

How to Win at Job Interviews e-Course Day 2

Hello, this is Margaret Buj. Welcome to another lesson in the Interview Coach's free e-Course to help you succeed at job interviews.



Employers are more interested in what you can achieve for them, than the skills you possess. The interviewer will try to establish what benefits you will bring to the company, and where your benefits might be greater than those of other candidates.

Therefore, when giving examples... use the S.T.A.R. Statement format:

- 1. S – Situation**
- 2. T – Task**
- 3. A – Action**
- 4. R – Result**

S.T.A.R. represents 3 ways to begin to demonstrate your achievements, or in other words how your key skills are applied in work. Your STAR examples should illustrate your depth of knowledge, level of ability and value for each key skill.

If you take any one single action after reading this, it should be to identify and write out at least 6 to 8 detailed personal S.T.A.R. statements.



Situation / Task

Describe a work-related situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. Be very specific and give details, but keep it short and concise. Throughout your interview you'll want to make many S.T.A.R. Statements when using "FOR EXAMPLE."

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Action

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did - not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you MIGHT do, or WOULD do - tell what you DID do. Incorporate Behavioural Competency keywords into the description of your action.

Results

Describe what you achieved. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? How did it make people feel? How did you feel? How did your boss feel? How much time and money did you save?

Take the time to develop and practice your S.T.A.R. Statements! You'll want to have AT LEAST 6 to 8 S.T.A.R. Statements at the tip of your tongue when you go into an interview. Create S.T.A.R. Statements from the jobs on your resume that you want to bring attention to. As you use the statements as examples, your interviewer will become familiar with the various positions you have held, and will get a good idea of your track record of success in those various positions.

About Behavioural/Competency-based Interviewing



During any interview you are likely to face some "Behavioural Interview" style questions.

The interviewer is trying to make a prediction of your future success by understanding how you have handled situations in the past.

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In a Behavioural Interview you will be asked for very specific examples. The questions will start with "Tell about a time ..." or "Describe a situation ..." and then you might be encouraged to elaborate further with questions like "So what were you thinking at that point?" or "What was your decision making process?"

Remember, the core Characteristics / Competencies your future employers will be looking for are:

- Courage / Persuasion
- Commitment
- Work Orientation / Stamina
- Discipline
- Competitiveness
- Big Picture Thinking
- And more.

Don't let this worry you. All you have to do is prepare and stay positive!



Yes, it can be difficult to prepare for Behavioural Interview Questions because of the huge range of possible situational questions you might be asked. The best way to prepare is to arm yourself with an arsenal of example stories that can be adapted to many Behavioural Questions. This brings us back to S.T.A.R. statements.

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Again, if you learn any one single thing from this guide, it should be that you need to write out and develop at least six to eight Personal S.T.A.R. statements, and know them forward and backwards, in great detail.

Use examples of any accomplishments, or awards you might have received, and try to **QUANTIFY** your results. Be specific about numbers, dates and durations!



Here's how to prepare:

- 1) **Write down six to eight example** situations from your past experience where you demonstrated desirable behaviours and skills that employers look for. What was the Situation? What Action did you take? What was the Result? Take the time to make it strong. You want to get hired, don't you?
- 2) Don't be bashful - think of examples that **highlight your strongest** skills.
- 3) Half of your **accomplishment** statements should be totally positive, such as large achievements or accomplishments. The other half should be situations that started out negatively but ended positively.
- 4) Have some **variation** in your examples. Don't make them all relevant to just one theme/job.
- 5) Use fairly **recent** examples, if you can.
- 6) In the interview, **listen carefully** to each question. Pause, and then choose an example story.

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When you are finished, go back to each job and think about what you might have done above and beyond the call of duty. What did you contribute to each of your jobs?

- Did you exceed sales quotas each month?
- Did you solve a problem?
- Did you develop a new procedure?
- Did you promote a new product?
- Did you do something that made the company more competitive?
- Etc.

Convince your employer that you will be able to generate a significant return on their investment in you. **You are selling yourself so stress the benefit and contribution you can make to your prospective employer.**

Interviewers, because of habit, lack of preparation time, poor training, or even laziness, will most likely ask you:

"Can you just take a couple of minutes to tell me about yourself?"



A lot of my clients ask me about this question - **"What do they want to know?"** Answer this question in terms of the skills and experience required for the position. This question is all about you as an **employee**, not about your personal life or whether you're a dedicated sports fan. Answer it by **describing your best attributes relevant to the job.**

Interviewers also think it is improper, a sign of your lack of preparedness, or even rude, for you to answer their "Tell me about yourself" question with a question of your own like, **"What would you like to know?"**

Have a good idea of what you'd like to say before you start talking!

I suggest you learn to answer this question with a **3 part**, pre-planned marketing statement that can more or less be reused from interview to interview.

- 1) A brief summary of the candidate's **career history**
- 2) One, maybe two-sentence summary of a single **accomplishment** that you are proud of that will also capture the potential employer's attention.
- 3) It needs to be a one-sentence summary of specifically **what you want to do next** in your career.

EXAMPLE:

PART 1 : "I am a Product Manager with 7 years experience working for medium to large organizations the IT sector both in the UK and abroad."

PART 2: "Recently, as a long-term contract employee at a medium IT company, I was responsible for overseeing the development of Desktop Services for high value customer accounts. I defined product services and a rollout strategy for the operations, developed a business plan and successfully sourced funding. Product was implemented on time and within budget, this has also provided complete customer satisfaction and repeat business."

PART 3: "For the next step in my career, I would like to move away from contract work and find myself as a direct employee of a large IT company where I will be able to contribute my experience in managing and overseeing the product development life-cycle, as well as bringing forward ideas for new products and subsequently leading the design, development and delivery of these products."

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But for a **second employer**, this **ending was significantly altered** because of the candidate's multiple interests in differing opportunities, to:

PART 3: "For the next step in my career, I would like to find myself as a direct employee of a medium-sized firm that was looking to hire an in-house Product Manager so I could continue growing my career by managing new product launches, and evangelizing initiatives with the sales team. I would also love to apply my past team project management skills to managing a small project team."

These are two very different endings that perfectly **matched two very different employer needs**. With some simple planning **BEFORE** an interview, you, the candidate, will quickly realize the **benefit** of a targeted third sentence in these pre-planned opening statements. Employers will feel that you are perfectly suited to do just the job they are interviewing you for.



Interview "Don'ts"

- ✘ **Don't take your accomplishments for granted.** Make your accomplishments measurable in terms of saving time and money, or making your colleagues, clients, and superiors feel more secure, respected and admired.
- ✘ **Don't be too modest.** Job interviews are not the time to be modest. By all means, don't be cocky or overbearing, but DO make flat out statements like "Based on my skills, and experience with "X," I really do think that I would be a great addition to your team." If anywhere, the job interview is the right time and place to toot your own horn.

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- ✘ **Don't be constrained by official job descriptions.** Your role and responsibilities are often more than your past or future "official titles" may indicate. Show that you are willing to take on tasks outside the official job description when necessary and appropriate.
- ✘ **Never volunteer any negative information about yourself.** Don't testify against yourself. If asked your greatest weakness, reply with a weakness you have conquered, or tell the interviewer about a weakness that may actually indicate strength, like "sometimes I get impatient with teammates who are not as organized as I am."
- ✘ **Don't criticize your former boss or employer.** Talking negatively about past jobs, bosses, colleagues or clients never pays off.
- ✘ **Don't ever lie.** Don't be dishonest in an interview. It will come back around and get you. Put your best foot forward and pump yourself up – but never lie.
- ✘ **Don't inquire about salary, vacations, or other benefits until after you've received an offer, or when you are close to the offer stage.** It makes sense that you should build your own perceived value as high as you can before you ask for the money. You will be able to price yourself higher this way. However, you must be prepared for a question about your salary requirements. Go into every interview with an idea of the probable salary range for the position. ALWAYS ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT, or you won't get it.
- ✘ **Don't feel pressured to answer every question.** Sometimes the best answer is "I don't know." If you don't know the answer, say so. Change the subject or answer with a different S.T.A.R. story if applicable.

Besides these bullet points, just use common sense. Be relaxed, don't talk about politics or religion, and most importantly – work with my Guide and **PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!** You are going to ace it!



Bye for now & good luck with the job hunting!

Need some personal feedback and help?

If you are finding it difficult to come up with a convincing answer to specific interview questions, or would really like some personal coaching in your interview technique, you might want to consider booking an interview skills coaching session. In just 1.5 or 2 hours, I will help you come up with answers that will present your skills and experience in the best possible light.

For more information about my 1-to-1 interview coaching sessions or to read some recent testimonials, please visit www.interview-coach.co.uk or contact me on Margaret@interview-coach.co.uk

Want to **skyrocket your chances of getting any job** that you interview for?? [Click here](#) to purchase my 'Land that Job' e-book. You can get it for £15 instead of £27 if you enter VIP15 in the coupon box when you check out.

Warm regards,

Margaret Buj

