

# CAREER TOOLKIT

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**BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS**



## BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWS

Behavioral questions ask the interviewee to provide examples and results of actions from their career. For example, you might be asked, “Tell me about a time when you handled a difficult situation.” To best address these questions, develop strong examples prior to the interview that relate to the position description, and use the BAR method (as shown below) to structure your answers.

It is also important to practice these responses in a mock interview and on your own prior to the interview.

Behavioral questions help an interviewer predict future performance based on past successes and behaviors. Your answers should be based on competencies and applicability for the specific position in question. Your roadmap for preparation should be the job description, informational conversations, GlassDoor.com and more.

One of the smartest approaches to preparing for every interview is to *deconstruct the job posting*. Review the position description and:

1. Determine which requirements are your strong suit, and how you will add value;
2. Be prepared to discuss your shortcomings, and how you will compensate; and
3. What combination of skills and experience would make your contributions unique?

Customize your answers for each situation to ensure you are addressing the needs of the position.

### TIP

**WHEN PRACTICING YOUR ANSWERS, ALWAYS PRACTICE THEM OUT LOUD, NOT IN YOUR HEAD. RESEARCH INDICATES GREATER EFFICACY PRACTICING ANYTHING SPOKEN WHEN YOU HEAR YOUR OWN WORDS, MUCH LIKE WHEN YOU PRACTICE SPEAKING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.**

## B-A-R METHOD

Addressing behavior-based interview questions: **B = Background**. Set up *briefly* the stage/context of the situation; **A = Action**. What literally did you do? **R = Result**. What was the result or intended result of your actions?

<b>B</b> BACKGROUND	<b>A</b> ACTION	<b>R</b> RESULT
Last semester I was on a team with five classmates to work on a project. After the first few meetings, we realized one member frequently arrived to meetings late or not at all.	I approached this team member directly to talk about expectations and missing meeting. I also asked if there was anything I could do to help him meet those commitments.	The team member admitted lack of good time management skills. I offered to send him day-of reminders and he was never late or missed another meeting again.

## BEHAVIORAL QUESTION EXAMPLES

- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a directive from your manager.
- Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond work expectations to get a job done well.
- Please describe an example of a leadership experience.
- For additional questions, visit [quintcareers.com/sample\\_behavioral.html](http://quintcareers.com/sample_behavioral.html) and [nolljobs.com/career-center/common-interview-questions](http://nolljobs.com/career-center/common-interview-questions) (website has reasons behind the questions and suggested directions for answers).

Following are a categorized sampling of the kinds of questions MBA students should expect in an interview. You will not get all of these questions...but there is a high likelihood you will get one or two from many of the categories, depending on the role you are interviewing for. If you prepare a few answers for each of the categories, you should be in good shape. Abraham Lincoln once said "If I had 8 hours to cut down a tree, I would spend 6 hours sharpening my axe." This definitely applies to interview preparation.

## TEAMWORK

Questions relate to ability to work with other peers, other units, senior management to accomplish organizational goals

- Describe a time when you got involved in teamwork which needed to be done but which was not one of your responsibilities or work requirements.
- What have been two major contributions you have made to the effectiveness of your team in the last year? What was the result of these contributions?
- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your professor's or supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?
- Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his or her share of the work. How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.

## ANALYSIS

- Give an example of a problem or project which required you to integrate and analyze information from a number of different sources.
- What's the most analytically challenging problem you've had to solve in the past year or so?
- Describe a situation which illustrates your ability to identify central or underlying issues in complex situations or problems.
- Can you give an example of when you analyzed financial information and made a recommendation which provided a cost savings?
- What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision?
- We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.
- Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle the situation? How did that make you feel?



## ADAPTABILITY

- How was your transition from college to your first job? What challenges did you face in adapting and how did you overcome them?
- Tell of some situations in which you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?
- Describe a time when you had to adapt quickly to an unfamiliar or unpredictable situation.
- Give an example of when you had to adjust quickly to a change in order to achieve objectives.
- Describe a time when you had to work with unclear goals or changing priorities. How did you approach the situation?
- Describe a time when you were confronted with an unfamiliar or unpredictable situation which threatened to impact the effectiveness of your team.

## WORK STANDARDS

- Describe a time when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?
- What are your standards of success in school? What have you done to meet those standards?

## INITIATIVE

- Describe a project or idea that was implemented or carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.
- Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?

## PLANNING & ORGANIZING

- Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you changed any processes, functions, or methods of doing work in your job so that you were more effectively able to complete your tasks.
- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.
- Describe a time in school when you had many projects or assignments due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?



## COMMUNICATION

- Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.
- What has been your experience in giving presentations to small or large groups? What has been your most successful experience in speech making?

## CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION

- Tell of the most difficult customer service experience that you have ever had to handle. Be specific and tell what you did and what the outcome was.

## SENSITIVITY

- Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle that person?
- Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?

## TECHNICAL & PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Questions relate to level of understanding and ability to apply it.

- Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head." Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.
- Give an example of how you applied knowledge from previous coursework to a project in another class.

## LEADERSHIP

- Describe a time when circumstances were difficult and you had to motivate your team to achieve specific objectives.
- How would you deal with a team member who was under performing?
- How do you make your team members feel valued? Can you give an example of when you have done this?
- It is often said that a leader must "walk the talk." Please give an example of how you have led your team by example.

