



HOSPITALITY PRACTICE II:

BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS HANDOUT

Answering of behavioural interview questions require you to respond to questions with specific examples of how you have handled situations in the workplace. Answers to behaviour interview questions should be in the form of a brief anecdote that illustrates your strengths and skills as a worker. Provide background on the situation, the specific actions you took, and the results.

Review examples of the questions you may be asked during a behavioural job interview and think about how you would answer them. That way you'll be prepared ahead of time, rather than having to think of a response on the spot during the interview.

FORMULA

The **STAR technique** is a useful strategy for responding to interview questions that require an anecdote. There are four steps to answering questions using this technique:

S Situation	Describe the situation in which the event took place.
T 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.
A Action	Explain what action you took to complete the task or solve the problem.
R Result	Explain the result of your actions. For example, if your actions resulted in completing a task, resolving a conflict, improving your company's sales record, etc., explain this. Try to focus on how your actions resulted in a success for the company.

TIPS

Take your time. It is okay to take a moment before answering the question. Take a breath, or a sip of water, or simply pause. This will give you time to calm any nerves, and think of an anecdote that appropriately answers the question.

Prepare ahead of time. Review common behavioral interview questions ahead of time, and practice your answers. This will help you ensure that you have a number of thoughtful anecdotes ready to answer any behavioral interview questions.



Follow the STAR technique. Be sure to answer any questions using the STAR technique described above. By completing each of the four steps, you will provide a thorough answer without rambling or getting off topic.

Be positive. Often, behavioural 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.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Read through the behavioural interview questions below. Practice answering some of these, using the STAR technique to provide complete answers.

- Give an example of an occasion when you used logic to solve a problem.
- Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.
- Give an example of a goal you didn't meet and how you handled it.
- Describe a stressful situation at work and how you handled it.
- Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.
- How do you handle a challenge?
- Have you been in a situation where you didn't have enough work to do?
- Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?
- Describe a decision you made that was unpopular and how you handled implementing it.
- Did you ever make a risky decision? Why? How did you handle it?
- Did you ever postpone making a decision? Why?
- Have you ever dealt with company policy you weren't in agreement with? How?
- Have you gone above and beyond the call of duty? If so, how?
- When you worked on multiple projects how did you prioritize?
- How did you handle meeting a tight deadline?
- Give an example of how you set goals and achieve them.
- Did you ever not meet your goals? Why?
- What do you do when your schedule is interrupted? Give an example of how you handle it.
- Have you had to convince a team to work on a project they weren't thrilled about? How did you do it?
- Give an example of how you've worked on a team.



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- Have you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker? How?
 - What do you do if you disagree with a co-worker?
 - Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or co-workers.
 - Do you listen? Give an example of when you did or when you didn't listen.
 - Have you handled a difficult situation with a supervisor? How?
 - Have you handled a difficult situation with another department? How?
 - Have you handled a difficult situation with a client or vendor? How?
 - What do you do if you disagree with your boss?

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Tell me about how you worked effectively under pressure.

I had been working on a key project that was scheduled for delivery to the client in 60 days. My supervisor came to me and said that we needed to speed it up and be ready in 45 days, while keeping our other projects on time. I made it into a challenge for my staff, and we effectively added just a few hours to each of our schedules and got the job done in 42 days by sharing the workload. Of course, I had a great group of people to work with, but I think that my effective allocation of tasks was a major component of the success of the project.

2. How do you handle a challenge? Give an example.

One time, my supervisor needed to leave town unexpectedly, and we were in the middle of a touchy negotiation with a new sponsor. I was tasked with putting together a PowerPoint presentation just from the notes he had left, and some briefing from his manager. My presentation turned out successfully- we got the sponsorship, and the management team recommended me for an award.

3. Have you ever made a mistake? How did you handle it?

Once I misquoted the fees for a particular type of membership to the club where I worked. I explained my mistake to my supervisor, who appreciated my coming to him, and my honesty. He told me to offer to waive the application fee for the new member. The member joined the club despite my mistake, my supervisor understood, and although I felt bad that I had made a mistake, I learned to pay close attention to the details so as to give accurate information in the future.

4. Give an example of how you set goals.

Within a few weeks of beginning my first job as a sales associate in a department store, I knew that I wanted to be in the fashion industry. I decided that I would



work my way up to department manager, and at that point I would have enough money saved to be able to attend design school full-time. I did just that, and I even landed my first job through an internship I completed the summer before graduation.

5. Give an example of a goal you reached and tell me how you achieved it.

When I started working for XYZ Company, I wanted to achieve the Employee of the Month title. It was a motivational challenge, and not all the employees took it that seriously, but I really wanted that parking spot, and my picture on the wall. I went out of my way to be helpful to my colleagues, supervisors, and customers - which I would have done anyway, I liked the job and the people I worked with. The third month I was there, I got the honor. It was good to achieve my goal, and I actually ended up moving into a managerial position there pretty quickly, I think because of my positive attitude and perseverance.

6. Describe a decision you made that wasn't popular and how you handled implementing it.

Once, I inherited a group of employees when their supervisor relocated to another city. They had been allowed to cover each other's shifts without management approval. I didn't like the inconsistencies, where certain people were being given more opportunities than others. I introduced a policy where I had my assistant approve all staffing changes, to make sure that everyone who wanted extra hours and was available at certain times could be utilized.

7. Give an example of how you worked on a team.

During my last semester in college, I worked as part of a research team in the History department. The professor leading the project was writing a book on the development of language in Europe in the Middle Ages. We were each assigned different sectors to focus on, and I suggested that we meet independently before our weekly meeting with the professor to discuss our progress, and help each other out if we were having any difficulties. The professor really appreciated the way we worked together, and it helped to streamline his research as well. He was ready to start on his final copy months ahead of schedule because of the work we helped him with.

8. What do you do if you disagree with someone at work?

A few years ago, I had a supervisor who wanted me to find ways to outsource most of the work we were doing in my department. I felt that my department was one where having the staff on premises had a huge impact on our effectiveness and



ability to relate to our clients. I presented a strong case to her, and she came up with a compromise plan.

9. Share an example of how you were able to motivate employees or co-workers.

I was in a situation once where the management of our department was taken over by employees with experience in a totally different industry, in an effort to maximize profits over service. Many of my co-workers were resistant to the sweeping changes that were being made, but I recognized some of the benefits right off the bat, and was able to motivate my colleagues to give the new process a chance to succeed.

10. Have you handled a difficult situation? How?

When I worked at ABC Global, it came to my attention that one of my employees had become addicted to painkillers prescribed after she had surgery. Her performance was being negatively impacted, and she needed to get some help. I spoke with her privately, and I helped her to arrange a weekend treatment program that was covered by her insurance. Fortunately, she was able to get her life back on track, and she received a promotion about six months later.

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS ACCORDING TO CATEGORIES

Questions 1 to 5

Teamwork

For questions like these, you want a story that illustrates your ability to work with others under challenging circumstances. Think team conflict, difficult project constraints, or clashing personalities.

1. Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.
2. Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?
3. Describe a time when you struggled to build a relationship with someone important. How did you eventually overcome that?
4. We all make mistakes we wish we could take back. Tell me about a time you wish you'd handled a situation differently with a colleague.



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5. Tell me about a time you needed to get information from someone who wasn't very responsive. What did you do?

Questions 6 to 10

Client-Facing Skills

If the role you're interviewing for works with clients, definitely be ready for one of these. Find an example of a time where you successfully represented your company or team and delivered exceptional customer service.

6. Describe a time when it was especially important to make a good impression on a client. How did you go about doing so?
7. Give me an example of a time when you did not meet a client's expectation. What happened, and how did you attempt to rectify the situation?
8. Tell me about a time when you made sure a customer was pleased with your service.
9. Describe a time when you had to interact with a difficult client. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?
10. When you're working with a large number of customers, it's tricky to deliver excellent service to them all. How do you go about prioritizing your customers' needs?

Questions 11 to 15

Ability to Adapt

Times of turmoil are finally good for something! Think of a recent work crisis you successfully navigated. Even if your navigation didn't feel successful at the time, find a lesson or silver lining you took from the situation.

11. Tell me about a time you were under a lot of pressure. What was going on, and how did you get through it?
12. Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some change. How did that impact you, and how did you adapt?



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13. Tell me about the first job you've ever had. What did you do to learn the ropes?
 14. Give me an example of a time when you had to think on your feet in order to delicately extricate yourself from a difficult or awkward situation.
 15. Tell me about a time you failed. How did you deal with the situation?

Questions 16 to 20

Time-Management Skills

In other words, get ready to talk about a time you juggled multiple responsibilities, organized it all (perfectly), and completed everything before the deadline.

16. Tell me about a time you had to be very strategic in order to meet all your top priorities.
17. Describe a long-term project that you managed. How did you keep everything moving along in a timely manner?
18. Sometimes it's just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?
19. Tell me about a time you set a goal for yourself. How did you go about ensuring that you would meet your objective?
20. Give me an example of a time you managed numerous responsibilities. How did you handle that?

Questions 21 to 25

Communication Skills

You probably won't have any trouble thinking of a story for communication questions, since it's not only part of most jobs; it's part of everyday life. However, the thing to remember here is to also talk about your thought process or preparation.

21. Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.



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22. Describe a time when you were the resident technical expert. What did you do to make sure everyone was able to understand you?
 23. Tell me about a time when you had to rely on written communication to get your ideas across to your team.
 24. Give me an example of a time when you had to explain something fairly complex to a frustrated client. How did you handle this delicate situation?
 25. Tell me about a successful presentation you gave and why you think it was a hit.

Questions 26 to 30

Motivation and Values

A lot of seemingly [random interview questions](#) are actually attempts to learn more about what motivates you. Your response would ideally address this directly even if the question wasn't explicit about it.

26. Tell me about your proudest professional accomplishment.
27. Describe a time when you saw some problem and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.
28. Tell me about a time when you worked under close supervision or extremely loose supervision. How did you handle that?
29. Give me an example of a time you were able to be creative with your work. What was exciting or difficult about it?
30. Tell me about a time you were dissatisfied in your work. What could have been done to make it better?