

Interview Skills & Performance Techniques (Week 9)

Professional Career Development

BMSW4012

Lesson Objectives & Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, learners will be able to:

- Understand the purpose of behavioural interview questions and how employers assess candidates.
- Use structured techniques, such as STAR and SHER, to deliver effective interview responses.
- Demonstrate professional communication skills, including active listening and appropriate interview etiquette.
- Prepare confidently for interviews by researching employers, presenting professionally, and asking effective questions.

Understanding Behavioural Interview Questions

What are behavioural interview questions?

Behavioural interview questions ask candidates to describe how they handled specific situations in the past. They are based on the idea that past behaviour can help predict future performance.

Why do employers use them?

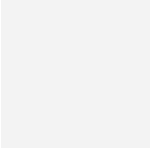
- Predict future job performance
- Assess key workplace competencies
- Evaluate decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Understand communication and interpersonal abilities
- Determine organisational and cultural fit

(Armstrong and Taylor, 2023)



Behavioural questions
often begin with:

**"Tell me about a time
when..."**

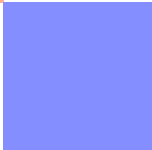


Examples of Behavioural Interview Questions

Behavioural interview questions are designed to assess how candidates have demonstrated key workplace skills in real situations.

- **Leadership:** Tell me about a time you led a team to achieve a goal."
- **Problem Solving:** "Describe a challenging problem you faced and how you resolved it."
- **Conflict Management:** "Tell me about a time you handled a disagreement with a colleague."
- **Working Under Pressure:** "Describe a situation where you successfully met a tight deadline."
- **Teamwork:** "Tell me about a successful team project and your contribution to it."

(Armstrong and Taylor, 2023)



“Tell Me About Yourself”

Why is this question asked?

It provides an opportunity to introduce your background, highlight relevant skills and experience, and demonstrate the value you can bring to the role.

- Often the first question in an interview
- Helps set the tone for the discussion
- Allows candidates to showcase their strengths and suitability for the role

(Armstrong and Taylor, 2023)

Use the SEAT Method

SEAT Element	What to Include
Skills	Key strengths and abilities
Education/Experience	Relevant qualifications and background
Achievements	Notable accomplishments
Type of Person	What you bring to the organisation

Crafting a Strong SEAT Example Response

- **Skills:** Highlight key strengths, such as communication, teamwork, or project management
- **Education & Experience:** Briefly summarise your education and relevant work, placement, or internship experience.
- **Achievements:** Share a notable achievement that demonstrates your skills and impact.
- **Type of Person:** Describe personal qualities that make you effective in the workplace, such as being collaborative, adaptable, and motivated.

Keep your response relevant, structured, and under two minutes.

Activity: Tell Me About Yourself

Working in pairs, use the **SEAT** method to structure your answer to the interview question:

"Tell me about yourself."

- **Skills** – What are your key strengths?
- **Education & Experience** – What qualifications and relevant experience do you have?
- **Achievements** – What accomplishment are you most proud of?
- **Type of Person** – What personal qualities would make you a valuable employee?

Aim to keep your response clear, focused, and **under 2 minutes**.

The Importance of Active Listening in Interviews

Using a clear structure helps you deliver concise, relevant, and impactful interview answers.

Well-structured responses make it easier for interviewers to understand your experience and assess your suitability for the role.

Good candidates:

- Listen carefully to questions
- Respond appropriately and clearly
- Ask for clarification when needed
- Demonstrate interest and engagement

(Hargie, 2021)

Key Benefits of Active Listening

What are the benefits of active listening?

- Reduces misunderstandings
- Improves the quality of responses
- Builds rapport and professionalism
- Creates a more positive interview experience

(Hargie, 2021)

The L.I.S.T.E.N. Model for Effective Professional Listening

The L.I.S.T.E.N. model provides a simple framework for effective listening during interviews and professional conversations.

L – Lean in and pay attention

Focus fully on the speaker and minimise distractions.

I – Interact in the conversation

Show engagement through verbal and non-verbal communication.

S – Seek clarification

Ask questions if you need further explanation or detail.

The L.I.S.T.E.N. Model (2) – Think, Evaluate, Neutralise

T – Think before responding: Take a moment to consider your answer before speaking.

E – Evaluate questions carefully: Ensure you understand what is being asked before responding.

N – Neutralise bias and assumptions: Listen objectively and avoid making premature judgments.

Structuring Strong Interview Answers

Using a clear structure helps you deliver concise, relevant, and impactful interview answers.

Well-structured responses make it easier for interviewers to understand your experience and assess your suitability for the role.

Structured answers help you to:

- Stay focused and organised
- Provide clear examples and evidence
- Demonstrate skills and competencies effectively
- Help interviewers assess your performance and potential

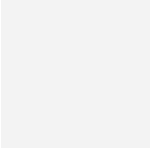
Two Useful Frameworks



SHER (SITUATION,
HINDRANCE, EFFECT,
RESPONSE)



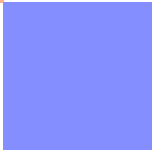
STAR (SITUATION,
TASK, ACTION,
RESULT)



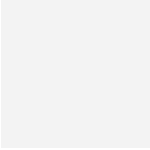
Understanding the SHER Framework for Structured Interview Answers

The **SHER** framework helps you structure interview answers by explaining a situation, the challenge you faced, the actions you took, and what you learned from the experience.

- **S – Situation:** Briefly describe the context or scenario.
- **H – Hurdles:** Explain the challenge, obstacle, or difficulty you encountered.
- **E – Endgame:** Describe the actions you took and the outcome achieved.
- **R – Reflection:** Highlight what you learned and how the experience helped you develop.



(Moon, 2013)



Understanding the STAR Interview Framework

The **STAR** framework is a widely used method for structuring interview answers. It helps candidates provide clear, evidence-based examples that demonstrate their skills, experience, and achievements.

- **S – Situation:** Briefly explain the background or context.
- **T – Task:** Describe your responsibility or objective.
- **A – Action:** Outline the specific steps you took to address the situation.
- **R – Result:** Highlight the outcome and the impact of your actions.

(Yate, 2021)



"Tell me about a time you worked effectively in a team."

Situation: "During a university group project, our team faced a challenging deadline to complete an assignment."

Task: "I was responsible for coordinating communication and ensuring everyone stayed on track".

Action: "I developed a project plan, allocated tasks, and organised regular team meetings to monitor progress and address any issues."

Result: "The project was completed on time, met all requirements, and received a high grade."

Activity – Build a STAR Response

In Pairs

Choose one question:

- Tell me about a time you solved a problem.
- Describe a conflict you resolved.
- Tell me about a time you showed initiative.

Task

- Work together to create a STAR response.



Practise Behavioural & Competency-Based Interview Questions

The following questions are commonly used in behavioural and competency-based interviews to assess key workplace skills and experiences.

Teamwork:

"Describe a time when you worked successfully as part of a team."

Leadership:

"Tell me about a time when you influenced or motivated others to achieve a goal."

(Yate, 2021)

Practise Interview Questions to Prepare Strong Responses

Conflict Management:

"Describe a disagreement you experienced in the workplace and how you resolved it."

Prioritisation:

"Tell me about a time when you had to manage multiple tasks or competing deadlines."

Initiative:

"Describe a situation where you took the initiative or went beyond what was expected of you."

(Yate, 2021)

Mock Interview Activity

Instructions

1. Work in pairs
2. One person acts as interviewer
3. One person acts as candidate
4. Use STAR or SHER
5. Provide constructive feedback

Reflection Questions

- What worked well?
- What could be improved?



The Impact of Professional Appearance

A professional appearance can create a positive first impression and influence how you are perceived by employers.

It can demonstrate your readiness for the role and your understanding of workplace expectations.

What does professional appearance reflect?

- Credibility and trustworthiness
- Confidence and self-awareness
- Professionalism
- Attention to detail

(Pool and Sewell, 2007)

Choosing colours for interviews?

The colours you wear can influence first impressions and contribute to a professional appearance.

While colour alone will not determine interview success, appropriate colour choices can help communicate confidence, professionalism, and attention to detail.

Colour	Impression
Navy Blue	Trustworthy, dependable
Black	Authority, sophistication
Grey	Professional, balanced
White	Clean, organised

(Johnson, Schofield and Yurchisin, 2002)

Why Asking Questions Matters in Interviews

Asking thoughtful questions at the end of an interview demonstrates that you are engaged, prepared, and genuinely interested in the role and organisation.

What does it show?

- Interest in the position
- Preparation and research
- Curiosity and a willingness to learn
- Professionalism and engagement

**Are there any questions
to avoid?**

Examples of Strong Questions to Ask in an Interview



About the Role

“What would success look like in the first six months of this role?”



About the Team

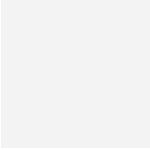
“How would you describe the team culture and ways of working?”



About Development

“What learning and development opportunities are available?”

(CIPD, 2024)



Examples of Strong Interview Questions to Ask Employers

About Leadership

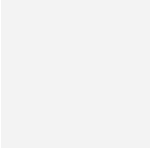
"How would you describe the management and leadership style within the team?"

About Flexibility

"What does flexible or hybrid working look like within the organisation?"

(CIPD, 2024)





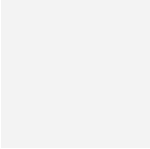
Interview Success Checklist for Effective Preparation

Before the Interview

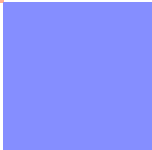
- ✓ **Research the organisation:** Understand its values, culture, products, services, and recent developments.
- ✓ **Prepare STAR examples:** Have clear examples ready that demonstrate your skills, experience, and achievements.
- ✓ **Practise common interview questions:** Rehearse your responses to improve confidence and communication.
- ✓ **Plan your outfit:** Choose professional attire that is appropriate for the role and organisation.
- ✓ **Prepare questions to ask:** Develop thoughtful questions that show your interest and help you learn more about the role.

(CIPD, 2024)

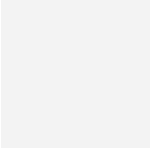




During the Interview: Making a Strong and Professional Impression

- ✓ **Listen actively:** Pay close attention to each question and seek clarification if needed.
 - ✓ **Structure your responses:** Use frameworks such as STAR or SHER to provide clear and focused answers.
 - ✓ **Demonstrate enthusiasm:** Show genuine interest in the role, organisation, and opportunity.
 - ✓ **Remain professional:** Maintain positive body language, communicate respectfully, and present yourself confidently.
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(CIPD, 2024)



Key Takeaways for Interview Success

- Behavioural questions explore past experiences
 - Use SEAT for introductions
 - Apply L.I.S.T.E.N. for active listening
 - Structure answers with SHER or STAR
 - Practise regularly
 - Dress professionally
 - Prepare thoughtful questions
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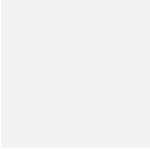
Any questions?

**What is one interview technique
you will apply in your next
interview?**

Session Recap & Key Learning Outcomes

By the end of today's session, you should now be able to:

- Explain the purpose of behavioural interview questions and why employers use them during recruitment.
- Apply the STAR and SHER frameworks to structure clear and effective interview answers.
- Demonstrate effective interview communication through active listening and professional conduct.
- Prepare more confidently for interviews by researching employers, presenting professionally, and asking meaningful questions.



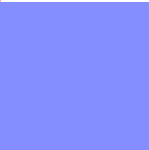
Week 10: Optional Drop-In Session & Assessment Preparation Overview

Next week's session is an optional drop-in and provides a great opportunity to:

- Ask any questions you may have
- Receive feedback on your work
- Take part in a live mock interview where I can assess your interview skills and provide guidance ahead of your assessment

Attendance will be recorded for anyone who attends between 9:30am and 1:00pm.

Please make the most of this opportunity, as the following week (week commencing 6 July) will be your assessment week.



Reference List

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- Hargie, O. (2021) *Skilled Interpersonal Communication: Research, Theory and Practice*. 7th edn. Routledge.
- Johnson, K.K.P., Schofield, N.A. and Yurchisin, J. (2002) 'Appearance and dress as a source of information: A qualitative approach to data collection', *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 20(3), pp. 125–137. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X02020003>
- Moon, J.A. (2013) *Reflection in Learning and Professional Development: Theory and Practice*. Routledge.
- Pool, L.D. and Sewell, P. (2007) 'The key to employability: Developing a practical model of graduate employability', *Education & Training*, 49(4), pp. 277–289. DOI:10.1108/00400910710754435
- Yate, M. (2021) *Knock 'em Dead Job Interview: How to Turn Job Interviews Into Job Offers*. 7th edn. Adams Media.

**If you have any questions, please do
not hesitate to get in touch.**

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