The STAR Method: How to Answer Behavioural Interview Questions

If you are preparing for an interview, there is a very strong chance you will be asked behavioural interview questions.

These are questions where you are asked to recall a past experience and describe how you handled a specific situation or challenge. Employers use these questions to better understand how you think, how you solve problems, and how you behave in the workplace.

Many organizations expect candidates to structure their responses using a framework such as the STAR Method or a similar approach like Amazon's Situation–Behavior–Impact model.

The goal is simple: demonstrate your experience through real examples.

What is the STAR METHOD?

The STAR Method is a structured way of answering behavioural interview questions by clearly explaining:
- the Situation you faced
- the Task you were responsible for
- the Action you took
- the Result you achieved

This framework helps you present your experience in a clear, concise, and compelling way while demonstrating how you handled real work situations and challenges.

The STAR Breakdown

Situation
Describe the context or challenge you faced.
What was happening?

Task
Explain your responsibility or objective in that situation.
What needed to be accomplished?

Action
Describe the specific steps you took to address the situation.
What did you do?

Result
Share the outcome.
What was achieved? What improved? What did you learn?

Example Structure for Your Answer
When answering a behavioural question, it is perfectly acceptable to structure your answer clearly:
- "The situation was…"
- "The task at hand was…"
- "The action I took was…"
- "The result was…"

This structure helps ensure your answer is organized, easy to follow, and impactful.

KEY TIPS

1. When using the STAR method, own your response
- Speak about your contributions, your role, your actions, and your impact
- Avoid speaking only in terms of "we"
- Interviewers want to understand what you personally contributed to the outcome

2. Keep Your Answer Focused
- One common mistake candidates make is over-explaining the situation and not spending enough time on the action and result
- Remember: Recruiters are not looking for a long story
- They are looking for a clear, concise example that demonstrates how you approached the situation and the outcome you achieved
- Follow the STAR framework and avoid rambling

3. Practice Before Your Interview
- For many candidates, answering behavioural questions using the STAR method feels unfamiliar at first. The best way to improve is practice.
- Choose a few common behavioural interview questions and write out your answers in advance, breaking them down into:
    - Situation
    - Task
    - Action
    - Result
- This exercise helps you identify where you may be including too much information or not enough impact
- Practicing your responses ensures you can deliver clear, confident answers during the interview

Common Behavioural Questions to Practice

Examples of behavioural questions you may encounter include:
- Tell me about a time you managed multiple priorities and deadlines.
- Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a colleague or supervisor.
- Tell me about a challenge you faced at work and how you handled it.
- Tell me about a time you demonstrated leadership.
- Tell me about a time you solved a difficult problem.
- Tell me about a time you failed and what you learned from it.
- Tell me about a time you went above and beyond expectations.

Final Advice
We all have stories we can draw on in interviews. The key is choosing examples that are relevant to the role and organization you are applying to.

A strong candidate selects examples that demonstrate:
- problem solving
- leadership
- accountability
- teamwork
- results

The examples you choose, and how clearly you present them, can make a significant difference in your interview outcome.