# COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEWS - THE "STAR" APPROACH

The acronym **STAR** stands for:

* **Situation**
* **Task/ Target**
* **Action**
* **Result**

It is a universally recognised communication technique designed to enable you to provide a meaningful and complete answer to questions asking for examples.

Many interviewers will have been trained in using the STAR structure. Even if they have not, they will recognise its value when they see it. The information will be given to them in a structured manner and, as a result, they will become more receptive to the messages you are trying to communicate.

## **Step 1 – Situation or Task**

Describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished. With the STAR approach you need to set the context. Make it specific, concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story. State facts, outline the scenario clearly. What was the objective/ goal? What were the measurables?

* Be Specific
* Provide measures
* Outline the time frame
* Provide facts
* Who, what, where and why?

## **Step 2 – Action**

This is the most important section of the STAR approach as it is where you can demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing. Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain *WHAT* you did, *HOW* you did it and *WHY* you did it. In doing so, you will need to remember the following:

* Be personal, i.e., talk about *YOU*, not the rest of the team. Use “I”. What did you *YOU* personally do, what have YOU been responsible for achieving? It is okay to talk about a team when you are discussing teamwork and collaboration, but still emphasis what *YOU* do personally to contribute toward the end goal.
* Go into some detail. Do not assume that the interviewers will guess what you mean. Talk it through step by step. What technologies have you used and why? What methodologies have you followed and why? What strategies have you taken and why?

This is where you can sell important skills. You can demonstrate your knowledge/ understanding on a subject, give specific examples of your experience, demonstrate that you have been there, done that, got the t-shirt and have what is needed to do this next job.

Help the interviewers understand what drove your actions and help them to understand your strategic thinking, technical knowledge and expertise.

## **Step 3 – Result**

Explain what the end result was (tie it in with the facts you gave at the beginning of your answer). Did you achieve your objective? Was it successful? Also, use the opportunity to describe what you accomplished and what you learnt in that situation. This helps you make the answer personal and enables you to highlight further skills.

**Discuss the following:**

* What did you learn?
* What worked?
* What didn’t work?
* How will you do things differently/ better next time?

**The best predictor of future performance, is past performance**

**Top Interview Tips:**

* Know your CV off by heart:
  + Where have you worked and when?
  + What did you do there?
  + What did you achieve there?
  + What did you learn there?
* Revise the job description thoroughly
* Think about your experience, skills and expertise that are relevant to this new role
* Identify example situations/ tasks which you can use to demonstrate your ability to fulfil this new role
* Practice the STAR technique – write down your examples
* Be specific. Be clear. Be confident.