

100 questions

BY HUMAN RESOURCES EXPERT
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How to Master Behavioral Interviews

*Properly answering these 100 questions will help job seekers
make the final candidate list*



PHOTO BY STEVE BARRETT

Behavioral Interviewing is defined as a technique used by employers that asserts that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar situation. More and more employers are using this approach to make solid hiring decisions. How can you best present yourself during a behavioral interview — when it really matters? Practice answering the 100 questions on pages 2-5 using the recommended CALL approach, and land that next job offer.

Some background: The concept of behavioral interviewing was developed in the 1970's by industrial psychologists. The goal

the best answers. To sell themselves effectively, they should respond to the behavioral interview questions in a way that shows the potential employer their skills match the employers' needs. It is vital for candidates to prepare by identifying the accomplishments that prove they'd be the perfect employee for the job.

- Think of examples when you have cut costs, introduced a new approach, increased productivity, and encouraged teamwork.
- Give concrete examples of the technical skills and competencies required for the position.

- Assess your answers using the **CALL** format:

C = Circumstances: What were you tasked with doing and why.

A = Actions: Explain what steps you took.

LL = Lasting Legacy: Explain the result you achieved.

Most importantly, be prepared to provide evidence of your top performance so you'll be ready for that important interview.

Good luck! — *Sharon Armstrong*

was to help the managers more thoroughly analyze the job they were offering so they could more precisely know what characteristics and experiences an ideal candidate needed to have.

Here's how it works: The interviewer picks which job-related questions to ask, based on technical and interpersonal aspects of the position, as well as the expected job outcomes. Remember, these questions are aimed to pull stories from the candidates about real-life work experiences they have had — and their answers illustrate an ability to perform the essential functions of the job.

What candidates need to do: It behooves candidates to understand this approach so they will be prepared and confident to give

READY TO NAIL THAT INTERVIEW? STUDY THESE 100 QUESTIONS



100questions

ACCEPTS CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

1. Tell us about a time when your work on an idea of yours was criticized. How did you handle it?

ABILITY TO WORK UNDER PRESSURE

2. Describe a situation that required you to work under pressure and tell us how you reacted.

3. Tell us of a time when you were given a job or assignment where you had no prior training. How did you learn to do the job? How did it work out?

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

4. Describe your three greatest accomplishments to date.

5. What was the most satisfying goal you accomplished in your last job?

6. Give us another example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.

7. Describe a time when you set your sights too high.

8. What are some obstacles that you have had to overcome to get where you are today? How did you handle them?

CAN HANDLE CHALLENGES

9. Describe a situation when you found yourself challenged. Were you successful? If not, why?

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

10. Tell us about a time when you had to use your spoken communication skills in order to get across a point that was important to you.

11. Tell us about a job experience in which you had to speak up and tell other people what you thought or felt. Was it difficult for you to do?

12. Describe the most significant written document, report, or presentation that you've completed.

13. Give an example of a time when you were able to communicate successfully with another person — even if that individual may not have personally liked you.

14. Have you had to make a presentation? When? What was the goal? What was the outcome?

15. Please discuss an important written document you were required to complete.

16. Have you had to “sell” an idea to your co-workers or group? How did you do it? Did they “buy” it?

17. Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

18. How do you typically deal with conflict? Give an example. Also tell of a time you had to manage a conflict or dispute among direct supports or team members.

19. Describe a time when you worked with others who did not work well together. How did you deal with it?

COPING SKILLS

20. Talk about a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?

21. Describe a high stress situation when it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude.

22. When you encounter a roadblock, what do you do? Give us an example of a situation.

CREATIVITY

23. Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed. What was the outcome?

CUSTOMER SERVICE

24. What is your philosophy of good customer service? Describe a time when you used this customer philosophy to deal with a perplexing problem.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE

25. Tell us about a time when you recently had to deal with a difficult team member. Describe what you did.

26. Think about a difficult boss or other person who has challenged you. What made him or her difficult? How did you successfully interact with this person?

27. Describe the worst customer or co-worker you have had, and talk about how you dealt with him or her.

DECISION-MAKING

28. Tell us about the riskiest decision you have made in your career. Tell us about a difficult decision you've made in the last year.

29. Give an example of a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

30. Give us an example of a time when you had to make a split second decision. Was the comfortable for you?

31. Tell us about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision. What was the outcome?

32. Give an example of a time when you had to keep from speaking or making a decision because you did not have enough information.

33. Describe a decision that you made within the last year that you're very proud of.

DELEGATION

34. Talk about how you usually delegate projects, and name a time when you felt you were most successful at doing this. Was there a time you felt you could have done a more effective job? When? How?

35. Describe a time when you were given a vague assignment, yet handled it successfully. What did you do?

INITIATIVE

36. Describe a time when you showed strong initiative.

37. Can you tell us about a time that you seized an opportunity and really took the ball and ran with it?

38. Give an example of a time you went above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done.

39. Have you ever performed duties that were beyond the scope of your job description?

40. Give an example of when you worked on an extremely difficult assignment with little or no resources. What did you do? What was the outcome?

LEADERSHIP

41. One positive leadership skill is the ability to achieve and sustain the healthy accommodation of differences in the workplace, regardless of what those differences are. Share an example of your successes in fostering a healthy work environment.

42. What personal qualities do you believe define you as a leader? Describe a situation when those qualities helped you lead others.

43. Tell us about your best show of leadership.

44. Describe the toughest group that you've managed to get to truly cooperate.

45. Have you ever had difficulty getting others to accept your ideas? What was your approach?

46. Describe a situation when you had to change your leadership style to accomplish the desired impact?

MOTIVATION

47. How have you motivated yourself to complete an assignment or task that you did not want to do?

48. Why does this position interest you? What attracts you to our organization? What can you tell us about our organization?

49. What is most important to you in a job? What is least important to you?

50. How do you motivate people? Give a specific example of something that you have done in your career that helped build enthusiasm in others.

51. What are ways you've used to recognize staff?

52. Talk about a time when you took charge of a group and led it to achieve a desired goal.

PERSISTENCE

53. Give an example of when your persistence had the biggest payoff.

54. Give us an example of an important goal you set, and tell us about how you reached it.

PERSUASION

55. Summarize a situation where you successfully persuaded others to behave differently so they'd work more collaboratively or to see another point of view.

56. Give an example of a time when you used facts and reason to persuade another person to take action.

PLANNING

57. Tell us about a time you planned and pulled off a complex assignment.

PROCESS MANAGEMENT SKILLS

58. Tell us about a time when you had to organize and implement a system / work process.

PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

59. Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it. Describe a situation when you effectively solved a problem by combining different approaches.

60. Name a complex project or assignment you struggled with. What approach did you take to complete it?

61. Describe when you or a group that you were a part of was in danger of missing a deadline. What did you do?

62. What do you think the major ongoing concerns in this job will be? How would you solve them?

63. Give an example of a time you used your fact-finding skills to gain information needed to solve a problem. Talk about how you analyzed the information and came to a decision.

64. What do you do when your priorities don't match the priorities of those around you?

65. Give an specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

66. Describe a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.

67. Talk about a time when you had to achieve consensus in a group disagreement. What was the outcome?

68. Did you ever have to source out "experts" in your organization in order to learn something? How did you do it? What were the results?

69. How do you approach the challenge of unfamiliar tasks? Give us an example.

QUICK STUDY

70. Tell us about a time when you had to learn something brand new in a short time. What steps did you take?

SEEKS TO CONSTANTLY IMPROVE

71. Give three specific examples from your work experience when you made something better or improved a service / product.

72. Describe a time when you wanted to improve a system, but were met with resistance. What did you do?

73. Have you ever recognized a problem before your boss or co-workers did? How did you handle that?

74. Talk about a time when you presented a new idea to your supervisor. How was it received? If it wasn't received well, how did you handle that?

SUPERVISION

75. How many people have you supervised? If we talked to them, what are three things they would say about you?

76. What do you think is the toughest aspect of being a supervisor?

77. Tell us about a situation in which a staff member was not performing to your expectations. What did you do?

TEAMWORK

78. Tell us about an occasion when you needed to work with a group to get a job done. What steps did you take?

79. Have you worked with a person who did things differently from you? How did you resolve your conflicts?

80. How do you create a team among those who work for you? What has worked? What hasn't?

81. What did you do in your last job to contribute to an environment of strong teamwork? Please be specific.

82. Describe a recent group effort that you led.

83. Describe a time when you led a task force or team with representatives from diverse units or departments. How did you handle the situation?

TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS

84. Give an example of how you can prioritize multiple demands. Is this an easy or difficult task for you?

85. If you suddenly were given a deadline assignment while you were busy finishing another urgent problem, how would you handle the conflict? Have you experienced this situation in the past? How did it play out?

86. How did you organize your duties for your last job?

87. How do you determine what are the top priorities at work? How do you plan out your day so those priorities are accomplished? How do you deal with situations when those priorities need to be re-shuffled?

88. How frequently do issues arise in your job that force you to alter your daily routine? Describe a recent time.

VISION

89. Share aspects of the position description really focus on your particular interests or talents and how would you use these in building your vision of this position?

WORK ETHIC

90. How do you describe / define your work ethic? Please give specific examples.

91. Talk about a time when you worked your hardest. What was the project or task? What was your role? What was the outcome? What was the reward?

92. Give an example of how you prioritize multiple demands on your time.

93. Talk about the last time you were unable to report to work. How did you get the work finished that needed to be done that day?

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST ...

94. Pick three adjectives that best describe yourself and your leadership skills.

95. What has been your biggest professional failure? What did you gain from it? Additionally, give an example of a time you tried to accomplish a task, and failed.

96. Tell us about a work situation that irritated you.

97. Tell us about a place you worked that made you feel proud to be part of the team. Why?

98. What do you believe sets you apart from all other candidates?

99. What have you accomplished in the way of self-development in the past year?

100. What question do you wish we had asked? What question would you like to ask us?

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Author and Human Resources Expert

Sharon Armstrong began her career in human resources in 1985 as a recruiter/trainer in a large Manhattan law firm. She took over as Director of HR at the DC firm Shaw, Pittman, Potts & Trowbridge in 1991, and in 1994 became the Director of HR and Administration at the Association of Trial Lawyers of America. In 2000, she opened her own firm, Sharon Armstrong & Associates, and since has consulted with many large corporations and small businesses. She has facilitated training, completed HR projects and provided career transition services for a wide variety of clients in the profit and non-profit sectors. Her firm also serves as a brokerage house for other HR professionals. Sharon received her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Southern Maine and her Masters in Counseling from George Washington University. She is a certified Professional in Human Resources (PHR).

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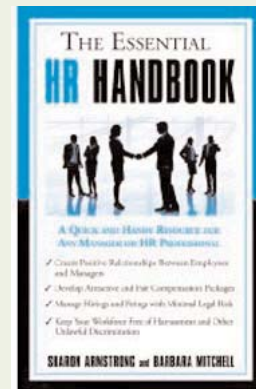
THE ESSENTIAL HR HANDBOOK

A quick and handy resource for any manager or HR professional by Sharon Armstrong and Barbara Mitchell

The Essential HR Handbook: A Quick and Handy Resource for Any Manager or HR Professional, is a 250-page reference guide, published in the fall of 2008 by Career Press. It is a must-have for everyone who deals with employees on a daily basis, believe Mitchell and Armstrong, who wrote the book to shed light on the issues that perplex managers. "Human resource professionals are not only charged with resolving labor issues," explains Mitchell, who worked for Marriott Corporation and several technology firms in the Washington DC area before launching her own company, The Millennium Group International, in 1998. "We also help acquire, train, appraise, and make sure employees are fairly compensated, while attending to their concerns about labor relations, health and safety, and fairness."

"It's a big job, but we make it easier by outlining guidelines and best practice recommendations in the 12 chapters of our book," adds Armstrong, who began her career in human resources in 1985 as a recruiter/trainer in a large Manhattan law firm before launching Sharon Armstrong and Associates in 2000. "Whether you are a newly promoted manager, a seasoned business owner, or a human resources professional, knowing the ins and outs of dealing with HR issues is critical to your success."

For more, visit www.TheEssentialHRHandbook.com.



STRESS-FREE PERFORMANCE APPRAISALS

Turn your most painful management duty into a powerful motivational tool by Sharon Armstrong and Madelyn Appelbaum

Stress-free Performance Appraisals, by Sharon Armstrong and Madelyn Appelbaum, is a guide also published by Career Press that helps managers turn one of their most painful duties into a powerful motivation tool. This book takes readers through the process of conducting a productive and meaningful performance appraisal — without the usual tension, anxiety, and uncertainty that most managers encounter in the process. Co-author Sharon Armstrong explains: "We focused on providing employees with positive feedback, and broke down the process into several simple steps."

It is a comprehensive overview that "is readable, practical, yet shrewd," said Sanford M. Jacoby, Howard Noble Professor of Management at The Anderson School UCLA. "Based on research and the actual experiences of many companies, the book will provide you with new ideas and new approaches to an old problem. I recommend this book to any manager — whether HR or not."

Buy it online: www.amazon.com.

