

EY Center for Careers

Behavioral Interview Guide

Behavioral interview questions usually focus on 4 main themes or skillsets - Leadership, Team Work, Customer (Client) Service and Organization / Time Management. While many students review, practice and memorize 100 or more behavioral interview examples, it is much more effective to be prepared for the skillset, and not specific questions, as you cannot possibly anticipate every potential question that may be asked. The approach recommended on the next page will save you a lot of time and energy!

Start by understanding what each of these skillsets actually mean.



 <p>5 Essential Leadership Skills</p> <p>Communication, Motivation, Positivity, Creativity, Feedback</p>	<p><u>Leadership</u>: Leadership is more than supervising. Good leadership skills involved providing clear communication and guidance, providing support and coaching/mentoring throughout, providing helpful feedback, recognizing good work and achievement, and developing team members to grow in their roles and within the organization. You can be a leader without being selected as the formal manager of a project or team.</p>
 <p>Together Everyone Achieves More</p>	<p><u>Team Work</u>: Working on a group project does not automatically make you a team player. Being an effective member of the team includes working with fellow team members in a collaborative and supportive manner to achieve a common goal (maintain a budget, meet a deadline, produce a good product), to discuss openly and try to reach consensus, to get each team member involved, and to help each team member contribute successfully.</p>
 <p>Service, Quality, Reliability, Efficiency, Satisfaction</p>	<p><u>Customer Service</u>: Working with customers does not demonstrate quality customer service. Quality customer service starts with valuing the customer (understanding that they are the most important aspect of the business), asking and learning their needs and preferences, doing what you can to meet their needs and preferences, taking the initiative to exceed their expectations and resolving issues to their satisfaction whenever possible. Quality customer service leads to customer retention and additional sales and referrals.</p>
 <p>Time management</p> <p>Organize, Economize, Streamline, Prioritize, Contribute</p>	<p><u>Organization / Time Management</u>: Having a lot of tasks and activities does not translate to effective organization and time management. Time management requires planning, identifying priorities, determining what is required to complete tasks and projects, scheduling based on priorities and how long it will take to complete tasks, reducing wasted time and effort, and following through with the plan.</p>

Story Telling

Then, think about your various experiences in school, work, volunteering, and other activities, and identify two or more examples (stories) for each skillset, that exemplify (demonstrate) your Leadership, Team Work, Customer Service and Organization/Time Management skills. Give each example a Title and put the two Titles in the table below next to the corresponding category. Do not include any notes.

For Failure, think of an example when you failed or did not achieve your goals/objectives. Be prepared to explain what happened and why, what did you learn, and how did or will you handle the situation better the next time. As a failure question is not usually anticipated, it is to your benefit to be prepared, just in case!

** See the table below - there are no Questions (only the broad skillsets), and no Answers (only the titles for your examples).

Q (Question) 	A (Answer = Story) 
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 1 (create a title) • Example 2 (create a title)
Team Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 1 (create a title) • Example 2 (create a title)
Customer (Client) Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 1 (create a title) • Example 2 (create a title)
Organization / Time Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example 1 (create a title) • Example 2 (create a title)
Failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Example (create a title)

If you have examples (stories) for each of the themes above, you will more likely be ready to answer most behavioral questions as you can tailor the story depending on how the question is asked. You will not be able to anticipate every question, and it will lower your anxiety and reduce your prep time by accepting this. Chances are, there will be one or more questions that you did not prepare for, and you will have to adapt accordingly.

There are other behavioral questions relating to Problem Solving, Communication / Interpersonal Skills, Initiative, Creativity, Handling Stress, etc. You will be able to use the examples (stories) above to respond to these questions. If you do not have a specific example, use a "hypothetical" example of how you would handle a specific situation. You may also summarize from your experience a process you use.

- If you get a question about ethics, answer it honestly, and ask for clarification if you need more information.
- If you get a technical question, be honest if you don't know the answer, and then explain how you would research and find the correct answer (this tests your integrity).
- Also, be prepared to discuss Technology, Analytics and Artificial Intelligence as more and more employers are asking one or more questions related to this topic.

P-A-R Process

At CSUN, in one or more classes, students learn the S-T-A-R process = Situation, Task, Action, Result. The P-A-R process (Problem, Action, Result) is a simplified version of S-T-A-R as P replaces S and T.

To prepare for a behavioral interview question, use the P-A-R process:

P = Problem (or Issue or Goal/Objective or Expectation or Need)

- What problem or issue were you trying to resolve?
- What goal or performance standard were you trying to achieve?
- Provide a brief introduction to the story - do not provide too much detail, just a couple of sentences, and no more than 30 seconds. You don't want the Problem to be the main focus of your story.

A = Action

- What steps did YOU take to handle / resolve the situation?
- Be detailed, and focus on what YOU specifically did, and not just what the team did.
- Try to list the steps in order; however, if you forget a step, you can go back and include it.
- This is the heart of your story, so don't be too brief - 45 seconds to 1 minute.

R = Results

- What did you accomplish?
- Did you resolve the situation, meet/exceed the goals and objectives, improve a process, generate revenues/reduce costs, and/or contribute in any other way to the success of the team, organization, or employer?
- What did you learn?
- If you did not fully resolve the problem or achieve the goal, how did or will you perform better next time?

On separate pages, prepare very brief notes using the P - A - R process for each example (story). Do not write full sentences or paragraphs. The key is to remember each story, not to memorize.

Review your notes, and go through each story once. Do not practice telling your stories over and over as you will lose your enthusiasm for sharing your stories in the interviews.

Summary

Do not practice and memorize 100s of questions. Prepare and remember your examples, but do not memorize! Tell your story in a conversational manner. It's OK if you pause or forget something - you can add it when you remember it. Best to be yourself, to be genuine and to be natural. Do not over prepare or practice. Do not sound rehearsed or you will sound robotic, and an interviewer can tell when you have memorized a story.

**** Attend an EY Center for Careers Interview workshop to learn more and be prepared!**