Behavioral interviews, a very popular style of interviewing, seek information on how you have behaved in a variety of specific professional, personal, and interpersonal situations in the past and what consequences resulted from your actions. The interviewer is interested in a number of common themes, such as leadership, communication, management, motivation, decisiveness, and interpersonal skills. To answer these questions well, keep in mind that you will have to reflect on specific situations from your experience. Tell a STAR story: state the situation, the task involved, the action you took, and the results you achieved.

THE STAR STORY

S – Briefly state the situation
Who? (Your position/Role), Where? (Your company/organization/department/class), Why? (problem)

T – Identify the task involved
How did you develop your plan? What was your strategy?

A - Explain the action you took to address the situation
How did you develop and execute the steps of your plan? Which skills did you use?

R – Describe the results you achieved
What happened? (Quantify when possible: increase/decrease/save/profit/improve), What did you learn? How might you do things differently to improve the outcome?

SAMPLE STAR RESPONSE

Tell me about a challenging experience you had working as part of a team.

S – That’s a great question. In my economics class, I was assigned to a group project, consisting of 4 team members. Two of the members on the team did not get along and it was making it very difficult to make progress in completing the assignment.

T – I knew that in order to get this project completed I needed to ensure that, we could put our differences aside to complete our work. In the end, this project would have a significant impact on our grade for the course.

A – At the beginning of one of our meetings, I stepped up as a leader, and had a conversation with both of the students. I discussed how important it was for us to put our differences aside so that we could complete this project and earn a good grade. We all agreed that we would focus our energy on the project. The two students even shook hands and apologized to one another.

R – As a result, we were able to get the project done and earned an A. What I learned from this experience is that you may not always get along with someone, a classmate, team-mate possibly a co-worker, but you must put your differences aside to accomplish a common goal.
THE BEHAVIOR INTERVIEW CHECKLIST

- Prior to your interview, identify six to eight examples from your past experiences that demonstrate behaviors and skills that employers typically seek.
- Choose examples from internship experiences, jobs, class and school projects, volunteer and/or campus activities, hobbies and other areas that allow the employer to see your diverse background and experiences.
- Develop stories to describe these examples utilizing the STAR model, emphasize achievements; however, include some evidence of struggles and how you were able to overcome them.
- Stories should be approximately 3-5 minutes
- Practice, Practice, Practice – Write out your examples, rehearse them and meet with someone to practice so you will be well prepared, comfortable and confident during your interview.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Communication
- Describe a time when you were able to effectively communicate with a co-worker even though you may not have had a positive, personal relationship.
- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information to someone who did not understand the concept.

Leadership
- Tell me about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
- Describe a time when others looked to you for leadership and guidance. What was the situation and how did you conduct yourself?

Influencing
- Describe a situation in which you persuaded someone to see things your way.
- Give me an example of a time in which you persuaded a large group to change their course of action.

Motivation
- Give me an example when you were exceptionally motivated. Describe this experience.
- Describe a situation where you had to take the initiative to start and begin a project, and what you learned from it.

Decision Making
- Give me an example of a time you had to make a difficult decision.
- Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a decision you had to make quickly.
THE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

Time Management
- Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a time when you were particularly effective on prioritizing tasks and completing a project on schedule.

Planning/Organization
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to juggle several high-priority tasks. What was the outcome?
- Describe a situation when you had many projects due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?

Teamwork
- Describe a team experience and your role on that team.
- Give me an example of a team project you completed.

Flexibility
- We often have long hours and we expect a great deal from your people. Describe a time when you went above and beyond the “call of duty.”
- Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist them? What was the result?

Analytical/Problem-solving
- Describe a time when your analytical skills were put to the test. What was the challenge, how did you react, what was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you were faced with a challenge and how you developed an innovative way to meet that challenge.
- Describe a time when you used good judgment and logic to solve a problem.

Ethical
- Tell me about a time when you were asked by your employer to do something that went against company policy.
- What would you do if you saw a co-worker doing something unethical?

Achieving Excellence
- Describe something in your life that you are most proud of.
- What is your greatest accomplishment to date?
- Tell about a time where you had to work hard to achieve your goals.
STAR STORY PRACTICE

Now it’s your time to practice. Select 5-6 behavioral interview questions from the sample questions. In the space provided, write your STAR story based on examples you have come up with for each question.

**Situation** (What was the situation or problem?):

**Task** (What needed to be done?):

**Action** (What did you do?):

**Result** (What was the outcome?):