

Core Stream

Professional Skills

Interview Preparation

FDM Academy

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1 Interview Preparation

Planning for interviews in advance will help you perform better when the time comes to secure your placement.

1.1 Evidence your Skills using STAR

The acronym STAR breaks down as:

Situation – what was the background to the situation you are describing?

Task – what was the challenge you faced or what were you required to deliver in this situation?

Action – what did YOU actually do to overcome the challenge?

Result – as a result of your action(s), what happened?

It's important you explain the background to the event, what was required, what you actually did and the outcome.

Remember when using STAR – the RESULT is just as important as what you actually did...

1.1.1 STAR Example (evidencing Team Work skills):

Whilst being trained at the FDM Academy I was involved in the delivery of several pieces of software including a Trading Platform web site which we delivered following Agile/Scrum methodology. As part of this, we did daily stand ups to discuss progress and blockers.

During an early Sprint the testers in my team reported a major blocker for them was using SubVersion, our source code control tool which they were unfamiliar with. This was causing delays in progressing with testing.

As I had gained experience of SubVersion from the FDM Developer Stream, I volunteered to run a short workshop for the testers to cover the basics of checking in/checking out code and act as a point of contact for them if they ran into further difficulties during the Sprint.

As a result the whole team became conversant in using SubVersion and was able to move forward and complete the Sprint on time.

1.2 Planning for Common Questions

Whilst specific examples of technical competence might be limited to the training you have undergone at FDM, you should be able to identify STAR examples of more general interpersonal competencies and soft skills from previous life experiences.

1.2.1 Vary your examples

Multiple examples from the same previous employer or situation (e.g. time at university, voluntary work etc) demonstrate a range of experience.

However, it's easy to focus on a single situation/event as evidence for your skills and many interviewers will pick up on the fact you repeatedly refer to the same event in your life, drawing the conclusion that you only have limited experience.

To address this, plan in advance for common questions and you should be able to build up a portfolio of experiences on which to draw.

1.2.2 Skills/Competencies Interview Plan

Using the table on the next page you can begin to plan your STAR examples and identify where you might be relying too often on the same specific event.

When this happens you should consider if you have an alternative STAR example you could use to illustrate your skills.

1.2.3 Planning Action(s)

Using the table on the next page to help you, carry out the following actions:

- Make a list of skills/competencies
- For each one, provide an example of something you have done/achieved which demonstrates that skill/competency (use STAR)
- For each one, note where you were/what specific event it was in that situation (e.g. Employer name, university etc.)
- Where the same situation and event occurs for multiple skills/competencies, consider if you can actually refer to another event and still demonstrate the skill

2 Skills/Competencies Interview Plan

Use this plan to help you formulate STAR answers when interviewers are looking for evidence of skills/competencies.

Competency	Example	Where?
e.g. Communication	e.g. Use STAR...	e.g. Previous Employer (Customer facing)
e.g. Problem Solving	e.g. Use STAR (3 rd year module at university)	e.g. University (3 rd yr module)
e.g. Team Working	e.g. Use STAR (different situation, same employer)	e.g. Same Previous Employer (part of Customer Service team)
e.g. Planning & Organising	e.g. Use STAR (different situation, Dissertation at university)	e.g. University (Dissertation)
<i>Add other competencies...</i>		