The STAR Approach
Behavioral Interview Techniques

Situation	Describe the context or situation you were in. Provide enough detail for the interviewer to understand the scenario.
Task	Explain the specific task or objective you were faced with in that situation. What was expected of you or what goal were you trying to achieve?
Action	Describe the actions you took to address the situation or task. Focus on what you did, rather than the efforts of your team. Highlighting your skills, abilities, and decision-making process. Be specific and use "I" statements to emphasize your role.
Result	Discuss the outcomes or results of your actions. What happened as a result of your efforts? This could include achievements, lessons learned, or impacts on the team or organization. Make sure to quantify results when possible.

Remember – many behavioral questions are designed to have you to explain how you responded to *negative* situations. Come to the interview with examples of negative experiences ready, but try to choose negative experiences that you made the best of – or better yet, those that ended up with positive outcomes.

Here's a good way to prepare for behavior-based interviews:

- Identify 6-8 examples from your past experience where you demonstrated top behaviors and skills that be relevant to this hiring manager or team. Think in terms of examples that will showcase your top selling points.
- Half your examples should be positive, such as accomplishments or effectively meeting goals.
- The other half should be situations that started out negatively but developed into a positive, or where you made the best of the outcome.
- Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your life.
- Use fairly recent examples, preferably examples of behaviors demonstrated within the last 1-2 years.
- Try to describe your examples in story form, and refer to the above diagram to utilize **PAR** (problem, action, result)/**SAR** (situation, action, result) or **STAR** (situation, task, action, result).

How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview

Companies that employ behavioral interviewing have predetermined skill sets they're hoping to find for a particular position. These skill sets could include decision making, problem solving, leadership, motivation, communication, interpersonal skills, planning, organization, critical thinking, team building, and the ability to influence others. The company determines these skills sets by doing a detailed analysis of the position. As a job seeker, you can also conduct an analysis during an interview by asking questions such as:

- What are the necessary skills to be successful in this position?
- What makes a successful candidate?
- What would make an unsuccessful candidate?
- Why is this position open?
- What are the challenges someone in this role might face?

Once you have landed the interview, keep in mind the following points:

- **Be detailed and specific.** You should develop three stories that illustrate your past performance. Remember that the interviewer will be operating under the premise that "past performance in a similar setting is the best predictor of future performance." The best way to accomplish this is to use the PAR/SAR/STAR process.

- **Limit rambling and tangents.** While you can't control what is asked, you can control what you say.

- **Listen carefully to each question.** If you are unsure, rephrase the question and ask for clarification. When you respond, be sure to recall your past accomplishments in detail.

- **Practice your behavioral stories using real-life examples.** It is very difficult to make up behavioral stories, which is why behavioral interviewing is becoming more popular. By practicing, you will be able to recall with confidence your past accomplishments.

As you prepare for a behavioral interview, review your resume. Seeing your achievements in print might help jog your memory. During the interview, listen carefully to each question and pull an example out of your bag of tricks that provides an appropriate description of how you demonstrated the desired behavior. With practice, you can learn to tailor a relatively small set of examples to respond to a number of different behavioral questions.

Examples of Behavioral Questions

Communication Skills

- Give an example of a time when a co-worker criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others?
- How do you ensure that someone understands what you are saying?
- Tell me about a time where you had to present complex information.
- Tell me about a time where you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.

Decision-Making Skills

- Give an example of a time where you had to make a difficult decision.
- Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?
- Give an example of a time where it paid off to take your time in making a decision.

Initiative

- What did you do to prepare for this interview?
- Give an example of a situation that could not have happened successfully without you being there.

Planning and Organization Skills

- Describe a situation where you had many projects that were due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give an example.

Flexibility

- Describe a time where you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Describe a time where you put your needs aside to help a co-worker with a task. How did you assist them? What was the result?

Leadership Skills

- Tell me about a time where you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
- Give an example of a time where you involved others in the decision-making process.

Time Management Skills

- Tell me about a time where you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a time where you were particularly effective in prioritizing tasks and completing a project on schedule.