



BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions and Answers

If you haven't already done so, be sure to read our previous Behavioral Interview blogs:

- ✓ September 18, 2020 blog, "Behavioral Interviews – What Are They And How To Prepare For One" for great information to help you prepare for a behavioral interview. ([Behavioral Interviews – What Are They And How To Prepare For One.pdf](#))
- ✓ September 21, 2020 blog, "Common Skills Addressed During A Behavioral Interview" for some specific skills that are common themes in behavioral interview questions. ([Blog 2 Common Skills Addressed During A Behavioral Interview.pdf](#))
- ✓ September 22, 2020 blog, "Tips For Answering Behavioral Interview Questions" for some great tips to help you get comfortable answering behavioral interview questions. ([Blog 3 Tips For Answering Behavioral Interview Questions.pdf](#))
- ✓ September 23, 2020 blog, "The STAR (Sometimes STARR) Technique" for information on the STAR technique and how to use it to prepare for behavioral interviews. ([Blog 4 The Star Technique.pdf](#))

1. Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

What They Want to Know: If you're being considered for a high-stress job, the interviewer will want to know how well you can work under pressure. Give a real example of how you've dealt with pressure when you respond.

Sample Answer: *I had been working on a key project that was scheduled for delivery to the client in 60 days. My supervisor came to me and said that we needed to speed it up and be ready in 45 days, while keeping our other projects on time. I made it into a challenge for my staff, and we effectively added just a few hours to each of our schedules and got the job done in 42 days by sharing the workload. Of course, I had a great group of people to work with, but I think that my effective allocation of tasks was a major component that contributed to the success of the project.*

2. How do you handle a challenge? Give an example.

What They Want to Know: Regardless of your job, things may go wrong and it won't always be business as usual. With this type of question, the hiring manager wants to know how you will react in a difficult situation. Focus on how you resolved a challenging situation when you respond.

Sample Answer: *One time, my supervisor needed to leave town unexpectedly, and we were in the middle of complicated negotiations with a new sponsor. I was tasked with putting together a PowerPoint presentation just from the notes he had left, and some briefing from his manager. My presentation turned out successfully. We got the sponsorship, and the management team even recommended me for an award.*

3. Give an example of how you set goals.

What They Want to Know: With this question, the interviewer wants to know how well you plan and set goals for what you want to accomplish. The easiest way to respond is to share examples of successful goal setting.

Sample Answer: *Within a few weeks of beginning my first job as a sales associate in a department store, I knew that I wanted to be in the fashion industry. I decided that I would work my way up to department manager, and at that point I would have enough money saved to be able to attend design school full-time. I did just that, and I even landed my first job through an internship I completed the summer before graduation.*

4. Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?

What They Want to Know: Nobody is perfect, and we all make mistakes. The interviewer is more interested in how you handled it when you made an error, rather than in the fact that it happened. The best way to answer this question is to talk about a specific example of a time you made a mistake. Briefly explain what the mistake was, but don't dwell on it. Quickly switch over to what you learned, or how you improved, after making that mistake. You might also explain the steps you took to make sure that mistake never happened again.

It's a good idea not to mention a mistake that would be critical for success in the new position. For instance, give an example from your last position that isn't specifically related to the job requirements for the new position. It's also a good idea to mention something that is relatively minor. Avoid mentioning any mistakes that demonstrate a flaw in your character (for example, a time you got in trouble for fighting at work).

Sometimes a good mistake to mention is a team mistake. You don't want to place all the blame on your teammates, but you can say that you collectively made an error.

Sample Answer: *I'm the kind of person who tries to learn and grow from every mistake. Years ago, a team I was working on failed to land a sale, and we were told it had to do in part with our ineffective visuals. Over the next six months, I spent much of my free time learning how to use various software programs to create enticing visual presentations. Since then, I've been continuously praised for my visuals in meetings and sales pitches.*

5. Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.

What They Want to Know: The hiring manager is interested in learning what you do to achieve your goals, and the steps you take to accomplish them. What separates a good answer from an exceptional one is a description of the active strategy and steps you're taking to achieve those goals, which also speaks to your motivation and call to action.

Sample Answer: *I am always trying to grow and learn and I have gained additional skills by taking related classes and continuing my involvement with a variety of professional associations. I noticed that your company provides in-house training for employees, and I would certainly be interested in taking relevant classes.*

6. Give an example of how you worked on a team.

What They Want to Know: Many jobs require working as part of a team. In interviews for those roles, the hiring manager will want to know how well you work with others and cooperate with other team members. These questions provide you with the opportunity to discuss some of the characteristics that enable you to work well with your co-workers, supervisors, and clients

Sample Answer: *When I was a junior, I worked on a case project for a marketing class where six of us were asked to analyze the marketing practices of Amazon.com and make recommendations for alternative approaches. Early on we floundered in an effort to find a focus. I suggested that we look at Amazon's advertising strategy within social media. I led a discussion about the pros and cons of that topic and encouraged a couple of the more reticent members to chime in. Two of the group members didn't initially embrace my original proposal. However, I was able to draw consensus after incorporating their suggestion that we focus on targeted advertising within Facebook based on users' expressed interests. We ended up working hard as a group, receiving very positive feedback from our professor, and getting an A grade on the project.*

7. What do you do if you disagree with someone at work?

What They Want to Know: With this question, the interviewer is seeking insight into how you handle issues at work. Focus on how you've solved a problem or compromised when there was a workplace disagreement. Be prepared. This type of answer always has two parts, and sometimes three. You need to describe a problem. And you need to show how you actively, not passively, resolved the situation. You don't necessarily have to be the one who solved the entire problem, though if you did, good job for showing initiative. Many times, however, calling in the right people is the best and most appropriate form of action. Either way, don't be shy about telling this to your interviewer.

A third part of answering this type of question involves sharing your personal philosophy. Your philosophy can be about your work ethic in general or certain industry-specific issues.

Don't stress about coming up with a major problem. Not everyone can rescue a company from financial ruin. A problem can be as simple as helping two colleagues who disagree about how to address a task resolve their differences. What you perceive as a problem and how you choose to resolve it tells a whole lot about who you are as a person.

Sample Answer: *A few years ago, I had a supervisor who wanted me to find ways to outsource most of the work we were doing in my department. I felt that my department was one where having the staff on premises had a huge impact on our effectiveness and ability to relate to our clients. I presented a strong case to her, and she came up with a compromise plan.*

8. Have you handled a difficult situation? How?

What They Want to Know: Can you handle difficult situations at work or do you not deal with them well? The employer will want to know what you do when there's a problem.

Sample Answer: *During a joint project, my co-worker resigned 2 weeks before the deadline. In order to finish the project on time, I consulted my manager. Between us, we decided it was best to put a minor project on hold and to prioritize this one. To make sure that the quality of the work was not affected, I worked a lot of overtime and my colleagues kindly took over some of my daily tasks to help me concentrate on getting the project finished. Although I did feel pressured, the end result was very positive. My client was more than happy with what I delivered and from this difficulty, I recognized my own capabilities and my ability to work well independently. I wouldn't have been able to do it without the help of my colleagues and my manager; I was very grateful for that."*

9. What have been your most positive and negative management experiences?

What They Want to Know: Employers might ask you this question to understand what you like and dislike in certain management styles. This might help them decide whether or not you would be a good fit under a certain manager. You should answer this question honestly and as tactfully as possible.

Sample Answer: *One of my past managers, while very talented, tended to manage our team's work closely with little flexibility on how things were to be done. It made me feel like I wasn't trusted and there wasn't much room for process improvement. My most recent manager was terrific at listening to my needs and helping me get the resources I needed to achieve my goals. I thrive under managers who create a collaborative, trusting team environment.*

10. What's your biggest weakness?

What They Want to Know: Employers may ask about your weaknesses to see if you have a sense of self-awareness and how you're working to improve.

Sample Answer: *One weakness I've been working on is my ability to provide constructive criticism. I understand how providing feedback on work or projects that could have been handled better is extremely valuable. To improve on this, I'm writing down my feedback before I approach my colleagues. This helps me to plan out my answer, give the best criticism possible and be less nervous.*

11. What do you do when a team member refuses to complete his or her quota of the work?

What They Want to Know: Employers ask this type of question to see how you handle conflicts with coworkers.

Sample Answer: *When there are team conflicts or issues, I always try my best to step up as team leader if needed. I think my communication skills make me an effective leader and moderator. For example, one time, when I was working on a team project, two of the team members got embroiled in an argument, both refusing to complete their assignments. They were both dissatisfied with their workloads, so I arranged a team meeting where we reallocated all the assignments among the team members. This made everyone happier and more productive, and our project was a success.*

12. Tell me about a time you showed initiative on the job.

What They Want to Know: Employers ask this type of question to see how whether you just do the minimum to complete your job or whether you have the drive and vision to improve the process.

Sample Answer: *Last winter, I was acting as an account coordinator, supporting the account executive for a major client at an ad agency. The account executive had an accident and was sidelined three weeks before a major campaign pitch. I volunteered to fill in and orchestrate the presentation by coordinating the input of the creative and media teams. I called an emergency meeting and facilitated a discussion about ad scenarios, media plans, and the roles of various team members in relation to the presentation.*

I was able to achieve a consensus on two priority ad concepts that we had to pitch, along with related media strategies. I drew up a minute-by-minute plan of how we would present the pitch that was warmly received by the team based on our discussions. The client loved our plan and adopted the campaign. I was promoted to account executive six months later.

13. How Would Your Colleagues Describe You?

What They Want to Know: This isn't a chance for you to give an egotistical answer and blow your own trumpet. Pick qualities that would be admirable in the workplace and use examples from your previous job.

Sample Answer: *I think my coworkers would describe me as punctual, hard-working and trustworthy. Punctual because I was always a few minutes early for meetings. Hard-working; because I never missed a deadline and ensured I never left the office until the assignment was finished. Trustworthy because my boss entrusted me to conduct employee reviews and host my own meetings that were all kept confidential.*

Resume-Interview Success, LLC

www.resume-interviewsuccess.com

(610) 564-9623

dbitler@resume-interviewsuccess.com

(Behavioral Interview- Blog 5 of 6 – September 24, 2020)