

# Behavioral Interviewing

During your interview you may be asked to provide an example of how you handled a given situation. The assumption behind this approach is that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance. Instead of asking if you have leadership skills the interviewer may ask you to give an example of an experience working in a group. A “behavioral” question gives you a chance to showcase your skills and gives all candidates an equal opportunity to present their accomplishments.

To prepare for behavioral questions you must show the critical capabilities for the position. Get a copy of the job description or talk to a current job holder.

You must also be ready to talk about significant accomplishments. Look at school projects, jobs, volunteer activities and situations in which you overcame some barrier. Prepare 60-90 second “stories” using the following format.

- Problem:** What was the situation or problem. What was the task?  
Provide context. Why was it important?
- Action:** What action did you take and why? Use dynamic action verbs.
- Results:** What happened because of your actions? What was improved?  
What were the benefits? What was changed? Use numbers if possible.

Basically, you must recall many experiences quickly, select the most appropriate one and describe it effectively. Practice with a friend.

## EXAMPLE:

**Problem:** In college I lived in an apartment complex with a predominantly student population. The place generated an enormous quantity of recyclable material but there was no systematic effort to collect it and get it to the recycling center.

**Action:** Several of us who were interested in environmental issues formed a committee to promote recycling. I was elected chairperson and had primary responsibility for organizing our efforts and assigning duties. We convinced a local recycler to donate containers. We held a kick-off party in the parking lot. Residents had to bring recyclables to get in. I persuaded people with pick-ups to rotate hauling the papers, cans and bottles to the recycler.

**Result:** The project was a giant success. Recycling was increased by at least 90%. The money we earned funds an annual party for everyone in the complex.

## Sample Behavioral Questions

- Give me an example of a time you demonstrated initiative.
- Thinking back over your college experience, describe a situation in which you were challenged in using your communication skills. Tell me about it in detail.
- Tell me about your experience in dealing with routine work. What problems did you overcome in order to focus on the details the job required?
- What is the most difficult decision you have had to make that involved other people who did not agree with your decision? Tell me about the process of making that decision and the results.
- What was one of the most difficult technical problems you have solved? Tell me all about it in detail.