Learning the S.T.A.R. Interview Technique

By learning to utilize the S.T.A.R. Interview Response technique, students can advance their skills greatly with regard to being able to demonstrate their abilities and accomplishments. The S.T.A.R. method is based on Targeted Selection Interviewing methodology (TSI), a theory that is based on the belief that a job candidate's past performance is the best predictor of their future behavior in a similar situation. By using TSI questions, employers can best discover if that candidate has the characteristics and skills the employer is seeking for a specific opening.

Although there are a number of ways to answer TSI questions, one of the most straightforward approaches that can be readily mastered if a student applies the necessary time and thought is the S.T.A.R. method which is made up of:

1) Describe the **Situation** that fits the question you have been asked
2) Briefly state what your **Task** was in relation to the situation
3) State what **Actions** you took and finally,
4) What **Results** happened due to your efforts.

As you can see from the bold words above, S.T.A.R. is an acronym for **Situation -> Task -> Action -> Results**. By learning to answer TSI questions with the S.T.A.R. technique, you will greatly enhance the impression you make on potential employers.

Here is a brief list of TSI questions that students may use to start practicing their S.T.A.R. technique. The skill or competency that the employer is probing is listed after each.

Note that all of these questions are actually composed of a **series of questions**. As students begin learning this technique, it's helpful for them to jot down the question series, then answer them in the order asked. With practice, a student will learn how to handle question series on the fly. Most TSI series questions mirror the **Situation -> Task -> Action -> Results** line of actions. Words such as challenge, problem, outcome, assignment, etc. are sometimes substituted as you will see below.

- Tell me about a project that you had to organize for work or school? What steps were involved and what was the outcome? (Organizational skills)
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a disgruntled or angry customer or colleague? How did you resolve the situation? (Interpersonal and conflict-resolution skills)
- Describe a situation in which you misunderstood instruction from a teacher or supervisor. Why did the misunderstanding occur? What steps were taken to resolve the situation? What was the outcome? (Communication skills)

- Tell me about a time when you considered the pros and cons of a specific situation and decided not to take any action, even though there was pressure on you to do so. (Judgment skills)
- Describe a situation when you faced multiple deadlines in a short time frame. What caused the situation? How did you handle it? What was the outcome? (Time management skills)
- Give me an example of a time when you helped solve a problem in a group or team setting.
- Describe the most difficult situation you have ever faced at work or school. What did you do to solve the problem? What results were achieved? (Problem-solving, possibly technical skills)
- Tell me about a time when you were able to use a newly acquired skill in a workplace setting. What was the skill or knowledge? Describe the situation and outcome. (Technical skills)
- What documents do you create on a regular basis? Do you have someone else proof them for you? What are the typical changes you make before sharing them? (Written communication, proofreading skills)
- Tell me about a situation you faced when something you said of did was misunderstood. What did you do to clarify or resolve the situation? What was the end result? (Communication skills)
- Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a co-worker or team member. What was the basis for your difference of opinion? How was the difference worked out? What was the end result of your interaction? (Interpersonal skills)
- Describe a situation when you were not proud of what you accomplished. What was the challenge or issue you faced? Why do you think your results were not up to par? What did you learn from the situation? (Self-assessment skills, quality orientation)
- Tell me about a time when you had to "go the extra mile" to complete a project. Why were you in that situation? Were there any other ways to complete the project successfully? (Organization, time management skills)

A few final tips:

- Listen carefully to each question. If you are unsure what is being asked, make sure you ask for clarification. When you respond, be sure to recall your past accomplishments in detail. Stay out of the hypothetical world, stay away from the phrase "I would".

- Practice your behavioral stories using **real-life examples**. It is very difficult to make up behavioral stories, which is why behavioral interviewing is becoming more popular.

More information and questions may be found online at:
http://www.pacificu.edu/hr/training/interview/pdfs/TargetedSelection.pdf