What to Expect from Behavioral Interviews

Many employers are aware that employing somebody on the basis of two short interviews can be a risk if they do not ask the "right" questions in an interview. That's why "behavioral" interviewing has become very popular with many managers.

What is behavioral interviewing?

It is a style of interview that forces you to answer questions that demonstrate your competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) by giving specific examples from your past experiences. The focus of the interview is less about what you can or could do, and more about what you have done in specific situations in the past.

Prior to the interview, the interviewer will define the competencies for the position, and will then develop a series of questions that allow him/her to find out if you have those competencies. Behavioral interviewing is based on the assumption that your past performance (in previous roles) is an excellent predicator of your future performance.

What sort of questions should you expect?

If your interviewer decides to conduct a behavioral interview, you can expect questions that will focus clearly on how you handled situations in the past, such as:

- Give me an example of how you have .
- Tell me about a situation where you .
- How did you deal with a situation in your past role where you had conflict with .

How should you prepare for a behavioral interview?

You can best prepare by taking the following steps:

- Look closely at the position you are applying for. Get hold of a job description. What specific skills are the employers looking for?
- Analyze your past work experience and background. Match the skills that you have with those the employers are looking for. Don't forget competencies that you have developed outside of the work environment (eg, leadership or organizational skills through not-for-profit activities, etc.)
- Now identify specific examples/situations that demonstrate those skills. You need to be able to explain an entire situation - tell a story to show how you actually used a particular competency. It pays to illustrate the level of involvement you had in resolving a situation, and to quantify the results. If there are situations where you applied a competency but things didn't work out, use them as examples and explain what went wrong. What did you do to resolve it?
- Try the **PAR** approach to answering questions. State the **problem** you faced. Outline the **action** you took to resolve the problem. And then explain the **results** you achieved.