

How To Answer Toughest Behavioral Interview Questions and Answers

Part 2

For traditional interview questions, the interviewer may ask questions that will eventually show your educational background, skills, abilities, etc. But in the behavioral interview questions, the interviewer focuses on how you were able to handle different work situations in the past.

1. Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it

It is advisable for you to use the **STAR** method to help you have a more structured answer. Using this method will provide you all the information that the interviewer is looking for.

The STAR method includes the following steps:

Situation: You should start by describing the situation that you were or the task that you needed to complete. You must describe a specific situation or event.

Task: Describe the goal that you were looking forward to achieving

Action: Describe the specific action that you took to address the situation. You are also explaining the actions you took to reach your goals.

Result: You must be able to give the result of your actions using specific details. The result is going to be an important part of your response because the interviewer asked about a time that you achieved success. Meaning that there would definitely be a result.

Answering this question, you have to:

- Make sure the situation you are describing is relevant
- Make sure that you are clear and realistic

Sample Answers

“In my recent internship program, I set a personal goal to accomplish my objective for my internship which is developing my experience in IT support. I also set a goal to learn the basics of computer programming before the end of my internship program. I worked really closely with the IT and programming team to make sure I develop my skills. At the end of my internship, I had 1- year experience in IT support role and was able to horn my programming skills to intermediate level”.

‘This year, I set to push my customer service skills from intermediate to advance. I decided to work closely with the customer service department to learn the core of customer service from experts. I also took professional classes in customer relations management. After working really close with the customer service department for that, I was amazed at how good I have become with my customer service skills that even customers spoke very well of me to my boss”.

2. Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your Performance

When interviewers ask this question, they simply want to understand how you take your work (how much you care about your job) and to what extent do you consider yourself responsible for your success in the role.

Take note of the following before you attempt the question:

- Make sure the example you are giving is relevant to the job that you are applying for
- Talk about your previous role
- Give tangible reasons why you think you were not satisfied
- Give an example of what you have learned
- State how your learnings have helped you improve

Sample Answers

“When I got my first job as a marketer and was given a target for the month, I was overwhelmed by what I was supposed to achieve, so I simply went out to get customers the possible way I thought. At the end of the month, I noticed I was the only one in the team that did not meet up with the target. I felt really bad.

I spoke to my boss about it, then he advised me to be more strategic and create a plan before carrying out any action. Working with his advice, I devised a marketing strategy and broke down plans to achieve my goals before I went out. After working with my strategy I become one of the top marketers in my company. I realized that it is very important to plan and that doing too many things at the same time does not guarantee success”.

“At a point in my current job, I discovered that I was used to working in a team and because of that I became too dependent on other team members to get things done. My supervisor talked to me about it, and I started to be more responsible in carrying out my task and I wanted to start working more independently. I worked closely with my supervisor so she could give me personal tasks which she did. After doing more task alone, I develop a better sense of independence carrying out my task. Because I started working independently I developed other skills like advanced Excel skills that I applied to make my work better”.

3. Tell me about a time when you worked under close supervision or extremely loose supervision. (How did you handle that?)

Most times when interviewers ask this question, they want to know how well you can work in a team, how you relate with a superior and how well you can work independently.

When answering the question, always talk about;

- What the situation was like
- The action you took to handle the situation
- What you learned
- How you finally handled the situation

Sample Answers

“In my previous job, I was working under a supervisor that was almost always busy with official duties, so he did not really have the time to supervise my task. It was quite challenging for me as an entry-level staff member with very little experience in Human resources. I decided to ask my colleagues in the same department how they carried out their task and they were always willing to help me through my task. Getting more knowledge from other people helped me work better and deliver result to my supervisor with ease”.

(Working under loose supervision)

“In my previous job, I was working as a content developer for our media team, but my line manager’s supervision was too close and almost intense. She watched everything I do and virtually sits by me almost all day. I felt very uncomfortable with it because it kept me under pressure almost all the time. Over time, I discovered that she did not really trust me to handle projects alone because I was new. I decided I was going to build her trust for the projects I handled. I talked to her about handling a project without supervision, she agreed reluctantly. I did my best to research and perform well in the project. The project was very successful, and since then she really did not need to supervise me with so much intensity”.

(Working under close supervision).

4. Tell me about a time when you went above your duty to do a job

When interviewers ask this question, they simply want to know how passionate you are about your job. They would also love to know the extent you can go to get your job done. Interviewers also use this to know how result-oriented you are.

Sometimes interviewers ask this question to see if you are the kind of person that is ready to take challenges and goes over the minimum to ensure that the job is done properly (when necessary)

These are aspects you should focus on when answering this question:

- Focus on the goal of the question which is over and beyond
- Focus on the qualities rather than the situation
- Focus on understanding what the interviewer means by above your duties
- Understand how you would explain over your duty to the interviewer.

Avoid the following:

- Avoid exaggerating anything
- Don't be in a haste to answer the question
- Avoid giving an example that is not related to the question

Sample Answers

"For me, I think that **going beyond my call of duty** is making sure that the right things are done at the right time and not just doing what I am expected to do. A very big company contacted us to get them the invoice for a range of product. The mail was sent to our mailbox. Fortunately, I pick it up from the mailbox and discovered it was going to be late by Monday and it was already Friday. I took the mail home did my research and forwarded them the invoice even if it was not my duty. The following week we were awarded the multi-million contract".

"Going beyond my call of duty is going out of my way to make sure that everything works out perfectly. For example, I once worked as a logistics manager, so one day our big client made an order that needs to leave that night, I decided to join people doing the package even if I was a manager till almost midnight. I did not want the client to lose trust in our vision which is express national delivery. I knew that was the only thing I could do to save the moment"

5. Tell me about a time you disagreed with a decision that was made at work

Employers understand that no two people are the same, and working together with people there will be points of agreement and disagreement. Most times, interviewers ask this question because they want to know how well you can work in a team, and how well you deal with disagreement.

When answering this question, you should focus on:

- The decision you disagreed with
- Why you disagreed with the decisions
- The alternative suggestion that you offered
- The result of the disagreement

You should avoid:

- Using negative words on people involved in the decision making
- Avoid being defensive
- Be careful to not sound opinionated

Sample Answers

“My team members were working on a publication for the company, and my supervisor and other members of the team were keen about setting time targets to help us come up with the publication. I disagreed with that, I know setting a time target puts you on your feet to get the job done, but it also creates a tense environment and team members will work under duress which will not help them see things from their creative space. I told them that it is better we take our time and come up with something that is worth it at the end of the day. After a lot of deliberations, my supervisor and other team members agreed with me and the publication still stood out as one of the best that we have ever done”.

“I was working on a project that needed us to reach out to so many people. My boss instructed me to go out on rallies so that we can create awareness of our program. I did not agree with his instruction on going on the street of Lagos for a rally. I advised him that we should run an internet campaign that it is fast, easy and cheaper. He was really impressed with my online campaign suggestion that we carried out and we were able to reach out to the number of people that we wanted to reach out to”.

6. Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it

Interviewers ask this question because they want to have an idea about how determined you are, how purposeful you are, and also want to have an idea of your vision and goal to see how it points at you being the best fit for the job.

Use the STAR method to answer this question effectively

You should focus on the following:

- You should focus on telling the interviewer about the goal
- How you set to achieve the goal
- The action you took to achieve success
- The result of the action that you took

Sample Answers

“When I first got to my current company, I discovered that increasing the customer base was the core of what the company wants to achieve. I set a goal to contribute to a least 10% to the existing customer base of the company. To achieve that I did a research on what method the company has been using, I decided to take a course in a marketing and sales promotion. At the end of the course I was able to better make use of online marketing solution as well as offline and PR. At the end of that year I was able to contribute over 10% to our customer base and my boss my very happy”.

“During my internship period in my previous company, I set a goal that I would build my career in human resources even if I was just a front desk officer. I always spoke and interacted with the human resources department to get a grasp of what they are doing. I took a course in HR and indirectly practiced in my company. At the end of my one year internship program, I was able to discover my career path, and had gained useful experience in Human Resources”.

7. Can you an example of a time that you were pleased with your work (what happened, what was your reaction)

When an interviewer asks you this question, the interviewer simply wants to understand what success means to you. Simply put; the interviewer wants to have an idea of your definition of success and a feel of what brings satisfaction to you.

The interviewer also wants to know how much concern you have for the growth of the company.

When answering this question, focus on:

- What exactly you did
- The actions you took that led to success
- Why you were pleased with the actions
- What effect did the action have

Avoid:

- Bragging
- Exaggeration

Sample Answers

“I was handling a project to do a blog post that would inspire people. So I did a research on topics that people will be interested in and a topic that can help people become better. I asked a couple of friends about their suggestion and I started the post. I also reached out to CEO’s that could be a source of inspiration to others. When we published the post, we discovered that we got far more recognition than what we planned for initially and we received an enormous turn out of testimonial that affected our sales that year. I was very pleased with the approach that I took to make that project a success”.

“In my first job, I was working as a sales intern, but I was really interested in pushing my sales skills to the next level. I told my supervisor to allow me sell a product on my own without any guidance or assistance. She agreed, so I did my research, used my internet and PR skills to sell over 90% of the product that I was given. I was really pleased with the fact that I was able to achieve that level of success even with my limited access as an intern”.

8. Can you give an example of a time that you solved a problem

When interviewers ask this question, they are really interested in how you go about solving a problem. The interviewer looks forward to understanding your problem-solving skills to know how well you will deal with challenges on the job.

How to answer this question:

- Identify the problem
- Clearly explain the method you used to solve the problem
- Why you decided to use the approach
- What the solution to the problem was eventually

Sample Answers

“In my role as the growth lead in my previous company, I was in charge of managing the growth of the company and to make sure that everything that will finally lead to increased revenue is functioning well. At a point, I noticed that our growth was limited to just one source (online source) and this was limiting the revenue capacity that we would have gotten over time.

Our offline activities were declining fast, and according to my research, I noticed that a better portion of our revenue can best be tapped into from offline activities within our niche. So I called to talk to our sales and marketing team to see how best we can handle the situation. We agreed and came up with offline branding and a lot of PR strategies to put our brand in front of people’s eyes. After a while we noticed that we now had a good number of walk-in request and this increased our client base and revenue too”

“In my role as the Human resources manager, I was responsible for staff welfare and management. During the course of my work, I noticed that we were finding it difficult to get the best candidates for our positions and that of clients. This became a big problem because this was the service that we provide to customers and not getting it right would have an effect on our reputation.

I called a meeting with other Human Resource executives and we tried to find out what we are not doing well, and how fast we can get candidates to clients as early as possible. After series of deliberations, we discovered that we don’t search for our candidates the right way, so we decided to add a page to our website where we can have the database of candidates for different positions. We also decided to use online tools like LinkedIn to search for candidates. We found out that we wait till there is so much pressure to start head hunting for talents, so we decided that we will start processing the candidate request as soon as a request is made. All the reformation helped us get candidates fast and also retained our clients”.

9. Can you give an example of a time when you experienced difficulty at work

This is a broad question, and it can come in different forms. Interviewers ask this question basically for these reasons; they want to understand what you consider to be difficult (this largely depends on how you choose to answer the question).

To know how you go about identifying a problem and your approach to solving it. When you are answering this question, you should focus on the following:

- Focus on talking about a difficult situation on a problem that you have successfully resolved
- Focus on talking about a problem that is related to your work
- Carefully make the interviewer understand what caused the problem
- State the actions you took that solved the problems

The STAR method will help you answer this question well

You should also avoid making the following mistakes:

- Avoid talking about your personal problem
- Avoid dwelling too much on the damage the problem caused, focus on what you learned instead.

Sample Answers

“In my current internship in the product management department, the customer service personnel directed a customer to me that was really upset with a particular functionality of our product. The customer explained that it was the major reason she bought the product and she is so angry that the product cannot satisfy her needs. I talked to everyone in the team to see how we can handle the problem, but the solution was not forth coming.

So I pleaded with the customer and assured her that I will make sure that we give her a new one with the functionality she intends to see. So instead of just solving the problem, I decided that we add that function to our new product, and promote the product with the new function when it is out.

At the end of the day, we achieved solving the woman’s problem as well as satisfying our customers with our products by adding a function. This led to a great brand and product awareness”.

“In my current position as customer success executive, we noticed that we were focusing on getting more customers to buy our product and services than retaining them. This was a major problem that everyone in the company was yet to resolve. This created a lot of tension for the marketing team, because they kept thinking of how to get customers.

I thought of how we could improve our customer retention to enable us build loyalty in our customers. I came up with a plan for us to improve our reward system for customers and also how we can improve engagement with our customers. I decided that we should create social media pages on different platforms where we can reach out to our customers and help them even before they visit our website. So we improved engagement with our customers and that way we were able to increase our customer retention and revenue for the company”

10. Can you tell me about a time that you disagreed with your supervisor

This question sounds like a trap. When interviewers ask this question, they want to find out how you handle disagreement especially with a superior.

The interviewer is aware of the fact that disagreement happens, so the interviewer is not trying to stir up your anger, the interviewer just wants to know how you communicate your differences with a superior person.

Interviewers ask this to also know how well you will work with a supervisor, and your ability to compromise.

When you are answering this question, you should focus on the following:

- How the disagreement with your supervisor helped you learn how to better deal with co-workers

You should also avoid:

- Dwelling on the disagreement for too long
- Being disrespectful talking about your supervisor
- Playing the victim

Sample Answer

“In my position as a Human Resources Executive, I disagreed with my supervisor about making sales representatives and customer care executives work during the weekends. Rather than talking to her where the sales and customers service executives were I spoke to her about it privately in her office. I was open and honest with her about how I feel these people will feel they are over used. After our discussion, I became clear about the motive of the decision.

The decision was taken because we have greater customer turn out during the weekends even more than week days and we cannot afford to lose that. She also explained to me that the management is working on their compensation plan. It then occurred to me that the disagreement was just a simple misunderstanding. The disagreement made me understand the importance of communicating and how to better deal with issues at its formative stage”.