

Sample chapter from a ghostwriting assignment for an e-book: My Interview Coach

Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Preparation
	Evaluate Your Skills.....4
	Resumes.....5
	Researching the Company.....7
Chapter 2	Building Confidence
	Confidence Building Exercises.....9
	Focus on Your Strengths.....10
	How to Sell Yourself.....10
	Projecting the Image of Success.11
	Stress Relief.....11
Chapter 3	Dressing for Success
	Project Professionalism.....13
	What to Wear.....13
	What Not to Wear.....14
Chapter 4	Job Fairs

Prepare for the Fair.....16
Types of Fairs.....17
On the Spot Interviews.....19
Follow Up After the Fair.....21

Chapter 5

Getting the First Interview

Finding and Contacting Employers...22
Inquiring by Telephone.....22
Practicing Your Technique.....23
Get Over the Fear.....24

Chapter 6

Panel and Behavioral Interviews

Purpose of a Behavioral Interview...25
Questions asked in Behavioral.....26
Answer Like a STAR.....27

(Situation, Task, Action, Result)

What are Panel Interviews?.....29
Situations for Using a Panel.....30
Answering Questions from Everyone...31
Prepare for Panel Interviews.....31

Chapter 7

Surviving Interview Questions

Strategies for Answering Questions...32
Standard Interview Questions.....33
Behavioral Interview Questions.....36
Navigating Difficult Questions.....37

Chapter 8

Other Interview Styles

Second Interviews.....38
Informational Interviews.....38
Group Interviews.....39
Stress Interviews.....40
Directed Interviews.....41
Show Me Interviews.....42

Chapter 9

Now it's Your Turn to Ask Questions

Asking Intelligent Questions.....43
What Not to Ask.....44
Getting Feedback.....45

Chapter 10

Rehearsing for the Big Day

	Finding Help in Practicing.....	46
	Methods for Coaching.....	46
	Getting Honest Feedback.....	47

Chapter 11 Interviews by Phone

	Reasons for Distance Interviews.....	48
	Pros and Cons of Phone Interviews.....	48
	Strategies for Success on the Phone.	49

Chapter 12 Interviewing for a Promotion

	Preparing for In House Interview.....	50
	Researching the New Job.....	51
	Follow Up.....	52

Chapter 13 Passing Required Testing

	Psychometric Testing.....	53
	Aptitude Tests.....	54
	Tests of Basic Skills.....	55
	Strategies for Test Taking.....	55

Chapter 14 Interview Follow Up Etiquette

How Did You Do?.....	57
Follow Up Phone Calls.....	57
Thank You Letters.....	58

Chapter 6: Panel and Behavioral Interviews

The Purpose of a Behavioral Interview

Behavioral interviews have been used by large corporations for the past fifteen years. The purpose of this method is to get an idea of the future job performance of an applicant for a specific position. The questions asked in a behavioral interview are more reliable for determining the performance of a specific candidate than standard interview questions.

As word has spread about the effectiveness of this method, more companies are beginning to use behavioral interviews. Before the interview, the employer will determine what traits or behaviors they think a good candidate should possess. These are different for each position in the company.

About five characteristics will be chosen, this is approximate, there could be a little more or less, depending on the position being filled. Common behaviors employers are seeking include: written communication, willing to learn, confidence, professionalism, listening communication, project management, leadership, ability to motivate others, coping with stress, critical thinking skills, and teamwork. The goal is to determine how a candidate has performed in these areas in the past and use this information to determine future performance.

When answering, you are expected to use situations from past employment and how you handled the situation. You can also use situations from school, internships or community service projects if you don't have a lot of job experience. Both positive and negative situations are used in behavioral interviews. When discussing a negative situation, describe how you dealt with the problem or improved the situation.

Preparing for a Behavioral Interview

It's difficult to prepare for a behavioral interview, because the questions vary according to the behaviors the employer is attempting to target. If you can get a copy of the job description, you may be able to determine the traits the employer wants to see in the ideal candidate. This is sometimes available on the company website or from the human resources department.

Take out your resume to refresh your memory. Think about each job or volunteer experience and write down a few situations you could use in answering questions. Write them down and choose about four situations, two positive and two negative that could be used in answering interview questions.

Typical Questions Asked in Behavioral Interviews

The questions asked in a behavioral interview will vary according to the position being filled. If the position is management level, they will probably be looking for leadership, team building and your ability to motivate others. If you will be working with the public, your communication skills, ability to cope with stress and persuasive skills may be the focus of the questions.

Some common questions asked in behavioral interviews

- Tell me about a time when you were able to convince someone to change their position on an issue.
- Describe a time when you made a difficult or unpopular decision.
- Describe a situation when you set goals and had to make a plan to meet the goals.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an upset customer.
- Describe a time you had to deal with conflict in the workplace. How did you handle the situation?
- Tell me about a time you had to discipline/write up/fire an employee you considered to be a friend.
- Describe a situation in which you had to do research to find the solution to a problem.
- Tell me about a time you foresaw a problem and were able to prevent it.
- Tell me about a time you had to delegate tasks in a project.
- Describe how you have handled a policy you didn't agree with.
- Tell me about a time when you needed to make a quick decision and your decision making process.
- Describe a time you set a goal and failed to reach the goal. How would you handle the situation differently in the future?
- Describe a time you made a decision based on good judgment.
- Tell me about a time when you took the initiative and made a decision when your supervisor was unavailable.

The most important thing to remember when answering these kinds of questions is to be specific. Give a detailed answer. You may be asked a follow up question to get additional information.

Answer like a STAR

The STAR acronym stands for:

Situation or Task: Describe a situation from past experience or a task you needed to accomplish. The situation may be a positive or negative experience. Most employers use a combination of both types of questions. They want to know how you handle difficult situations as well as positive work experiences.

Action: What you did to resolve the situation or complete the task. This is different from the typical, hypothetical questions asked in job interviews. You will be talking about something you did, not what you would do in a given situation. The employer is generally interested in situations from past employment. If you don't have a relevant situation, you can use examples from school, volunteer work, internships or community service experiences.

Result: What happened as the result of the action you took? What was the outcome?

Practicing the STAR Format

Choose a few situations from your past experience that you can use in answering questions. Don't try to memorize the answers to the questions. This will just make you more nervous. Instead, just prepare a few situations and think about how you can answer based on the commonly asked questions.

Most of the questions asked fall into a few basic categories. Become familiar with these categories and choose situations that can be used in more than one question when preparing for a behavioral interview.

Technical knowledge: Describe how you apply the theory and knowledge gained in school to your work.

Motivation: You may be asked about experiences when you have been satisfied or not. Other questions will focus on your past supervisors. You may be asked about the kind of person who is able to motivate you best.

Whatever you do with these questions, don't trash your old boss. Talk about positive experiences, if at all possible. If you must talk about the negative experiences, do it diplomatically. Rather than talking about what an idiot your old boss was, focus on how you handled a bad situation and remained motivated.

If you are applying for a management position, you will be asked how you motivate others. Even if you haven't been a manager before, you can talk about situations in which you were a member of a team. Describe how you motivated the group.

Critical Thinking/Problem Solving: Talk about specific steps you have taken to solve a problem, or how you were able to solve a problem before it became too large. Discuss a complex project and give specific details about how you were able to organize, delegate tasks and complete the assignment on time. Talk about how you would do things differently next time. Employers like to hear that you evaluate your own performance in an effort to improve.

You may be asked about disciplining employees in the past. Explain in detail the steps taken to improve the performance of a specific employee. Of course, you should avoid using the name of the person out of respect for confidentiality. Talk about how you dealt with the problem and how you handled the person. Describe the outcome, particularly if there was an improvement in the performance.

Taking the Initiative: Talk about situations in which you took the initiative to solve or prevent a problem. Give specific examples of when you made decisions in the absence of supervision. This shows that you are able to take the ball and run with it, without needing constant direction.

Work Ethic: These questions are intended to gain information about your personal work standards. You may be asked about work done above and below standard. Talk about a time you were not happy with your own performance and steps you took to correct the problem and increase your performance in the future.

Teamwork/Team building: These questions will vary depending on whether you will be the member of a team or a team leader. If you are applying for a position requiring leadership, you will be asked how you motivate your team and deal with conflict. Discuss specific examples of teams you have worked with in the past. You can use situations from college when you were required to work as a group. Talk about conflict resolution and how you have dealt with a member of the team who wasn't pulling their weight on the project. Avoid negative remarks about lazy coworkers. Instead, focus on how you improved the situation or motivated others.

Once you have chosen the situations you will discuss, practice your answers. Find a friend or family member to help you rehearse for the interview. Look for someone who will give you honest feedback. You may want to videotape the rehearsal and watch it later for a better idea of how you did.

What are Panel Interviews?

In a panel interview, several people will be present for your interview. The purpose of a panel interview is to allow several decision makers to sit in on the interview and give input into the hiring of personnel. The manager the candidate will be reporting to is usually part of the panel. Other panel members could be human resources representatives, other managers and company executives. The position being filled sometimes dictates who will sit in on the panel.

Situations for Using a Panel

Most companies use panel interviews for higher level positions. This format is typically used for management level and higher jobs. Professional positions such as teachers or health care workers often use panel interviews.

Panel interviews can be beneficial for both the employer and prospective employee. Although most people are nervous about the idea of appearing before a panel, there are several advantages. You will probably have to meet with most of the people on the panel at some time during the hiring process. Being interviewed by a panel saves you time because you won't need to be called back as many times as you would if you met them all individually.

Observing the panel members and their interactions can give you some insight into the operation of the company and how they do business. Think of it as another opportunity for you to check out the company.

Answering Questions from Everyone

In most cases, a standard list of questions is used for each candidate that will be interviewed by the panel. In other words, you will be asked the same questions as the people you will be competing with for the job. The answers are scored and the candidates with the highest scores move forward in the hiring process.

A few people may ask the majority of the questions, or every member may ask just a few questions each. Speak directly to the person asking the question. While answering, be sure to make eye contact with every member of the panel. Although there may be a few key decision makers, you should try to connect with all members of the panel, particularly the person who would be your direct supervisor.

You will be introduced to each member of the panel at the beginning of the interview. Greet each person individually with a firm handshake. Try to remember their names. If possible, use their names when answering the questions. Have you noticed salespeople doing this? Using a person's name is a proven way to make a connection. Salespeople know that making a personal connection is a good way to make the sale. You are selling yourself, so use this technique to make the sale.

When answering the questions, pay attention to the panel members who appear to have the most influence in the decision. You may be able to tell how you are doing by their reactions to your questions or body language.

How to Prepare for Panel Interviews

Prepare for a panel interview in the same way you would prepare for any other interview. You may be asked standard interview questions or behavioral questions. In many cases, you will be asked a combination of both types of questions.

If you want to rehearse before a panel, get a few friends or family members together. Write out sample questions on index cards and give a few to each person. Have them ask you the questions and practice making eye contact with each person on the panel.

You may decide to send a thank you note after a panel interview, as you would after a standard interview. You have a couple of choices here. You could send individual thank you notes to each member of the panel, or send one note to everyone. Either way, be sure to spell all the names correctly. A name is a very personal thing, and some people become offended if their name is spelled incorrectly. Get business cards from the panel members for the correct spelling of their first and last names.