Acing the Situational Interview

ARA) - The phone rings. It’s a recruiter calling to let you know that all that hard work on your resume paid off and they’re inviting you to come in for an interview. You’re psyched up, until you hear about this new situational interviewing taking place -- now, you’re psyched out.

While situational interviews may be drastically different from what you know of standard interviews, they’re not impossible to conquer. Instead of a recruiter asking you factual questions -- such as, “So, what makes you experienced for this position?” or emotional questions like, “What would your coworkers say about you?” -- they ask situational questions. In situational interviews, the recruiter is looking to glean how a candidate handles real work situations, his or her problem-solving style and what the potential employee’s personality is really like.

To prepare for a situational interview, it’s not important to study your resume, but do study the buzz words in the job description. Look for qualifications that stand out, like time management, ability to multitask, autonomy, etc. These are key traits you’ll want to convey during your interview, and you’ll have to do so by illustrating the characteristics and giving specific examples, instead of just saying you possess them.

Snelling Staffing Services has compiled a list of some of the most common situational interview questions that a candidate is likely to be asked.

1. Describe a challenging work situation. What did you do to solve the problem, and what was the outcome?

2. Tell me about a time when you had to think on your feet and reach a decision quickly.

3. In your experience speaking with clients and customers, tell me about an instance when communication became challenging and how you overcame that.

4. Give an example of a time you were able to be amiable and warm as a communicator.

5. Describe a time when you were successful working in an unstructured environment.

6. Tell me about a time you had a conflict with a co-worker and how you resolved it.

7. Can you describe a situation in which you had to think outside the box to solve a problem for a co-worker, client or customer?

8. Describe an instance in which you have disagreed with instruction or criticism from your boss and how you approached the situation.

9. Tell me about a time in which you had to really manage your time well, how you went about doing so, and how you were able to meet your goal.
10. Can you tell me about an instance in which you were able to positively motivate others?

In preparation for the interview, candidates should read through situational questions and focus on coming up with multiple scenarios from work history to illustrate his or her abilities. Tell your stories aloud. Keep your answers on target, make the scenarios relevant to the question and focus on the positive outcome. To structure your answer, focus on the following order: situation, action and outcome. If you keep the order in mind, the story should naturally progress to become well-rounded and on point.

Ask a friend or family member to ask you questions throughout the days or weeks leading up to your interview so that you can become comfortable telling your stories. Focus on keeping your answers positive and avoid the standard interview pitfalls. Never use profanity, bad-mouth a former or current employer or lie.

Even if you're not interviewing now, keep a running list of examples from your current employment to draw upon down the road. Once you’ve gotten your stories straight, they should be just as familiar as your resume.

Courtesy of ARAcontent