



# BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

## The STAR (Sometimes STARR) Technique

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](#))

The STAR technique is a useful strategy for responding to behavioral interview questions that require an anecdote. You can unusually recognize a behavioral interview question because they usually start with something like:

- Tell me about a time when...
- Have you ever....
- How would you handle...
- Give me an example...

It's an excellent way to organize your thoughts. The STAR interview response technique is a way of answering behavioral interview questions. Behavioral interview questions are questions about how you have behaved in the past. Specifically, they are about how you have handled certain work situations. Employers using this technique analyze jobs and define the skills and qualities that high-level performers have exhibited in that job. STAR is an acronym for four key concepts. Each concept is a step the job candidate can utilize to answer a behavioral interview question. By employing all four steps, the job candidate thereby provides a comprehensive answer. The concepts in the acronym comprise the following:

**Situation:** Describe the context within which you performed a job or faced a challenge at work. For example, perhaps you were working on a group project, or you had a conflict with a coworker. This situation can be drawn from a work experience, a volunteer position, or any other relevant event. Be as specific as possible.

**Task:** Next, describe your responsibility in that situation. Perhaps you had to help your group complete a project within a tight deadline, resolve a conflict with a coworker, or hit a sales target.

**Action:** You then describe how you completed the task or endeavored to meet the challenge. Focus on what you did, rather than what your team, boss, or coworker did. (Tip: Instead of saying, "We did xyz," say "I did xyz.")

**Result:** Finally, explain the outcomes or results generated by the action taken. It may be helpful to emphasize what you accomplished, or what you learned.

STAR can also contain an additional "R" for "Relate" - Relate how the example demonstrates the skills relevant for the job you are interviewing for.

You can prepare to use the STARR method for answering questions ahead of any interview.

- Analyze the position for which you are being interviewed and determine what skills are required.
- Evaluate and reflect upon your background to identify your skills and experiences related to the position. Think about your experiences and skills gained in class, internships, leadership positions, and activities and relate them to the skill sets required by the position for which you are interviewing.
- Identify three to five top selling points—attributes that set you apart from other candidates—and be sure to take the opportunity to point them out during the interview using “S.T.A.R. Stories.”
- Create brief “S.T.A.R. Stories” prior to the interview that demonstrates your teamwork abilities, initiative, planning, leadership, commitment, and problem-solving skills. Try to be as relevant as possible to the position. Be prepared to provide examples of occasions when results were different than expected.
- Practice your stories, but be careful not to memorize as you may forget nuances of your story when in a pressure situation. Reviewing them before your interview will give you confidence in knowing you are prepared and will eliminate fumbling for words and awkward silences in the interview.
- Be specific in your stories. Giving generalizations will not help the employer understand and evaluate your behavior and skills. Employers want to know what you did rather than what you would do in a given situation.
- Quantify wherever possible. It is evidence of your achievements, accomplishments, and efforts.
- Be honest! Omitting or embellishing parts of your story could lead to disaster if the interviewer discovers that the foundation of your story is weak.
- If you have been given an Interview Agenda, be aware of how long you will have with each person you are interviewing with. You need to take this into consideration when you are creating your “S.T.A.R. Stories” so that you can share the most important information in the time you have available.

Because behavioral interviews (as well as technical interviews, case interviews, competency-based interviews, etc.) can be very difficult and/or unnerving, it is very important to prepare, practice and take part in mock interviews before you go into any interview. Although you can do an informal mock interview with a friend or family member, a mock interview with a career coach, interview preparation counselor or university career office will give the best feedback.

***Resume-Interview Success, LLC***

[www.resume-interviewsuccess.com](http://www.resume-interviewsuccess.com)

(610) 564-9623

[dbitler@resume-interviewsuccess.com](mailto:dbitler@resume-interviewsuccess.com)

*(Behavioral Interview- Blog 4 of 6 – September 23, 2020)*