

THE BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW MAKES A COMEBACK

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One of the most important aspects of landing that dream job is the interview. Although there are many types of interviews, “behavioral interviews”, which have been conducted for over twenty-five years, are popping up more and more frequently. Employers view them as one of the best predictors of success and longevity in new employees. While information is readily available about the more traditional styles of job interviews, let’s take a look at what the behavioral interview is all about.

The idea behind behavioral interviewing is that past performance in particular situations is the most accurate predictor of future performance in similar situations. By doing a bit of probing, the interviewer asks the candidate to describe how he or she handled certain experiences in the past. The answers to these questions reveal whether the candidate used the skills (or behaviors) that are most relevant to the job for which he or she is applying.

For an interviewer, the key to success in using behavior based interviewing is the preparation that is done beforehand. It is essential that the skills and behaviors required for the job are clearly defined. Once those are determined, it is easier to gauge the applicant’s potential for success. Interviewers should design questions that will elicit detailed responses. The more details that are provided, the better! If the first account of the candidate’s past experience is too broad, the interviewer needs to probe further to determine if the candidate possesses the desired characteristics.

Candidates are not asked questions in a behavioral interview. Instead they are encouraged to describe their response to specific situations from their past employment. A good example of this approach is, “Describe a time when you had too many things to do and were required to prioritize your tasks.”

A candidate’s response to a past negative situation can provide some of the best insight into their future employment success. Specifically, the interviewer seeks insight into how the candidate made the best of a bad situation and/or if the situation had a positive outcome.

While candidates may be aware of the skills that are needed for a job based on the job’s description, they rarely expect this style of interview. Most interviewers are still using the traditional methods of collecting employment history information. But as more and more employers realize the value of looking at past behavior as a predictor of future job success, they will undoubtedly utilize the behavior interview more frequently. Bottom line: while candidates prepare for that big opportunity to impress a future employer, they should spend some time remembering how they handled business situations in the past and how they can use those stories to their advantage.

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