1/4 How to prepare for behavioral interview?

Collect stories, assign keywords, practice the STAR format

Keywords

List important keywords that will be populated with your personal stories. Most common keywords are given in the table below

Conflict Resolution	Negotiation	Compromise to achieve goal	Creativity	Flexibility	Convincing
Handling Crisis	Challenging Situation	Working with difficult people	Another team priorities not aligned	Adjust to a colleague style	Take Stand
Handling –ve feedback	Coworker view of you	Working with a deadline	Your strength	Your weakness	Influence Others
Handling failure	Handling unexpected situation	Converting challenge to opportunity	Decision without enough data	Conflict Resolution	Mentorship/ Leadership

Stories

1. List all the organizations you have been a part of. For example
    1. Academia: BSc, MSc, PhD
    2. Industry: Jobs, Internship
    3. Societies: Cultural, Technical, Sports
2. Think of stories from step 1 that can fall into one of the keywords categories. The more stories the better. You should have at least 10-15 stories.
3. Create a summary table by assigning multiple keywords to each stories. This will help you filter out the stories when the question asked in the interview. An example can be seen below

Story 1:	[Convincing] [Take Stand] [influence other]
Story 2:	[Mentorship] [Leadership]
Story 3:	[Conflict resolution] [Negotiation]
Story 4:	[decision-without-enough-data]

STAR Format

Write down the stories in the STAR format as explained in the 2/4 part of this cheat sheet. This will help you practice the organization of story in a meaningful way.

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2/4 How to prepare for behavioral interview?

Direct*, meaningful*, personalized*, logical*

*(Respective colors are used to identify these characteristics in the example)

Example: "Tell us about a time when you had to convince senior executives"

Situation

Explain the situation and provide necessary context for your story.

S

"I worked as an intern in XYZ company in the summer of 2019. The project details provided to me was elaborative. After some initial brainstorming, and research I realized that the project approach can be modified to make it more efficient in terms of the underlying KPIs. I decided to talk to my manager about it."

Task

Explain the task and your responsibility in the situation

T

"I had an hour-long call with my manager and explained him in detail the proposed approach and how it could improve the KPIs. I was able to convince him. He asked me if I will be able to present my proposed approach for approval in front of the higher executives. I agreed to it. I was working out of the ABC(city) office and the executives need to fly in from XYZ(city) office."

Action

Walk through the steps and actions you took to address the issue

A

"I did a quick background check on the executives to know better about their area of expertise so that I can convince them accordingly. I prepared an elaborative 15 slide presentation starting with explaining their approach, moving onto my proposed approach and finally comparing them on preliminary results.

Result

State the outcome of the result of your actions

R

"After some active discussion we were able to establish that the proposed approach was better than the initial one. The executives proposed a few small changes to my approach and really appreciated my stand. At the end of my internship, I was selected among the 3 out of 68 interns who got to meet the senior vice president of the company over lunch."

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3/4 How to answer a behavioral question?

Understand, Extract, Map, Select and Apply

Example: "Tell us about a time when you had to convince senior executives"

Understand

Understand the question

Example: A story where I was able to convince my seniors. Maybe they had something in mind, and I had a better approach and tried to convince them

Extract

Extract keywords and tags

Extract useful keywords that encapsulates the gist of the question

Example:

[Convincing], [Creative], [Leadership]

Map

Map the keyword to your stories

Shortlist all the stories that fall under the keywords extracted from previous step

Example:

Story1, Story2, Story3, Story4, … , Story N

Select

Select the best story

From the shortlisted stories, pick the one that best describes the question and has not been used so far in the interview

Example: Story3

Apply

Apply the STAR method

Apply the STAR method on the selected story to answer the question

Example: See Cheat Sheet 2/3 for details

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4/4

Behavioral Interview Cheat Sheet

Summarizing the behavioral interview

How to prepare for the interview

1 — Gather important topics as keywords
Understand and collect all the important topics commonly asked in the interview

2 — Collect your stories
Based on all the organizations you have been a part of, think of all the stories that fall under the keywords above

3 — Practice stories in STAR format
Practice each story using the STAR format. You will have to answer the question following this format.

4 — Assign keywords to stories
Assign each of your story one or more keywords. This will help you recall them quickly

5 — Create a summary table
Create a summary table mapping stories to their associated keywords. This will be used during the behavioral question

How to answer a question during interview

U — Understand the question
Understand the question and clarify any confusions that you have

E — Extract the keywords
Try to extract one or more of the keywords from the question

M — Map the keywords to stories
Based on the keywords extracted, find the stories using the summary table created during preparation (Step 4)

S — Select a story
Since each keyword maybe assigned to multiple stories, select the one that is most relevant and has not been used.

A — Apply the START format
Once the story has been shortlisted, apply STAR format on the story to answer the question.

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