

Greatest Hits Exercise

Purpose: Help you brainstorm and structure success stories by skill area to prepare for interviews.

Background: Behavioral Interviews are based on premise that best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. They usually start with the interviewer saying, “Tell me about a time when,” “Give me an example of,” or “Describe a situation when...”

It’s an opportunity for you to share success stories from your past to help this employer feel that you have the experience and transferrable skills to make significant contributions to their organization. Here are some...

The best way to answer these questions is the CAR method

- **Challenge – what was the challenge you encountered**
- **Action – what actions did you take to address the challenge**
- **Result – what were the positive results**

Keep answers between 90 seconds and 2 minutes. It’s a great framework for structuring your answer in an efficient way to get the main points across.

When asking these questions, employers are trying to discern specific skills or competencies they need for the person who fills this role. The questions can focus on hard or most often, soft skills like communication and teamwork. To make the best impression in the interview, it’s important to have many stories ready that demonstrate your skills. You may be good at thinking on your feet, but it’s better to give these some thought in advance.

Here’s an example of mapping out a CAR story for the question – “Tell me about a time when demonstrated adaptability” and in this example, I will pretend to be a wedding planner.

I would talk about working with a couple and it’s about 10 days before their outdoor wedding when the extended forecast predicted thunderstorms that day. So, the Challenge is Rain predicted for outdoor wedding.

By the C, I would include keywords: rain, outdoor wedding

First, I would talk to the couple see if they would be willing to have the reception under a tent. Since it was last minute, I would call other vendors with whom I had cultivated strong relationships with over the years to see if last minute, somebody had availability. I connected with the florist and a designer to ensure the reception had the ambiance the couple envisioned with this change of plans. Once I did that, I inquired about renting 300 umbrellas to make sure all the guests stayed dry.

By the A, I would include keywords: talked to couple, vendors, tent, umbrellas

Thankfully, it all came together and on the day of the wedding it was sunny for the actual ceremony and they were able to hold it outdoors, but it did pour during the reception. The lighting and the flowers in the tent looked beautiful and everyone stayed dry and seemed to enjoy the evening. The couple expressed their gratitude, left positive reviews, and referred good friends who had just gotten engaged.

By the R, I would include keywords: rain reception, everyone dry, happy couple, referral

Your Greatest Hits Exercise

This exercise walks you through the steps to prepare a quick visual depiction of 20-30 success stories across skill areas and will help you feel more confident when faced with behavioral questions.

On one sheet of paper, write 10-15 skill areas...

For example, Leadership, Teamwork, Communication skills, Strategic Planning, Analytical Skills, Project Management...

Let the job description be your guide in terms of which skills appear on this sheet. 10-15 skill areas was just a guideline. Select all the skills and competencies relevant to your target job.

For each of these skill areas, write 2 CAR stories meaning **Challenge** (what was the challenge you faced), **Action** (what actions did you and your team take), and **Results** (what were the positive results).

Pull examples from every area of your resume including your jobs, consulting work, board membership, philanthropy, activities, internships, and more, but focus the majority of your stories on your relevant past experience, particularly the past 5 years. If you are returning to the workforce after a gap or pivoting, then you may pull stories from farther back in your work history.

When doing this exercise, don't write out long answers. It's too overwhelming writing it out and could come across as too rehearsed and unnatural if you try to memorize it.

You know your experience, so there's no need to memorize the answers. Instead, I recommend using keywords and phrases to trigger your memory.

I will have a Greatest Hits Exercise sheet for you to download in the show notes at tjfcareercoach.com under the podcast tab and episode 8.

I recommend having your resume beside this greatest hits sheet as you decide which success stories correspond best to each skill. In some cases, you may use the same story for two skills – for example, a major project you spearheaded could serve as an example of Leadership and it may also fall under the Change Management category as well. That's why I recommend having two stories for each skill category.

It may take an hour or two to map out all of your stories and get the keywords on the sheet, but it's worth the effort.

Once the sheet is complete, practice saying these success stories out loud before your interviews. - Don't skip this next step!

In your head things sound great, but it usually takes a bit of practice to articulate your value and they are only 90 seconds to 2 minutes each, so not that much time.

Practicing will help you smooth out the flow (get rid of ums, pauses, likes), identify areas where you need to come up with a better example, and in the process increase your confidence.

You will now be better prepared to show this hiring committee how everything you have done in your career to this point has been building transferrable skills that will enable you to jump in and contribute right away to their organizational objectives.

Leadership

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Analytical Skills

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Project Management

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Teamwork

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Adaptability

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Business Development

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Communication skills

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Strategic Planning

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Resilience

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Negotiations

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Delivering presentations

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Customer Service

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Demonstrating Initiative

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Compliance

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Risk Management

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Technical skills

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Change Management

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Navigating conflict

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Client Account Management

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Sales and Marketing

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R:

Teaching & Mentoring

C:
A:
R:

C:
A:
R: