SBAR Accomplishment Stories Format for Interviews

Many employers use behavioral questions asking you to discuss **specific examples** of yourself as a successful employee. In responding you should use examples from your previous work experience or any setting in which you have had work-related success. Examples of behavioral questions include:

* Give me an example of a time when you had to juggle multiple tasks.
* Tell me about a time when your work or an idea of yours was criticized.
* Describe a difficult problem that you've had to deal with and how you resolved it.
* Describe a situation in which you were required to work under pressure and how you reacted?
* Describe a time that you showed initiative.
* Tell me about a time when you put your foot in your mouth.
* Describe a situation when you found yourself challenged. How did it work out?

**Answering Behavior-Based Questions**

Strong answers to behavioral questions describe **specific situations** where **your actions** are the focus. In asking behavior-based questions, employers are attempting to get a "glimpse" of you as a worker. Often, behavioral questions cover specific "themes" required by the position, such as: time management, team work, initiative, organizational and communication skills, etc.

One strategy for answering behavior-based questions is to use the **S.O.A.R.** formula **(**Situation, Obstacles, Actions, Response). Using **S.O.A.R** ensures that you deliver a complete and concise answer. Below is an example of how an interviewee might answer a question in **S.O.A.R** format.

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| **Situation** | Describe the situation that you were in and the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event. |
| **Barriers** | Describe the challenges or barriers you faced such as lack of budget, difficult politics, lack of time, uncooperative co-workers, etc. |
| **Action you took** | Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did. |
| **Results you achieved** | What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? |

**Interview Question:**

**"Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer. How did you handle the situation and what happened?"**

**Situation** "While working as a salesperson for XYZ Company, I was given an account that had been mishandled by our company in the past. When this customer came in to place a large, new order, she was angry, expressing dissatisfaction with past service and asked us to guarantee superior work this time around."

**Obstacles** "I wanted to maintain this customer relationship, but also to not promise service we could not deliver and compound the problem. This was a challenging product or service to deliver for my company.”

**Action** "I scheduled a meeting with my supervisor and we reviewed her order, identifying potential pitfalls, resulting in our adjusting the services we could provide. I then returned the customer's call, negotiated a new contract, and faxed it to her."

**Result** "While the customer was a little disappointed that we could not provide everything she wanted, she appreciated my being honest about what we could do. In the end both parties were happy."

Don't be frustrated if the interviewer interrupts you to ask probing questions that will enhance his or her understanding of your work style. This gives you an opportunity to clarify your response.