Behavioural Interview Techniques – The STAR Approach

Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalised description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation should be from a previous employment experience.

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?

Remember that many behavioural questions try to get at how you responded to *negative* situations; you'll need to have examples of negative experiences ready, but try to choose negative experiences that you made the best of or -- better yet, those that had positive outcomes.

Here's a good way to prepare for behaviour-based interviews:

- Identify six to eight examples from your past experience where you demonstrated top behaviours and skills that employers typically seek. Think in terms of examples that will exploit your top selling points.
- Half your examples should be totally positive, such as accomplishments or meeting goals.
- The other half should be situations that started out negatively but either ended positively or you made the best of the outcome.
- Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your employment.
- Use fairly recent examples where possible
- Try to describe examples in story form and/or PAR/SAR/STAR.

To cram for a behavioural interview right before you're interviewed, review your resume. Seeing your achievements in print will jog your memory.

In the interview, listen carefully to each question, and pull an example out of your bag of tricks that provides an appropriate description of how you demonstrated the desired behaviour. With practice, you can learn to tailor a relatively small set of examples to respond to a number of different behavioural questions.