



How To Answer Behavioral Interview Questions With The STAR Technique

Prospective employers love to ask you behavioral interview questions (or situational interview questions). These kinds of questions dig a little deeper into what makes you tick. The answers reveal how you have handled real-world situations in the past, which predict how you will probably behave in similar situations in the future. Even more, they show how you think—how you approach and solve problems, which is a valuable thing to know about a potential employee.

We almost always have to answer behavioral questions with some kind of example, or story. “Tell me about a time when you...” needs a story to explain. “How have you handled...” a particular kind of situation need a story, or an extended example, too.

One of the problems with these kinds of interview questions for you is that it can be all too easy to get caught up in the story and miss making your point. Your point, in any story you tell (or in answering any interview question), is to give them one more reason that you’re wonderful and they should hire you.

The way to be the most effective with any interview story you tell is to always frame your story in a particular structure, called the STAR technique. STAR stands for ‘Situation or Task,’ ‘Action,’ and ‘Result.’ Most people have no trouble retelling the situation and the action they took, but it’s very easy to forget about telling the result, which is the most important part.

When you tell your story, tell it like this:

Situation or Task

Set the scene for your story. What was the situation? What task were you faced with? Give it some context, and show them what the problem was.

Action

Talk about your thought process or decision-making process that led to your choosing an Action to take. Walk them through it with you: “Because of X, Y, and Z, I looked at A, B, and C and decided that our best course of action was to do G.”

Result

This is the most important part. Obviously, this needs to be a positive, happy ending. If at all possible, quantify your result. This means to describe your result in terms of numbers, dollars, or percentages. For example:

- “I saved the company \$47,000.”
- “I reduced our losses by 30%.”
- “I saved a customer relationship worth \$1M per year.”
- “We were able to hire 6 new employees and increased our production by 400%.”

Whatever your results were, quantify them. This is the “wow” moment in your story. Numbers provide hard evidence that you did what you said you did, and put your achievement in context. This is a huge attention-getter for hiring managers.

All the stories you can tell that show how you approach a problem or task, think critically about it, and make good, solid decisions that benefit your company will help you stand out in the interview and get the offer.

Credit: <http://www.careerealism.com>