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Article for Module 2
Good STAR Stories Matter, Especially in Virtual Interviews

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Author: Julia Wuench. **Source:** Taken from <u>Forbes</u>.
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No matter what job you're interviewing for and in whatever industry, it's nearly a guarantee that there will be a "behavioral" component to the interview. Behavioral interviews aim to get at how you behave in certain professional situations. This information is crucial for employers as they're making hiring decisions. You will be asked questions like "Tell me about a time when you had conflict with a colleague," "When is a time that you had to lead in an ambiguous environment?" and so on.

Behavioral interviews have always mattered, but they can hold particular weight when interviews take place in a virtual setting. It's inherently harder to gauge body language and overall interpersonal energy from a virtual interview. Therefore, interviewers may lean more heavily on behavioral interview questions over video.

Behavioral interviews truly transcend industry and job function. I regularly help prepare my clients for behavioral interviews at Fortune 500 companies. My husband co-owns a restaurant, and he and his team always conduct behavioral interviews even before hiring hourly wait staff.

Employers want to know how they can expect you to react in differing circumstances. In order to ace these interviews, you need two things.

1. An arsenal of quality go-to stories you can pull from, and
2. A STAR framework for each story.

While it might seem silly and over-engineered at first, my clients who write out their behavioral stories in STAR format ace their interviews at a higher rate.

Here is what STAR stands for:

S: Situation
T: Task
A: Action
R: Result

Don't worry about being overly scripted when you prepare. This will only make you more comfortable with your own stories. Then, when you can recite the STAR framework for each story from memory, you can go a bit more off-script.

An example of a great STAR story is below:

Prompt: "Tell me about a time when you demonstrated leadership."

Situation

In my second year as Manager for X company, I was nominated to be the Chair of the Women's Employee Resource Group for the firm. My responsibilities included generating monthly content for members, cultivating community through monthly attendance at meetings, and being a spokesperson to leadership for the concerns women were facing within the organization.

[What works: Sets context, establishes role as leader, explains big picture goals of the role, concise and not overly descriptive.]

Task

However, when I was nominated, the attendance at monthly meetings was poor. Despite being a company of 5,000 people where 50% are women, we were only seeing 3-4 women turn out for the monthly meetings. My job was to increase attendance and engagement in the Employee Resource Group.

[What works: Explanation of the problem, using numbers and quantification. Clear explanation of the task at hand.]

Action

I started by assembling a member management committee. We then created and disseminated a survey to all of the women at the company asking them what kinds of content they were seeking, what they wanted more of, and potential issues or reasons for not attending meetings.

[What works: Describe actions succinctly, not elaborating unnecessarily, actions indicate leadership by leveraging other individuals to help and collect data.]

Result

The results of the survey were two-fold: 1) We found that the time of the meetings was preventing women from attending. And 2) We discovered that the content and guest speaker content of the past was a mismatch with what our women wanted to hear

and learn about. By changing the monthly meeting time, and hiring speakers to present on topics that were top of mind, we grew monthly attendance by over 500%.

[What works: Clear explanation of survey findings as two-fold. Explains each result that corresponds to the survey finding. Quantifies the end result in terms of percentage growth of monthly attendance.]

You might have a story that can double as a "conflict with a manager" and "managing up" story. That's okay! You need about 5-7 quality anecdotes in your arsenal to make sure you're prepared for all of the behavioral questions that come your way.

Try the STAR framework for your next behavioral interview. I promise it won't disappoint.