

O'Neill CAREER HUB | Behavioral Based Interviews

Your "STAR" Story

Behavioral based interview questions should be answered using the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result). Behavioral based interviews encourage the applicant to tell a short story which demonstrates their ability to perform relevant job functions according to certain competencies the employer is looking for. These stories should be thought out and practiced well in advance in order to be delivered effectively.

Situation (Set the context for your story): Open with a brief description of the Situation and context of the success story (who, what, where, when, how). Remember to leave out acronyms and abbreviations that are not well known to your audience. Tell just enough to get the person interested, but don't ramble on or get too into the details.

Task (Explain what was required of you): Explain the Task you had to complete highlighting any specific challenges or constraint (ie. deadlines, costs, other issues). Remember to focus on YOU and not other members of your team. Also be cognizant of the wording and language you use. Simple changes can make a big impact. Instead of saying "I had to create a cost benefit analysis because my boss needed it," say instead "I was given the opportunity to come up with a creative cost-benefit analysis which our leadership team would then use to...."

Action (What you actually did): Describe the specific Actions that you took to complete the task. These should highlight desirable traits without needing to state them (initiative, intelligence, dedication, leadership, understanding, etc.)

Result (How the situation played out): Close with the result of your efforts. Include figures to quantify the result if possible. If you are still in the project or aren't aware of the final outcomes, consider a different example, or state the intended outcomes.

Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a project:

S: Over the summer, I worked as a service advisor for a car dealership. One morning in our department staff meeting, the service manager announced that we had been receiving an unacceptable amount of negative feedback in our reviews for the service we were providing to customers. His solution was to create a committee that would analyze the situation and put forth actionable improvements.

T: I had been looking for an opportunity to show that I was capable of taking on more responsibility and being a person who enjoys working in group situations, I was the first to volunteer. My service manager was quick to make me the leader of the committee, which put me in the position as leader of a group of four other people who were tasked to come up with a solution.

A: For three weeks, we analyzed each of the customer service reports and discovered that the vast majority of negative reviews were a result of lengthy wait times for customers. Knowing that we had to come up with a solution to decrease the amount of time our customers were waiting, I then lead a brainstorming session to find a way to fix the problem. We zoned in on changing the way our mechanics worked on each job.

R: After implementing my suggestion, mechanics were able to focus mainly on their specializations, which meant they worked faster and more efficiently, which translated to wait times dropping by 18%.

Tell me about a time when you demonstrated leadership skills:

S: During my last semester of school, I completed an internship at Memorial Hospital in the Health Information Management department. I was the first and only intern the department had ever had, and they decided they wanted to implement an official internship program.

T: In order to successfully launch this program, my supervisor asked me to create and administer a training curriculum for the new incoming interns.

A: To complete this task, I outlined all the procedures the new interns would need to learn about such as HIPAA, how to operate the 10-line phone system, and how to use the health record index and storage system. Next I created a three-day training agenda covering these topics. Finally, I facilitated the program to four new interns.

R: The training was a huge success. On a survey completed after the training, all four interns rated the program a 10/10 in the areas of usefulness and creativity. In addition, each intern rated my communication and leadership styles as "Excellent."

Give an example of how you worked on a team:

During my last semester in college, I worked as part of a research team in the History department. The professor leading the project was writing a book on the development of language in Europe in the Middle Ages. We were each assigned different sectors to focus on, and I suggested that we meet independently before our weekly meeting with the professor to discuss our progress, and help each other out if we were having any difficulties. The professor really appreciated the way we worked together, and it helped to streamline his research as well. He was ready to start on his final copy months ahead of schedule because of the work we helped him with.

What do you do if you disagree with someone at work?

A few years ago, I had a supervisor who wanted me to find ways to outsource most of the work we were doing in my department. I felt that my department was one where having the staff on premises had a huge impact on our effectiveness and ability to relate to our clients. I presented a strong case to her, and she came up with a compromise plan.