

Interview Preparation: Behavioural Questions

Quick Tips

This is a popular interview technique where interviewers ask detailed questions about your past experiences in areas relevant to the competencies and attributes required for the job. Recruiters consider the best predictor of future performance is your past behaviour.

To answer behavioural questions, you need to provide specific examples or stories which demonstrate your ability in relation to the key selection areas. The use of the STAR technique will assist in answering behavioural questions. This involves providing an overview of:

S / T – Situation and Task: describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. Describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description. The situation can be from your studies, a previous job, a volunteer experience, or hobbies and interests.

A – Actions: describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did, not the efforts of the team.

R – Results of your actions: What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

ANSWERING

Tell me about a time when you had to work as a part of a team, and you had a team member who wasn't helping or doing their share of the work. What did you do to fix the situation? What was the result?

This question is asking about your interpersonal skills and what you are like as a team player.

Situation/Tasks: Think of a time when you had a team member who wasn't being very cooperative or productive. An example could be a team member who:

- Avoided responsibility for deadlines
- Did not work to an acceptable standard due to insufficient skills

- Did not share the work ethic and commitment held by the rest of the group

DON'T spend too long on what happened or put all the blame on someone else.

Action: The example must be one where you had the chance to solve the problem. You (and your group) need to have had an approach or method which worked.

Giving examples of how you were a good team member includes being:

- Willing to listen
- Willing to contribute
- Respectful and encouraging of alternative skills and ideas

Results: You need to select an example which has a happy ending or result. Ideally, you will have learnt from this situation and will have better interpersonal skills and techniques next time you are in a similar position:

- To reach agreement from all members at each stage of the project
- To identify each team member's strengths and weaknesses and to divide the tasks appropriately

Sample answer

During my final year marketing project, I was involved in re-branding and in the strategic advertising of a new energy drink. As the team leader, it was my role to oversee the re-branding strategy, delegate tasks and ensure that timeframes were achieved. One of the team member's contributions was unsatisfactory, resulting in timeframes not being achieved. As team leader, it was my role to meet with him/her one-on-one in order to assess the situation. I discovered that the team member



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was not sure of what was required and together we developed a list of task-specific expectations. As a result of the meeting, the team member commented that he/she had been aware of low performance but was unsure about what to do. This resulted in a distinction result for the project, and a much happier and less anxious team member.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Communication/Interpersonal Skill

- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- What obstacles or difficulties have you ever faced in communicating your ideas to a manager?
- Tell me about a successful presentation you gave and why you think it was a hit.
- Describe a time when you struggled to build a relationship with someone important. How did you eventually overcome that?

Analytic/Problem Solving

- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? Was the recommendation accepted? If not, why?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. What did you do? What was the outcome? What do you wish you had done differently?
- What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision? Why?

Team

- Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?
- Describe a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.
- We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently with a colleague.

Customer/Client Focus

- Describe a time when you had to interact with a difficult customer/client. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?
- Describe a time when it was especially important to make a good impression on a client. How did you go about doing so?
- Give an example of a time you went well out of your way to ensure a customer received the best possible service from you and organisation. What was their reaction?
- When you're working with a large number of customers, it's tricky to deliver excellent service to them all. How do you go about prioritizing your customers' needs?

Organisational Skill

- Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you go about ensuring that you would meet your objective?
- Give me an example of a time you managed numerous responsibilities. How did you handle that?
- How do you prioritize projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.
- Tell me about a project that you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks? Tell me about your action plan.

Initiative

- Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.
- Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a project you initiated. What did you do? Why? What was the outcome? Were you happy with the result?

Resilience/Grit

- Tell me about a particular work-related setback you have faced. How did you deal with it?
- When have you ever found yourself in a competitive situation professionally? How did you handle it?
- When have you seen your tenacity or resilience really pay off in a professional setting? What was the outcome?

FURTHER INFORMATION

Careers & Employability has a range of other resources which may help you prepare for your interview. You can access an Interview Simulator through [SwinEmploy+ \[swi.nu/swinemploy\]](http://swi.nu/swinemploy).