

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING (AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOU)

When conducting job interviews, employers know it is important to ask questions not only about an applicant's job knowledge and skills, but also about past work experiences. In particular, it is valuable to gather information in order to reveal how the applicant behaved in certain work situations. The applicant's past behavior often predicts how he/she will respond in similar future situations – this line of questioning is termed behavioral interviewing and can be of great use to a potential employer and as a candidate you need to be ready for this line of questioning.

This information is important because how an employee behaves in completing responsibilities is as critical as what the responsibilities are in the actual job. Identifying and assessing required key behaviors should contribute to the overall success of an employee in their position.

GUIDELINES FOR A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

Prior to asking the behavioral interview questions, it is recommended to begin the interview with general introductory questions. The following are offered as suggestions:

- Please highlight your past jobs telling me the employment dates when you worked for companies and what your job duties were (candidate should not have resume in hand, they should be able to recite from memory). If there are any gaps in employment, inquire about the situation(s).
- I have reviewed your resume but would like to ask you to begin by giving me an overview of your education and experience as they relate to this position and why you are interested in this position.
- Please elaborate on one of the work experiences listed on your resume.
 - What were your major responsibilities?
 - What were some of the most difficult duties of that job?
 - Who did you report to and who reported to you (title)?
- What special skills and knowledge were needed to perform the duties in your previous jobs?
- Your resume/application lists many job changes. Tell me about that.
- How has your present/previous job changed while you've held it?
- What unique talent do you offer? Why do you feel it is unique?
- What else should I know about your qualifications for this job?

Organizational Success

Teamwork/Cooperation

- Gaining the cooperation of others can be difficult. Give a specific example of when you had to do that, and what challenges you faced. What was the outcome? What was the long-term impact on your ability to work with this person?
- Please give me your best example of working cooperatively as a team member to accomplish an important goal. What was the goal or objective? What was your role in achieving this objective? To what extent did you interact with others on this project?
- Tell me about a time when your coworkers gave you feedback about your actions. How did you respond? What changes did you make?

- Describe a project you were responsible for that required a lot of interaction with people over a long period of time.
- How have you recognized and rewarded a team player in the past? What was the situation?
- Tell me about a course, work experience, or extracurricular activity where you had to work closely with others. How did it go? How did you overcome any difficulties?
- Describe a problem you had in your life when someone else's help was very important to you.

Customer Orientation

- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome? How would you assess your role in defusing the situation?
- Give me an example of when you initiated a change in process or operations in response to customer feedback.
- Tell me about a marketing promotion/initiative or information dissemination you developed. How did it meet the customer's need(s)?

Commitment to Continuous Quality/Process Improvement

- Tell me about a suggestion you made to improve the way job processes/operations worked. What was the result?
- Tell me about one of your workplace improvements that another department now uses.
- Give me an example of when you initiated a change in process or operations.
- In your last job, what problems did you identify that had previously been overlooked? Were changes made? Who supported the changes as a result of your ideas?
- Describe something you have implemented at work. What were the steps you used to implement this?

Creativity/Innovation

- Describe the most significant or creative presentation/idea that you developed/implemented.
- Describe a time when you came up with a creative solution/idea/project/report to a problem in your past work.
- Tell me about a time when you created a new process or program that was considered risky. What was the situation and what did you do?
- Can you give me an example of how you have been creative in completing your responsibilities?
- Can you think of a situation where innovation was required at work? What did you do in this situation?

Flexibility/Adaptability to Change

- By providing examples, demonstrate that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and/or environments.
- What do you do when priorities change quickly? Give me one example of when this happened.
- Tell me about a decision you made while under a lot of pressure.
- Tell me about a specific time when you were given new information that affected a decision that you had already made.
- Give me an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place? What was the outcome?

- When was the last time you felt pressure on a job? How did the situation come about? How did you react? What made you decide to handle it that way? What effect, if any, did this have on your other responsibilities?
- What are some of the things your last employer could have done to keep you?

Continuous Learning/Development

- Describe a decision you made or a situation that you would have handled differently if you had to do it over again.
- When you have been made aware of, or have discovered for yourself, a problem in your work performance, what was your course of action? Can you give me an example?
- Tell me about a time when your supervisor/co-workers gave you feedback about your work/actions. What did you learn about yourself?
- What have you done to further your own professional development in the last 5 years?
- Tell me about a job that you had which required you to learn new things.
- Tell me about a recent job or experience that you would describe as a real learning experience. What did you learn from the job or the experience?
- Tell me about a time when you were asked to complete a difficult assignment even though the odds were against you. What did you learn from that experience?
- Discuss the highlights of your most recent educational experience. Did you accomplish any special achievements? What were your most difficult challenges?
- I noticed on your resume that you attended _____ training program. Please describe the training program. How have you applied what you learned to your current job?

Displays Vision

- Describe what steps/methods you have used to define/identify a vision for your unit/position.
- In your current or former position, what were your short and long-term goals? How long ago did you set them? Who else was involved in setting them? Which ones were achieved?
- How do you see your job relating to the overall goals of your present/previous organization?
- Tell me about a time when you anticipated the future and made changes to current responsibilities/operations to meet future needs.

Leadership/Initiative

- What are 3 effective leadership qualities you think are important. How have you demonstrated these qualities in your past/current position?
- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to approach things your way. What level was the person you had to persuade?
- What risks did you take in your present/previous job? Tell me about it.
- Tell me about your efforts to "sell" a new idea to your supervisor.
- Describe a leadership situation that you would handle differently if you had it to do over again.
- What one experience proved to you that you would be a capable manager?
- What have you done to develop the skills of your staff?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to provide a co-worker with recognition for the work they performed. What did you do?

- Tell me about a time when you reached out for additional responsibility.
- Tell me about a project/suggestion that you initiated. Explain how you communicated the project/suggestion.
- What have you done in your present/previous job that goes beyond what was required?

Making People Matter

Respect for Others

- Tell me about a time when you had to resolve a difference of opinion with a co-worker/customer/supervisor. How do you feel you showed respect?
- Tell me about a time when you needed to give feedback to an employee with emotional or sensitive problems. Was the outcome?
- Describe the way you handled a specific problem involving others with differing values, ideas and beliefs in your current/previous job.

Interpersonal Skills

- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to address an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about the most difficult challenge you faced in trying to work cooperatively with someone who did not share the same ideas. What was your role in achieving the work objective? What was the long-term impact on your ability to get things done while working with this person?
- Describe a work situation that required you to really listen and display compassion to a co-worker/employee who was telling you about a personal/sensitive situation.
- Describe the way you handled a specific problem involving people in your last job.

Supports Diversity and Understands Related Issues

- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a wide variety of people by accepting/understanding their perspective.
- What have you done to further your knowledge/understanding about diversity? How have you demonstrated your learning?
- Can you recall a time when you gave feedback to a co-worker who was un-accepting of others?
- Can you recall a time when a person's cultural background affected your approach to a work situation?
- How have you handled situations in which you could not understand a customer's strong accent?
- Tell me about a time that you successfully adapted to a culturally different environment.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to separate the person from the issue when working to resolve differences?
- How have you taken responsibility/accountability for an action that may have been offensive to the recipient?
- Tell me about a time that you had adapted your style in order to work effectively with those who were different from you.
- How have you reacted to conversations between co-workers that were clearly offensive to non-participants?

- Give examples of when your values and beliefs impacted your relationships with your co-workers.
- Tell me about a time that you evaluated your own beliefs or opinions around issues of difference.
- Tell me about a time when you avoided forming an opinion based upon a person's outward appearance.
- How have you made your voice heard in a predominantly male or female-dominated environment?
- What measures have you taken to make someone feel comfortable in an environment that was obviously uncomfortable with his or her presence?

Honesty/Fairness

- Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough problem which challenged fairness or ethical issues.
- Tell me about a tough decision you made. What steps, thought processes, and considerations did you take to make an objective decision?

Builds Trust

- Think of a situation where you distrusted a co-worker/supervisor, resulting in tension between you. What steps did you take to improve the relationship?
- Keeping others informed of your progress/actions helps them feel comfortable. Tell me your methods for keeping your supervisor advised of the status on projects.
- If you can, tell me about a time when your trustworthiness was challenged. How did you react/respond?
- Give me examples of how you have acted with integrity (walked your talk) in your job/work relationship.
- Tell me about a time when you had to give feedback to an employee who displayed a lack of professionalism in their work relationships. What did you say? What standards did you set? What was the outcome?
- Setting high expectations implies you believe the employee can deliver. Give me an example of having done this.
- Trust requires personal accountability. Can you tell me about a time when you chose to trust someone? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to give the "benefit of the doubt" to a co-worker/supervisor. What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of when you 'went to the source' to address a conflict. Do you feel trust levels were improved as a result?

Recognizes Others' Achievements/Contributions

- Give me an example of how you and your staff have celebrated success in the past. What was the occasion?
- Tell me about a time when you were able to provide a co-worker/employee with recognition for the work they performed. What did you do?
- What consistent methods do you use to ensure that staff feel valued for their contributions?

Understands Others' Perspectives

- By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people.
- Gaining the cooperation of others can be difficult. Give a specific example when you had to do that.
- Tell me about the most difficult challenge you faced in trying to work cooperatively with someone who did not share the same ideas. What was the difference in ideas? What was the outcome? What was the long-term impact on your ability to get things done working with this person?
- Tell me about a time when you felt your staff was under too much pressure. What did you do about it?

Resolves Conflicts Constructively

- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when you felt the individual did not value your perspective.
- Tell me about a time when you and your previous supervisor disagreed but you still found a way to get your point across.
- Describe a time when you facilitated a creative solution to a problem between employees.
- Tell me about a recent success you had with an especially difficult employee/co-worker.
- Thinking of the most difficult person you have had to deal with, describe an interaction that illustrates that difficulty. Tell me about the last time you dealt with him/her? How did you handle the situation?
- Describe a time when you took personal accountability for a conflict and initiated contact with the individual(s) involved to explain your actions.

Positive Attitude

- What 3 specific things about your last job gave you the most satisfaction? Why?
- What have you done in your last job that makes you feel proud?
- Please think back to a time when setting a positive example had the most beneficial impact on people you worked with. How did you determine that a strong example was needed? What was the effect on the staff?
- Tell me about a time when you needed to address an employee's attitude. What did you say to that person? What was the outcome?
- Describe your best boss. Describe your worst boss.

Job Effectiveness

Planning/Organization

- Give me a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle it?
- Using a specific example of a project, tell me how you kept those involved informed of the progress.
- Are you better at working on many things at a time, or are you better at working on and getting results on a few specific things? Please give me two examples that illustrate this.
- Name one of your best accomplishments, including where the assignment came from, your plans in carrying it out, how you eventually did carry it out, and any obstacles you overcame.

- Of your current assignments, which do you consider to have required the greatest amount of effort with regard to planning/organization? How have you accomplished this assignment? Tell me how you handled it. How would you assess your effectiveness?

Problem Solving/Judgment

- Describe an instance when you had to think quickly to free yourself from a difficult situation.
- Tell me about a politically complex work situation in which you worked.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Give me an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place? What was the outcome?
- How do you go about solving problems at work?
- Tell me about a specific time when you eliminated or avoided a potential problem before it happened.
- What types of problems do you most enjoy tackling? Give me some examples of such problems you faced. What did you enjoy about them?
- What types of problems do you least enjoy tackling? Give me some examples of such problems you faced. What was it about the problems that you least enjoyed?
- To whom did you turn for help the last time you had a major problem and why did you choose that person?
- In some aspects of work it is important to be free of error. Can you describe a situation where you have tried to prevent errors? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Makes Effective Decisions

- Tell me about a decision you made but wish you had done differently.
- Tell me about an experience in which you had a limited amount of time to make a difficult decision. What was the decision and the outcome/result of your decision?
- Give me an example of a time when there was a decision to be made and procedures were not in place? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision.
- Discuss an important decision you have made regarding work. What factors influenced your decision?
- In a current job task, what steps do you go through to ensure your decisions are correct/effective?

Takes Responsibility

- Give me an example of something you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- What is the biggest error in judgment or failure you have made in a previous job? Why did you make it? How did you correct the problem?
- Tell me about a time when your supervisor criticized your work. How did you respond?
- Tell me about a time when you took responsibility for an error and were held personally accountable.

Achieves Results

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to approach things your way.
- Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past, and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- What projects were accomplished during your previous job? How were these accomplished? What experiences did you have when meeting deadlines for project completion? Explain.
- Are you better at working on many things at a time, or are you better at working on and getting results on a few specific things? Please give me two examples that illustrate this.
- What do you consider your greatest accomplishments in your current/previous position?

Communicates Effectively

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have agreed with your perspective.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you had to handle an angry customer. What was the problem and what was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you and your current/previous supervisor disagreed but you still found a way to get your point across.
- Tell me about your efforts to "sell" a new idea to your supervisor.
- How do you make your feelings known when you disagree with the views of your staff?
- What have you done to improve your verbal communication skills?
- What have you done to improve your listening skills?
- Tell me how you kept your supervisor advised of the status on projects.
- How have you assessed your behavioral messages and what have you learned about yourself as a result?

Dependability/Attendance

- Give me a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle it?
- We all face times when personal issues pull us away from work responsibilities. If possible, tell me about a time when your dependability or attendance was challenged. How did you handle it and/or remain accountable or involved in work? How long did the situation last?

Job/Organizational Knowledge

- Describe how your position contributes to your organization's/unit's goals. What are the goal's/unit's mission?
- Tell me how you keep your job knowledge current with the ongoing changes in the industry.

Productivity

- Give me an example of an important goal that you had set in the past, and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to complete multiple tasks/projects within a tight timeline.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you did not meet a deadline. How did you handle it?
- Give me two examples of things you've done in previous jobs that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.
- Describe a course, project, or work experience that was complex. What kind of follow-up did you undertake? How much time was spent on unexpected difficulties?

Additional Factors for Supervisors

Coaches/Counsels/Evaluates Staff

- Give me an example of a time when you helped a staff member accept change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward. What were the change/transition skills that you used?
- Tell me about a specific time when you had to handle a tough morale problem.
- Tell me about a time when you had to take disciplinary action with someone you supervised.
- Tell me about a time when you had to tell a staff member that you were dissatisfied with his or her work.
- Tell me about a time when you had to handle a highly emotional employee.
- Discuss a work situation in which you felt you successfully directed the work of others.
- Tell me about a time when your department was going through long-term changes or working on a long-term project. What did you do to keep your staff focused?

Identifies Areas for and Supports Employee Development Opportunities

- What have you done to develop the skills of your staff? How many of your employees have received training (any form) during the past year? What were the specific topic areas? Did they ask for the training or did you suggest it to them?
- Tell me about a specific development plan that you created and carried out with one or more of your employees. What was the specific situation? What were the components of the development plan? How long was the time frame from start to finish? What was the outcome?

Encourages Teamwork and Group Achievement

- Please tell me about your most successful attempt to encourage others to take action and get the job done. What led you to take these actions? Exactly how did you encourage others to take action or responsibility? What was the result of your efforts? Did anyone comment on your actions? Who? What was said? How often have you taken this type of action in the past six months?
- Tell me about a time when you needed to have co-workers working on a project who normally have different work styles/ideas. How did you pull them together?

Leads Change/Achieves Support of Objectives

- Tell me about a time when you were responsible for hiring and orientating a new employee. What did you do to help them adjust?
- Tell me about a time when your department was going through long-term changes or working on a long-term project. What did you do to keep your staff focused?
- Give me an example of a time when you helped a staff member accept change and make the necessary adjustments to move forward.

Enables and Empowers Staff

- Tell me about a time when you needed to delegate parts of a large assignment. How did you decide whom to distribute them to? What problems occurred? What was the outcome?
- What specific information do/did you share with your staff, how often do you share this information and why?
- Give me a specific example of how you have empowered your staff to make independent decisions.
- Tell me about the expectations you create for staff. What are they? What factors do you consider in setting/communicating expectations?

Strives to Achieve Diverse Staff at all Levels

- Give me a specific example of how you have helped create an environment where differences are valued, encouraged and supported.
- What have you done to support diversity in your unit?

Understands Diversity Issues and Creates Supportive Environment for Diverse Employees

- Tell me about the specific talents and contributions of your team/staff and how you have utilized these qualities to increase the effectiveness of the unit.
- What have you done to support diversity in your unit?
- Can you recall a time when you gave feedback to an employee who was un-accepting of others?