sherri Eng, San Jose Mercury News