

## Questions About Behavioral Interviews

### What is a behavior based interview?

**Behavioral Based Interviewing** focuses on experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that are job related. It is based on the belief that past behavior and performance predicts future behavior and performance. You may use work, school projects and family life as examples of your past behavior. Current employment literature indicates that the majority of employers use this type of interviewing style.

### What do Employers Evaluate in a Behavioral Interview?

Employers are looking for three types of skills:

- Content Skills.
- Functional also known as Transferable Skills.
- Adaptive also known as Self-Management Skills.

**Content Skills** -- Knowledge that is work specific such as computer programming, accounting, welding and expressed as nouns.

**Functional or Transferable Skills** -- Used with people, information or things such as organizing, managing, developing, communicating and expressed as verbs.

**Adaptive or Self-Management Skills** -- Personal characteristics such as dependable, team player, self-directed, punctual and expressed as adjectives.

### How are behavioral questions different from other types of interviewing questions?

There are three types of questions typically found in interviews:

1. **Theoretical Questions** -- Questions that place you in a hypothetical situation. These questions are more likely to test your skill at answering questions rather than doing a good job.

**Example:** How would you organize your friends to help you move into a new apartment?

2. **Leading Questions** -- Questions that hint at the answer the interview is seeking by the way they are phrased.

**Example:** Working on your own doesn't bother you does it?

3. **Behavioral Questions** -- Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behavior from your past experiences and concentrate on job-related functions. They may include:

**Open-ended questions** -- These require more than a yes or no response. They often begin with "Tell me..." "When..."

**Example:** Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a workload.

- **Closed-ended questions** -- Used mostly to verify or confirm information.

**Example:** You have a degree in psychology, is that correct?

**Why questions** – Used to reveal rationale for decisions you have made or to determine your level of motivation.

**Example:** Why did you decide to major in this program at MCC rather than at another community college or larger university?

### **A Quiz on Behavioral, Theoretical and Leading Questions**

- A. How would you resolve a customer service problem where the customer demanded an immediate refund?
- B. Tell me about a time when you had to juggle a number of work priorities. What did you do?
- C. You can work weekends occasionally can't you?

Answers: A. Theoretical; B. Behavioral; C. Leading

### **How Can I Best Answer Behavior-Based Questions?**

Think of “PAR for the Course.” A complete answer to a behavior-based question must:

- Explain the task or problem for which you are responsible.
- The specific action you took.
- The results of your actions.

Your answer must contain *all of these components to be a PAR answer. Tell the interviewer a “story” (with a beginning, middle, and an end) about how you used a practical skill.*

**Problem (P)** – Advertising revenue was falling off for the Daily News and large numbers of long-term advertisers were not renewing contracts.

**Action (A)**—We designed a new promotional package to go with the rate sheet and compare the benefits of DN circulation with other ad media in the area. I also set up a special training session for the account executives with a College of Business professor who discussed competitive selling strategies.

**Result (R)** – We designed contracts with 15 former advertisers for daily ads and five for special supplements. We increased our new advertisers by twenty percent (quantities are always good) over the same period last year.

### **Can You Give Me an Example of a Complete PAR Story?**

Right before Thanksgiving weekend, most of the employees had gone home for the holiday weekend. Our president and vice president had already left for home when we received a call that one of our employees who had been traveling had been involved in a car accident. I volunteered to go to the hospital to be with him and then called his family. I also made arrangements for them to stay at the Hospital Hospitality House when they arrived. They were extremely pleased I had taken time from my own weekend to help them. Our president complemented me for keeping a cool head and showing empathy and compassion while handling the situation. I've since decided to be more assertive in the office.

## **How Can I Prepare for a Behavioral Interview?**

- Analyze the type of positions for which you are applying. Try to get an actual job description. What skills do employers require?
- Analyze your own background. What skills do you have (content, functional, and adaptive) that relate to your job objective?
- Identify examples from your past experience where you demonstrate those skills. How can you “tell a story” about your particular skills or knowledge? Concentrate on developing complete PAR answers (and remember that a good story has a beginning, middle and end).
- Whenever possible, quantify your results. Numbers illustrate your level of authority and responsibility.
- Be prepared to provide examples of when results didn’t turn out as you planned. What did you do then?
- Before starting the interview process, identify 5 to 6 of your top selling points and determine how you will convey these points (with demonstrated PAR stories) during the interview.
- Once employed, keep a personal achievement diary to help document demonstrated performance (PAR stories).

## **Information on the Web About Behavioral Interviews**

[www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/JOBSPG1.HTM](http://www.career.vt.edu/JOBSEARC/JOBSPG1.HTM)  
[www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/interviewing/](http://www.careerjournal.com/jobhunting/interviewing/)  
[www.careerplanning.about.com/library/weekly/aa080900a.htm](http://www.careerplanning.about.com/library/weekly/aa080900a.htm)  
[www.brockport.edu/career/behave.htm](http://www.brockport.edu/career/behave.htm)  
[www.careerfare.com/tips/behavioralinter.asp](http://www.careerfare.com/tips/behavioralinter.asp)  
<http://www.bc.edu/offices/careers/skills/interview/types/>  
[www.geocities.com/optimalbiz/interv.html](http://www.geocities.com/optimalbiz/interv.html)

## **What Questions Are Employers Likely to Ask During an Interview?**

Although you will never know for sure what questions you will be asked in your interviews, you can become aware of the kinds of questions you may be asked. You should be prepared to answer not only the following questions, but variations of them as well. Typically, employers will ask you questions about yourself, your education, your career goals and questions specific to the organization/job you are applying for.

### **Questions About Yourself**

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are your major strengths?
- If we were to contact one of your references, how would they describe you?
- What are your greatest strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- What can you do that someone else can’t?
- Why should I hire you?
- What qualifications do you have that make you feel you will be successful in your field?
- What are your three most important priorities?

- Have you ever served in a leadership role? Please give me an example.
- Describe an accomplishment that you are most proud of.
- What qualities do you like to see in others?
- How do you define success?
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**The following websites will help you answer the question, “Tell me about yourself.”**

<http://interview.monster.com/articles/tellme/>

[http://www.salesandmarketingpro.com/articles/tell\\_me\\_about\\_you.html](http://www.salesandmarketingpro.com/articles/tell_me_about_you.html)

[http://www.andreakay.com/main\\_job\\_interviews.htm](http://www.andreakay.com/main_job_interviews.htm)

[http://www.chicagjobresource.com/career\\_interview19.htm](http://www.chicagjobresource.com/career_interview19.htm)

<http://interview.monster.com/archives/dosanddents/>

### **Questions About Your Education/Experience**

- How did you decide to attend Arkansas State University?
- How has attending Arkansas State University prepared you for a career with \_\_\_\_\_?
- Which courses did you enjoy the most?
- Which courses did you least enjoy? Please give me the reason why.
- Why did you choose your particular college major?
- If you are starting over, would you choose the same major/certificate programs? If no, what would you choose?
- Describe your most rewarding college or work experience.
- Please provide me with an example of a problem you encountered in school or on a job and how you solved it.

### **Questions About Career Goals**

- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- Professionally, where do you hope to be in five years?
- What do you think determines an individual’s success in a work situation?
- What personal characteristics are necessary for success in your chosen field?
- If you could do anything in life, and know you could not fail, what would you do?
- What are your career goals?
- What have you done that shows initiative?

### **Questions Specific to the Job or Organization**

- Why do you want to work for us?
- What position in our company interests you the most?
- What do you know about our company?
- In addition to literature we sent you, what other sources did you use to prepare for this interview?
- Why are you interested in this field?

- What contribution do you believe you can make to our organization?
- How have you been prepared to handle the responsibilities of this position?
- How do I know you are the right person for this job?
- What are the essential elements of this position that make it right for you?

**Information on the Web about Interviewing Questions**

- [www.intervie coach.com/index.html](http://www.interviecoach.com/index.html)
- [www.monster.com](http://www.monster.com)
- [www.careerbuilder.com](http://www.careerbuilder.com)
- [www.job-interview.net](http://www.job-interview.net)