RCS Quick Tips: Interview Story Preparation

KEY VALUE ADDED OF A GOOD STORY: Does the candidate meet our job requirements?

While Recruiters expect Ross students to have a high level of general MBA skills and traits, they are also looking for specific skills that meet the job requirements and traits that align with their company's culture and values. These specific skills and traits are outlined in the job description. Behavioral interviewing is a technique used to assess candidates' skills, traits and overall fit for the role and the organization by focusing in on very specific descriptions of what you have actually done. The presumption is that your past behavior is the best indicator of future behavior.

Example behavioral interview questions

- "Tell me about a time when you had to persuade someone to adopt your point of view."
- "What's the hardest professional decision you've ever had to make?"
- "Tell me about your project management experience"
- "Tell me more about this bullet in your resume."

How to respond

Answers to questions during behavioral interview should generally be a 1-2 minute long "sandwich" providing details about what you have done:

DIRECT ANSWER
COMPELLING EXAMPLE
TAKEAWAY
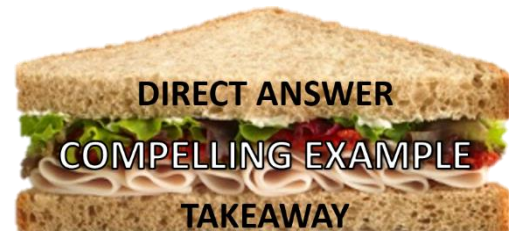
Answer the Question Directly (10 to 20 seconds)

The key is to be concise and focus on the actual question asked, not twist it to something else you had previously prepared to answer. For example: (Q) What is your most significant strength? (A) "My most significant strength is my ability to motivate others."

Support Your Answer With a Compelling Example (60 to 90 seconds)

Use the Context-Action-Result (CAR) format to ensure your example is concrete, compelling, and structured. In the following example, notice how much more specific and interesting the first lead in is compared to the second: "Last semester I was working on a class project with a seriously demoralized team" vs "Motivating others is important and something I think I'm good at." With the right lead in, you capture the interviewer's attention and make it easy for yourself to stay focused on the rest of the story: how you handled it and what happened.

Takeaway (10 to 20 seconds)

After your example, wrap up with a takeaway. Your takeaway can be an observation about how you anticipate using the skill you described in the role for which you're interviewing, or a lesson you learned that reinforces your fit.

Creating a Behavioral Questions Matrix and developing a set of CAR format examples

Creating a matrix like the one on the next page will help you identify stories for questions most likely to be asked by interviewers in a single industry (e.g. – consulting) or single functional role across industries (e.g. – finance manager). If you are interviewing for different roles, you'll likely need to create a different matrix for each. In either case, we recommend you revisit and refine your matrix for each company with whom you will interview to ensure you're prepared for their unique culture and any unique questions they may throw at you.

As you create your matrix, be sure there are at least two stories in each column and one story in each row. By doing so, you'll ensure you are prepared to reinforce how you meet their job requirements with every question asked.

Once you have completed the matrix, use the Response Structure "Sandwich" Template to think through how to tell each of your stories in a compelling, concrete, and organized way.

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Sample Question Matrix

JOB REQS / TOPICS	Strong analytical skills	Excellent verbal and written communications	Project management experience	Leadership and ability to influence others	History of drive and personal impact
Leadership					Accenture conference story
Teamwork			Borders project story		
Someone you admire				Mentor story	
Strengths (2)	AMD Supply Chain project story	AMD presentation story			
Weaknesses					Clerestory start-up story
Significant failure		DTA partnership program story			
Ethical dilemma				Detroit Country Day story	
Under pressure	Ford executive workshop story				
Difficult team member			Ford CRM project story		

RESPONSE TEMPLATE (1-2 MINUTES)

Response or CLAIM?

Support

Context	Action	Result

Takeaway