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| **Interviewing and STAR Stories** |

**Every interview question should be answered like you’re telling a story.** Give details and help your interviewer really imagine and envision you in the workplace and “see” how you work. Two ways of doing this are to answer according to the STAR Method or the FEB Selling Method:

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| **STAR Method** |
| S - What was a **Situation** that relates to the question?  T - What were your **Tasks**?  A - What **Action** did you Take?  R - What was the **Result**?  **Situation:** Give an example of a situation where you had to study a problem before making a decision. **Task:** Describe your process and the tasks involved  **Action:** Talk about the various actions that you used  **Result:** What were the results that followed because of your actions? |

STAR applies mostly to situational questions, but the important take-away for all questions is that you need to paint a clear picture of what you have done (using specific examples) and how what you did cause something to change for the better or end positively.

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| **FEB Selling Method** |
| F - **Feature**: a fact that sets you apart from other people.  E - **Example**: a specific, personal example that supports your fact.  B - **Benefit**: how your fact and example benefit the employer.  For example:  *Feature*- strong work ethic  *Example*- while attending Lambda School part-time, I worked 40 hours a week to finance my education.  *Benefit*- I’m used to working hard in order to achieve positive results.  *By using the examples above, we come up with this statement:*  My greatest strength is that I have a strong work ethic. For example, while attending Lambda full-time I worked 40 hours a week to finance my education. What this means for XYZ Company is that I’m used to working hard in order to achieve positive results. |

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| **Part 1: Answer the 7 questions below following the template provided** |
| 1. **TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF:** |
| **Explanation:** |
| This is a question that is asked in all interviews. What the interviewer wants to know is, "What can you bring to the job? What do you have to offer?” The interviewer wants to hear about your strengths, skills, abilities and experiences - especially related to the job you are interviewing for. Key points to hit: what you did professionally before Lambda School, what skills you have learned and how have you applied them practically in your projects, and how you plan to use these skills to benefit the company you are applying for. Be specific about the projects you are working on and the skills you have gained. (Does this sound like your elevator pitch? It should.) |
| **Your Turn:** |
| 1. **Name:** Elvis Gonzalez 2. **What Lambda School is:** Lambda School is an immersive full stack web development 3. **Your track, and what skills you've built as part of that track and how you applied them in projects (focus especially on those that mirror the language of the job description):** I am in the full stack web development track – as I’ve gained knowledge, skills, and confidence I’ve been able to increase productivity and efficiency. 4. **What you did before Lambda School (if professional & relevant):** Before and During Lambda School I am a software tester for Atlas Technologies, Inc. At my current position, I have had the opportunity to become proficient at using Linux, BASH, Apache, Ansible, and LDAP. I have constructed and executed Test Cases and Test Requirements, using Test Link, and created reports to be signed up lead members of our team detailing the test process and results of the tests executed by our Subject Matter Experts. I have extended our applications capabilities using PHP and LDAP to allow session based logins after Apache authentication, speeding up the onboarding process tremendously. I have created a new route in TestLink’s report component to create a separate report that fulfils our requirements cutting down many hours of editing. I launched an internal Wiki page using MediaWiki, expanded it with extensions, and completely removed the need for SME (Subject Matter Experts) to carry paper versions of an internal document (The Book of Knowledge). The wiki’s search function has increased efficiency during testing and with LDAP authentication automatically applied through Apache users and their edits can be properly tracked by admins. More recently, I have refactored the user interface for a product for another company, DKW, implementing responsive design. 5. **Close with summarizing 2-3 key professional attributes that you are excited to potentially bring to the job at \_\_\_\_ Company.** I am excited to potentially bring my energy, passion, and professionalism. |
| 1. **WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT OUR COMPANY?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| The employer wants to see that you did in-depth research on the company. This helps prove to them that you really want this particular job, and aren’t just applying everywhere to get any job. You should begin by giving an overview of what the company does (the products or services it sells), when it was founded (roughly- exact year is less important for older, more established companies), name some major company milestones (ex. reaching 100,000 users, earning an award or being ranked highly on a list, expanding to have a global presence), and explain what you see that sets this company apart from its competitors. |
| **Your Turn:** |
| * 1. **Overview of company products/services/mission (and specific project you’re working on, if applicable):** Many products for many types of businesses and companies   **b) When/how/why was it founded:** 2006, headquartered in Charleston SC  **c) What is the company’s business model?** Real Estate  **d) Major company milestones:** 1st acquisition, California based Real Contact.  **e) What sets this company apart from its competitors?** Powerful leadership and constant expansion and talent acquisition |
| 1. **WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 3-5 YEARS? / WHAT ARE YOUR CAREER GOALS?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| The employer wants to know if this job aligns with your longer-term interests; if they do, then you are likely to stay with the company. If they do not, the employer will wonder why you even want this job and will worry that you will not last at the company. Emphasize your excitement to bring your skills and experiences from previous positions to add value to the company, express that you would like to explore some additional roles and responsibilities, and eventually become a manager or start working in a new IT field (ex. “I’d like to develop my Linux skills so that I can become a Systems Admin.”) Add that you are studying for a certification in a certain field (if that is relevant and is true). If you do not know what you want to do with your career, that is okay, as long as you can show the connection between how the skills you will gain at this job will help you transfer into your future career. Don’t say things like ‘I want to be a CEO,’ or ‘I want to own my own company.’ It takes a lot longer than 3-5 years to train for such high level roles, and you want to show your eagerness to hone your skills to perform highly at the job that you are applying for. Also, if you are pursuing higher education, be careful to communicate that this job you’re applying for is your top priority, and that you would adapt your school schedule to nights, online classes, or weekends. |
| **Your Turn:** |
| 1. **What skills or experiences do you have that will add value?** I believe my current skillset can meet this job posting and as I continue to grow and develop my skills as a back end engineer, I can become a well-rounded engineer. 2. **What types of additional roles and responsibilities are you interested in exploring? (must be relevant to job or industry at hand)** I am interested in becoming a full stack web developer 3. **What skills will you learn at this job that will help you attain those new roles and responsibilities, or help you advance in your longer-term career goals?** This job will help me refine and reinforce my current skill set and help me immerse myself further into web development. At my current job, the scope is very large, which means my experience and skill in web development is not as concentrated. 4. **Name certifications or education that you are pursuing that will add to your skill set (if applicable)** Finishing Lambda School and obtaining a Linux certification 5. **Explain how you will be able to prioritize work if you are also planning on continuing your education:** My courses are part-time and during the evening, they are not conflicting with a work schedule. |
| 1. **WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE? / WHY SHOULD WE HIRE YOU?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| The interviewer wants to hear why you chose this particular company or position. If you do some research before the interview, you can speak about the things you learned about the company - the company's mission and values, goals, and policies. You can tell the interviewer that the mission and values of the company are in line with what is important to you (be specific about what their values are and tell stories of your own personal experience with those values) and that you are really excited at the potential to add value and grow with a company whose product/work you are passionate about. |
| **Your Turn:** |
| 1. **What are the company’s mission/values/services, and how to you personally relate to them?** Create amazing experiences, Do the right thing, Communicate openly and honestly, spread some laughter and have fun, go for it, seek and share knowledge, do more with less, stay humble. These absolutely resonate with me, especially creating amazing experiences. I am passionate about creating experiences that will delight users and keep them coming back. 2. **What is it about their product or the projects you would be working on that excite you?** Real Estate in itself is extremely interesting. 3. **What similar skills and experience do you have that has prepared you with the knowledge to do this work?** My experiences in software and testing have equipped me with a large scope of tools and experience to solve problems throughout the software development life cycle. |
| 1. **WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| What the employer wants to know here is that you are solution-oriented. Everyone has growth areas, and what matters is how you work to convert on them. You can be honest about your growth area, but do not name a weakness that would be a main responsibility of the job that you are applying for. Name your weakness/growth area, and then talk about specific steps and strategies you use to convert on this growth area and how you have already started to see positive results. |
| **Your Turn:** |
| 1. **Name the weakness/growth area:** I tend to over-think issues 2. **What specific steps are you taking to overcome this growth area?** Improving my coding/pattern recognition, and asking good/researched questions early on to try to improve my efficiency 3. **What positive results have you seen because of your effort?** I am quicker to resolve problems and can find solutions more efficiently – and when I am unable to find solutions, I do not waste too much time before asking researched questions from my tech lead. |
| 1. **WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST STRENGTH?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| The employer wants to see what you really bring to the table! They want to know: What are you really good at? How can you prove that you’re really good at it? How can you apply this strength to their company? The strength that you mention should be directly related to the job you’re applying for – it should be a key word that you saw on the job description that is critically important to the role. |
| **Your Turn:** |
| 1. **Name the strength:** I am able to think outside of the box and come up with solutions to problems while constantly thinking about problems that may arise within my own software. 2. **Give an example of a time when you used that strength. Describe what the need was, and describe step-by-step what you did to meet that need.** Working with TestLink is rough and it is built using PHP, which I was not too familiar utilizing. When we needed to find a solution to the persisting problem of having to alter the output of TestLink which would take our Technical writer hours to do I found a solution that would allow us to create a new report tailored for our uses without affecting the rest of TestLink. I created new components and created changes to these components to meet our requirements within my development environment – I ensured none of the original TestLink components were mutated and after thorough testing, created a shell script to “patch” these changes to the production environment. 3. **End with a statement that acknowledges an area in which this strength would be useful in the job that you are applying for, and how you plan to use your strength to bring value to that task.** Being able to solve problems without mutating current or legacy code is important, and I plan to bring good coding practices and continue to improve and learn |
| 1. **DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS FOR ME?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| WRONG ANSWER: "No, I think you just about covered everything that I wanted to know. I'm sure I'll have more questions if I get the job." Come prepared with 3-4 questions to ask the interviewer. If you don't ask questions, you have missed an opportunity to gather information you need to make a decision about whether this is the right place for you, and is a red flag to the interviewer that you may not curious or excited to learn more. **Don’t ask questions that you could easily answer yourself by doing research on the company website, LinkedIn, or the job description**. Instead, ask questions that will help you better understand the company culture and what it would be like to work there. (ex. How would you describe the company culture and environment here? What do you love about your work and what do you find challenging? What are the top three qualities that describe a top performer in a \_\_\_\_ position [the role you’re applying for]?) |
| **Your Turn:** |
| **Question 1:** How long is this project?  **Question 2:** What does a typical day look like working here?  **Question 3:** How would you describe the environment here?  **Question 4:** What are some qualities that would be indicative of a top performer for this role? |

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| **Part 2: Answer the 3 situational questions below using the STAR method** |
| 1. **Tell me about a time when you had a conflict or a disagreement with someone at work.** |
| **Explanation:** |
| The employer wants to see your communication and collaboration skills. Make sure to emphasize the following points: remaining calm, listening and trying to understand others’ points of view, showing empathy, recognizing where you may need to change or compromise, and a **positive resolution** of the issue. The end result should never be “We agreed to disagree, and that coworker and I never spoke again for the remainder of our time working together.” |
| **Your Turn:** |
| **Situation:** Working with DKW to improve the UI for their product was rough, their team is very resistant to change but I had built a good rep with a few of the engineers and testers at my location. I offered to apply the fixes to a local copy and then have them propose the changes, since the changes needed to be applied for its overall functionality on the system that was being tested by my company. It was a compromise, and I knew that having to create a local variant of their system would take more time but they were happy to help, especially if it would not only bring about a positive outcome but also be relatively low risk.  **Task:** Improve UI for a product outside of my company  **Action:** Using a local VM snapshot of their system I imported my own style sheets on target areas that were corrupted on our system. I detailed the issues I found while I was applying the necessary actions to fix the problems and gave them a report on the errors I found, the fix I applied, and the methodology behind the fix.  **Result:** The problem is fixed locally for our use, and being worked on by their web developer for a future update. |
| 1. **What challenges do you find at work that make it difficult for you to get your work done?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| The employer wants to see your resilience – to see that you can proactively recognize challenges and bounce back from them by using them as a learning experience. This is also an opportunity to demonstrate your self-awareness; are you in touch enough with your work ethic that you can call out things that you struggle with and change your behaviors to address them? |
| **Your Turn:** |
| **Situation:** I tend to over-think issues and attempt to apply immediate Band-Aids to problems before tackling the root cause. We have a small but very active user base that depends on the software to get their work done so my main priority is to get them up and running as soon as possible – but tackling the root cause is very important, so juggling between these has been an issue I am working on.  **Task:** TestLink was unavailable because of an update that adversely affected our LDAPS server.  **Action:** I immediately switched the config to use LDAP instead of LDAPS to allow our users to continue working. Doing this meant the connection was not as secure to, but being in an internal network with no way outside it was deemed appropriate. I then updated my development environment and found the root cause of the issue, and rolled out an update to fix the production version of TestLink.  **Result:** TestLink was fixed and testing was not interrupted by any significant amount of time |
| 1. **Tell me about a time when your manager dropped a huge job on your desk as you were headed out the door. How did you handle this situation?** |
| **Explanation:** |
| The employer wants to see your stress management, prioritization, and organizational skills. Describe how you keep yourself organized – do you use a calendar? Do you use a task management system like Asana or have a system for setting up your daily/weekly/monthly to-do list and priorities? Do you ask for help if you know that the project is time-sensitive and you don’t have the capacity to fully complete it? Are you comfortable communicating limitations and boundaries to someone senior to you? How do you assess what is high priority and what is low priority, and how do you adapt as these priorities change throughout the day? |
| **Your Turn:** |
| **Situation:** During my on boarding and training at Atlas, the person who trained me was offered a better position and put in his two weeks’ notice. I was left with his project after he left of implementing SSO across our application suite and creating a portal to access these applications. This included Thunderbird, Thunderbird Chat, TestLink, Bugzilla, Gitblit, and MediaWiki applications. We wanted to use LDAP to authenticate to all of these, and the system itself (RHEL 7). The requirement was having the ability to add a user to our LDAP and have that user able to sign into a laptop loaded with RHEL and have access to Thunderbird and all of our web applications after authenticating with Apache. That user would have his level of access and privilege on different web applications set by his group.  **Task:** Apply SSO across our internal applications suite using LDAP  **Action:** I started by breaking the problem into pieces and rolling the needed changes incrementally on an app-by-app basis. I started with TestLink the current version, version 1.9.18, already had some measure of LDAP authentication available but not necessarily using the session environment variables. Using the LDAP config with Apache I was able to authenticate TestLink using the session variables using the already existing structure with a few edits to the authentication function. I moved on to Bugzilla and was able to include the email address used within LDAP into the session to extend LDAP SSO to Bugzilla. Finally applied it to MediaWiki very similarly and added emails directly to Thunderbird from Bugzilla alerting users of edits to pages they have edited or created.  **Result:** The result was one of my happiest moments working for Atlas, when we on boarded our newest member added him to the LDAP and watched as he seamlessly integrated into the entire system and had email access and access to our web applications under his specific restrictions immediately. |