

THE STAR INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY, SUMMARY AND APPLICATION

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Over the years, I have met many strong sales reps and sales leaders that have turned out to be weak at interviewing. On the flip side, I have met some weak sales rep candidates that got good jobs because they were strong interviewers. Interviewing is a skill.

Just like a sales call, you need to go into an interview prepared with a strategy. I have been endorsing the STAR interviewing methodology since 2004. If you can practice answering behavioral-based questions using this approach, you will become a strong interviewee.

The STAR method is:

S – Situation, background set the scene

T – Task or Target, specifics of what's required, when, where, who

A – Action, what actions you took, skills used, behaviors', characteristics

R – Result – Outcome, what happened? Bonus; attach a tangible number (% or \$)

HOW TO BUILD A STAR METHOD ANSWER

A STAR answer could be up to 2-3 minutes long, and must be delivered with energy and enthusiasm describing a real-life experience you have had.

Question: Tell me about a time when a customer was going to fire you as a service provider, but you managed to save the account.

Lets build a STAR method answer.

(Situation) “Certainly. A relevant example being at my last company, when I was assigned to a new territory as an account manager. I inherited a large account, Magna Automotive, who had been neglected by the previous rep. They were not getting their products on time, not seeing any value in our services, and competitors were knocking on the door gunning for our chunk of the business. John, the maintenance manager, was threatening to kick us out”.

(Task) “This account was critical in my territory, representing 8% of my annual budget. Part of my role, as an account manager, was to provide exceptional customer service and to do whatever it took to keep the business”.

(Action) "The first thing I did was gather historical account information from our CRM system. I wanted to know exactly what I was getting myself into before I sat down with the contact. I could immediately tell that some of the pricing was off, and that their products were coming from tier 3 suppliers. With this data in hand, I urgently requested a meeting with John the maintenance manager. Our initial meeting did not go well. John spent most of it venting and listed all of the examples of how our company had screwed up. I listened carefully, taking notes and asking clarification questions. I took responsibility for what had happened and requested an opportunity to at least rectify the situation. I assured him that the account was my top priority and that I would propose a solution for him quickly. I met with my sales manager and showed him the billing changes and new supplier information I wanted to enact. We were going to provide free service charges and some special pricing for an initial period of time. I received my manager's buy in. I arranged a follow up meeting with the customer and we went over the new initiatives I had suggested. The customer was skeptical, but he was willing to give this one last shot."

(Result) "For the next 2 months, I personally showed up to the account whenever they were scheduled to receive shipment. I met with the customer on site to ensure that everything had arrived to his satisfaction. After a few visits, this allowed us to develop a bit of a relationship. He could see that I was 'bending over backwards' to please him. The customer did not end up firing us, and he stayed. In fact, he bought more products from me once he was comfortable that I could come through. As a result, the account grew to 12% of my territory volume, representing \$58,000 in annual sales. Later that year, the client received an internal audit customer service survey and rated me 10/10 on satisfaction. They are now, one of our best customers".

You need to practice your answers out loud, and ensure that you don't go over 2-3 minutes.

The example above not only answers the customer service question, but also conveys that you have other skills and behaviors any interviewer would be interested in.

Articulating an interview answer like this will help set you apart. You are providing the interviewer with an answer that shows formal solution process, along with a tangible result.

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