

## Telling Your Story Effectively During an Interview

Understanding and using the **STAR** method in job interviews. Answer interview questions succinctly, stating accomplishments and results.

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A powerful resume is only the first step to getting your foot in the door. Okay, you got noticed and now you are scheduled for an interview. We all know the saying, "you only have one chance to make a great first impression." So, what do you do to "nail" the interview?

Let's face it, most hiring managers are going to take the opportunity to fill a new or open position with the person whose skill set, image and presentation are the closest to the criteria established for their ideal candidate.

How do you convince your interviewer that you are "the one"...that person?

You do so by structuring your answers to their questions to focus on what you have **accomplished** and how you did so...NOT by providing a laundry list of job responsibilities while at previous employers.

Because of its proven effectiveness, most companies today use behavioral interviewing, which focuses on the premise that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. One of the most effective methods for navigating through such an interview is to use the **STAR** method (**S**ituation or **T**ask, **A**ction and **R**esults).

- **Situation or Task** - Provide an example of a specific situation/task in which you were involved that resulted in a positive outcome
- **Action** - Discuss specific actions that you took related to achieving the desired outcome
- **Results** - Provide the measurable results related to the direct outcome of your actions

For example, let's say you are asked the following question by the interviewer:

"Give me a specific example which clearly demonstrates how you are able to work effectively with a wide variety of individuals."

**A non-STAR answer** - "I think it's a good idea to know how to deal with different personalities, and I can do that. I have been a team leader in the past and completed many big projects successfully."

Congratulations, you've just told me nothing about how you are going to be able to apply your skills to the challenges of the position you are seeking and produce exceptional results at my company. I have no perspective on the actual scope of any of your "big" projects and telling me that they were successfully completed means very little without specific metrics to back up your claim. And, I have no clue as to your ability to consistently "bring it" to my team if I hire you.

I have done many hundreds of interviews during my career with most candidates' answers sounding like the one above. I did not hire any of those people.

**Answer using the STAR method - "(Situation/Task)** I was asked by the company president to lead a project team consisting of representatives from different groups within our organization, to design and launch, within six months, a new widget that could help expand our current product offerings. **(Actions)** Selecting a very diverse group of employees, I put together a team consisting of twelve individuals representing the Design, Fabrication, Marketing, Sales, Operations and Customer Service departments. I established an environment that promoted creativity and effective collaboration among individuals, allowing my team to realize a powerful synergy from the combination of their unique talents. **(Results)** The new Power Widget was launched five months later and within the following year it was responsible for a 20% increase in our overall widget sales and a 5% increase in total market share. For this effort I was recognized by the president with the company's 'Outstanding Team Leadership' award and promoted to vice president."

A candidate who delivers an answer like this is going to get my attention...especially when they deliver it using good eye contact, body language that exudes self-confidence and the right degree of passion that makes it all very believable.

Interviewing is a lot like dating. Think about it...what is the real purpose of the first interview (date)? The objective is to get a second interview (date). Not unlike two people using an online dating service, the interviewer and interviewee can use the Internet to do quite a bit of research about each other - including a look at photographs, prior to actually meeting. During the initial discussion there is normally a mixture of general "get to know you a little better" questions and tougher "are you really who you say you are," more detailed inquiries. This first meeting is used to determine if what was written about each other (LinkedIn, Facebook or Match.com) seems legitimate. Ultimately, both parties are trying to determine if the person with whom they are speaking is "their type." A very important part of this process is figuring out if the other person will "get along with my group of friends"/future co-workers.

Interviewers love asking the "give me an example of a time when" type questions - the STAR method will help you to focus on demonstrating how your past performance indicates that you are "the one"...the ideal candidate which they are seeking.