

Acing the Behavioral-Based Interview

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PREPARATION

- > Know your resume so that you can answer questions about it.
- > Know how you have handled problems. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you have successfully solved problems or performed memorably. The stories will be useful to help you respond meaningfully in a behavioral interview.
- > Know the firm. Read the firm's press releases and the interviewers' bios.
- > Be able to articulate why you are interested in the firm. Prepare three positive reasons for joining. It is easier to stay positive when you focus on what you are *drawn to* as opposed to why you are leaving.
- > Know the job description, if you have it, or the job posting or ad. You may be able to get a sense of what skills and behavioral characteristics the employer is seeking from reading the job description and position requirements, which will help your preparation.
- > Dress conservatively and in a suit as if you are going to court or a client meeting.

TIPS FOR ANSWERING BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- > Follow the STAR technique—a useful strategy for responding to interview questions that require an anecdote. There are four steps to answering using this technique; by completing each of the four steps, you will provide a thorough answer without rambling or getting off topic.

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Situation Describe the situation in which the event took place.
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Task Describe the task you were asked to complete. If there was a particular problem or issue you were trying to solve, describe that here.
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Action Explain what action you took to complete the task or solve the problem.
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Results Explain the result of your actions. For example, if your actions were tasks that needed to be done, then describe (1) the action you took and (2) the results, i.e., what happened.
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- > Pause and think before you answer.
- > Be positive. Often behavioral interview questions require you to focus on a problem or a failure at work. Describe the problem or issue you faced, but do not focus too much on the negative. Quickly shift to describing how you solved the problem, and the positive results.

SAMPLE BEHAVIORAL-BASED QUESTIONS TO PRACTICE

- › Give me an example of a time when, in a business setting, someone “pushed all your hot buttons” or “got on your nerves.” (Tests composure.)
- › Walk me through how you established a relationship with a specific client. (Tests client service potential.)
- › Tell me about a time you had to make a difficult or complex point understood in a business meeting. Or, give me an example of a time you had to communicate a sensitive topic through an e-mail. (Tests communication skills.)
- › Describe a time when you had a short deadline and had to begin working on a project before it was completely defined. Or, describe a time you were in a crisis situation and had to think on your feet to solve a problem you hadn’t faced before. (Tests dealing with ambiguity.)
- › Describe a time when you made a mistake on something you felt was important. If possible, think about a work-related example. What did you do? (Tests whether a candidate can take responsibility and work to learn from a mistake.)
- › Tell me about the last time a client or co-worker got upset with you. (Tests interpersonal skills and the ability to deal with conflict and work on a team.)
- › Describe a time when a supervisor made a decision you disagreed with. (Tests giving and receiving feedback.)
- › Tell me about a goal you failed to achieve. (Tests how a candidate deals with adversity, disappointment and failure.)
- › When you have had a full plate and you are handed another project, what steps have you taken to make sure that all assignments are completed on time? (Tests time management.)

ASK QUESTIONS

- › Elicit their needs—the key to a successful interview is to focus on fulfilling their needs. This is especially important in speaking with senior interviews and hiring attorneys.
- › Sample questions to ask:
 - What are your expectations for me?
 - Can you describe what type of associate is successful here?
 - If I were to join you tomorrow what will I be working on?
 - Why did you choose to join this firm?
- › Avoid the following topics:
 - Billable hour requirements
 - Compensation
 - Work/life balance

