

GET THE JOB

Look to STAR for Better Interviews

One of the most important parts of nailing a job interview is being able to weave pertinent stories about your job history into concise answers.

Some find it hard to pick and choose which topics to discuss, however, and organizing those thoughts can be even more difficult. That's where a handy answer format called STAR comes into play. STAR stands for situation, task, action and result. Here's more about how to use it for better job interviews.

WHAT IS STAR?

Answers matter if you want to stand out in a job interview. Hiring managers are looking for certain traits or skills, and interview remarks help them decide if you possess them. Still, it's not just what you say, but how you say it. To stay focused, begin with a situation that happened in the past, then explain how you contributed, the actions ultimately taken and finally the result. This format sharpens your thought process, while also underscoring your problem-solving skills, creativity, analytical ability, sense



© ADOBE STOCK

of perseverance, teamwork skills and ability to achieve qualitative results.

SITUATIONS AND TASKS

First, detail the "situation," a challenge that presented itself at work. This might be a new issue or one that's lingered, or even something like a conflict within the staff on

how to approach a problem. It doesn't have to be a complex obstacle, and the result don't have to change the world. The important part is framing how you ultimately performed when faced with a workplace issue. Next, move on to the "task," which details the role you played in this situation. Did you take a leader-

ship role in creating a plan, broker an agreement, or make sure deadlines were met? Here's where you give the interviewer a sense of how you work within a larger office dynamic.

ACTIONS AND RESULTS

With all of the challenges laid out, it's time to share how

you helped resolve the situation. Keep this portion of your answer focused on your own contributions, rather than those of other members of your team like managers or peers. This "action" step showcases your ability to work through obstacles, smooth over conflicts and think outside the box. It's your time to really shine. Finally, share your "result." Highlight positive outcomes from all of your previously explained efforts, showcasing what was accomplished. Don't be shy about placing it all in context. If the project became hugely successful, describe it in those terms.

PRACTICE BEFORE YOU GO

Job interviews, by their very nature, are unplanned affairs. There may be times when you share a story because the timing just feels right. But more often, applicants never know how, or in particular when, a question about their past experience may come up. So, it's best to become familiar with the STAR method before you go. List your skills, qualifications and experience with a specific eye on the job you're applying for, then practice incorporating this simple method of explanation to make sure you present yourself in the very best light.