

Interview Tips

Assertiveness, Problem Solving Ability, Commitment to Task, Decision-making Ability. These are some of the headings for a series of questioning probes that interviewers use to determine the suitability of a candidate for a specific position. This technique is called "The Behavioral Interview" and it is being used extensively in organizations across the country.

The hiring manager and interviewer first establish the capabilities and traits essential to a candidate being successful in a specific position. Once that is established they design their questions or probes to address those traits and as they interview they build a profile of the candidate. Generally the behavioral interview is the second stage after the technical or introductory interview. The first determines if you can do the job, the second determines if you will do the job.

The candidate is asked to give specific examples of situations in answer to the interviewer's questions. "Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with an employee problem. What was the problem and what was the outcome". When the candidate has completed their answer the next question might be "is that the worst problem you had to deal with?" This line of questioning urges the candidate to refocus and communicate clearly a whole new situation, showing both flexibility and adaptability under pressure. Candidates should remember that there are no right or wrong answers in this format however if they are not able to articulate their experiences, communicating success and failures, then they may not be considered for the position.

Organizations recognize that they have a personality, a climate to offer employees. They also know that successful companies run lean operations so they are looking to hire "multi-tasked individuals who will thrive in the existing climate". Bottom line "it is great that you are such a talented Web developer but if you cannot communicate ideas with our clients or our own team we will have to keep looking".

Prepare for a Behavioral interview by reviewing your employment, educational and personal history. Make mental notes of successes, failures, brilliant ideas etc. Think about the possible situations you may be asked to describe and identify both successful and unsuccessful examples. RELAX you can expect to be in the interview for one to two hours. LISTEN to the question and do not rush your response.

For the interview ...

- Arrive 15 minutes early. Being late is never acceptable.
- Be sure you answer the questions the interviewer asks.
- Ask the interviewer to describe the position and specific responsibilities early in the conversation so you can relate your skills and background to the position throughout the course of the interview.
- Discuss your qualifications, and stress the accomplishments that are most pertinent to this position.
- Conduct yourself professionally. Be aware of what your body language is saying. Smile, make eye contact, don't slouch, and maintain your composure.
- Anticipate difficult questions about your chosen career path and prepare in advance so you can turn apparent weaknesses into strengths.
- Dress appropriately. Make your first impression on a prospective employer a professional one.

- Ask questions throughout the interview. An interview should be a mutual exchange of information, not a one-sided conversation.
- Listen. By focusing not only on the interviewer's words, but also on their tone and body language, you will be able to pick up on their style. Form your answers accordingly. This will also enable you to establish a personal rapport with the interviewer.

Don't ...

- Answer vague questions. Rather than trying to answer an unclear question, ask the interviewer to more specific.
- Interrupt the interviewer. If you don't have time to listen, then neither does the person conducting the interview.
- Smoke, chew gum, or place anything on the interviewer's desk.
- Be overly familiar, even if the interviewer is.
- Wear heavy perfume or cologne.
- Ramble. Long answers can make you sound apologetic or indecisive. On the other hand, don't answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain yourself in detail when possible.
- Lie. Answer questions as truthfully as possible.
- Make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies. This could have a negative effect on the interviewer's perception of you.

Closing the interview

If candidates are prepared for the interview, there is no need to doubt your answers after the interview. If you feel that the interview went well and you would like to continue the interview process, express your interest to the interviewer. For example, "After hearing more about your company, the position and the responsibilities at hand, I am certain that I possess the qualities that you are looking for in the (title) position. Based on our conversation and my qualifications, are there any issues or concerns that you have that would lead you to believe otherwise?"

You have a right to be assertive. This is a great closing question because it opens the door for the interviewer to be honest with you about his or her feelings concerning your qualifications for the position. If concerns do exist, this is the opportunity to address them.

A few things to remember during the closing process:

- Don't be discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed. The interviewer will likely want to communicate with a superior or interview other applicants before making a decision.
- Make sure you answer the following two questions: "Why are you interested in the company?" and "What can you offer?"
- Express thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration.
- Ask for the interviewer's business card so you can write a thank you letter.

Following up after the interview

After leaving the interview, take a few minutes to write down key issues that were raised during the interview, such as specific qualifications for the position, your strengths in meeting these needs, areas of concern and how to address them, etc