How to Use the STAR Interview Response Technique

BY
ALISON DOYLE
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Do you struggle to give concise answers to interview questions? Are you unsure how to share your accomplishments during an interview without sounding boastful? What's the best way to let the interviewer know that you're the right candidate for the job?

The STAR interview response method can help. Using this method of answering interview questions allows you to provide concrete examples or proof that you possess the experience and skills for the job at hand. You'll be able to share examples of how you successfully handled situations at work.

STAR: Situation, Task, Action, Result

STAR stands for **S**ituation, **T**ask, **A**ction, **R**esult. Using this strategy is particularly helpful in response to competency-focused questions, which typically start out with phrases such as, "Describe a time when..." and "Share an example of a situation where...."

Read below for a more detailed description of the STAR interview response technique, and examples of how to best use it.
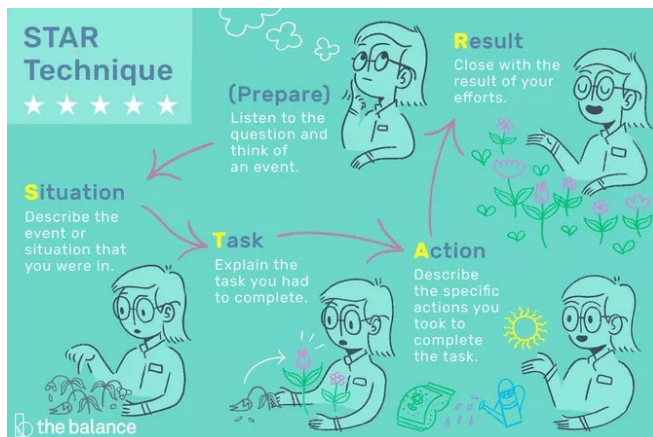
What Is the STAR Interview Response Method?

The STAR interview response method is a way of answering behavioral interview questions. Behavioral interview questions are questions about how you have behaved in the past. Specifically, they are about how you have handled certain work situations. Employers using this technique analyze jobs and define the skills and qualities that high-level performers have exhibited in that job.

For example, employers might be looking for proof of problem-solving skills, analytical ability, creativity, perseverance through failure, writing skills, presentation skills, teamwork orientation, persuasive skills, quantitative skills, or accuracy.

Examples of behavioral interview questions include the following:

- Tell me about an occasion when you had to complete a task under a tight deadline.
- Have you ever gone above and beyond the call of duty?
- What do you do when a team member refuses to complete his or her quota of the work?

Some interviewers structure their questions using the STAR technique. However, job seekers can also use the STAR interview method to prepare for behavioral interview questions.

STAR Key Concepts

STAR is an acronym for four key concepts. Each concept is a step the job candidate can utilize to answer a behavioral interview question. By employing all four steps, the job candidate thereby provides a comprehensive answer. The concepts in the acronym comprise the following:

Situation: Describe the context within which you performed a job or faced a challenge at work. For example, perhaps you were working on a group project, or you had a conflict with a coworker. This situation can be drawn from a work experience, a volunteer position, or any other relevant event. Be as specific as possible.

Task: Next, describe your responsibility in that situation. Perhaps you had to help your group complete a project within a tight deadline, resolve a conflict with a coworker, or hit a sales target.

Action: You then describe how you completed the task or endeavored to meet the challenge. Focus on what you did, rather than what your team, boss, or coworker did. (Tip: Instead of saying, "We did xyx," say "*I* did xyz.")

Result: Finally, explain the outcomes or results generated by the action taken. It may be helpful to emphasize what you accomplished, or what you learned.

How to Prepare for an Interview Using STAR

Since you won't know in advance what interviewing techniques your interviewer will be using, you'll benefit from preparing several scenarios from the jobs you've held.

Make a List of the Job Qualifications

First, make a list of the skills and/or experiences that are required for the job. It may help you to look at the job listing and similar job listings for indications of the required or preferred skills/qualities and match your qualifications to those listed in the posting.

Create a List of Examples

Then, consider specific examples of occasions when you displayed those skills. For each example, name the *situation, task, action, and result*.

Match Your Skills to the Job

Whatever examples you select, make sure they are as closely related to the job you're interviewing for as possible.

You can also take a look at common behavioral interview questions, and try answering each of them using the STAR technique.

Examples of Interview Questions and Answers Using STAR

Example Question #1

Tell me about a time you had to complete a task within a tight deadline. Describe the situation, and explain how you handled it.

While I typically like to plan out my work in stages and complete it piece by piece, I can also achieve high-quality work results under tight deadlines. Once, at a former company, an employee left days before the imminent deadline of one of his projects. I was asked to assume responsibility for it, with only a few days to learn about and complete the project. I created a task force and delegated work, and we all completed the assignment with a day to spare. In fact, I believe I thrive when working under tight deadlines.

Example Question #2

What do you do when a team member refuses to complete his or her quota of the work?

When there are team conflicts or issues, I always try my best to step up as team leader if needed. I think my communication skills make me an effective leader and moderator. For example, one time, when I was working on a team project, two of the team members got embroiled in an argument, both refusing to complete their assignments. They were both dissatisfied with their workloads, so I arranged a team meeting where we reallocated all the assignments among the team members. This made everyone happier and more productive, and our project was a success.