

A complete guide to Behavioral Interviews

Introduction

Behavioral Interviews are taken to evaluate a candidate's past behavior or conduct in certain different situations to analyze/predict their future behavior towards the future employer.

Common Myths regarding Behavioral Interviews

Myth #1 - Are Simple Interviews

Many candidates treat Behavioral Interviews to be easy and simple to crack. The reality is these interviews are often complex and very dense if not prepared well.

Myth #2 - Formality / No Rejection

Many candidates believe that Behavioral Interviews are just for formality. The reality is these interviews can generate red flags based on your answers and can reject your whole candidature even if other interviews have gone well.

Myth #3 - Can be prepared in a day

It is believed that Behavioral Interviews can be prepared a day before the actual interview. The reality is even though we know what questions can be asked, the complexity and rejection often come from the follow-up questions. Thus, sufficient time needs to be invested in its preparation.

Preparation Resources

- Watch CareerVidz YouTube channel for behavioral interview questions.
- Watch Jeff H Sipe's YouTube channel for behavioral interviews.
- Check out a list of good Behavior Interview questions.

Pattern to answer in a Behavioral Interviews

STAR Method

The STAR method is a structured manner of responding to a behavioral interview question.

Situation - Describe the scene and provide the details about the situation or task you accomplished. The situation can be from past job, experience, any event or from personal life.

STAR Method

The interviewer must understand the exact situation and its relevance to the question.

Task - Describe your responsibility in that situation or the goal you worked toward. It's like a list of steps that could help you accomplish the goal or situation.

STAR Method

Action - Describe the actions you took to complete each and every task. These actions should describe how much contribution you made towards accomplishing the situation.

STAR Method

Result - Share the outcomes of the tasks you accomplished by your actions. These results should demonstrate the impact of your actions and describes the lesson learned from them.

Master STAR method across Amazon's Leadership Principles

Customer Obsession

Leaders start with the customer and work backwards. They work vigorously to earn and keep customer trust.

Although leaders pay attention to competitors, they obsess over customers.

Ownership

Leaders are owners. They think long-term and don't sacrifice long-term value for short-term results.

They act on behalf of the entire company, beyond just their own team. They never say “that's not my job.”

Invent and Simplify

Leaders expect and require innovation and invention from their teams and always find ways to simplify. They are externally aware, look for new ideas from everywhere, and are not limited by “not invented here.” As we do new things, we accept that we may be misunderstood for long periods of time.

Are Right, A Lot

Leaders are right a lot. They have strong judgment and good instincts. They seek diverse perspectives and work to disconfirm their beliefs.

Learn and Be Curious

Leaders are never done learning and always seek to improve themselves. They are curious about new possibilities and act to explore them.

Hire and Develop the Best

Leaders raise the performance bar with every hire and promotion. They recognize exceptional talent, and willingly move them throughout the organization. Leaders develop leaders and take seriously their role in coaching others. We work on behalf of our people to invent mechanisms for development like Career Choice.

Insist on the Highest Standards

Leaders have relentlessly high standards – many people may think these standards are unreasonably high. Leaders are continually raising the bar and drive their teams to deliver high quality products, services, and processes. Leaders ensure that defects do not get sent down the line and that problems are fixed so they stay fixed.

Think Big

Thinking small is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Leaders create and communicate a bold direction that inspires results. They think differently and look around corners for ways to serve customers.

Bias for Action

Speed matters in business. Many decisions and actions are reversible and do not need extensive study. We value calculated risk taking.

Frugality

Accomplish more with less. Constraints breed resourcefulness, self-sufficiency, and invention. There are no extra points for growing headcount, budget size, or fixed expense.

Earn Trust

Leaders listen attentively, speak candidly, and treat others respectfully. They are vocally self-critical, even when doing so is awkward or embarrassing. Leaders do not believe their or their team's body odor smells of perfume. They benchmark themselves and their teams against the best.

Dive Deep

Leaders operate at all levels, stay connected to the details, audit frequently, and are skeptical when metrics and anecdote differ.

No task is beneath them.

Have Backbone; Disagree and Commit

Leaders are obligated to respectfully challenge decisions when they disagree, even when doing so is uncomfortable or exhausting. Leaders have conviction and are tenacious. They do not compromise for the sake of social cohesion. Once a decision is determined, they commit wholly.

Deliver Results

Leaders focus on the key inputs for their business and deliver them with the right quality and in a timely fashion. Despite setbacks, they rise to the occasion and never settle.

Story Preparation

Take the above leadership principles and prepare 1-2 experience stories around it using the STAR method. It will cover most of your Behavioral Interview Questions. For eg. (my)

Customer Obsession

Situation - I had just joined XYZ company and was assigned to a project that was already in the development phase for 6 months. The UI presented a screen to the Client for uploading documents. The UI showed all uploaded documents on UI, along with their metadata.

Customer Obsession

Initially, it worked fine due to the limited no. of documents. As the documents increased in the system, this started making UI slower and slower. Soon, the problem became evident to the client and the team was asked about probable solutions.

Customer Obsession

Task - Looking at the problem I created a few tasks that can tackle the problem efficiently such as,

- Improving the performance of UI. (Rendering of grid)
- Improving the performance of backend logic.
- Optimizing the queries that get us the data.

Customer Obsession

- Handling and storage of the document blob efficiently (upload/download/store)
- Improving the search, sorting and filters on UI.

Customer Obsession

Action - Taking up tasks step by step, we implemented various improvements such as,

- Implemented Client Side Pagination. Instead, of rendering all the documents on UI, we paginated it to show a max of 10-20 records. This made rendering of UI faster.

Customer Obsession

- Implemented Server Side Pagination to make queries faster to fetch limited data.
- Implemented Document blob fetching/preview on user action, instead of fetching along with document metadata. The idea was to show only document metadata and interested document preview was done via download API.

Customer Obsession

- Implemented filters, search, and sorting along with paginated queries i.e. removed all the UI processing to the backend.
- Initially, the Document blob was stored in a database. It resulted in slowness of queries. Later, we migrated it to a blob storage solution.

Customer Obsession

Result - After implementing the above actions step by step, it resulted in a drastic improvement in the performance of the system. The queries which took almost 1 minute to fetch the data of X no. of documents, now took nearly 1 sec. The clients were happy and it resulted in trust and new initiatives for the future.

Top Frequently Asked Behavioral Interview Questions

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Tell me about your most challenging Client. How did you resolve their issues and make them satisfied?
- Describe a time when you had to make a decision without having all the data or information you needed.
- Which {company's} leadership principle resonates with you most?

- Tell me about a time when you were working on a project, and you realized that you needed to make changes to what you were doing. How did you feel about the work you had already completed?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you exceeded expectations?
- Can you describe a time when you took the lead on a project?

- Think about a time you received negative feedback. How did you deal with that?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with ambiguity. How did you overcome the ambiguity to reach a positive outcome?
- Have you been stressed over a certain project delivery in the past? Did it affect your work-life balance? How did you deal with it?

- Tell me about a time you have disagreed with your manager and how you handled it.
- How do you motivate others? Can you give me an example of a time you have motivated someone?
- Tell me about a time when you took a risk and failed. What did you learn from that experience?

- What obstacles have you encountered in your career? How did you overcome them?
- Tell me about a time when you have had to work to earn someone's trust.
- Tell me about a time you showed initiative.
- Why do you want to work for {company}?

- **Describe a time when you were given a project to work on, but your responsibilities were unclear. What did you do?**
- **You see a co-worker struggling with a task. What do you do?**
- **Describe for me a time when you had to choose short-term sacrifices to achieve long-term gains.**

- How do you deal with having to provide feedback to someone?
- Tell me about a time you failed to meet a deadline. How did you cope with that?
- Has there been a time when your contribution was overlooked and somebody else from your team took credit for it? How did you deal with it?

- Tell me about a project you are proud of. How did you ensure high standards were met in delivering that project?
- Have you been in a conflict with a fellow coworker? How did you deal with it and what was the end result?

Tips for Interviews

- There is no right or wrong answer. Try to focus on better and positive ways to answer them.
- Apply the STAR pattern to write experience stories around the above behavioral questions.
- Do not prepare for this kind of interview a day before.

Tips for Interviews

- Keep the stories handy for all such interviews. Write the question and describe stories following the STAR pattern.
- If you don't have any such experience stories, try to come up with stories around your past life like school, colleague, events etc

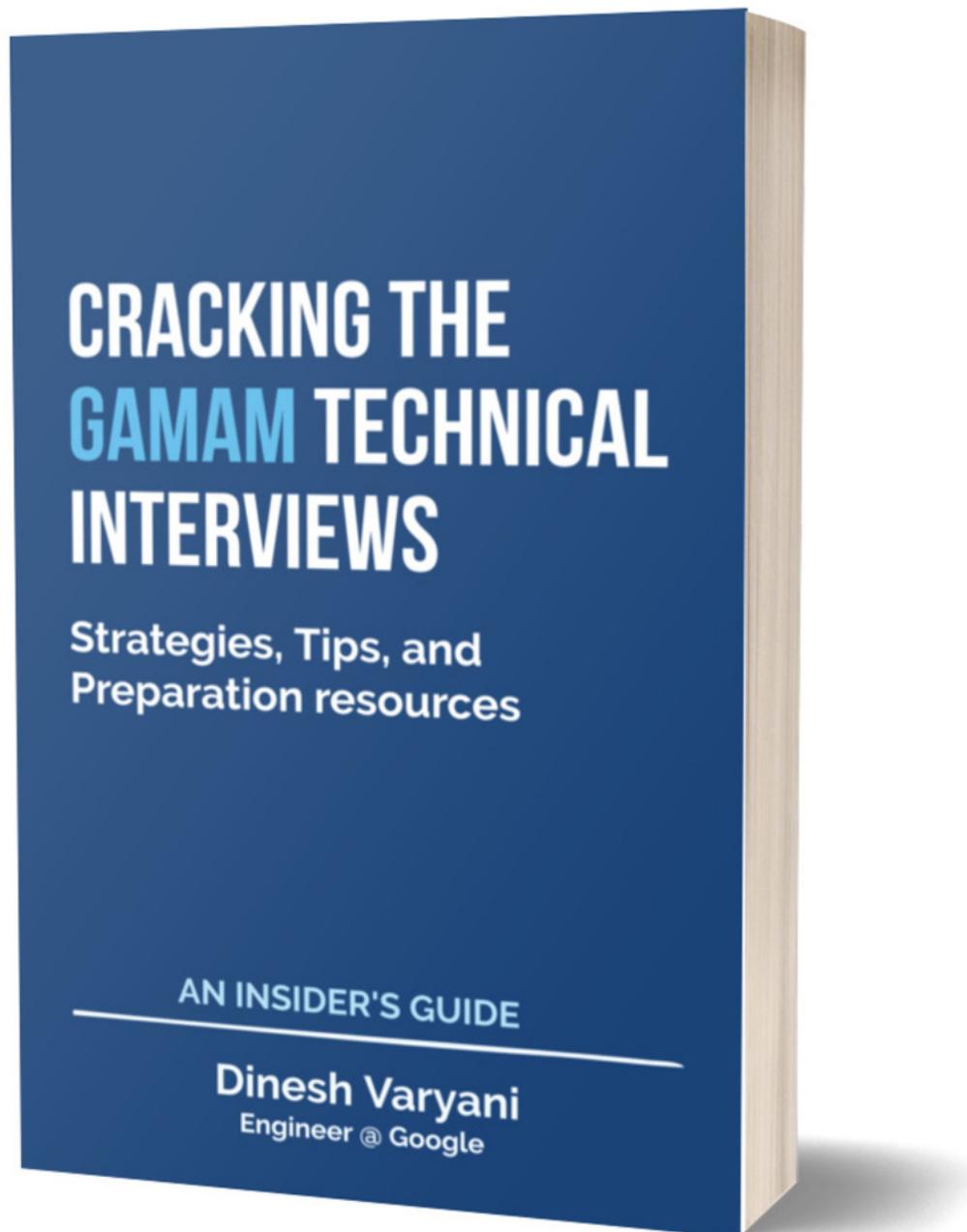
Tips for Interviews

- If you don't have any such experience stories, try to come up with stories about your seniors, and colleagues and see what they have done when faced with such situations.
- If you don't have any such experience for a question, you should tell that I don't have any such experience but I can tell you how would I will react in such situation.

Tips for Interviews

- Avoid being disrespectful, arrogant, and confrontational to any person or company you have worked with.
- Don't lie. Whatever you speak be ready with proof.
- Avoid useless details, make stories/answer short and to the point.
- Always highlight your good qualities in every sentence/paragraph of your answers.

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