BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING – The PARL Method

Behavioral interviewing assumes that your past experiences are good indicators of your future abilities. You’ll be asked to tell stories about your past so that the employer can assess your skills and behavior. The behavioral interview is the most common type of interview so regardless of your industry of interest, you will likely encounter behavioral interview questions. These questions are also known as situational interviews and the questions require you to provide a specific, detailed example of a past experience and demonstrate how you handled the situation.

By having a good understanding the nature of the job and the organization, you can more accurately select examples from your life that have meaning to the employer. The best way to prepare for behavioral questions is to PRACTICE! You want to learn your stories, not just memorize them, so practice makes perfect. Remember though – this is storytelling, so you want your answers to sound natural, not like you’ve rehearsed them before.

The PARL Method

The key is being able to talk about your experiences in such a way that employers can identify your skills and approach to problems. Behavioral questions often begin with “Tell me about a time when you had to...” One way to help organize your answers and experiences is to use the PARL Method, which helps you focus on the most relevant aspects of your experience in a structured way.

P: the PROBLEM or situation (“What happened”)

A: the ACTIONS you took (“What did you do”)

R: the RESULTS or outcomes (“What was the result”)

L: the LEARNING or KNOWLEDGE you gained (“What did you learn? How have you grown as a person?”)

Sample Practice Questions

1. Describe a work situation in which you were not proud of your performance. What did you learn from this?

2. Describe an important goal you set and tell me how you reached it.

3. What is the biggest struggle you’ve experienced in the past 6 months and what did you learn from it?

4. Tell me about a time when you had to motivate yourself to do something you didn’t want to do?

5. When was a time things didn’t go as planned, and how did you handle it?

6. Tell me about a time when you had a conflict and how you resolved it?

7. Give a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

8. Tell me about a problem that you solved in a unique or unusual way.