Behavioral Interview Guidelines

Behavioral interviewing is one of the many styles of interviewing an employer can use when speaking with a candidate. More and more this style is being used as a way to predict future behavior based upon past actions. Therefore it is important to recognize and respond to this type of question. In addition, it is important to have excellent eye contact with your interviewer without staring. Your language and grammar should be appropriate with limited use of “um” or “and” and you should speak at a moderate pace.

Most behavioral interview questions relate to a specific skill or competency an employer is attempting to assess. Determining the skill being assessed is the first step when responding to a behavioral interview question. Once you have determined the skill you will be addressing, use the STAR response method to verbalize your answer.

S: Describe a situation utilizing the skill being evaluated that has a positive outcome.
T: Describe the tasks associated with the situation.
A: Describe the action(s) you took to address the situation.
R: Describe the result of your actions.

You will find many examples of behavioral interview questions below are categorized by skill. There are more skills assessed than are listed below; those listed specifically relate to skills needed by certain business majors. The questions may be asked somewhat differently than what is seen here, so it is to your benefit to practice responding to behavioral interview questions before your interview occurs. Practice interviews can be scheduled with a career development specialist in The Career Center.

Analytical thinking
- Describe the project or situation that best demonstrate your analytical abilities. What was your role?
- Tell us about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. What kind of thought process did you go through? What was the reasoning behind your decision?

Building relationships
- It is very important to build good relationships at work, but sometimes it does not work. If you can, tell me about a time when you were not able to build a successful relationship with someone.
- What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients in guiding and maintaining successful business relationships? Describe using an example.

Business systems thinking
- Describe how your current position contributes to your organization’s/unit’s goals. What are the unit’s goals/mission?

Communication
- Describe a situation in which you were able to effectively “read” another person and guide your actions by your understanding of their individual needs or values.
- Describe a situation when you were able to strengthen a relationship by communicating effectively. What made your communication effective?

Customer orientation
- How do you handle problems with customers? Give an example.
- How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer? What have you done to gain their confidence? Give an example.

Detail-orientation
- Do you prefer to work with the “big picture” or the “details” of a situation? Give an example of an experience that illustrates your preference.
- Tell us about a situation where attention to detail was either important or unimportant in accomplishing an assigned task.

Evaluating alternatives
- Have you ever been in a situation where you had a number of alternatives from which to choose? How did you go about choosing just one?
- What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you? Describe one.
Follow-up and control
• Give an example of how you keep track of delegated assignments.
• Describe how you collect data for performance reviews.

Integrity
• Describe a time when you were asked to keep information confidential.
• On occasion we are confronted by dishonesty in the workplace. Tell about such an occurrence and how you handled it.

Leadership
• Give an example of your ability to build motivation in your co-workers, classmates or on a volunteer committee.
• Give an example of a time in which you felt you were able to build motivation in your co-workers or subordinates at work.

Listening
• Give an example of what do you do to show people you are listening to them.
• Give an example of a time when you made a mistake because you did not listen well to what someone had to say.

Motivating others
• Give an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty.
• Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.

Performance management
• How do you handle performance reviews? Tell me about a difficult one.
• There are times when people need extra help. Give an example of when you were able to provide that support to a person with whom you worked.

Persuasion
• Describe a situation where you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
• Have you ever had to persuade a peer or manager to accept an idea you knew they would not like? Describe the resistance you met and how you overcame it.

Planning and organization
• Describe how you develop a project team’s goals and project plan.
• What do you do when your time schedule or project plan is upset by unforeseen circumstances? Give an example.

Problem solving
• Give me an example of a situation where you had difficulties with a team member. What, if anything, did you do to resolve the difficulties?
• Describe a time when you had to use problem solving at work.

Project management
• Tell us about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
• Using a specific example of a project, tell how you kept those involved informed of the progress.

Sales
• How do you go about making cold calls? Give an example.
• Tell us about your most difficult sales experience.

Selecting and developing people
• What have you done to develop your subordinates, fellow employees, or classmates? Give an example.
• Give an example of how you coach an employee or classmate who is completing a new assignment/task.

Strategic planning
• Tell us about a time when you anticipated the future and made changes to current responsibilities/operations to meet future needs.
• How do you see your job as it relates to the overall goals of the organization?