

## INTRODUCTION

The information in this file comes from [www.upgradereality.com/star-model](http://www.upgradereality.com/star-model). We could not have written it better and decided to use this well-prepared description of the STAR method.

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The STAR Interview Method is the easiest way to get behavioural interview questions right under pressure. This step by step guide shows you exactly how to master the STAR method. Your actions and results are of intense interest to other people, and they define who you are and how you act. This is why stories are so powerful for interviewing. But only the right stories work in interviews.

Being able to tell people about yourself through stories which put you in a good light is an *extremely* powerful way to show your value. Becoming an expert in short, structured story telling is the best way to answer competency based and behavioural interview questions.

## WHAT IS THE STAR MODEL?

The STAR Story model contains these parts in order:

- **Situation:** Open with a brief description of the **Situation** and context of the story (who, what, where, when, how).
- **Task:** Explain the **Task** you had to complete highlighting any specific challenges or constraint (i.e. deadlines, costs, other issues).
- **Action:** Describe the specific **Actions** that you took to complete the task. These should highlight desirable traits without needing to state them (initiative, intelligence, dedication, leadership, understanding, etc.).
- **Result:** Close with the **Result** of your efforts. Include figures to quantify the result if possible.

## WHEN TO USE THE STAR METHOD?

The STAR method is perfect for answering certain behavioural and competency based interview questions. Some companies even tell you that they use the STAR interview process so you can prepare. Typically the STAR interview questions will be open questions (i.e. requiring more than just a 'Yes', 'No', numerical or single word response) where the interviewer indicates that a description of an event would be a good way to answer.

Sometimes, closed interview questions which could be answered with a simple 'Yes' or 'No' are good to answer using the STAR technique. For example questions starting "Did you ever ..." are also often good to answer using a STAR story. Sure you could say "Yes, I did XYZ" but if you feel the interviewer is not just looking for a yes or no answer or if there is a level of skill that you can demonstrate better by describing a situation or problem you solved, then use a story.

## CONSTRUCTING YOUR STORY

Think of a situation which have highlighted your skills and good qualities. Usually these will be situations where you achieved something special and ideally where the result was significant and measurable. The following questions may help:

- Have you ever helped meet a tight deadline?
- Have you ever received an award for your efforts?
- Have you ever over-achieved a special target of some kind (sales / production etc.)?
- Have you ever helped someone get through a problem?
- Have you ever helped increase / decrease a desirable business metric (i.e. increase sales / profit / production /customer retention or decrease costs / errors etc.)?

Remember that it is absolutely critical that you stick to the truth. There is nothing wrong with highlighting your good work, but interviewers will pick up if you are lying.

Now describe what happened in the situation going through each of the STAR sections in order of Situation, Task, Action and Result. If it helps, you might like to start by using the following prompts to keep the structure.

<b>Situation</b>	One time I ... / Just last month I had a situation where ... / It was ... and ... <b>Tip:</b> Just tell the relevant facts around when it was, who was there, where it happened, how it had come to this point.
<b>Task</b>	So what we had to do was ... / In order to fix ... we had to ... / We wanted to achieve ... so we needed to .... <b>Tip:</b> People like measurable things, so include anything which is measurable like size of an order, beating a deadline, etc. Any kind of special issue or constraint is good to include here.
<b>Action</b>	What I did was ... / So I ... <b>Tip:</b> Describe your actions. You do not want to make the person you are talking to feel like they should be hiring another hero.
<b>Result</b>	In the end we ... (achieved great result as measured by) / We met the deadline and ... / After that I received an award for ... / ... and reduced XYZ (i.e. costs / errors / rework / time required/etc.) by X (percent / dollars / hours etc.) / ... and increased XYZ (i.e. profit / sales / output etc.) by X (percent / dollars / hours etc.) <b>Tip:</b> Avoid subjectivity. This is the point most people make a mistake on. The person listening wants to hear a specific, measurable result, not something which you think was good.

**DEMONSTRATING VALUE**

Tying the need from the Task tightly to the Actions you took and the Results you achieved will demonstrate your value. It should also be tied together in a way which demonstrates desirable character traits in you which will fit well into the role. It comes back to clearly and quickly understanding what character traits the interviewer is looking for and highlighting them in your story.

It is also important to remain positive. Never put previous companies or other people down because your job is to position yourself in a good light. If you have weak characters in your stories, you will inadvertently be comparing yourself to weak people. It is much better to be positive about other people in your stories and when you describe your contribution, you will really shine.

**STAR technique example:** If the interviewer is looking for someone who is *dedicated* you might say:

<b>Situation</b>	One time, we had many requests for customer follow-ups after a conference where our company had a stand.
<b>Task</b>	Because one of our team was sick, we had a large backlog and customers were complaining that we were taking too long to get back to them.
<b>Action</b>	What I realized was that some of the customers were fine with a follow-up on the weekend, so I got one of the other team members to ring the whole list and setup appointments first requesting a weekend time if possible then worked on the weekend to clear the backlog.
<b>Result</b>	We cleared the list and we ended up acquiring 10 new customers and sales of \$50,000.

**GETTING THE TIMING RIGHT (THE BIGGEST RISK)**

Timing is everything in an interview and in a story. You always want a balance of talking and listening in any conversation, so it is important to keep any STAR story short. 1-3 minutes maximum for any story, so keep it tight. Listen to the pacing in your story so it moves along nicely and is balanced between all sections.

The other aspect is your intonation and rhythm in your voice. Because the STAR method is a formula, it is possible that you may sound robotic or canned. It is important to mix it up and ensure that your stories sound natural and spontaneous. This might sound a conflict in terms, but the best story tellers and the best public speakers practise practise practise, but they also sound natural. Keep this in mind that you can both do lots of practice and still sound natural.

Another aspect of timing is how long you spend on each section. Balance is important. Have a think about what the interviewer is interested in. Are they technical? Are they more socially orientated? Are they looking for leadership? Balance is best, just keep in mind that if you are technical and they are social, then they will get bored if you spend lots of time on one part of your story, so try to balance between Situation, Task, Action and Result.

**PRACTICE**

Practice really helps. It is really good to practice before the interview with several possible situations where you have shone and demonstrated desirable character traits. Before the interview, think what qualities they are likely to be looking for and practise your stories around each one. It is also good to ask yourself what type of person you are and polish the stories highlighting your strengths. You should have them in your resume. Try making up a STAR story demonstrating each of the following qualities.

Desirable Skill / Trait	STAR Question (Tell me about a time when you...)
Good decision making	made a tough decision / evaluated 2 potential options / approached a new problem
Team spirit	supported your team through a challenge
Leadership skills	involved others in a decision or to fix an issue / took a lead role
Initiative	took control of a situation / fixed a tricky problem
Flexibility	were put into a stressful situation / had to change your mind in order to solve an issue
Solid planning skills	prioritized between multiple conflicting goals
Communication skills	were criticized / had to explain something complex

As it is mentioned above, it is important to keep it natural and if you over practise, you are at risk of focusing so heavily on the answers that you have rehearsed that you might sound unnatural.

Another risk around practising too much is potentially missing the question. This can be an easy mistake to make especially if you know that it will be a STAR model interview. You may have been practising your story, and when you get a question similar to one you have practised, you launch into a great story, but miss the point that the interviewer was looking for.

**It is critical to listen carefully to each interview question!**

## USING VOICE GRADIENT

When people get excited, they always speak with more energy. Building up the energy as the story progresses is a good way to keep people engaged. Stories using the STAR approach lend themselves to increasing the energy and excitement in your voice and even movement from low / normal at the beginning (Situation) through to high energy at the end (Result). If you are nervous, sometimes you can have nervous energy at the start then level off at the end when you are feeling more comfortable. This will make your story sound flat, so just be aware of the energy you have in your voice at each stage of the story.

**A word of warning:** Adding gradient to the story is really good when speaking to a group and can be very powerful if doing a presentation (some people call it using dynamic range), but you should be very careful not to go over the top in an interview as in most cases interviewers are looking for professionalism though there are exceptions in some industries. Try to assess your own natural energy as compared to the interviewer's natural energy and stay somewhere in between. E.g.: If you are a naturally quiet person, but the interviewer is gregarious then step it up a little. If you are gregarious and they are quiet then just be aware of this to keep them comfortable.

## ELICIT AN EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

Emotion is powerful and one of the Results of any achievement is the emotion that you felt for having achieved the goal. You should naturally display this, but if you have the feeling that the message did not come across properly then you can have an optional statement near the end of the story as a backup. Have a statement ready in case you need it. If your delivery is good, you should not need it. This statement can come in a number of forms and again must be 100% honest. Sometimes a simple statement of how you felt at the time is enough to punch it home or recover. You can either name the emotion or imply it. Something like:

I was really **pleased / relieved / proud** to clear the backlog / make those sales.

We worked hard, but it was worth it. (**implied satisfaction**)

That was **impressed** how even the junior members of the team helped out.

## WHAT IF I DO NOT LIKE BEHAVIOURAL INTERVIEWS OR USING THE STAR MODEL?

There are lots of people who say they do not like behavioural interviews and feel that they are unnatural. To those people, we have to say, get off your high horse and change it when you are interviewing. The person interviewing is doing the best job they know how. Even if you give the slightest impression that you think they are wrong, then you will reduce your chances of success.

The interviewer is always right just like the customer is always right. Your job is to work within the constraints given and put yourself in the best possible light through giving the most compelling examples of where you have and can help the company you are interviewing for.

## ALTERNATIVE TO STAR

There are as many alternatives to STAR as there are story tellers and stories. The advantage of using a structure is so it is both logical and so you do not forget to include the parts that are **important to the interviewer**.

One nice alternative that is worth to mention is EAR (Example, Action, Result). EAR technique is almost the same as STAR and if you remember what was challenging about the example, you'll be on the mark.

## BE THE STAR

Everyone is a superstar at some point in their lives. The way you achieve successes and the successes you achieve are intensely interesting for those listening because stories are the way we have learned and survived for thousands of years. The STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) is simply a formalization of a short story which displays a moral and desirable qualities with your centre stage achieving results. Start at level 1, this will help you immediately and you can keep refining it to become a master.

## FINAL WORD: BE YOURSELF, BE POSITIVE, BE HONEST!

Remember, practice makes perfect, but while you are practising, do not try to learn your story like learning lines. Do your preparation and have the possible ideas ready, then listen to the question and answer honestly. Be yourself and deliver your story professionally and positively knowing that if they are looking for your skills then you will be putting yourself in the best light possible through using the STAR Method.

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On the following pages, you will find 10 questions to practise. Prepare STAR-like answers to them. Thanks to that you will not be surprised by the obvious questions during your interview. Remember:

- Specificity sells!
- The devil is in the details!
- Be concrete!

Use numbers when discussing the results of undertaken actions. You do not remember if the “...” was 36.5% or 36.6%? It does not matter, especially if it was a relatively long time ago. Double-check if you are able to do that. If not, operate with approximate numbers. Why? If your potential employer has to choose from a short list of 2 candidates, with all things being equal, they will choose the person that is more convincing. Let's assume, your competitor is in theory the weaker candidate, but has during the entire interview process confidently operated with numbers while you talked about general things. It is very probable that the other person will be offered the job.

**QUESTION: HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH STRESS?**

**EXAMPLE #1**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**EXAMPLE #2**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -



**QUESTION: HOW DO YOU MANAGE CONFLICT?**

**EXAMPLE #1**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**EXAMPLE #2**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -



QUESTION: DESCRIBE WHAT YOU HAVE DONE IN YOUR CAREER THAT DEMONSTRATES YOUR INITIATIVE / PRO-ACTIVITY.

EXAMPLE #1

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

EXAMPLE #2

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**QUESTION: WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE?**

**EXAMPLE #1**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**EXAMPLE #2**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

QUESTION: **WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST FAILURES TO DATE? WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED FROM THEM?**

EXAMPLE #1

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

EXAMPLE #2

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

QUESTION: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR WORK AT X.

EXAMPLE #1: COMPANY A

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

EXAMPLE #2: COMPANY B

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**QUESTION: TELL ME ABOUT A SITUATION WHEN YOU NEEDED TO PRESENT AN UNPOPULAR DECISION OR POINT OF VIEW.**

**EXAMPLE #1**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**EXAMPLE #2**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**QUESTION: DESCRIBE YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE.**

**EXAMPLE #1**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**EXAMPLE #2**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

QUESTION: GIVE EXAMPLES THAT PROVE YOUR EFFECTIVITY.

EXAMPLE #1

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

EXAMPLE #2

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -



**QUESTION: HOW ARE YOU DIFFERENT / BETTER FROM OTHER CANDIDATES?**

**EXAMPLE #1**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

**EXAMPLE #2**

<b>Situation</b>	- - -
<b>Task</b>	- - -
<b>Action</b>	- - -
<b>Result</b>	- - -

If you want to practise more, we recommend you this website:

- [www.job-interview-site.com/executive-interview-questions-for-management-positions.html](http://www.job-interview-site.com/executive-interview-questions-for-management-positions.html)