

Interview – Behavior Based

Description

Behavioral based interviewing is a style of interviewing that is gaining popularity in the hiring processes of many companies and organizations. Behavioral based interviewing focuses on past experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that are job or project related to see if a candidate possesses certain “key competencies.”

Following this premise, many employers make a judgment about an applicant’s future behavior on the job by learning about a person’s past behavior in a similar job or through other experiences. They know before the interview which skills and qualities they are looking for in a candidate. They ask probing and specific questions to determine if an applicant possesses those skills and abilities. General answers about behavior are not acceptable - the candidate must describe in detail a particular event, project or experience, how he/she dealt with the situation, and what the final outcome was.

Basic premise of BBI

- The best predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation.

As a candidate, you should be equipped to answer the questions thoroughly. Obviously, you can prepare better for this type of interview if you know which skills that the employer has predetermined to be necessary for the job you seek. Be prepared to give specific examples, details, and dates. You may be asked about how you handled deadlines, pressures, unexpected situations and any adversity.

Use your résumé as a guide to remembering your achievements and experiences. You may want to use examples from past internships, classes, projects, activities, team involvement, community service, or any other accomplishment of which you are especially proud. Be prepared to relate these situations to the interviewer, showing how they illustrate your skills or desired behaviors.

Employers Evaluate Three Types of Competencies in a BBI

Content Skills	Functional Skills	Adaptive Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge that is work specific such as computer programming, accounting, welding, etc., expressed as nouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also called Transferable Skills • Used with people, information or things such as organizing, developing, communicating, etc., expressed as verbs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also called Self Management Skills • Personal characteristics such as dependable, team player, self directed, punctual, etc., expressed as adjectives.

Competencies may include

- Assertiveness
- Clarification
- Commitment to task
- Communication effectiveness
- Dealing with ambiguity
- Decision making
- Interaction
- Leadership
- Management skills
- Problem solving
- Team building

Prepare for a BBI

- Analyze the type of position for which you are applying. Try to get an actual job description. What skills are required?
- Analyze your own background. What skills do you have (content, functional and adaptive) that relate to your job objective?
- Be prepared to provide examples of when results did not turn out as you planned. What did you do then?
- Before starting the interview process, identify two or three of your top selling points and determine how you will convey them.

BBI Questions are different than other interviewing questions

There are three types of questions found in behavioral interviews:

1. **Theoretical Questions** – Questions that place you in a hypothetical situations. These questions are more likely to test your skills at answering questions rather than in doing a good job.
 - a. *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 interviewer is seeking by the way they are phrased.
 - a. *Example:* Working on your own doesn't bother you does it?
3. **Behavioral Questions** – Questions that seek demonstrated examples of behavior from your past experience and concentrate on job related functions; They include
 - a. **Open-ended questions** – They often begin with "Tell me..." or "Describe..." or "When..." or "Give me an example..."
 - i. *Example:* Describe a time you had to be flexible in planning a work load.
 - b. **Closed-ended Questions** – Used mostly to verify or confirm information
 - i. *Example:* You have a degree in psychology, is that correct?
 - c. **Why Questions** – Used to reveal rationale for decisions you have made or to determine your level of motivation.
 - i. *Example:* Why did you decide to attend a large university rather than a small private college?

Employers know before the interview which skills and qualities they are looking for in applicants. With behavioral questions they are looking for results, not for an activity list. They ask probing and specific questions to determine if an applicant possesses those skills and abilities. To find out which skills a certain employer is seeking, you may want to talk with alumni, read the company literature carefully and listen closely to the company's information session.

In the interview your responses to the interviewer’s questions must be specific and detailed. Rather than talking about a general situation, describe a particular set of circumstances that relate to the question. Tell briefly about the situation, what you did specifically, and the positive result or outcome.

Tell the interviewer a “story” (with a beginning, middle, and an end) about how you used a practical skill

As you think about stories to tell in relation to the various skills you think the interviewer is looking for make sure you cover three specific areas:

1. The *situation* or the task you had to perform.
2. The *action* you took in response to the situation or task.
3. The *results* of your actions.

Once you have described a situation, action, and results, the interviewer may ask questions to gain more detail, such as:

- “What were you thinking at that point?”
- “What did you say?”
- “How did you feel?”

Sample Questions

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Give an example of a time on any job that you held in which you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick on coming to a decision.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Describe the most significant or creative presentation that you have had to complete.
- Can you give an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to complete a job?
- Give an example of a time when you used facts and reason to persuade another person to take action.
- Give 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 specifically did you do in your last job to contribute toward a teamwork environment?
- Describe a situation in which you disagreed with your supervisor and how you handled this disagreement.
- Tell me about a time when you knowingly violated a company policy to accomplish a goal.

- Give an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.
- Tell me about a situation in the past year in which you had to deal with a very upset customer or co-worker.
- Give an example of when you had to show good leadership.

Career Center Resources

Behavior-based interviewing, by Terry L. Fitzwater, 2000

Preparing for the behavior-based interview, by Terry L. Fitzwater, 2001

Website Repository

For even more information, please search through our hand-picked list of websites on [The Career Center's Website Repository](#).