

## Behavioral Interviewing Process

1. **TRAITS** – identify the traits the individual must possess to be effective in the role
  - a. **VALUES-BASED** – traits that align with the overall corporate values – examples:
    - i. Building long-term relationships
    - ii. Integrity
    - iii. Creativity in problem-solving
    - iv. Performance-driven
    - v. Customer service
    - vi. Quality

REMINDER: Only a few values can be the core values – those that are most critical in how your company does business. Just screen for these.
  - b. **POSITION-BASED** – traits that are needed to excel at the job based on the responsibilities of the position, examples:
    - i. Leadership abilities
    - ii. Exceptional communication skills
    - iii. Good team player
    - iv. Self-driven and able to work independently
    - v. Attention to detail
    - vi. Big-picture mentality
  - c. In listing the key traits, do the following:
    - i. Think about the most successful employees – what are some of their strongest traits?
    - ii. Think about people who were spectacularly unsuccessful – what traits do you want to avoid?
    - iii. Get input from other team members – what do you think is most important in the person we hire for this position? Steer them toward answering about traits, not experience.
  - d. Develop a list of behaviors for each key trait.
2. **QUESTIONS**
  - a. Draft questions that can reveal past behavior (or lack of behavior) in line with the key traits
  - b. Questions should ask for specific examples – ‘Tell me about a time when...’ ‘Share a story about a co-worker who...’ ‘Tell me about a one customer who ...’
  - c. For each question, list some specific behaviors that could be revealed that are both positive and negative. Pre-determine what a ‘right’ answer will look like, and what a ‘wrong’ answer would be.
  - d. Test the questions on A players currently on your team.

### 3. INTERVIEWING

- a. Develop a final list of questions for them interview.
- b. Train your interviewers. Key points:
  - i. Allow candidates plenty of time to think and consider the question. Unlike traditional interview questions, they may not prepared answers. That's a good thing. Encourage them to take their time to recall a specific situation they can share with you.
  - ii. ANSWERS MUST RELATE A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE. There will be a tendency to answer with generalities. 'Whenever a customer has a complaint, I always...' This is not an acceptable answer in behavioral interviewing. This is usually a thought-out response designed to sound right that may or may not reflect the future behavior of the candidate. When given a general answer, follow-up with – 'Tell me about a specific example...' 'What was the customer's name?' 'What happened?' etc.
  - iii. Don't evaluate responses. Avoid comments about their response that conveys approval or disapproval. Just keep asking questions. 'So what did you do next?' 'What was the result?' 'Then what happened?'
  - iv. Be sure to take notes about the responses for further evaluation.

#### **EXAMPLES:**

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|------------------|--|
| Desired trait:   | Competitive & goal-oriented (Performance-driven culture)   |
| Behaviors:       | Aggressive, bottom-line focus, willing to go the extra mile, likes to win.   |
| Question:        | Tell me about a time you achieved a specific business goal you worked hard for.  |
| 'Right' answers: | Will be examples of hitting objective measures (sales target, growth of department, production increases, etc.);<br>Will reveal going above and beyond to achieve the goal;<br>Will refer to improvements over past performance or others' performance;<br>Will mention reward or end result for the candidate;<br>Will reflect pride/confidence/strong ego. |
| 'Wrong' answers: | May be about subjective achievements, and may emphasize effort versus result.  |

# SAMPLE Behavioral Interview Questions (grouped by skill)

## **ADAPTABILITY**

- Tell me about a situation in which you have had to adjust to changes over which you had no control. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a classmate's or colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objectives.
- How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular problems? How did you handle them?

## **ANALYTICAL SKILLS / PROBLEM SOLVING**

- Describe the project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities. What was your role?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze information and make a recommendation. To whom did you make the recommendation? What was your reasoning? What kind of thought process did you go through? Why? Was the recommendation accepted? Why?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem. What did you do? What was your thought process? What was the outcome? What do you wish you had done differently?
- What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision? Why?

## **COMMUNICATION**

- Tell me about a recent successful experience in making a speech or presentation? How did you prepare? What obstacles did you face? How did you handle them?
- Have you ever had to "sell" an idea to your classmates or co-workers? How did you do it? Did they accept your idea?
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa). How did you handle the situation? What obstacles or difficulties did you face? How did you deal with them?
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get an important point across.

## **CREATIVITY**

- When was the last time you thought "outside the box" and how did you do it? Why?
- Tell me about a problem that you've solved in a unique or unusual way. What was the outcome? Were you happy or satisfied with it?
- Give me an example of when someone brought you a new idea that was odd or unusual. What did you do?

## **DECISION MAKING**

- Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision without all the information you needed. How did you handle it? Why? Were you happy with the outcome?
- Give me an example of a time when you had to be quick in coming to a decision. What obstacles did you face? What did you do?

- What is the most difficult decision you've had to make? How did you arrive at your decision? What was the result?

## **GOAL SETTING**

- Give me an example of an important goal which you have set and tell me how you reached it. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did you overcome the obstacles?
- Tell me about a goal that you set that you did not reach. What steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did it make you feel?

## **INITIATIVE**

- Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts. What was your role? What was the outcome?
- Describe a situation in which you recognized a potential problem as an opportunity. What did you do? What was the result? What do you wish you had done differently?
- Tell me about a project you initiated. What did you do? Why? What was the outcome? Were you happy with the result?
- Tell me about a time when your initiative caused a change to occur.
- What was the best idea you came up with during your professional or college career? How did you apply it?

## **INTEGRITY/HONESTY**

- Discuss a time when your integrity was challenged. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you experienced a loss for doing what is right. How did you react?
- Tell me about a business situation when you felt honesty was inappropriate. Why? What did you do?
- Give a specific example of a policy you conformed to with which you did not agree. Why?

## **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

- Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How/why was this person difficult? How did you handle it? How did the relationship progress?
- Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?
- Describe a recent unpopular decision you made. How was it received? How did you handle it?
- What, in your opinion, are the key ingredients in guiding and maintaining successful business relationships? Give me examples of how you have made these work for you.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa). How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team with someone you did not get along with. What happened?
- Describe a situation where you had a conflict with another individual, and how you dealt with it. What was the outcome? How did you feel about it?

## **LEADERSHIP**

- Tell me about a team project when you had to take the lead or take charge of the project? What did you do? How did you do it? What was the result?
- Describe a leadership role of yours. Why did you commit your time to it? How did you feel about it?
- What is the toughest group that you have had to get cooperation from? What were the obstacles? How did you handle the situation? What were the reactions of the group members? What was the end result?

## **PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION / TIME MANAGEMENT**

- Describe a situation that required you to do a number of things at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
- How do you prioritize projects and tasks when scheduling your time? Give me some examples.
- Tell me about a project that you planned. How did you organize and schedule the tasks? Tell me about your action plan.

## **TEAMWORK**

- Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a classmate or colleague who was not doing their share of the work. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or help others to compromise. What was your role? What steps did you take? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work on a team that did not get along. What happened? What role did you take? What was the result?

## **PROBES / FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS**

- What steps did you take?
- What action did you take?
- What happened after that?
- What did you say?
- How did he/she react?
- How did you handle that?
- What was your reaction?
- How did you feel about that?
- What was the outcome/result?
- Were you happy with that outcome/result?
- What do you wish you had done differently?
- What did you learn from that?
- How did you resolve that?
- Why did you decide to do that?
- What was your logic?
- What was your reasoning?
- Where were you when this happened?
- Who else was involved?

## **1. Analysis/Problem Assessment**

- a. Describe a complicated problem you have had to deal with on the job. How did you identify or gain a better understanding of that problem?
- b. What kind of information have you been required to analyze? Describe one of your most difficult analyses.
- c. Have you ever had to review proposals submitted by a vendor or by another team? Tell me about one of those situations.

## **2. Teamwork/Collaboration**

- a. Interacting with others can be challenging at times. Describe a situation when you wished you'd acted differently with someone at work. What happened? What did you do about the situation?
- b. Tell me about one of the toughest teams/groups you've had to work with. What made it difficult? What did you do?
- c. Can you give me an example of a team decision you were involved in recently? What did you do to help the team reach the decision?
- d. Sometimes it can be frustrating and trying to get information from other people so that you can solve a problem. Please describe a situation you've had like this. What did you do?

## **3. Adaptability**

- a. Tell me about a situation when you had to adjust quickly to change in organizational/departmental, or team priorities. How did the change affect you?
- b. Tell me about the manager/supervisor/team leader who was the most difficult to work for. How did you handle this difficult relationship?
- c. Sometimes we have to work under new policies we don't agree with. Tell me about the last time you disagreed with a new policy or procedure instituted by senior management. Why did you disagree? What did you do?

## **4. Customer Service Orientation**

- a. Tell me about a difficult internal/external customer you've had to deal with. Why was he/she difficult? What did you do?
- b. Describe a time when you took steps to make sure an internal/external customer was satisfied.

c. Tell me about a time when you were able to respond to an internal/external customer's request in a shorter period of time than was expected. Contrast that with a time when you failed to meet an internal/external customer's expectations. What was the difference?  
difference?

d. There aren't enough hours in the day to ensure that every customer is totally satisfied. Give me a recent example of when you didn't have the time to satisfy a customer totally.

## **5. Planning and Organizing/Work Management**

a. We all have had times when we just couldn't get everything done on time. Tell me about a time when this has happened to you.

b. Has your time schedule ever been upset by unforeseen circumstances? Give me a recent example. What did you do then?

c. What objectives did you set for this year? What steps have you taken to make sure you're making progress on all of them?

d.

e. At one time or another we've all forgotten to do something important for a customer. Tell me about a time this happened to you recently. What did you forget? Why? What happened?

## **6. Organizational Awareness**

a. Tell me about a recent business problem you solved. How did you utilize organizational structure (policies, systems, etc.) to solve the problem?

b. Sometimes you just have to disregard existing organizational policies to get something done. Tell me about a time when you knowingly disregarded an organizational policy. Why did you choose to disregard the policy? What happened?

c. In order to keep a customer satisfied, sometimes you have to make a commitment that may not be realistic. Tell me about a time your organization was unable to keep a commitment you made. What happened?

d. Give me an example of a time when you made a decision only to find out later that it was rejected. Why was it rejected? Why, do you think, was it not approved through your systems?

## **7. Motivational Fit**

a. When were you most satisfied/dissatisfied in your work? What was most satisfying/dissatisfying about that?

b. [Creativity] Tell me about a time when you were able to be creative in your work. How

satisfied were you and why?

c. [Independence] Tell me about a time when your work was closely supervised. How satisfied were you with that and why?

d. [Interaction] Tell me about a time when you had many opportunities to interact with others at work. How satisfied were you with that and why?

## **8. Written Communication**

a. Tell me about one of the most important documents you have written. What reactions did it receive?

b. Have you written proposals for external customers? Tell me about the best one you ever wrote. Why was it the best? How did you know that it was good?

c. We've all written a memo that called for specific action only to discover later that those who received it didn't do what they were supposed to do. Can you give an example of when this happened to you?