# Handouts for Networking Class

1. Questions to Ask in an Interview

2. STAR Interviewing Response Technique for Success in Behavioral Job Interviews

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**Questions to Ask in an Interview**

A job interview isn’t just an opportunity for your prospective employer to ask questions to learn about you. This is also an opportunity for you to ask questions that will help you learn about your employer.

Remember to ask smart questions that will foster a two-way conversation​

* Connect​
* Culture​
* Challenges​
* Close​

Here are some suggested questions to help you prepare:

**The Job**

*You will likely have some idea of the main responsibilities of the position from the posting. The interview provides you with an opportunity to make sure you understand exactly what the day-to-day responsibilities of the job will be—both now and in the foreseeable future.*

1. What does a typical day look like for the person in this position?

2. What are the most immediate projects that need to be addressed?

3. Can you show me examples of projects the person hired for this position will be working on?

4. What are the skills and experiences that the ideal candidate for this position should possess?

5. What qualities does a person need to have in order to be really successful in this position?

6. What types of skills are missing on the team that you’re looking to fill with this new hire?

7. What are the biggest challenges that someone in this position would face?

8. What sort of budget would the person hired for this position be working with?

9. Is this a new position that has been created? (If so: Why was it created?)

10. Do you expect the core responsibilities for this position will change in the next six months to a year?

**Training and Professional Development**

*Your next job isn’t just your next job – it’s also the next step on your path to career success. Will this position help you get where you want to go?*

11. What would training for this position include? How would training take place?

12. What training programs are available to your employees?

13. Are there opportunities for advancement or professional development in this position?

14. Would the person hired for this position be able to represent the company at industry conferences?

15. Where did the last person who held this position move on to?

16. Where have successful employees who were previously in this position progressed to?

**Your Performance**

*Make sure you're setting yourself up for success by learning up front what is expected of a person in the position and how work will be evaluated.*

17. What are the most important things you’d like to see the person you hire for this position accomplish in the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job?

18. What are the performance expectations of this position over the first 12 months?

19. What is the performance review process here? How often are formal reviews done?

20. What metrics or goals will my performance be evaluated against?

**The Interviewer**

*Asking questions of the interviewer shows that you're interested in him or her as a person—and that's a great way to establish a connection with someone who will be making a decision affecting your future.*

21. How long have you been with the company?

22. Has your role changed since you've been with the company?

23. If you are comfortable sharing, what did you do before this?

24. Why did you come to this company?

25. What’s your favorite part about working here?

**The Company**

*Ask about the company because you’re not just working for one department—show the interviewing you care about the big picture.*

26. I've read about how the company’s mission, but can you tell me more about its core values?

27. What are the current goals that the company is focused on, and how does this team work to support hitting those goals?

28. What can you tell me about your new products or plans for growth?

29. Where do you see this company in the next few years?

30. What gets you most excited about the company's future?

**The Team**

*You spend a lot of time with the people you work with so you will want to know if the team is a good fit for you.*

31. Can you tell me about the team?

32. Who will the person in this position work with most closely?

33. Who does this position report to directly?

34. Can you tell me about the direct reports to the person hired for this position? What are their strengths and the team's biggest challenges?

35. Do you expect to hire more people in this department in the next six months?

36. Which other departments work most closely with this one?

37. What are the most common career paths in this department?

**The Culture**

*Is the office formal or casual? Are people engaged in conversation throughout the day or is the workplace quiet?*

38. What is the company and team culture like?

39. How would you describe the work environment here—is the work typically collaborative or more independent?

40. Can you tell me about the last team event you did together?

41. Is there a formal mission statement or company values that guide the team? (Note: first search for mission and values online to see if you can find the company’s information. If mission and values are noted on the company website, you may be expected to already know the mission and values without asking.)

42. What's your favorite office tradition?

43. What do you and the team usually do for lunch?

44. Does anyone on the team socialize outside the office?

45. Do you ever do joint events with other companies or departments?

46. What's different about working here than anywhere else you've worked?

47. How has the company culture changed since you were hired?

**Next Steps**

*Before you leave, make sure the interviewer has all of the information he or she needs and that you understand next steps in the process.*

48. Is there anything that concerns you about me being the right fit for this position?

49. What are the next steps in the interview process?

50. Is there anything else I can provide you with that would be helpful?

51. Can I answer any final questions for you?

**Source for these questions to ask in an interview:**

* <https://www.themuse.com/>

**STAR Interviewing Response Technique for Success in Behavioral Job Interviews**

One strategy for preparing for behavioral interviews is to use the STAR Technique, as outlines below (this technique is often referred to as the SAR and PAR techniques as well).

Read up on the technique, and then try it with our list of sample behavioral interview questions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **S**ituation  Or  **T**ask | Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event. |
| **A**ction You took | Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did — not the efforts of the team. Don’t tell what you might do, tell what you did. |
| **R**esults You Achieved | What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? |

Remember that **many behavioral questions try to get at how you responded to negative situations**; you’ll need to have examples of negative experiences ready, but try to choose negative experiences that you made the best of or — better yet — those that had positive outcomes.

Here’s a good way to prepare for behavioral interviews:

* Identify six to eight examples from your past experience where you demonstrated top behaviors and skills that employers typically seek. Think in terms of examples that will exploit your top selling points.
* Half of your examples should be totally positive, such as accomplishments or meeting goals.
* The other half should be situations that started out negatively but either ended positively or you made the best of the outcome.

Vary your examples; don’t take them all from just one area of your life. Use fairly recent examples. If you’re a college student, examples from high school may be too long ago. Some employers, in fact, specify that candidates give examples of behaviors demonstrated within the last year. Try to describe examples in story from and/or PAR/SAR/STAR.

To cram for a behavioral interview right before your interview, review your resume. Seeing your achievements in print will jog your memory.

In the interview, listen carefully to each question, and pull an example out of your bag of tricks that provides an appropriate description of how you demonstrated the desired behavior. With practice, you can learn to tailor a relatively small set of examples to respond to a number of different behavioral questions.

Once you’ve landed the job, keep a record of achievements and accomplishments so you’ll be ready with more great examples the next time you go on a behavioral interview.

**Print resources about behavioral Interviewing:**

Hansen, Katherine, Ph.D., *The Quintessential Guide to Behavioral Interviewing*, 2008. Quintessential Careers Press.

Byham, William C., Ph.D., with Debra Pickett, *Landing the Job You Want: How to Have the Best Job Interview of Your Life*, 19993. Three Rivers Press.

**Job-Hunting Behavioral Interviewing Strategies for Job Seekers**

By Katharine Hansen, Ph.D.

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Behavioral interviewing is a relatively new mode of job interviewing. Employers such as AT&T and Accenture (the former Andersen Consulting) have been using behavioral interviewing for about 15 years now, and because increasing numbers of employers are using behavior-based methods to screen job candidates, understand how to excel in this interview environment is becoming a crucial job-hunting skill.

The premise behind behavioral interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. Behavioral interviewing, in fact, is said to be 55 percent predictive of future on-the-job behavior, while traditional interviewing is only 10 percent predictive.

Behavioral-based interviewing is touted as providing a more objective set of facts to make employment decisions than other interviewing methods. Traditional interview questions ask you general questions such as “Tell me about yourself.” The process of behavioral interviewing is much more probing and works very differently.

In a traditional job interview, you can usually get away with telling the interviewer what he or she wants to hear, even if you are fudging a bit on the truth. Even if you are asked situational questions that start out “How would you handle XYZ situation?” you have minimal accountability. How does the interviewer know, after all, if you would really react in a given situation the way you say you would? In a behavioral interview, however, it’s much more difficult to give responses that are untrue to your character. When you start to tell a behavioral story, the behavioral interviewer typically will pick it apart to try to get at the specific behavior(s). The interviewer will probe further for more depth or detail such as “What were you thinking at that point?” or “Tell me more about your meeting with that person,” or “Lead me through your decision process.” If you’ve told a story that’s anything but totally honest, your response will not hold up through the barrage of probing questions.

Employers use the behavioral interview technique to evaluate a candidate’s experiences and behaviors so they can determine the applicant’s potential for success. The interviewer identifies job-related experiences, behaviors, knowledge, skills and abilities that the company has decided are desirable in a particular position. For example, some of the characteristics that Accenture looks for include:

* Critical Thinking
* Being a Self-starter
* Willingness to Learn
* Willingness to Travel
* Self-confidence
* Teamwork
* Professionalism

The employer then structures very pointed questions to elicit detailed responses aimed at determining if the candidate possesses the desired characteristics. Questions (often not even framed as a question) typically start out: “Tell me about a time…” or “Describe a situation…” Many employers use a rating system to evaluate selected criteria during the interview.

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. Researching the company and talking to people who work there will enable you to zero in on the kinds of behaviors the company wants.

In the interview, your response needs to be specific and detailed. Candidates who tell the interviewer about particular situation that relate to each question will be far more effective and successful then those who respond in general terms.

Ideally, you should briefly describe the situation, what specific action you took to have an effect on the situation, and the positive result or outcome. Frame it in a three-step process, usually called a S-A-R, P-A-R, or S-T-A-R statement.

1. Situation (or task, problem), 2. Action, 3. Result or outcome

It’s also helpful to think of your responses as stories. Become a great storyteller in your interviews, but be careful not to ramble.

It’s difficult to prepare for a behavior-based interview because of the huge number and variety of possible behavioral questions you might be asked. The best way to prepare is to arm yourself with a small arsenal of example stories that can be adapted to many behavioral questions.

Despite the many possible behavioral questions, you can get some idea of what to expect by looking at websites that feature behavioral questions, including:

* Sample Behavioral Interview Questions
* Job Interview Question Database
* Behavioral Interviewing

Knowing what kinds of questions might be asked will help you prepare an effective selection of examples.

Use examples from internships, classes and school projects activities, team participation, community service, hobbies and work experiences - - anything really - - as examples of your past behavior. In addition, you may use examples of special accomplishments, whether personal or professional, such as scoring the winning touchdown, being elected president of your Greek organization, winning a prize for your artwork, surfing a big wave, or raising money for charity. Wherever possible, quantify your results. Numbers always impress employers.