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Behavioral Interview Guide

Behavioral Interviews: What are they?

Employers from all industries utilize the behavioral interview.

Behavioral interviews elicit responses beyond typical yes/no questions. In fact, most behavioral interview questions are open-ended. The major premise of behavior interviewing is that past behaviors predict future behaviors and performance.

A typical behavioral question will have the interviewee describe a specific incident, situation, task, or problem as well as actions taken to achieve a desirable outcome.

Behavioral Interviews: How to Prepare

Employers base behavioral interviewing questions on desired skills and attributes needed for the position.

Therefore, the best preparation to accomplish success through a behavioral interview is to:

- Know your competencies and experiences
- Know the employer
- Know the job functions advertised in the job description
- Know yourself - strengths and weaknesses
- Know how to match your skills and experiences to the job functions

Five steps to prepare for a behavioral interview:

1. Research the employer and position
2. Predict the questions
3. Develop and script answers
4. Practice answering
5. Dress for Success

1. Research the employer and position

The best resources for getting to know an employer and job/internship position is through:

- The organization's web site
- Networking with Colby alumni and parents, or with personal contacts
- Research via other means (Vault.com, Glassdoor.com, industry journals, or articles in the general press)

2. Predict the questions

You can predict organization-specific questions as well as general (common) behavioral questions through:

- Glassdoor.com
- Networking with Colby alumni and parents, or with personal contacts.
- Working with a DavisConnects advisor to prepare

3. Develop and script answers (your story) using the STAR Method

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral-based interview question by discussing the specific situation, task, action, and result of the situation you are describing.

Situation: Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Task: What goal were you working toward?

Action: Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.

Result: Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behavior. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure your answer contains multiple positive results.

Make sure that you follow all parts of the STAR method. Be as specific as possible at all times, without rambling or including too much information. Oftentimes students have to be prompted to include their results, so try to include that without being asked. Also, eliminate any examples that do not paint you in a positive light. However, keep in mind that some examples that have a negative result (such as "lost the game") can highlight your strengths in the face of adversity.

SAMPLE STAR RESPONSE:

Situation (S): Advertising revenue was falling off for my college newspaper, *The Echo*, and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

Task (T): My goal was to generate new ideas, materials and incentives that would result in at least a 15% increase in advertisers from the year before.

Action (A): I designed a new promotional packet to go with the rate sheet and compared the benefits of *The Echo* circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set-up a special training session for the account executives with a local business professional who discussed competitive selling strategies.

Result (R): We signed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by 20 percent over the same period last year.

Keeping the job description always in mind, here are some helpful hints that should help you in scripting your answers:

- Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service.
- Prepare short descriptions of each situation; be ready to give details if asked.
- Be sure each story has a beginning, middle, and an end, i.e., be ready to describe the situation, including the task at hand, your action, and the outcome or result.
- Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable).
- Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation.
- Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.
- Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your life.

4. Practice answers

DavisConnects advisors can assist with mock interviews (schedule an appointment to come in and practice in a one-on-one session with an advisor). Don't be afraid to practice with friends and roommates as well.

5. Dress for Success

How you present yourself physically on the day of an interview (via dress and body language) is just as important as how you represent yourself and your accomplishments verbally in an interview.

It is always best to err on the side of caution and dress conservatively for professional interviews, which means "business professional" attire.

If you're ever not sure about attire, feel free to ask any of the DavisConnects advisors or stop by our daily drop in hours.

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

1. Describe a major change that occurred in a job that you held. How did you adapt to this change?
2. Tell us about a situation in which you had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
3. Describe a project or idea that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
4. Tell us about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
5. When you disagree with your manager, what do you do? Give an example.
6. When you have a lot of work to do, how do you get it all done? Give an example?
7. Give me an example of when you took a risk to achieve a goal. What was the outcome?
8. Tell us about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? What was your reasoning behind your decision?
9. Give a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you assess your role in diffusing the situation?
10. It is very important to build good relationships at work but sometimes it doesn't always work. If you can, tell about a time when you were not able to build a successful relationship with a difficult person.
11. Some people consider themselves to be "big picture people" and others are "detail oriented." Which are you? Give an example of a time when you displayed this.
12. Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively "read" another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values.
13. Describe a situation where you felt you had not communicated well. How did you correct the situation?
14. Have you had to "sell" an idea to your co-workers, classmates or group? How did you do it? Did they "buy" it?

15. Tell us about a recent successful experience in making a speech or presentation. How did you prepare? What obstacles did you face? How did you handle them?
16. Tell us about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you.
17. Everyone has made some poor decisions or has done something that just did not turn out right. Has this happened to you? What happened?
18. Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
19. What kind of decisions do you make rapidly? What kind takes more time? Give examples.
20. Do you consider yourself a macro or micro manager? How do you delegate?
21. What was the biggest mistake you have had when delegating work? The biggest success?
22. Describe a situation where you had the option to leave the details to others or you could take care of them yourself.
23. What kinds of things really get you excited?
24. What sorts of things did you do at school that were beyond expectations?
25. Tell us about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you've ever had to work with, and how you managed to work with them.
26. What have you done in past situations to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
27. Can you think of a situation where innovation was required at work? What did you do in this situation?
28. When was the last time that you thought "outside of the box" and how did you do it?
29. Have you ever been a member of a group where two of the members did not work well together? What did you do to get them to do so?
30. How often do you have to rely on information you have gathered from others when talking to them? What kinds of problems have you had? What happened?
31. Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.
32. Give an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.

33. Tell us about an important goal that you set in the past. Were you successful? Why?
34. Describe a time when you had to make a difficult choice between your personal and professional life.
35. Give an example of how you have been successful at empowering either a person or a group of people into accomplishing a task.
36. Keeping others informed of your progress/actions helps them feel comfortable. Tell your methods for keeping your supervisor advised of the status on projects.
37. Tell us about a time when you used facts and reason to persuade someone to accept your recommendation.
38. Tell us about a recent success you had with an especially difficult employee/co-worker.
39. Describe a situation where you had to use conflict management skills.
40. Tell us about a time when you organized or planned an event that was very successful.
41. Can you recall a time when you were less than pleased with your performance?
42. If there were one area you've always wanted to improve upon, what would that be?
43. Give me an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
44. How did you react when faced with constant time pressure? Give an example.
45. How do you typically plan your day to manage your time effectively?