

Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Behavioral questions are based on the premise that previous experience gives insight into future behavior. These types of questions ask about your experience addressing an issue (organizing a project, managing conflict). As you see in the answer below, the responses are not long, but they are focused on the steps you took to achieve the goal. Your answers will give the interviewer a sense of your experience and approach in problem solving, project management, etc.

Example

Question:

What types of projects have you worked on in the past where you worked with a team? Can you give me an example of a project you helped complete with a team?

Answer:

I work in teams on a daily basis – in the lab on research projects I work with teams of technicians, grad students, collaborators at other campuses. And as the lab member in charge of our lab's move to a new building, I've also worked with a wide range of UCSF staff – from Mission Bay movers to purchasing people, to top administrators.

But one team project I'm particularly proud of is the accomplishment of the group of four labmates that I led in writing a successful \$1.2 million NIH grant. When we began the project, the group felt we didn't have time to meet our 2-month submission deadline. But at that first meeting, we outlined particular, detailed, step-by-step milestones we would have to meet in order to reach our goal on time. Then I assigned each milestone a responsible person, and a completion date, and we all got started. The team "gel'ed", and we met weekly until the last week when we met constantly, or so it seemed. We had to pull a couple of all-nighters at the end but we submitted that proposal one day early, and it was successful.

Sample Questions

1. Tell me about a time when you faced a difficult problem which you initially failed to solve? How did you approach the problem the second time? What did you do differently? (A Behavior based interview question, but if possible, add in what you also learned from this process about avoiding similar problems in the future.)
2. Give me an example of a crisis situation you have handled successfully.
3. Give me an example of a time when you used your leadership skills.
4. What has been your greatest challenge thus far? How have you attempted to meet that challenge?
5. Give me an example of a time when you had to manage competing priorities effectively.
6. Give me an example of a time when you've had to handle criticism, opposition or rejection? How did you respond?
7. Tell me about a situation where you had to be a good team player? Explain your role on the team.
8. What other things have you done that are not related to your field? What have you learned from those involvements?
9. Tell me about a difficult goal you have set for yourself. How did you reach it?
10. Tell me about a tough group you had to get cooperation from. What was the issue and how did you go about obtaining "buy-in".
11. What was the most difficult decision you've made in the last months, and how did you go about making that decision?
12. Describe a particularly difficult person with whom you've worked, what made them difficult, and tell me about a specific situation where you dealt successfully with that person.
13. Have you presented a project summary to other team members on any of the above projects?
14. Describe a situation where you had to work on a challenging project and had an obstacle that you need to overcome. How did you resolve the challenge and what was the outcome?
15. Have you ever encountered a challenge in dealing with a team member on any project and how did you resolve the conflict with this team member?