

RESPONDING TO BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Behavior-based interview questions are grounded on the premise that past behavior is the best predictor of future performance. To answer these questions, give specific examples, or stories, from your previous experience. Highlighting the **challenge, action, result**, and relevant **details** of your accomplishments demonstrates your skills to the employer. Research shows that people retain information shared as stories 50% better than information shared as facts and figures.¹ Responding to questions in a story format helps you stand out and be more memorable to the interviewer as well.

A complete CARD response includes:

Challenge – Problem, goal, or requirement in the example

Action – Specific actions you took to resolve the challenge, solve the problem, or meet the requirement

Result – Benefit or outcome in specific and measurable terms

Details – Clarifying details to provide context:

consider answering *how many, how much, how long, or how often*

When developing your CARD stories, refer to the following guidelines:

- Identify your top accomplishments by reflecting back on jobs, academic projects, and volunteer experiences.
- Determine what skills you used in each of these examples.
- Prepare stories that demonstrate the qualifications the employer is seeking, referring to the job posting, company website, and current employees for insight.
- Develop short, one to two minute responses to keep your interviewers attention.
- Share stories that clearly demonstrate the skill the interviewer asks about.
- Each of your stories can be used to demonstrate more than one skill or strength. For example, if you are asked about a project you managed, share a story that demonstrates other positive attributes as well such as your ability to lead a team or manage conflict.

Review these examples of behavior-based interview responses that use the CARD model:

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person.

(Challenge) While working as a technical support representative at *ABC Technical*, I had to deal with difficult people on a daily basis. Specifically, I recall a time when an employee who was having trouble with her computer *became very upset when she* thought the problem was not being addressed in timely manner. The entire technical support department *was working on a high priority special project for the Executive Team* and was not available at the time she issued her help desk request.

(Action) I *immediately* went to her desk to offer assistance as soon as I returned from my part of the project. The employee expressed her frustration and anger at first, but I apologized for the delay, explained the situation, and helped her resolve the problem *within ten minutes*.

(Result) She calmed down *and smiled at me* during the latter part of our conversation. At the end, she expressed her gratitude *and later sent my supervisor a note of appreciation for my assistance*. I also realized that in the future our team needed to communicate better when working on a special project that may cause a slight service delay. I developed a process that outlined how to respond to during these times. Since the incident, we have successfully managed all employee questions while working on high priority projects.

The **details** are italicized in the above example.

Describe a situation when a project did not go as planned.

When I was employed at the Westervil County Human Services Agency, part of my job was to present life skills workshops to single mothers throughout the county. One evening, I was scheduled to present a workshop at a local church, and when I arrived I discovered that the projector I planned to use for showing my presentation slides had broken and could not be used. There were about ten participants at the workshop that evening, so instead of standing in front of the group, we sat around a table and I conducted a discussion session based on the information I would have normally presented. The women enjoyed the opportunity to learn from one another, and the discussion strategy worked so well that I decided to use it at subsequent workshops.

Can you give me an example of a time when you had to resolve a problem?

As English Department Chair at Westervil Senior High School, I received advice from a colleague regarding English curriculum that was in conflict with new State education standards. Through email communication, I had been instructed to implement the curriculum despite its conflict with the regulations. I called a meeting with key school administrators and outlined the issue. After discussion, my colleagues understood the conflict and as a team we were able to modify the curriculum in a way that did not compromise the school's compliance with State standards.

ⁱ Gentner, D. R. (1976). The structure and recall of narrative prose. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 15, 411–418. - See more at: <http://www.aft.org/periodical/american-educator/summer-2004/ask-cognitive-scientist#sthash.9pHQ3yfh.dpuf>