

## Behavioral-Based Interviewing and the STAR Approach

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In last month's issue, we touched upon a topic—behavioral-based interviewing—that's designed to help ensure more targeted and more successful hires. Although the resume is what initially catches the eye, it's the characteristics and behaviors the candidate possesses that should ultimately dictate whether or not they're hired.

The first part of the behavioral-based interviewing process, as we discussed last month, is to thoroughly evaluate the position you're seeking to fill. This is important, since you need to know what specific behaviors to look for. The next step is the actual interviewing of the candidates, and when it comes to behavioral-based techniques, the questions you ask them are quite divergent from standard interview questions.

### 'Tell me about . . .'

The main difference regarding behavioral-based interviewing questions is that they're designed to probe deeper and to uncover more information about the candidate. The key is to ask questions that will elicit detailed responses revealing not only the candidate's skills, but also how they utilize those skills and in what manner they facilitate their problem-solving strategies and their character.

Some call this approach **STAR** interviewing. The acronym stands for **Situation, Task, Action, & Result**. You present the background and the objective and then ask the candidate what action(s) they would take to achieve certain results. Another option is to ask the candidate to provide an example of a situation from their career and then walk through how they dealt with it.

The bulk of your questions will be situational in nature, either addressing a real situation from the past or a fictitious one that you're posing to the candidate. You can ask a combination of both, or they can all be real situations from the past. However, it's not recommended that they all be hypothetical. And it's not enough to ask an initial question or two and leave it at that. Follow-up questions are **essential** to discovering how the candidate will think and act in a given situation—in short, how they'll behave as a member of your team.

For example, instead of asking "Tell me about yourself," you might say, "Tell me about a situation where you had to overcome a conflict, either between you and another co-worker or between two other co-workers, in order to accomplish a common goal." And while the candidate tells their story, you can ask additional questions, such as "What were you thinking at that point" or "What led you to make that particular decision?" These questions will help you to uncover the candidate's behaviors, characteristics, and interpersonal skills.

In addition, this type of interviewing technique is more difficult for the candidate to navigate. It requires them to answer questions they didn't foresee and helps to evaluate their ability to think and respond quickly. Almost anybody can answer questions well that they're prepared for. Behavioral-based interviewing and the STAR approach will not only reveal a candidate's problem-solving characteristics based upon situational questions, they'll also reveal something about his or her behavior based upon the way they answer the questions themselves.

### It's all about 'who they are'

Behavioral-based interviewing requires a slightly different perspective and frame of mind. However, that difference can help you to not only avoid a potentially bad hire, but also zero in on the candidate who can

help take your company to the next level. That's a win-win situation—and **you** win both times. While it's true that behavioral-based interviewing is more time-consuming from beginning to end, it can be much more effective at finding a candidate who's a fit all the way around.

According to one of the trainers in the recruiting industry, "***People are hired for what they do, and they're fired for who they are.***" If you hire people both for who they are **and** what they do, you'll find they might be stars at your company for a long, long time.