

BEHAVIOR-BASED INTERVIEWING

While it is still important to prepare responses to the “25 most-asked interview questions,” more and more employers are beginning to utilize an interviewing technique called ***Behavior-Based Interviewing (BBI)*** as their preferred way to assess the qualifications of job candidates.

What is Behavior-Based Interviewing (BBI)?

Simply put, BBI encourages candidates to describe situations in which they have utilized skills and abilities similar to those required in the job for which they are applying. The interviewer asks questions targeted at the behaviors or qualifications they are looking for from an individual who will fill the position.

Why do employers use Behavior-Based Interviewing (BBI)?

Employers have found that candidates can easily memorize the answers that they think employers want to hear to the “25 most-asked questions.” Sometimes when these individuals are hired, they exhibit none of the characteristics or qualities that they claimed to have in the interview and therefore are unable to do the job well. Employers realize that a truer indicator of a future employee’s success is based on the simple premise that ***past performance is the best predictor of future performance***. If a candidate successfully utilized a particular skill in the past, chances are she/he will do so in the future. Furthermore, the more recent and frequent the behavior, the greater the indicator of the candidate’s success on the job. ***The goal for the employer is to hire candidates that not only have the knowledge and skills required for the job, but also the personal attributes needed to succeed in the position as well as within the organization’s environment and culture.***

How do I prepare for a BBI?

As previously mentioned, employers will ask questions targeted at the behaviors or qualifications needed for the candidate to be successful within the position. Candidates can offer behavioral examples from almost any life experience – current or previous employment, internships, volunteer activities, class projects, and involvement in, on, or off-campus organizations. Which ever you choose, success depends on three components:

1. Articulating examples which best illustrate what you can do for the employer
2. Telling stories with a beginning, middle, and end. Candidates **must** give the employer enough information for the employer to realize the skills that the candidate utilized in the situation. If you only tell the employer about the situation and not about what part you played, you really have not told the employer anything about you – the job candidate. Essentially, a complete answer to a behavior-based questions has three parts:
 - Situation** – what was the situation or problem you were facing?
 - Behavior** – what did you do or say? Be *specific* and give important details. Paint a word picture so the employer can completely understand the scenario.
 - Outcome** - what was the result of your actions or behavior?
3. Preparation and practice. Candidates who do the best at BBI are those who have anticipated the questions, or at least the behaviors or characteristics that the position may require, and have prepared and practiced their responses.

The following are examples of possible BBI questions which employers frequently try to assess during an interview:

Problem Solving When was the last time you solved a difficult problem that had significant impact? What was the situation? How did you go about analyzing the problem? What alternative solutions did you consider? Explain how you implemented your solution. What was the outcome?

Teamwork Tell me about a time when you worked with a team to solve a problem. What steps did *you* take? How were you involved? What was the outcome? How would you describe your role on the team?

Decision Making What was the most difficult decision you have made in the last six months? What was the situation? What made it difficult? What factors or variables did you consider? What did you decide? What was the result?

Initiative/Self-Motivation Describe your best example of taking the initiative to do something that needed to be done, even though it wasn't really your responsibility or, Tell me about a time when you saw a better way to do something. What was the situation? What circumstances required you to act? What actions did you take? What impact did your initiative have on the situation?

Achievement Drive Describe a situation in which you believe you were effective in achieving an ambitious goal. What caused you to work hard to meet this objective? What methods or skills did you use to meet your goal? What were the results? What feedback did you receive from others?

Motivation Explain an instance in which you were part of a team or group that needed to be motivated. How did you go about moving the team forward or bringing them together on a project? What was the outcome?

Handling Details Tell me about the most significant project you have worked on in which it was crucial to keep track of details while still managing the "big picture." What was the project? What skills did you utilize in managing it? How did the project turn out? What feedback did you receive on your management of the task?

Communication Describe for me when you had great difficulty communicating your thoughts clearly to another person or group. What was the situation? Where did the difficulty in communicating effectively lie? What did you do to get your point across more clearly? What was the outcome?

Conflict Management Detail an example of when you voiced a concern or disagreement to a co-worker, supervisor, or professor. What was the concern or disagreement? What did you say? What was his/her reaction? What was the outcome of the disagreement?

Coordinating/Leading Others/Leadership/Delegation Identify a situation in which you had to coordinate several people to achieve a goal. What prompted you to take the lead? How did you go about coordinating and leading the group? How did they respond? What was the outcome?

Managing Stress Describe your most disappointing experience, or tell me about a time when you were under a lot of stress? What were the circumstances? How did you cope with it? What did you do to move beyond it?

Technical Expertise Share with me the circumstances of when you needed to use your technical knowledge to solve a problem. What was the problem? What technical knowledge did you utilize to solve it? What was the outcome?

Thinking Critically Tell me an instance in which you personally had to analyze a situation, problem, or task and come up with a result or recommendations.

Flexibility Explain a time when your plans had to change because of circumstances or other people. What was the situation? What changes did you have to make? How did you handle the changes? What would you do differently?