



## What is a behavioural based interview and how can I prepare for one?

A behavioural based interview requires candidates to discuss specific examples of situations where they have applied particular skills or knowledge relevant to the position.

The reason that AMES Australia and other organisations conduct behavioural based interviews is that “Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour”. That means, if someone has been able to do something before, they are more likely to be able to do it again. Through a specific example from past experience, a person can demonstrate that they have knowledge and skills by explaining how they have used that knowledge and/or skill in a practical way.

Examples are best drawn from work experience, but can also be drawn from volunteering, sports activities or educational experience. If you don't have any work experience then try to think of some examples such as “working in a team” from playing in a group sport or through a team-based project at school or university.

There are different methods for preparing and responding to behavioural based questions, but the one we recommend is called the STAR Method. This is a commonly applied method, and if you follow it, you should be able to provide a specific and detailed example and remain focused and on point.

### What is the STAR method?

The STAR method is:-

**S** – Situation, background set the scene

**T** – Task or Target, specifics of what's required, when, where, who

**A** – Action, what you did, skills used, behaviours, characteristics

**R** – Result – Outcome, explains what happened in the end

The STAR method will enable you to answer behavioural-based questions in a specific and concise manner, and will allow you to directly link your skills, knowledge and experience to a criteria of the position that is being assessed through the interview question (and when addressing key selection criteria).



Interviewers will remember more of your answers, and the messages within them, when you provide examples that are relevant to the question, provide details about a specific situation, and the answer isn't too long! If you add additional facts or information that don't relate to the question, or go off point, your message will become lost as will the interviewers. You need your answers to maintain focus so you keep the interviewers attention!

If you follow the STAR method when preparing your examples before the interview, and when responding to behavioural based questions in an interview, your success ratio should greatly improve.

### **Preparing examples using STAR**

When you are preparing for an interview, take some time to research likely interview questions and rehearse how you might respond using the STAR model.

Read through the job advertisement, position description, key selection criteria statement (if separate document) and review the company's website, to try to understand you may be assessed in through the interview.

Think of some examples where things went well and some situations where things didn't go as planned, and consider what you learned from these experiences. Examples don't always have to be positive outcomes – sometimes what we learn when things go wrong is valuable experience.

Write down the topics you think are likely to be included in questions from you research. Some common areas included in interview questions are: team work, problem solving, customer service, time management, leadership, compliance (following guidelines, legislation, policies and procedures), and many more.

Under each topic try to think of at least one example, and write it down. For instance, think of a team you have worked in. What organisation did you work for when you were a part of that team? What was the name of the team? When did you work in the team? Then think of an example – perhaps when you helped a team member with a task when they were busy or didn't know how to complete it, or when there was conflict in your team (whether you were involved in the conflict directly or not) and the action you took to help resolve it, or when you had a new team member and how you made them feel welcome (perhaps you showed them where to get stationery or where to get coffee).



## Example using STAR Method

Criteria being assessed: Customer Service Skills

Interview question: Tell us about a time when you were confused by a customer's request. What steps did you take to clarify things? What was the outcome?

STAR Response:

### **Situation**

I recently started working with ABC Shoes at Melbourne Central shopping centre as a retail assistant on Friday nights and on weekends.

On my first night, a customer came in and the manager had gone on a tea break. The customer wanted to know if we had KLZ's that would fit his orthotics. I didn't know what KLZ's were or what orthotics meant.

### **Task**

I explained to the customer that it was my first day and that my manager was on a break. The customer got angry and said he was in a hurry and that they shouldn't have people working if they didn't know what they were doing.

I apologised to the customer and reassured him that I would do everything I could to help him, and that if I couldn't help him I would be able to phone my manager.

### **Action**

I asked him to take a seat and asked him a few questions to try to understand what KLZ's were. It turns out that they are a running shoe. I then asked him if I could check his size, and then checked on the computer to see if we had them in stock, which we did. The computer showed me that they were on sale at 25% discount.

I still didn't know what an orthotic was, so I asked if he had them with him. He took off his shoes and showed them to me and then I understood that they go in the shoes. I



offered to put them in the shoes to make sure the shoes fit him with them in it.

The shoes fitted him well. I then told him they were on sale today.

### **Result**

He was very happy and purchased the shoes. When he was leaving he apologised for being so rude when he arrived and said he hoped I was working next time he came in.

I told my manager when he came back, and he was happy and said he probably shouldn't have left me alone on my first day. I was a bit nervous at the beginning, but I felt proud of my achievement.