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# STAR Interviewing Response Technique for Success in havioral Job Interviews



Job Interview Question Database: 20 Situational Job Interview Questions & Sample Responses

Compare your responses to the excellent examples of responses below. These sample responses have been submitted by a variety of jobseekers interviewing for a variety of jobs. Remember, your experiences are unique and your answers should be your own. Never try to duplicate someone else's interview responses, rather use these responses as a guide to come up with your own perfect interview response.

For more suggestions on how to respond to interview questions designed to test how well you think on your feet, read our article, *Situational Interviews and Stress Interviews: What to Make of Them and How to Succeed in Them*.

1. What would you do if the work of a subordinate or team member was not up to expectations?

#### Sample response:

Luckily, I have quite a bit of previous team experience and have faced this situation a few times in the past. In my experience, the most important first step in dealing with an underperforming subordinate or team member is honest communications. I find that talking with the person can lead to some surprising discoveries, for example, that the person did not understand the assigned tasks, or discovering that the team member is overwhelmed by the assignment. Once I discovered the problem, I could then usually find a solution that allowed the work to move forward. So often in situations like this, the problem is some combination of miscommunications and unrealistic expectations. [contributed by Natalia B.]



A co-worker tells you in confidence that she plans to call in sick while actually taking a week's vacation. What would you do and why?



# mple response:

would tell this co-worker that being dishonest to her boss, as well as her co-workers, is not wise and that it could put her job in jeopardy. I remind her that we all want more vacation time, but we have to earn it, and that taking this extra time hurts everyone in the department because the person's absence will affect productivity.

[contributed by Danielle S.]

3. Describe how you would handle the situation if you met resistance when introducing a new idea or policy to a team or work group.

#### Sample response:

The best way to convince people to accept a new idea is to be able to understand their questions and concerns about the new idea directly. It is also important to stay confident and believe in yourself because if you don't buy it, no one else will either.

[contributed by Alexis]

4. What would you do if the priorities on a project you were working on changed suddenly?

## Sample excellent response:

I would notify everyone working on the project of the changes. I would then want to know why the priorities have changed, and if there is a risk of them changing again in the future. I would then meet with everyone involved with a new strategy to address the new priorities.

[contributed by Andra]

5. How would you handle it if you believed strongly in a recommendation you made in a meeting, but most of your co-workers shot it down?

## Sample excellent response:

I would continue to explain why the recommendation was good, giving concrete examples of what the benefits of my recommendation could be. Ultimately, if my co-workers continued to resist my recommendation, I would have to let it go and move on.

[contributed by Alexis]

6. In a training session, you find that the trainer has a thick accent, and you can't understand what's being said. What would you do?

## Sample excellent response:

Certainly, I would not call the trainer out on it. I would try my best to understand what the trainer is

saying, ask many questions to clarify any unclear parts about the session and compare notes with someone in the session afterward. This way I could make sure that I understood what was being explained. Discussing it afterward would have the added benefit of helping to reinforce the things I learned in the session.

[contributed by Alexis]

7. List the steps that you would take to make an important decision on the job.

## Sample response:



uld ask myself the following questions:



**G+** bw does this decision relate to the company's values and beliefs?

What are the positive and negative impacts this decision could have on the company? ontributed by Danielle S.]

8. What would you do if you realized at deadline time that a report you wrote for your boss or professor was not up to par?

#### Sample response:

If I found myself in this situation, I would meet with my boss, explain the situation, and request an extension. I would also reevaluate my actions to identify what I did wrong in order to make sure the same thing didn't happen again.

[contributed by Andra]

9. How would you deal with a colleague at work with whom you seem to be unable to build a successful working relationship?

### Sample response:

Typically, I pride myself on having a knack for building good working relationships at work. That said, it's certainly possible that I could encounter someone in my professional life who I find challenging to work with. On related e example I can think of happened in my senior year of college, I was placed on a team that had one member that the rest of the team disliked. While this team member was a bit of an outcast, I knew we needed this full commitment to make the project work. Even though I was not the team leader, I took it upon myself to forge a connection — and discovered we had a mutual passion for horses. We didn't end up being best friends but through our common interest, I was able to build enough rapport with him to engage him as a key team member. There is always something that bonds us all together — it is just harder to find with some people than with others.

10. You disagree with the way your supervisor says to handle a problem. What would you do?

#### Sample response:

I would outline why I disagreed with my supervisor and come up with a different way that I think the situation should be handled. I would then sit down with my supervisor — in private — and discuss the problem with him and present how I think it should have been addressed.

[contributed by Andra]

11. Who would you talk to if you discovered that a co-worker was disclosing confidential information that should not be divulged?

#### Sample response:

I would first sit down privately with my co-worker and let that person know what I had discovered. I would make it a dialogue rather than a lecture, with the goal of helping my co-worker realize what a serious mistake sharing this confidential information was and how it could impact both the company and his or her future. If the co-worker was defensive or denied it, or did not agree to stop divulging confidential information, I would be forced to go directly to my manager with the proof that I have of the unethical activities.

[name?]



When would it be appropriate to bring in your supervisor while dealing with an angry customer?



employee, it's my job to explore all the possible options to satisfy customer demands. However, if I see the customer is angry with me personally, it's better to bring in a supervisor because the customer might be more likely to listen to my supervisor than to me. However, it is important to always stay friendly, respectful and polite when dealing with customers in the face of frustration. [contributed by Alexis]

13. How would you attempt to make changes in the process if you felt a policy of your organization was hurting its members/workers?

## Sample response:

I would ask my co-workers if they felt the same way. I would want to make sure that I am not the only employee who feels like the policy is hurting the members/workers. If others agreed with me, I would request a meeting with a supervisor to explain my concerns. At the meeting, I would present an alternative solution.

[contributed by Alexis and Danielle S.]

14. What would a good manager do to build team spirit?

## Sample response:

Most importantly, any plan to build team spirit has to be authentic. We've all seen — or experienced — work environments like in *Office Space* or *The Office*. Anything less than authenticity will be seen as simply going through the motions.

A good manager brings the team together — perhaps on a retreat — to foster communications and develop common goals and objectives. During this gathering, the manager should be able to demonstrate the value of all the team members and reinforce that the team can only fully succeed only through teamwork.

15. How would you organize the steps or methods you'd take to define/identify a vision for your team or your personal job function?

## Sample response:

I believe a good team vision starts first with a strong understanding of the organization's mission. So, my steps would be as follows.

First, I'd review my organization's vision.

Second, I would develop drafts of a team vision statement.

Third, I would call a meeting of the team and have a discussion about how our team fits with the larger organization. Then I would discuss the organization's vision and ask for ideas and suggestions for the team's mission. If asked, I would mention some of my thoughts on our team vision. Fourth, following the meeting, I would craft a vision statement — perhaps with the help of one or two other team members — and then distribute it to the team and ask for feedback. Fifth, I would finalize the vision statement from the comments and feedback from the team, and then post our vision statement in places where all the team members could see it on a regular basis.

How would you react if two teammates were embroiled in a conflict that kept the team from completing its task?

# Gt ple response:

uild team spirit, it would be important that all team members are on the same page and agree on mon goal. Team-building exercises bring a team closer together and strengthen team spirit. For pple, there's an exercise that involves comparing a hammer, string, ruler, and table to work-style preferences. Participants are tasked with bringing a team in conflict into harmony by perfectly balancing the hammer, string, and ruler on the table. Team members should also be made to feel like their opinion matters and their input and ideas are valued by their manager.

[Contributed by Alexis]

17. You don't have the information you need to prioritize your projects. Your co-workers and supervisor are unavailable for you to ask for assistance. How do you handle the situation?

#### Sample response:

My first inclination would be to sit down and review all the projects and examine a couple of key issues — things like deadlines, potential impacts, and involvement of others. Obviously, projects that are mission-critical and have the shortest deadlines need to be addressed first.

If I were still stumped — and my manager and team members were truly unavailable — rather than sitting there paralyzed, I would probably consult a mentor within the organization and seek his or her advice on how to proceed.

18. As a supervisor, you've made an unpopular decision. What action would you take so that morale in the department is not negatively affected?

#### Sample response:

I would call for a meeting to let my employees know that their opinions about my decision are valued, however, I would also explain to them why the decision needed to be made. Sometimes people are more empathetic once they know the reasons for a certain action. I would also explain to my employees what the positive impacts of my decisions will be down the line. [Contributed by Alexis]

19. In a team leadership role, you discover that a team member has gone "over your head" to propose an idea or complain about an issue without talking to you first. How do you handle the situation?

# Sample response:

Often these situations arise when an individual feels his or her opinions or ideas are not being heard,

so rather than assume the person is simply trying to make trouble, I'd first need to get the details of the situation.

The first thing I would do is evaluate how this person has been treated in the workplace to determine if they might be disgruntled. Next, I would call a private meeting with the person and simply have a conversation about the situation and how and why it happened.

Finally, if it turns out the person is simply unhappy and I feel I have heard their concerns and done all I can to smooth over the problem to no avail, then I would need to meet again with my boss to have a discussion about how to handle the employee moving forward.

You have been placed in charge of a project team for a new initiative. What are your first steps to get the team going and complete the project?

# sample response:

ald call the team together for an initial meeting to make sure we all know each other and to set some initial expectations for the team. Once the team has been established, I would move ahead with the project in these basic steps:

First, explain the task at hand. We need to define the purpose of the project.

Second, we would outline the project's steps.

Third, we divide the process into smaller parts and assign individual team members tasks to complete, based on their individual skill sets.

Fourth, I would assign deadlines and budgets.

Fifth, the team would execute the plan and deal with any circumstances that arise as we move forward toward completion.

Sixth, we complete the project — as planned, on deadline and budget (hopefully) — and meet as a team one final time to discuss any unanticipated problems or issues that arose and how we can prepare and better address them in the future.

To view the original version of this article please click here.

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#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

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