STAR Technique/Approach

Applicant Handout

During the pre-interview planning, interviewers will develop a plan for evaluating the responses to interview questions and other job-related criteria. In assessing the sufficiency of answers to questions such as those posed during a behavioural interview, the interviewer may desire to utilize the **STAR** Method. STAR is an acronym that stands for situation, task, action and result.

In the STAR Method, an answer is assessed for including a clear statement of:

- **S**ituation or **T**ask
- **A**ction Taken
- **R**esult or Outcome

The interviewer will expect an answer to a behavioural question to specifically describe a situation or task relevant to the question and to clearly demonstrate the action(s) taken and the results achieved.

Details for anticipated responses of applicants in the **STAR** approach include:

Situation *Describe the situation that you were in.*	Briefly describe the background to give context to your example. Be specific in identifying a problem or challenge and provide enough detail for an interviewer to 'get it.' Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
Task *Identify the task that you set out to accomplish.*	This step might reflect your strategy or thinking in coming up with a plan. What goal were you working toward?
Action *Describe your actions.*	What did you do specifically? Which skills did you use? If you were part of a team, focus on you and the role you played. Describe the actions you took to address the situation with an appropriate amount of detail and keep the focus on YOU. What specific steps did you take and what was your particular contribution? Be careful that you don't describe what the team or group did when talking about a project, but what you actually did. Use the word "I," not "we" when describing actions.
Results *What happened?*	How did the event, project, situation unfold. What did you achieve or learn? How might you do things differently to improve an outcome? Describe the outcome of your actions and don't be shy about taking credit for your behaviour. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Make sure your answer contains multiple positive results.

Technique

STAR Method is a technique commonly taught by professional recruiters, career counselors and job interview coaches to help candidates structure their answer to a behavioural/competency based interview question.

Example of an Interviewer Using STAR Method

"Tell me a time when you were on a team and you didn't see eye to eye with a team member, what did you do?

Situation *Provide for a specific situation to provide context to the answer.*	"In my last job with Global Telecom, I was assigned to the Y25 project team with 10 other members to rollout and implement the new software system-testing tool within a 4-week period. "
Task *Describe in detail a task that you were responsible for and had to complete. Even if you worked on a team, it is important that you are clear on what your own responsibilities were.*	"I was responsible for all n-tier application testing for all systems within the Lower Mainland with one other team member. We had to ensure there wouldn't be any problems with the application once we started to rollout the systems to other parts of the Province. Problem was this team member and I could not see eye to eye when coming up with a testing process/methodology."
Action *What specific actions did you take to complete the task or solve a problem?*	"Since this team member was more senior then I, I respected his knowledge but I didn't agree with his testing process and vice versa he didn't agree with my ideas. I decided the only way we were going to work effectively is to meet up 1 on 1 during lunch (in a comfortable environment). I explained my frustration and went over both our process plans in detail. I told him if we were going to work effectively, we both have to be on the same page. Basically we discussed everything out in the open."
Results *Describe the results and outcomes of your action. Did you achieve successful results? What was the final outcome?*	In the end, the testing process was rolled-out without delays. We both compromised on a single process and everything worked out perfectly. We gained more respect for one another and we continue to keep in touch. Most importantly, the testing was rolled-out on time and on budget.

False Stars

A false STAR is a response you provide that is difficult for the interviewer to interpret. While these responses may be acceptable in everyday conversation, they do not allow the interviewer to isolate your role through a specific example of an actual previous behavior.

False STARS are typically statements of feelings and opinions, or statements of what an applicant "would do" or "would like to do" or vague statements.

Feeling as Fact *Interviewers will watch for your use of statements of opinion or feeling. For example:*	"I was really great at planning" "I thought I was the best manager and deserved more responsibility" "I showed a lot of initiative in making my sales calls"
The Use of "We" *The interviewer will also watch for your use of "we" to demonstrate that you are a team player and may ask for clarity to understand your role in a situation.*	Example: "What was your specific role in this team?" Incorrect use: "We developed a strategic plan and software" Correction: "I helped developed a strategic plan and software"
Would Haves *The interviewer will watch for candidates who use conditional statements. For example:*	"I would have achieved the targets" "In this situation, I would call the customer"

Behavioural questions rely on the theory of **past behaviour**. Interviewers are looking for a specific example where you demonstrated certain behaviour. When listening to the response, the candidate's role, what they actually did do, how they actually did handle a situation must be clear. In the above examples of false STARs, you can see that each statement does not provide the information required for an accurate evaluation.