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## *White Paper*

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# The Most Common Behavioral Interview Questions

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# INTRO



Behavioral interview questions are some of the most important questions you can ask in an interview. They allow you to get a feel for how a candidate is going to respond in certain kinds of situations. Some of them are more useful than others, of course, and you should always be aware that people will fudge the truth to secure a job, but that's true of all interview questions.

What even is a behavioral interview question? They're similar to normal, traditional interview questions, but they tend to be more pointed. They aren't asking about superficial details like "how did you hear about this position?" Instead, they're focused on how the candidate reacted to certain kinds of situations in their previous employment, or in general life situations. The idea being, of course, that the way an employee has reacted to situations in the past is an indicator of how they will react to similar situations in the future, should they encounter them on the job.

The key to using behavioral interview questions is to watch more than just their answer. Look for their body language when they answer, think about details they may be leaving out of their answer – though never assume something unsupported – and keep an eye out for contradictions between answers.

Whether you're the one holding the interviews, or you're preparing to take one yourself, it pays to know the most common behavioral interview questions that may be worth asking and answering.

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# How to Pick the Right Questions to Ask

If you're the one giving a behavioral interview, you have a decision to make: what do you ask? There are a ton of questions you can ask – as evidenced by our list below – and you only have so much time in your interview. You need to pick a selection of questions that give you a feel for your candidate without turning interviews into a slog.

Think about the open position. What kinds of situations occur in that position, both frequently and semi-frequently? This should guide the majority of the questions you want to ask.



For example, if you're hiring for a position that involves handling valuable items, you may want to ask questions about how an employee has handled a situation where they became aware of a coworker's theft. If the position involves dealing with private personal information, you can ask how they would handle a potential breach they noticed.

You can also ask more generalized questions about behavior, such as “if you encounter a problem with your assigned tasks and you haven't been trained to solve it, how would you handle it?”

**Is this part of the first interview, or a later stage?** Some companies only have one interview for many positions, while others progress to two or even three interviews, depending on the level of the open position and the qualifications necessary to fill it. These interviews are typically used to progress from traditional questions and filtering, to behavioral questions and filtering, to personalized questions to choose the best candidate. Your process may be different, and that's fine; just as long as you have one that works.

**How much time do you have to ask and discuss?** Behavioral questions tend to take up more time to ask, answer, and discuss than more traditional interview questions. You have to engage with a candidate and judge their awareness of a hypothetical situation, or the veracity of an anecdote that may take some time to tell. The longer a question takes to answer, the fewer questions you can ask in the course of a normal interview.

You can think up your own questions, but to get you started, here are 100 of the more common examples

# Questions about Leadership



1. Tell me about a time where you used logic to solve a problem.
2. Tell me about a decision you made that proved unpopular, and how you handled it.
3. How do you handle your schedule being interrupted?
4. Have you ever had to convince a team to work on a project they didn't like? How did you do it?
5. Have you had to solve a squabble between two team members? How did you do it?
6. Have you ever gone to bat for your team in opposition to a higher-up in your company? How did you do it, and how did it work out?
7. How would you go about motivating a team member who is struggling?
8. Have you ever had to make a risky decision? How did it turn out?
9. How would you handle a team member who failed to reach their goals?
10. How do you prioritize your projects?
11. Tell me about a time you solved a problem in a creative or unorthodox way.
12. How do you prioritize service to a large number of clients at the same time?
13. Tell me about a time where you were the resident expert. Did people trust you?
14. Do you consider yourself to be better with written or verbal communication?
15. What makes an ideal team member in your eyes?
16. Tell me about a time you've had to put together a team; how did you choose your candidates?

# Questions about Teamwork



- 17.** Have you been in a situation where you disagree with a company policy? How do you handle it?
- 18.** What do you do if a team member on your project isn't pulling their weight?
- 19.** How do you find motivation for a project you're not enthused to work on?
- 20.** Give an example of a successful moment as part of a team.
- 21.** Give an example of an unsuccessful moment as part of a team.
- 22.** How do you handle your team being reprimanded for something you didn't do?
- 23.** Give an example of a difficult situation with a team member you've had to solve.
- 24.** What do you do if your team disagrees with your manager's decisions?
- 25.** What would you do if your team was waiting on another department dragging their heels?
- 26.** What would you do if your team is stuck waiting for a vendor response?
- 27.** Tell me about a time you've had to work with a teammate with a very different personality from your own.
- 28.** Tell me about a time you've wished you handled a situation differently.

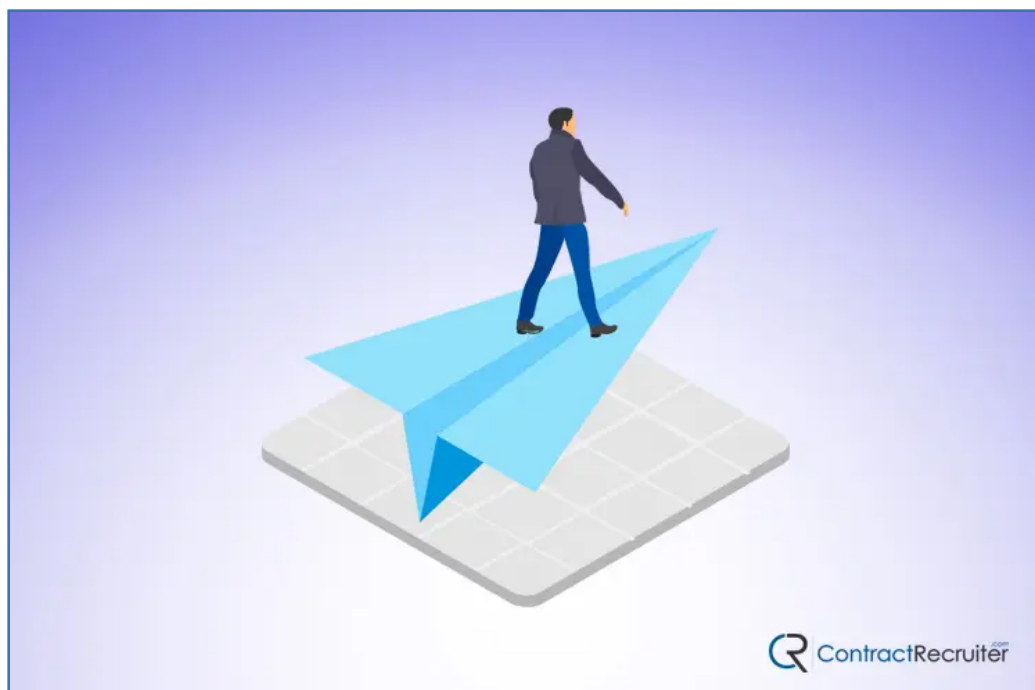
# Questions about Goals and Ambition

**29.** What is one example of a goal you achieved, and how did you work to achieve it?

**30.** Tell me about a time you went above and beyond your job duties.

**31.** Have you been passed over for a promotion? How did you react?

**32.** Have you struggled to reach a goal and failed? How did you handle it?



**33.** How do you set goals in a way that facilitates achieving them?

**34.** What do you do when you finish your work and the day isn't over yet?

**35.** How would you go about seeking out an additional certification for your career?

**36.** Have you ever had the opportunity to talk to your CEO? What did you talk about?

**37.** What would you discuss if you could talk to our upper management today?

**38.** What do you do when you need to make a good impression with a new customer?

**39.** What do you do when you need to make a good impression with management?

**40.** What would you do if you were chosen to represent the company at a trade show?

**41.** What do you do if your job training is going poorly?

**42.** What do you do if you want more training than what your job is providing you?

**43.** Have you ever had to take over for your boss? Is it something you would prefer to do?

# Questions about Stress and Adaptability

**44.** Tell me about a time you were stressed at work and how you handled it.

**45.** Describe a time where you worked under pressure for a short time.

**46.** Describe a time where you worked under pressure for an extended period.

**47.** Tell me what you do when presented with a deadline that seems too short.

**48.** How do you handle interruptions when you're under a time constraint?



**49.** Have you ever had to hand off a stressful situation to a coworker or supervisor?

**50.** Have you ever been faced with an important decision and not had enough information to make it? What did you do?

**51.** You have to make an important decision in a short time constraint; how do you make it?

**52.** Tell me about a time you've experienced a major setback, and how you handled it.

**53.** Tell me about a time you've had to get information or resources from someone who isn't very responsive, and how you handled it.

**54.** Tell me about a time where you had to extricate yourself from a tricky situation.

**55.** When time is running out, how do you decide what to cut from your to-do list?

**56.** Have you ever had to give a presentation, and how did it go?

**57.** Tell us about a time you felt defeated in your job. How did you handle it?

**58.** What is the costliest mistake you've made at your job, and what happened because of it?



# Questions about Morality and Ethics

59. Have you ever noticed a coworker violating company policy? If so, how did you handle it?

60. Have you ever noticed a manager or boss violating company policy? If so, how did you handle it?

61. Have you ever encountered a coworker or boss violating the law, and if so, what did you do?

62. Have you ever had a fellow employee throw you under the bus? How did you handle it?



63. What would you do if you found a manager showing clear favoritism for one employee, or the opposite?

64. Have you ever had the opportunity to duck the blame for something you did? Did you take it?

65. Do you own up to your mistakes when you make them?

66. What is the biggest mistake you've made as part of your job? How did you correct it?

67. Have you ever been part of an ethically questionable business? How did you handle it?

68. Have you ever violated company policy to solve a problem or do your job?

69. Have you ever been told to violate safety regulations to do your job? Did you?

70. Have you ever intentionally violated safety policies to do your job?

71. Have you ever been asked to perform a task that goes against your personal values, but not company or legal regulations? Did you do it?

# Questions about Resume Items



- 72.** Tell us about earning this certification you've listed.
- 73.** Tell us what you did to earn this employee commendation.
- 74.** Tell us what led to you earning this award.
- 75.** You've listed "team management" as a skill; tell us about a time you've led your team.
- 76.** What is your most important personal achievement you didn't list on your resume?
- 77.** What is your proudest moment in your professional career to date?
- 78.** What did you enjoy the most about your last job?
- 79.** What did you enjoy the least about your last job?

# Questions about Interactions



- 80.** Have you ever calmed down an angry customer? How?
- 81.** Have you ever been unable to calm down a customer? Why not?
- 82.** Have you ever had to deal with an irate manager? What did you do?
- 83.** Have you ever bent company policy to satisfy a customer?
- 84.** Have you ever been unable to bend company policy and irritated a customer?
- 85.** How do you handle bring a problem to the attention of a vendor?
- 86.** What would you do if you discovered a gross mistake with a customer's order after they've paid?
- 87.** Have you ever had to defend a customer to your superiors? How did you do it?
- 88.** Tell me about the best review you've ever gotten from a customer.
- 89.** Tell me about the worst review you've ever gotten from a customer.
- 90.** Tell me about a time you've had to deal with a client used to exploiting loopholes.

# Miscellaneous Questions



- 91.** What do you do to verify that the work you produce is accurate and valuable?
- 92.** How do you review your work to identify errors before finalizing a project?
- 93.** What do you do when you discover a mistake made by a coworker?
- 94.** Which would you lean on to make a decision; logic or a gut feeling?
- 95.** Tell me about a time where your gut feelings have been wrong.
- 96.** Tell me about the most difficult decision you've had to make on the job.
- 97.** What do you regret most about your previous job?
- 98.** What would you say is your greatest challenge as a team leader?
- 99.** Have you ever had a time where you've proposed a solution to a problem only to have it rejected? What did you do?
- 100.** What would you choose if you had to pick between a professional goal and a personal goal?

So there you have it; 100 behavioral interview questions you can use wholesale, or use as a basis for developing your own interview questions.