

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

“Behavioral interviewing” emphasizes past performance and behaviors. The theory behind “behavioral interviewing” is that past behavior is an indicator of future behavior. For example, if you can give the interviewer an example of how you solved a conflict, the interviewer can reasonably assume that you can solve future conflicts.

During a “behavioral interview”, typically the interviewer identifies desired skills and behaviors that are necessary for the job and creates open-ended questions and statements to elicit detailed responses. As a candidate, you should be prepared to answer the questions and statements thoroughly. Make sure you can give detailed examples using the STAR method (Situational or Task, Action, Result).

Below are some examples of Behavioral Interview questions that may be used to determine different competencies.

DIVERSITY:

Creates an environment of understanding, acceptance, and inclusion.

- Tell me how you have helped promote diversity?

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:

Exhibits understanding of natural sources of conflict and acts to prevent or soften them.

- Describe a time when it was difficult for you to work with a classmate, co-worker, boss, or professor. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- What do you do when you know you are right and your professor or boss disagrees with you? Give an example of this.
- Tell me about a difficult situation you avoided to by preventing conflict.
- Describe a situation where you were able to soften a conflict with another individual.
- Tell me about a time where conflict in the workplace got in the way of you being able to do your work.
- Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your professor's or supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?

ABILITY TO LEARN:

Assimilating and applying new job-related information promptly.

- What tricks or techniques have you learned to make school or a job easier, or to make yourself more effective? How did you learn that?
- Give an example of how you applied knowledge from previous coursework to a project in another class.

TEAMWORK:

Works effectively with others to accomplish common goals and to identify and resolve problems.

- What do you think are the best and worst parts of working in a team environment?
- What obstacles have you encountered while working on a team, and how did you overcome them?
- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- Tell me about any confrontation you have dealt with in a team environment. How did you handle it?
- Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his/her share of the work. What did you do?
- Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.
- Tell me about your experience communicating with a team. What did you do? What was challenging?
- Tell me about a time when communication within your work group broke down and what you did to resolve the problem.
- Give me an example of where you kept others informed.
- What have you done in the past to build a strong and productive team that worked well together?
- Tell me about a time when you contributed toward an environment that had a strong sense of teamwork?
- Describe a time when you helped a team member when it wasn't convenient for you to do so.
- Describe an ineffective teamwork situation in which you were involved.
- Describe a team you were on where communication was strong. What made it strong? How did you achieve and maintain that level of communication?
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to work with another person even when that individual may not have liked you.
- Tell me about a time when you had to work with someone that wasn't collaborative.
- Describe a time when you had to modify your approach in order to work with another person.
- Tell me about a time when you were able to demonstrate respect with someone you thought was disrespectful.
- Describe a situation where you had to include someone on a project that you might have felt could more easily be done on your own.

INDEPENDENCE:

Works self-sufficiently and exhibits a willingness to take a stand when needed.

- Describe a time when you were able to accomplish something on your own even when it might have been more comfortable working with others.
- Tell me about a time when being independent in your thinking or the way you work caused a problem.
- Describe a time where you held a different viewpoint than others and stood your ground defending that point of view.

INITIATIVE:

Self-manages responsibilities rather than passively accepting duties. Takes action to achieve goals beyond what is required.

- Describe a slow time at your work and what you did to fill the down time.
- Describe a situation where you achieved more than what was required.
- What projects have you started on your own?
- Describe some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were implemented, or carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.
- Have you found any ways to make school or a job easier or more rewarding?
- Describe a time when you performed a task outside of your perceived responsibility. What was the task? What was the outcome?

INNOVATION/CREATIVITY:

Explores and embraces opportunities for doing things in new ways. Improves processes, initiates, and/or supports improvements in work processes to increase efficiency.

- Give me an example of an opportunity you had to create to accomplish something new or in a new way.
- Tell me about a time when you suggested a better way to do a task to make work easier or save money.
- Describe a time where you used your creativity. Why was it creative or innovative? How was your creativity beneficial to your department/school/others?
- What is the most creative thing you did in your last job, group project, or school assignment? How did this creativity affect the particular situation?

INFLUENCING/NEGOTIATIONS:

Motivates others to buy into ideas and engages others in looking at a situation in a new way. Finds common ground to accommodate the needs and wants of different stakeholders.

- What is the toughest group that you needed to get cooperation from?
- Tell me about a time where you had to get others to accept your idea.
- Tell me about a particularly tough negotiation that you successfully managed.

ANALYSIS:

Relating and comparing data from different sources.

- What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision?
- We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.
- Describe a situation in which you had to collect information by asking many questions of several people.
- Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?
- Describe a time when you were assigned a complex project. What steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What one step would you have done differently if given the chance?
- What was the most complex assignment you have had? What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you created order out of chaos?

ADAPTABILITY:

Maintains effectiveness with varying environments, types of people, and responsibilities.

- Tell me about a time when you had to step out of your comfort zone. How did that make you feel?
- Tell of some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?
- Tell me about a time where you reacted quickly to changing conditions. Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to handle a difficult situation.
- Describe a time when you adjusted your behavior to meet the needs of different people or a situations.
- Tell me about at time where you worked effectively in an environment in which the parameters changed frequently.
- Tell me about a time where you took direction from multiple people. What worked? What didn't?
- How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular challenges?

DEPENDABILITY:

Consistently demonstrates appropriate follow-through with commitments.

- Give me an example of when you earned the trust of others by being dependable.
- Tell me about a time when it was very difficult to follow through on a task or project.
- How do you feel about being held accountable?

WORK STANDARDS:

Sets high standards of performance for self, subordinates, and the organization.

- Compare and contrast the times when you performed work which was above the standard with times your work was below the standard.
- Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?
- What are your standards of success in school? What have you done to meet these standards?
- How have you differed from your professors in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?
- Give me an example of when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
- Describe a project for which you were responsible that demonstrated your commitment to producing a high quality product or result.
- Give me an example where you achieved more than was required.

TIME MANAGEMENT:

Consistently adheres to deadlines and prioritizes time well.

- Give me an example of a time where you met a particularly tight deadline.
- Tell me about a time where you were unable to meet a deadline. What would you do differently next time?
- Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head". Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.
- Tell me about a time when you were faced with conflicting priorities. How did you determine the top priority?
- Describe a time in school when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
- Tell me about a time where you created order out of chaos?
- Give me an example of when your schedule was interrupted. What did you do?
- Have you ever been in a situation where the amount of work assigned to you exceeded the allotted time? How did you handle that?

STRESS MANAGEMENT:

Recognizes stress triggers and works to mitigate them, maintains work/life balance, responds appropriately to stressors outside of one's control.

- As your manager, how would I know that you were under stress? What would be the signs?
- Tell me about a time in the past year when you felt you were under pressure.

- Tell me about a recent workflow or production problem, such as a co-worker calling in sick. How did you respond?

LEADERSHIP:

Involves team members in solving problems and making decisions, inspires people to follow the lead, obtains input from others, facilitates change, and inspires confidence and optimism through a clear vision and by personal example.

- Tell me about a time you included others in the decision-making process even when it would have been easier not to.
- Tell me about a time when you made an unpopular decision that affected others.
- Tell me about a difficult change that you had to lead others to implement.
- Describe a situation where you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.
- Give me an example of a time where you successfully guided another person's development.
- Give me an example of a time when you successfully managed a group.
- Through your own experience or through observing others, do you find it more appropriate to point out what is wrong so a task can be accomplished competently or to praise individuals and then point out what may need correction after the task is complete? Give an example.
- What strategies have you used to get the individuals of a group to work well together to achieve the same goal?
- Tell me about a time where you positively influenced a morale problem.
- Tell me about your most difficult leadership challenge.
- What do you like about leading?

PROBLEM SOLVING:

Assesses the major elements of a specific situation from a number of viewpoints and considers an array of alternatives.

- Tell me about a time when you had a complex problem to solve. What options did you generate? How did you choose the best one?
- Tell me about a time when you took a unique approach to solving a problem.

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING:

Establishes a course of action for yourself (and/or others) to accomplish specific goals while appropriately allocating resources.

- Give me an example of a time when the details of a task or project were particularly important. How did you ensure accuracy on a consistent basis?
- Tell me about a time when you had to organize a large project or event? What steps did you take to ensure the project was completed on time and met standards?

STRATEGIC THINKING/GOALS:

Works on initiatives that impact and improves the organization, department, or group.

Anticipates changes that may impact the organization, department, or group.

- Give me some examples that demonstrate your ability to see the big picture and foresee the impact of potential changes on your department/school.
- Give me an example of a time when you suggested a better way to do a task to make work easier or save money.
- Tell me about how you helped a school group or work group accomplish its goals.
- While working on a group project, individual assignment, or at your job, are you more detailed oriented or more conceptual in your thought process? Give an example.
- Tell me about a time when you effected change.

DECISION MAKING/JUDGEMENT:

Follows a process for problem solving and uses consistent logic, rationality and objectivity.

- Tell me about a situation that you wished you had handled differently (i.e. did not receive your desired outcome). What was the situation? What would you change if faced with a similar situation?
- Give me an example of a difficult decision you have made and the outcome of your decision.
- Give me an example of a time when you had to make a decision quickly with limited information.
- Tell me about a time when you held off making a decision because you didn't have enough information.
- Describe a decision you made that did not turn out very well. What was the decision and its impact? What did you do once the result was noticed?
- Give me an example where using good judgment was key to accomplishing a task or completing a project.

CONCEPTUAL ABILITY:

Works effectively with abstract conceptual matters, not just with concrete tangible data.

- Describe a problem you were solving, idea you were selling or project you were implementing where you had to work with a concept that was abstract rather than concrete and tangible.

ASSERTIVENESS:

Takes a stand on issues without being excessively abrasive.

- When have you expressed an unpopular opinion at work? What was the result?
- Give me an example of a time when you took a forceful stand at work with finesse.
- Tell me about a time when you were assertive, but didn't get the reaction you hoped.

COMMUNICATION/LISTENING:

Clearly expresses ideas either verbally or in writing (including grammar, organization, and structure). Actively listens to others' opinions and ideas; respects and seeks to understand differences in opinions.

- Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you. This might be a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.
- What has been your experience in giving presentations to small or large groups?
- What has been your most successful experience in speech making?
- Tell me about a time you used verbal communication skills to get a point across.
- Tell me about a time you used written communication skills to get a point across.
- Tell me about a time where you had to write a difficult message. What was the situation? What did you write? What was the result?
- Give me an example of a time when you actively listened in order to understand another person with whom you had a difference of opinion.
- When has not actively listening to what was said caused you some difficulty?

CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION:

Makes efforts to listen to and understand the customer (both internal and external), anticipates customer needs and gives high priority to customer satisfaction.

- What ideas do you have for building a strong customer base?
- Tell me about the most difficult customer service experience that you have had to manage.
- Have you ever had to go the extra mile to satisfy a customer? What did you?
- You may have heard the phrase, "the customer is always right." Describe a time when you felt that the customer wasn't right.
- Tell me about a time when you did your best to resolve a customer's concern and the individual still was not satisfied. What did you do next?
- Tell me about a time when you provided quick and thorough service in response to someone's request.

COMPLIANCE:

Honoring university or organizational policies and regulatory requirements.

- Give me an example of a policy that you ended up having to go around to get your work done.
- Tell me about a policy you conformed to even though you did not agree with it.
- Describe a situation where you held a confidence or maintained confidentiality of information.
- Tell me about a time when you had difficulty maintaining confidentiality?

ETHICS AND INTEGRITY:

Follows through on commitments; incorporates honesty, respect and fairness of daily actions.

- Tell me about a time where you demonstrated integrity.
- Talk about a time when you did the right thing, even when it was going against the crowd.
- Tell me about a time when you had to bend or break a rule?
- Tell us about a time where you witnessed a friend or colleague doing something wrong. What did you do?

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:

Manages financial assets responsibly with a focus on cost effectiveness and productivity.

- What opportunities have you had to estimate and monitor expenditures?
- Give me an example of a budget you managed.
- Tell me about your financial management responsibilities and successes in this area?

DEVELOPMENT:

Makes efforts to build challenges into current job responsibilities and apply new skills on the job, recognizes one's own strengths and areas for improvement.

- What did you do in your last job to improve your skills and performance?
- Give me an example of a new task or responsibility you took on and how you went about it.
- Give me an example of steps you have taken to develop yourself over the last year.
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a failure. What was the impact, how did you react to it, and what did you learn from the experience?

