



BEHAVIOURAL BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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What are Behavioural Based Interview Questions?

Behavioural based interview questions are becoming the most common style of interview questions. Even if you don't encounter this type of interview question, the process of preparing for them will help you answer most interview questions effectively.

This type of question allows employers to gather valuable information on how you may behave in certain work situations. Basically, it is based on the assumption that ***past behaviour is often the best predictor of future behaviour***.

Employers want you to give real life examples and experiences to best illustrate your competency for the position. In a traditional interview where you are asked typical/general questions such as "Tell me about yourself"... you can usually adapt your answer to provide the interviewer with what he/she wants to hear. Behavioural interview questions work very differently, it is much more probing and more difficult to give answers that are outside your character. Employers use this style of interview question to assess a candidate's experiences and behaviours with the goal of determining if you possess the desired characteristics for the job.

How Should I Prepare?

It is extremely important to prepare for behavioural based interview questions. The following are some general guidelines to follow when preparing.

Research the company

As with any job interview, it is important to research the company in advance. While doing this, take note of what skills you can identify that the employer has predetermined are necessary for the job. Also, try to think of the types of characteristics that are relevant to the position you are pursuing.

Prepare a variety of example stories

Choose stories that can be adapted to many behavioural questions. Include some examples of negative experiences that had positive outcomes. You can use recent workplace, volunteer, school, hobbies, special achievements or any other real life experiences as examples of your past behaviour. Take time to consider experiences that will be useful for this specific position.

Be familiar with a variety of behavioural questions

Knowing what kinds of questions might be asked will help you prepare an effective selection of examples (see list on pages 3 - 6).

Practise

Take the time to work out answers to a variety of the questions and prepare a mental outline of how to respond. Also, try practising out loud.

How Should I Respond?

The best way to answer a behavioural-based question is to remember the steps in “SAR” when you are describing a past experience:

- S – SITUATION** Explain to the interviewer the circumstances and context in which the event took place.
- A – ACTION** Describe what you did and how you did it
- R – RESULTS** Describe the outcome, surrounding circumstances and reactions. Using this process is a productive and organized way for you to structure your experiences for the interviewer.

Sample Questions – Employability Traits

The following are a series of questions based on some common employability traits most employers are looking for when selecting an individual to join their team. Remember to research the company in advance to gain insight into what characteristics they may want. For example, if you are pursuing a sales job it's safe to say that the interviewer will want evidence of a positive, persuasive attitude. If the position requires customer service, you will likely be asked about your experiences with irate customers. Use the following list of questions to assist you in preparing for your interview.

TEAM WORK

- Describe a team experience you found rewarding.
- Describe a team experience you found disappointing. What would you have done to prevent this?
- Tell me about a time when your coworkers gave you feedback about your actions. How did you respond? What changes did you make?
- Give your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal. What was your role in achieving this? What challenges did your team face? How do you know you were successful?
- Tell me about a time when you were working as part of a team and one person wasn't “pulling their weight”. What did you do?
- Tell me about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you've ever had to work with, and how you managed to work with them.

- Give an example of a time when you had to help restore a conflict between yourself and another coworker or supervisor. What impact did your efforts have on the other person? Were you successful? How do you know?

INITIATIVE

- Describe a time when you did something that you were not expected to do. What did you do? How did you do it? How did your employer react?
- Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed.
- Tell me about a time when you've reached out for additional responsibility.
- When have you identified a problem and come up with a solution without being asked?
- What have you done in your previous job that went beyond what was required?
- Tell me about a time when your initiative caused a change to occur.

COMMUNICATION / CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Tell me about a time when you provided exceptional customer service? What did you do and how did you do it?
- Tell me about a time when you've had to deal with a very upset customer or coworker.
- Describe an important written document you were required to complete.
- Tell me about a time when you had a disagreement with your employer.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a difference of opinion with a coworker or customer. How do you feel you showed respect?
- Tell me about a time when you needed to give feedback to an employee you considered to be emotional or sensitive. What was the outcome?

GOAL SETTING

- Describe a time when you set a challenging goal for yourself. How did you set the goal and what were the results?
- Give an example of a time when you prioritized the elements of a complicated project.

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Describe a time when you took action to solve a problem. How did you go about it?
- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you had to choose between two equally attractive options.
- Tell me about a safety related problem you encountered in your workplace. How did you solve the problem?

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING

- Tell me about a time when you had to develop new procedures and implement them into your workplace. What steps did you take to ensure accuracy?
- Give an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision.
- Think of a time when you encountered a 'set' procedure or policy that wasn't working. What did you do to address this procedure or policy? How did this impact your ability to do your job?

FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

- Give me an example of when you had to conform to a policy or procedure at work, which you did not agree with.
- Describe a time when you had to be flexible and assume a team member's role on short notice?
- When was the last time you felt pressure on a job? How did you react? What effect did it have on your other responsibilities?

- By providing examples, demonstrate that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.

CRITICAL THINKING/ANALYTICAL ABILITY

- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze and apply new information to your workplace.
- Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.

ENTHUSIASM AND MOTIVATION

- Give me an example of a time when you had to motivate others.
- Tell us about a time when you decided to take on something “extra”.
- Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.

LEADERSHIP

- Give me an example of when you had to show good leadership.
- Tell me about a time when you were responsible for directing others. What was involved?
- Describe a leadership situation that you would handle differently if you had to do it over again.
- What was the toughest group you had to get cooperation from? How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to provide a coworker with recognition for the work they performed. What did you do?

Industry Specific Behavioural Interview Questions

Most of the employability trait questions can be adapted to specific positions. However, if you are interested in researching potential questions for specific industries you can do so through the internet. Try a “Google” combined search for your *“job title and behavioural interview questions”*.

Tips For Answering Behavioural Based Interview Questions

- **Think of your response as a story** – make sure it has a beginning, middle and end.
- **Use fairly recent experiences.**
- **Be sure to have a selection of both positive and negative experiences** to pull from.
- **If describing a negative experience, make sure** you put a positive twist on it. Talk about what you learned from the experience and how it strengthened you.
- **It's best not to use the same example** when responding to these questions.
- **Listen carefully** to each question and pull from an experience that will provide the interviewer with an appropriate description of how you demonstrated the desired behaviour.
- **Always try to answer with an actual story**, however, if you can't come up with a true example for a question, then answer with how you *would* respond to the situation.
- **Stay positive.**
- **Remember to send a thank-you note** after the interview is completed.

You should be able to back anything you say on your resume with a story or an example.

Practise and research will help to better prepare you for success. Good Luck!

Additional Resources

Internet Articles

www.quintcareers.com/sample_behavioral.html
www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/interview/Behavioral.htm
www.icejobs.com/effrecruiting_Behavioraldef1.htm

Books (found in the Work Search Centres' Resource Libraries)

Interview Magic, Susan B. Whitcomb
Job Interviews for Dummies, Joyce Lain Kennedy
More Best Answers to the 201 Most Frequently Asked Interview Questions, Matthew J. Deluca
The 250 Job Interview Questions, Peter Veruki
The Complete Idiot's Guide to The Perfect Interview, Marc Dorio