BEHAVIORAL BASED INTERVIEWING

Behavioral based Interviewing, sometimes called competency based interviewing, is a method of interviewing that more and more organizations are using in their hiring process. The basic premise behind behavioral interviewing is this: *the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation*. It focuses on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related. Traditional interviewing questions ask you general questions such as "Tell me about yourself." The process of behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently. Employers predetermine which skills are necessary for the job for which they are interviewing and then ask very pointed questions to determine if the candidate possesses those skills. For example, if successful leadership is necessary for a position, you may be asked to talk about an experience in which you were a leader as well as what you think makes a good leader.

How to prepare for a behavioral based interview

Before you start preparing answers for behavioral based interview questions, you have to determine what competencies you think the employer is looking for. Do your research: What does the job description say? Examine the company website. Speak to your recruiter, HR contacts, and people in your network.

Any company is likely to look for a combination of the following skills: communication, creativity, attention to detail, management material, action orientation, loyalty, ability to make/save money, team player, enthusiasm and flexibility.

Identify and rank these based on the job you are interviewing for. Now come up with specific examples where you have demonstrated these competencies. Preparation for behavioral based interviews is critical for success and will improve your ability to perform in any type of interview as well as in networking interactions.

During a behavioral interview, always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary, and make sure you answer the question completely. Describe a particular situation that relates to the question, not a general one. Briefly tell them about the situation, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome. During the interview, your responses need to be specific and detailed. Your answer should contain these four steps (Situation, Task, Action, Result or "STAR") for optimum success.

The STAR Method

Whatever the question and answer may be, there is a useful tool for your delivery. The best way to tell someone about a specific event and how it went is to employ the **STAR Method:**

Give the interviewer the **Situation** that you had to resolve and then describe the **Tasks** involved in the situation. Then describe the **Action** you took and what **Result** or outcome you achieved. Be as specific as possible, add any relevant components to your answer such as the people, environment, scale and scope. Be open about the outcome, whether it was a complete success or a result that you could learn from in order to do things better next time.

You now have to practice, practice, practice, and turn your real-life competencies into interesting stories.

Example of a STAR answer

Situation: In my previous position, I was responsible for managing various events.

Task: I noticed that attendance at these events had dropped by 30% over the past 3 years and wanted to do something to improve these numbers.

Action: I designed a new promotional packet to go out to the local community businesses. I also included a rating sheet to collect feedback on our events and organized internal round table discussions to raise awareness of the issue with our employees.

Result: We utilized some of the wonderful ideas we received from the community, made our internal systems more efficient and visible and raised attendance by 18% the first year.

Top 10 most commonly sought competencies (not in any order)

1. Achievement/Results Orientation
2. Initiative
3. Impact & Influence
4. Customer Service Orientation
5. Interpersonal Understanding

6. Organizational Awareness
7. Analytical Thinking
8. Conceptual Thinking
9. Information Seeking
10. Integrity

Behavioral Based Interview Sample Questions List

Here is a list of common behavioral interview questions that you should answer using the STAR (Situation, Task, Action, and Result) method.

Results & Performance Driven
(Note: this is one of the most frequently sought competencies)
Describe an example of when you were particularly effective at achieving end results. What steps did you take to achieve these results?
Think of an example when you consistently exceeded internal or external customer expectations. How did you do this? What approach did you use?
Provide an example of a project or team you managed in which there were many obstacles to overcome. What did you do to address those obstacles?

Communication skills
What was the most challenging business presentation you have ever delivered?
Give an example of when you had to put your foot down to assert a point that meant a great deal to you.
How are you able to communicate well with people that do not want to hear your message?
Tell us about when you were able to effectively communicate bad news to your co-workers.
What steps have you taken to improve your communication skills?

Managing people
Tell us about the toughest group that you had to get cooperation from?
Give us an example of when you had to improve the performance of a team. What were the problems and how did you deal with them?
Did you ever experience difficulty in getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach? How did this work?
Tell us of a situation where you had to inspire a team. Did you meet any challenges and how did you reach your goals?
Give an example of when you had to use different management styles for different people to achieve the same results?

Flexibility
Tell us about when you had to change your methods to reach a goal.
Give an example of when you had to do something completely new and what approach you employed.
How have you coped with changes in management?
Tell us about a project that failed due to changed circumstances and what it has taught you?

Motivation
Tell us about when you went above and beyond the call of duty and what the results were.
Give an example of when you lifted the spirits of others and got them to accomplish more than expected.
How do you keep going for a goal when others give up, give a specific example.

Teamwork
How have you helped your manager to inspire positive vibes in your team?
Tell us about when you had to deal with conflict within your team and how you helped to resolve it?
Tell us how you went about promoting both morale and work ethic in the teams you have been in?
Give an example of when you have helped a team member that was underperforming.

Structure and organization
How do you prepare your week?
Tell us about how your organization has helped your career?
Give an example of when you had to re-arrange your schedule completely.
What is given top priority in your job and why?

References:
http://theundercoverrecruiter.com/content/how-prepare-behavioral-based-interviewing
http://web.mit.edu/career/www/guide/star.html

Kessler, Robin. Competency-Based Interviews. Franklin Lakes, NJ: Career Press, 2006.