Preparing for Behavioral Interviews

Preparing for Behavioral Interviews:

• Recall past accomplishments (from work/volunteer experiences, undergraduate, and graduate school) which you can use to illustrate your skills, characteristics, and accomplishments
• Rehearse how you would describe your key experiences to interviewers (using PAR for the course)
• Try to create strong visual images (connections) in the interviewer’s mind

Think of “PAR for the course” to answer behavioral questions:

• **PROBLEM** – Describe a specific situation or problem you encountered
• **ACTION** – Speak about the actions you took, obstacles you overcame, etc…
• **RESULT** – Highlight outcomes & goals achieved (this is the most important aspect of PAR!)

Common themes of Behavioral Questions:

Difficult situations:
• Tell me about a difficult problem you had to solve
• Tell me about a time you made a mistake that cost the company money
• Describe a time when you had to handle a difficult customer/student/client

Adaptability:
• Can you provide me with an example of a time when you had to deal with a big change?
• Describe a time when you changed your actions or approach in order to respond to the needs of a situation

Analytical Skills/Decision Making Skills:
• Describe a time when you recognized a problem before your boss or others
• Give me an example of the most complex analysis you have ever undertaken
• Tell me about a strategic plan you helped develop
• What was the most difficult decision you had to make in the last six months?
• Can you give me an example of a kind of decision you make quickly, and one that takes more time?
• Describe a decision you made that you wish you could do over

Oral/Written Communication Skills:
• Sometimes people may not like what you are saying. Can you describe a time when you were able to successfully communicate under these circumstances?
• Give me an example of when you had to speak up in order to get a point across that was important to you
• Tell me about the most challenging report you have ever written
• What barriers have you run into when writing a report?
**Flexibility:**
- How do you get around obstacles that prevent you from doing something?
- Describe a situation when you had to work with someone who had a totally different way of doing things.

**Initiative:**
- Give me an example of a time when you went above and beyond the call of duty to get a job done
- Give me an example of a project/task that you started on your own
- What was your biggest achievement at ___ and what steps did you take to achieve it?

**Leadership:**
- Tell me about a time when you motivated someone to work hard and to do a good job
- Did you ever check the status of a project and discover it wasn’t being done correctly. What did you do?

**Organizational Skills:**
- Give me an example of when you had to handle multiple tasks at the same time
- Give me an example of where planning paid off

**Risk Taking:**
- Tell me about a time when you weighed the pros and cons of a situation and decided not to take action
- Describe a time you decided to take a risk you later regretted
- Describe a time you decided to take a risk you were glad you took

**Persuasiveness:**
- What was the best idea you ever sold to your boss? Why did she/he buy into it?
- What was the best idea you ever sold to a peer or group of peers?
- Can you think of a time when you had to persuade someone to change her/his mind?

**Teamwork:**
- Describe the best/worst team experience you ever had
- Describe a time when a team member strongly disagreed with your ideas or actions. What did you do?
- Describe a situation in which you became frustrated or impatient when dealing with a team member or peer