

5 Bullet Proof Strategies to Giving Structured Answers to Behavioral Questions (*transcript*)

This document is a transcript of the Behavioral Strategies video that can be found here:

Link to YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/mXvfSk1kfLI>

Article: <https://www.jobinterviewtools.com/how-to-give-strong-answers-to-behavioral-questions/>

If you have a behavioral interview coming up, well then, you are in the right place. Because today, I am going to help you pass it and here's how. I'm going to cover with you my Five Bulletproof Strategies for Passing Behavioral Interviews.

Now, you might ask; what is a behavioral interview? It sounds like someone is getting into your head and they're testing your behavior. Well, in a way they kind of are. You see, employers use behavioral interviews to determine your core competencies. So, what the heck are core competencies?

Well, core competencies are the things that you are really good at doing and these are the things that help you do your job. So, employers are going to test you on your core competencies. They're going to test you to make sure that you know how to do the job and they're going to do that by asking you a series of questions that are going to force you to give them examples of how you have done your job or how you would do your job; that's what they are and that's why they use them. They are very powerful and they help employers weed out the weak candidates and focus in on finding only the strong candidates; the ones who know how to do the job. Make sense; right?

I mean, if you were an employer; if you were interviewing candidates, wouldn't you want to do the same thing? I thought so.

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So, on any job interview, whether it's a behavioral job interview or not, you can expect at least 40% of the questions to be of the behavioral type; where they dig in deep and they test your core competencies. It might be a little bit more, it might be a little less. Sometimes, I've heard of interviews being 100% behavioral, but I've never actually seen one.

So, what happens when you're not prepared for an interview or a behavioral interview? Well, a lot of candidates like to show up thinking they're just going to win it. They're going to walk in and they're just going to sit down and they're going to answer questions. And then all of a sudden, they get hit with these behavioral questions. And then you know what happens? That's right; they look like this. They look like a deer in the headlights and they're like, "I don't know" and then they just start talking, they start talking over their words, they start reaching and thinking for projects they worked on that they can use as examples and then they just start tripping over everything they say and what comes out of their mouth just sounds awful. It doesn't sound good at all.

So, that's why you want to go in to your next interview or your behavioral interview and you want to be prepared. You want to be prepared to talk about your core competencies and your experiences as it relates to the position. So, I'm going to cover with you my five bulletproof strategies for doing this.

The first one is to **listen to the question.**

Don't cut them off. Let the employer ask the entire question, don't think you know what they are going to say and cut them off. Let them ask you the entire question and then think on it for just a couple of seconds before you try to answer it. If you're not sure, if you don't understand what they said or you want a little bit more clarity or maybe even you want just a little bit more time to think about what they said, what you can do is repeat the question back to them; just for clarity. But don't do this for every question. If you have to pull an ace out of your pocket and you need to buy yourself a little bit more time, you want some more clarity, go ahead and repeat the question back to them and get their nod of approval that you understand the question.

Alright, next one. **Choose your language carefully.**

Talk about your experiences as they relate to the position that you're interviewing for. So, let's say, for example, you're interviewing for an information technology position. You should be talking about examples from your profession. Don't talk about examples from like a different profession that maybe you were. Maybe you were a real estate agent or something, and they ask you questions, you start giving the examples from a real estate agent's perspective or a financial analyst or whatever it is. You want to give them examples that are related to the job criteria.

So, like I said, if you are interviewing for an IT position, try to use IT examples when you talk to them. I mean, that makes sense. That way, you'll get a strong connection with them.

Before your interview, **research industry buzzwords** that are specific to the industry that you are interviewing with. Let's say, for example, that you are a project manager and you're in the cement industry. You make cement, you make concrete, you're a project manager for that industry. And let's say you're going to switch industries and you're going to go into aluminum recycling. You're still a project manager but you're shifting industries. Maybe you don't know anything about the aluminum recycling business.

So, you want to go and **research that industry** and find out what kind of words they use; how do they talk? That way, even though you're not an expert at aluminum recycling, you could still show up and you have a little bit of an idea about the language that they use and you can use that language in your interview. And that's going to make you sound a lot more professional. That's going to separate you from everybody else; all the other candidates who are interviewing for the job.

Alright, number five; when you're giving your answers, **stick to the basics**. Keep your answers short and on point. Just briefly talk about the situation that you're going to explain, then briefly talk about the action and then summarize it with the result. Those are the three components of the STAR method.

What this will allow you to do is when your answer is short, this leaves more room for the interviewer to follow up and ask you questions. Plus it also allows for an easier train of thought.

If I were to ramble on for 10 minutes, explaining something to you, I can guarantee you that you're going to forget the first seven minutes and you're only going to remember the last couple. So, when you're giving your answer, keep it short; keep it just two maybe one or two minutes tops.

That way, they're going to be able to hear and understand and comprehend everything that you said because you've given them enough time, you didn't overwhelm them with dialogue, you didn't have a whole bunch of tangents in your story, you didn't digress, you were very specific, you are to the point; here's what I did, here's how it happened, here's the result; very easy to follow. And then that's going to make it so much easier for your interviewer to ask you follow-up questions and then you can have a discussion about the question or about the work that you did and how it might apply to them.

The last thing you should do before you walk into your interview is **review your past experiences and your projects** that you've worked on over the past maybe three, five or ten years. Get these fresh in your mind. The project that you worked on three or four years ago, might be very relevant to the work that you're going to be doing on this project or that you'd be doing for this company if they hired you. You want to refresh your memory.

You see, you have all these projects, all this experience, all you've done; it's all stored in your long-term memory. And when you sit down in front of an interviewer and they start asking you questions about things that you did some years ago, it's going to be harder for you to remember what happened in in any kind of sequence.

And this is where most people fall into the trap; they get confused, they get tongue-tied because they start trying to remember everything that they did years ago and then they're trying to sort all that out in the interview and it just turns into a big mess.

So, if you'll just take a little bit of time; a couple hours, the day before your interview and refresh the projects that you've worked on; just only refresh projects that are relevant to this job that you're applying for.

Just rewrite out what you did, how you did it, some of the things that you experienced while you're on this project; this is going to take all those long-

term projects and experience that you have and move them to your short-term memory.

And when you're in the interview, it's going to be a lot easier for you to remember what you did because it's in your short-term memory now. You're going to be able to quickly answer questions about all of your past experiences. Trust me on this one; it works. I can't recommend it enough.

When you follow when you follow these guidelines in your next behavioral interview, I guarantee you're going to give answers that are going to be strong, they're going to be on point and they're going to have structure.

And the structure part is they're going to mean something. It's not going to be a rambling mess of things that you did. Everything you say is going to have a meaning and it's going to have a place. That means you're going to talk about what you did, how you did it and what the result was; perfect structure.

And the structure also means is that they're going to be able to understand what you said. When you speak, they're going to hear you and they're going to understand what you did. They're going to comprehend it and it's going to mean something to them. They might even be able to visualize you doing this or working for them.

The next thing I want to do is look at a couple of different behavioral questions with you. I cover behavior questions in a different video using the STAR method but I felt it was appropriate to just cover a couple of questions than this one just so you can see how all this stuff flows and how it works together.

So, let's look at a behavioral question example. I'm going to walk you through exactly how to put all of this together. A good question here is; “describe a time when you came up with a creative idea to solve a problem”.

The first thing you want to do when you're answering a behavioral question is **describe the situation**. That's the S; the situation or task. So, if you're familiar with behavioral interviews, you use the STAR method to answer them; which is Situation or Task, Action and Result.

So, first we're going to describe the **Situation**. And in this case, you'll say,

“I work in our customer service department. And over the past year the volume of customer service calls were steadily increasing. Customers were asking us to make all kinds of changes to their accounts that kept us busier than normal. We were getting so many calls that we were getting ready to hire more people to handle the volume.

I didn't feel that hiring more people was the answer because I worked directly with the customer and the changes they were asking us to do could have been done by themselves. But our old website made it difficult for customers to make changes to their account and it was much easier for them to call in and have me do it instead.”

So, we just described a situation in the customer service example. Now, we're going to go into the **Action** and talk about what we did;

“I created a plan for a new website that would streamline the customer interface and make it easier for them to make their own account changes. Since I'm not a web designer, I could not write the code but instead, I created a high level model of what our website should look like and the functions it should perform. I presented my findings and ideas for a new website to our IT department and business manager.

Everyone agreed that by implementing these changes, with built-in video tutorials, would make it easier for our customers to manage their own accounts online and reduce the volume of customer service calls.”

We just explained what we did; the action we took. And now, we're going to talk about the **Result**; how it all worked out. This is what happened.

“The project took six months to complete and I was one of the beta testers. The new website looked fresh and was much more user friendly than before. As a result, customer service calls dropped by 32% and we eliminated the costly need of hiring additional reps. I received an accommodation and a monetary award for my idea.”

Now, when you give an answer like that, what this does is it demonstrates to a prospective employer that you know how to solve problems because you've

solved problems before. You're demonstrating your core competencies. Make sense? Alright, let's do one more.

Here's a great one; "give me an example of when you took a risk to achieve a goal. What was the outcome?" First thing; we're going to do is **Describe the Situation**. This is what happened.

"My company had a strict policy of pay on delivery. Our client, who wanted to purchase a large amount of our products and he really needed to purchase them urgently, but he was unable to pay the full amount when we delivered the product to his warehouse. Our department really needed this sale because it allowed us to make our monthly quota. My client has been with us for over 10 years and never posed a risk to our company before".

Now, we want to talk about the **Action**; we just described the problem. So, how did solved that problem?

"After discussing the matter with our accounting department, they stuck to corporate policy and decided not to extend payment terms to my client. I went back to my client and he said he would go elsewhere if we could not strike a deal. But he did offer to pay within three days.

So, I decided to take the risk and personally vouch for my client. I told the delivery team to ship the product but not to ask for payment on delivery. If my client did not pay, I would lose my job for sure.

Now, we talk about the **Result**; this is how it ended.

"After three days, my client sent his payment in full as promised. I told my boss what I did and though he was displeased that I broke company policy, he commended me for the risk. He said it was a good risk to take because that client had been with us for a long time. But the real risk was losing that client to a competitor."

So, there's another perfect example of **Situation, Problem and Result**. When you can give answers like that, this is going to demonstrate your core competencies that you are capable of solving problems because you demonstrated how you've solved problems before. That's how behavioral

interviews work, that's why they work that way, that's why companies use them to test your core competencies. That makes sense; right?

Alright, my friend. That is all I have for you today. Thank you so much for taking the time to watch this video or listening to the podcast. Thank you.

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