

ADMIN ADVANTAGE



The Exclusive Online Magazine for Administrative Professionals

May 2018

5 Cost-Effective Ways to Reward Administrative Employees

FEATURES:

How to Handle a Behavioral Interview

Want to Boost Your Administrative Career? Find a Mentor

6 Power Questions to Ask to Figure Out Your Strengths

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CONTENTS

of May '18

6 How to Handle a Behavioral Interview

11 Want to Boost Your Administrative Career?
Find a Mentor

15 6 Power Questions to Ask to Figure
Out Your Strengths

18 5 Cost-Effective Ways
to Reward Administrative Employees

23 Incentive Travel:
The Five Keys to Success

18



11



23



6



15





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How to Handle a Behavioral Interview

By Gary Alan Dumais

WHAT IS A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW? ▼

Behaviorally based interviewing is also known as situation based interviewing or the “STAR” method (Situation, Task, Activity, Result). Basically, it means the interviewer will ask you to describe examples of things you’ve done on the job, and most of the interview questions will begin with something like, “Tell me about a time when you... “. The interviewer then listens and probes for details about the who, what, when, where, how, etc. in the examples you provide.

Asking what a person did do in certain job situations is different from traditional interviewing methods that ask people what they would do. The behavioral method is used because what a person did do tends to be more predictive of what they will do in the future, in comparison to what they say they would do. For example, if a candidate was asked what he would do if he had a conflict with a colleague, he might say that he would confront his coworker to discuss the matter. However, when asked to describe

what he did do during a recent time he had a conflict with a colleague, the same candidate might share an example in which he ignored the conflict in hopes it would fade with time.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW ▼

Behavioral interview questions are usually designed to match the competencies needed for success in a role (e.g., problem-solving skills, project management skills, relationship building skills, etc.). For instance, if a job requires a person to think strategically, an interviewer might ask them to describe a recent time when they had to define a business strategy. With that in mind, it's useful to identify what competencies a job requires so you can prepare accordingly for related interview questions:

- Sometimes formal job descriptions will list the competencies required for a position. If not, Human Resources or the hiring manager for the role will likely share the competencies if asked. It's certainly OK to ask about the competencies required for success in a role when applying for a position.
- You may also be able to discern the required competencies by closely reviewing the job description and "reading between the lines", so to speak. In my experience, most job competencies fall into the three broad categories: Thinking (e.g., problem-solving, innovating, etc.), Results (e.g., accountability,

time management, etc.), and People (e.g., networking, influencing, etc.). Those categories can be used as a guide for deciphering the competencies underpinning a job description. For example, while reading the job description, you could ask yourself, "What thinking-related competencies seem needed for this role?", "What results-related competencies seem needed for this role?", and so on. Once you've identified the competencies required for a job, the next step is to recall instances from your work experience when you evidenced those competencies:

- Recall examples that occurred within the last year or less (the more recent, the better). They'll be easier to remember and share details about. Further, behavioral interviewers usually require examples to be relatively recent.
- Avoid getting caught-up in trying to identify the biggest, best, or most elaborate example you can think of. I've interviewed many people who had difficulty giving examples because they didn't feel the example was sophisticated or spectacular enough to share. Behavioral interviewers tend to focus more on the how than the what in the examples you provide. For instance, you probably take a similar approach to delegating work whether a project is large or small, but it'd be easier to convey the details of the smaller project when the interviewer asks.
- Don't let an undesired outcome keep you

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from sharing what would otherwise be a good example. I see this often, for example, when asking people to describe a time when they had to influence upward (e.g., gain buy-in from senior leadership, change their boss's opinion, etc.). They hesitate to share an example because they were unsuccessful at influencing upward. However, once they share the example it's clear (to me as a behavioral interviewer) that their approach to influencing was sound, despite senior leadership choosing not to buy-in.

HOW TO RESPOND TO BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ▼

Now that you've identified the competencies


required for a job and some examples from your work experience that illustrate those skills, the final step is to refine how you'll communicate those examples:

- Answer the question the interviewer asks. Seems intuitive, but I still come across candidates who give examples they believe will make them look good, rather than examples that fit the questions asked. The behavioral interview method requires clear examples from candidates that match specific competency areas, and so it's not the time to respond like a politician. For instance, if the interviewer asks you for an example of

how you dealt with a customer complaint, you won't be able to get by with an example of how you exceeded your sales goals for the year. Similarly, if you find yourself falling back into the traditional interview habit of responding to questions with guesses about what you would do in a hypothetical scenario, be prepared to be asked again about what you did do in an actual situation.

- Center your responses on describing your actions and involvement in the examples you provide. Remember, in most instances, the interviewer is seeking to understand what you did so they can draw conclusions about your skills, abilities, and fit for a job. For instances when you were part of a team, you can start your example with, "As part of a team I... (and then talk specifically about what you did or the role you played on the team)".
- Be concise. Interview time is limited, and interviewers typically have several competency areas to cover. Communicating only the essentials of each example (e.g., the who, what, where, when, and how) will help ensure you don't run short on time. Keep in mind that interviewers can ask you for more detail if they need it, but in contrast, it's difficult to make up for time lost on longwinded examples. Moreover, interviewers are likely to be gauging how well you communicate, as many jobs require strong verbal communication skills.

Practice to ensure examples are fresh in your mind, but do not over-rehearse or read from your notes during an interview. Behaviorally based interviews are not like school exams that can be "passed" by giving certain "right" answers. As alluded to previously, interviewers will likely be evaluating how you communicate, think on your feet, handle pressure, etc., while you are responding. Having a few notes (such as bullet points to jog your memory) is usually fine, but coming across as scripted, robotic, or rigid during an interview is not.

- Finally, don't be shy about taking time to think before responding (especially if you're asked a question you weren't expecting). It's much better to take a few moments to recall an example that is fitting and straightforward than it is to respond quickly with an example that's mismatched or convoluted. 

*I sincerely hope you found my advice about behavioral interviewing to be helpful. Please visit **Select Human Resources** or my website at **garydumais.com** for more useful articles and contact information. You can also connect with me on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/garydumais/>*

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Want to Boost Your Administrative Career? Find a Mentor

By Brandi Britton, OfficeTeam

You have the necessary education, skills and years of experience to be an office manager or senior executive assistant, yet you keep getting passed over for promotions. And all those upper-level administrative jobs you've applied to? Crickets. What's going on? ►►

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It's sometimes difficult for workers and job seekers to know what's keeping them from getting ahead. That's why finding a mentor is a smart career strategy. Seasoned professionals have built up years of experience and savvy. They have personal expertise with networking, office politics, goal setting and other skills that aren't learned in a classroom. Because they've been there and done that, their hindsight can serve as your foresight.

The tricky part, of course, is finding your Yoda — a teacher to help further develop your talents and guide your career path.

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT MENTOR ▼

You don't have to go to the ends of the galaxy to track down a mentor, but the process does require careful consideration and planning. As a mentee, you're looking for someone with greater skills and more accomplishments than what you have. You also want to choose someone who can commit to the time and effort it will take to properly guide you.

Keep the following points in mind as you evaluate potential mentors:

- **Their job title** — Although a mentor can come from practically any field, it may be best to look for someone who holds a position you aspire to reach. That way they can give you job-specific advice, such as what courses you should take and which administrative

certifications hiring managers like to see on resumes.

- **Their personality traits** — You're looking for someone with whom to build rapport based on trust and shared values. A good mentor has characteristics such as empathy, honesty, communication, support and cooperation. Above all, they should have a genuine interest in your career growth.
- **Their accessibility** — Thanks to today's technology, a mentor no longer needs to be located in the same city as you — though proximity does help. What's more important is how available they are. A person with a young family or who's still scrabbling to reach the height of their profession may not be able to devote as much time to developing your career as, say, someone nearing retirement.
- **Their relationship with you** — The keynote speaker at the conference you just attended gave an inspiring presentation, and you'd love to learn more from that person. But chances are slim they'll expend significant time on a virtual stranger. It can be better to pick someone from among your existing network. In fact, you should be doing everything possible to raise your profile with a potential mentor before asking them to guide your career. Volunteer for projects they care about. Give thoughtful feedback during the meetings they attend.



ASKING SOMEONE TO BE YOUR MENTOR ▼

You have a short list of possible candidates to serve as your mentor. Now comes the hard part. It can be nerve-racking to ask a senior-level professional to devote time to your career development. Here are some tips to help it go smoothly:

- **Be forthright.** While you could ask potential mentors for a coffee date and then spring the question on them, a more transparent strategy would be to state your purpose for wanting to meet. That way they won't be caught off guard during what they thought

was a simple social get-together. Also, by giving them advance notification, they'll have time to consider your proposal.

- **Get your pitch ready.** It's hard to ad lib well when you're nervous. To keep yourself focused, prepare a short elevator speech. This summary should include where you currently are in your administrative career, where you'd like to be someday and why you feel their mentoring will help you get there.
- **Be specific.** Articulate the kind of advice and type of commitment you're looking for.

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Do you need to take your interpersonal skills up a notch? Or perhaps extra help in setting career goals and establishing the associated milestones? Mentoring relationships shouldn't last forever, so also mention an end date, such as three or six months from the first official meeting.

- **Be flexible.** The person you ask may have different ideas of what would make for a productive mentorship, so don't be wedded to your notions. Let's say they agree to serve as your mentor but think you should work on building your confidence rather than technical skills. Be open to possibilities. Trust their judgment. After all, a good mentor knows what weaknesses are best to turn into strengths.

HOW TO BE A GOOD MENTEE ▼

Your first choice for a mentor said yes.


Now what? Here's what you can do to ensure a successful relationship.

- **Demonstrate initiative.** Underscore your commitment by being fully devoted to the mentorship. Come to each meeting on time and prepared to engage. At the end of each session, summarize the actions you will take before the next get-together.
- **Accept feedback gracefully.** An essential job of a mentor involves giving constructive criticism. But when you're on the receiving end, negative feedback isn't always easy to

take. Just remember that professional growth requires honesty and hard work, so don't get defensive when your mentor suggests that you stop doing what you've always done and start taking another approach.

- **Make the relationship mutually beneficial.**

Your mentor is being generous by sharing their time and expertise with you, but you shouldn't be all take and no give. Think of ways to share your unique talents and skill set with them. Reverse mentoring can be richly rewarding for everyone.

It's not always easy to go from where you are to where you want to be. With some thoughtful preparation and planning, you'll build a strong relationship with a mentor and you won't have to make the journey alone. 

Brandi Britton is a district president for OfficeTeam, the nation's leading staffing service specializing in the temporary placement of highly skilled administrative and office support professionals. OfficeTeam has 300 locations worldwide and offers online job search services at roberthalf.com/officeteam. Connect with us on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest and the OfficeTeam blog.

6 Power Questions to Ask to Figure Out Your Strengths

By Rosina S Khan

Ever wondered how to make the most of your skill set and match a job out there? You simply need to find your strengths. How would you do that? Ask a few power questions. Read on to find out. ►

1) Why is Evaluating Your Strengths Important?

Why would one want to identify his/her strengths? To develop the confidence that s/he has the expertise and skill set in certain areas, which in turn help them to land on the right job.

Not knowing one's strengths, one is unable to achieve fully and is bound in limited ways without spreading his/her wings. Having a full awareness of one's strengths, s/he can step out

TRAINING

of their comfort zone and soar, provided s/he has found the right work tasks for themselves.

There needs to be a match between what you know about your strengths and what job exists out there. When this match happens, you love to do what you do and cannot just go astray but bounce to higher levels.

So, identifying your strengths is worth your time and effort. You work on them on a daily basis, improving and honing on them to higher steps so that you come out as a more content and happier person. It means so much to contribute your values to the world.

2) How Do You Actually Identify Your Strengths?

Try to remember the past when you were approved for a job well done. What skills did you involve? Was it a writing exercise or a piano lesson? What are the things you love to do - you love them so much that you excel in them? What qualities in you helped you to get there? Perhaps you love to teach Mathematics and honing your skills in it will help you rise up the ladder of success.

There are hundreds of little things that could appeal to you. But it's not possible for you to do everything. So, choose two or three - one can be your main source of income and two others - your hobbies, which you can monetize and earn some extra income as side along jobs.

For instance, you could be a teacher - that's your main occupation. As hobbies, writing self-help eBooks and growing your list (money is in the list!) could go a long way as well as doing boutiques on dresses as a second hobby which you could start charging customers for doing it to the dresses they would like boutique prints on.

3) Which of Your Strengths Do You Take Advantage of Daily?

Do you realize by now that you have strengths and weaknesses? It is the strengths in you that we are concerned with, which help you soar.

Every single day you are accomplishing something fruitfully. Do you realize which of your strengths are you utilizing to achieve every day? For example, the traits could be:

- I) High typing speed to document something.
- II) A fast learner so that you are ready to grasp concepts quickly and put to use immediately.
- III) IT knowledge including programming and hard coding etc.

4). Can You Add Power to Your Strengths?

Practice and repetition are the keys to add power to your skill set.

The more you practice and repeat, the more an expert you become in your niche, making as little mistakes as possible.

Throw down a challenge and compete with friends in your niche on a particular work task. See how you do in it? Are you better off than your friends or they are better than you? Do you still have something to learn and catch up? The challenge will make you realize it. This is also how you know to add power to specific one(s) in your skill set.

5) How Can You Utilize More of Your Strengths Every Day?


Paying close attention to what you are doing on your job for a longer time every day will help you to take more advantage of your skill set.

How about spending 15 more minutes on the task you love per day? Yes, definitely it will add up for the month(s) and until the end of the year, when you finally realize that you have been wholly productive all along and it definitely pays off and brings in great rewards such as, a raise or promotion.

6) What lessons have you got to impart to others regarding your strengths?

Yes, what could you really impart to others about your strengths? Would they benefit? For instance, perseverance, hard and smart efforts, diligence and patience all contribute to your work tasks. Another criterion could be prior research and gaining knowledge about a particular area.

Impart all your secrets and values to your friends who need them, giving vivid examples from your life. You could also discuss it in a telesummit or webinar, reaching out to a bigger audience and you will genuinely gain true satisfaction.

Summing up, these are the questions you could ask to shine and stand out from others in your niche and career. What better way is there to achieve a fulfilling life, bringing out good not only for you but also for others? 

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WORKSMART

5 cost-effective ways to reward administrative employees

By Greg Dyer, President of Commercial Staffing, Randstad US

WORKSMART

Office and administration workers have long been in the shadows, quietly keeping companies humming efficiently and smoothly. But these roles are advancing, with responsibilities that now look more like middle management than support staff. There are specific days meant for recognizing these invaluable staff members, like Administrative Professionals' Day, which takes place every April. However, employers shouldn't wait for a holiday to show appreciation when they can demonstrate gratitude year round. ►►

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Employees who feel valued by their managers are generally more motivated to do their best at work. As a manager, you don't have to spend a lot of time or money to show appreciation. Try one of these five cost-effective ways to continually reward these employees and boost morale.

Write a thank you card. In a recent Randstad US survey, only half (53%) of employees feel as if their boss values their opinion, and nearly one in five (17%) workers report they have an employer who takes credit for their work. This will inevitably damage rapport between management and admin employees. So how can you communicate that their work is critical to your company's success? A simple, but solid, start is writing a personal thank-you note. In an increasingly digital world, a handwritten card can strike a positive chord among your workers. A thank-you note can especially go a long way when you point out contributions that helped (or increased) the success of the team.

Give a small, but personal gift. Your employees all have unique interests outside of work. Consider purchasing a small, but thoughtful gift that ties back to a hobby or something the employee enjoys outside the office. It's not only a cost-effective way to reward employees, but it will also come across as a more personalized gesture.

Take them out to lunch. Employees still see

the value of having facetime with their boss, especially younger professionals. In fact, 39 percent report "in-person" as the most effective method of communication, according to the Gen Z and Millennials Collide at Work study. However, facetime can go beyond providing regular feedback and holding in-person meetings.

On occasion, one-on-one lunches are a great opportunity for leaders to show their appreciation and have a more casual conversation outside of the office. Therefore, make an effort to treat your employees to lunch to commend them on a job well done and connect on a more personal level. Host team celebrations. Hosting team celebrations is a sure-fire way for all employees to be recognized. There are a lot of moving parts to any company project, and admin workers should be rewarded for their efforts in supporting a greater goal. Regularly commending all members of the team can inspire administrative professionals to take a more prominent stake in company initiatives.

If possible, increase compensation. Over the last few years, we've seen salaries rise an average of three percent across all industries. And while any reward holds merit, a competitive pay package is what your talent really wants. Office and administrative tasks run the gamut in today's workplace, and employees want —




and deserve — to be rewarded. The best way to honor employees is by assessing if their compensation aligns with the value of their tireless work and market standards. If not, they may seek employment elsewhere. Strongly consider how you can amp up rewarding employees in simple dollars and cents. If a raise is out of the question, consider creating a small incentive program where

employees can use points to redeem perks like a car wash, coffee or even a babysitter so they can enjoy a night out.

Admin positions have turned into multifunctional roles and warrant newfound praise. In fact, 87 percent of hiring managers ask admins to take on larger roles and more responsibility, according to Randstad's Workplace Trends

CAREER

report. Organizations that take time to appreciate their employees year-round will experience less risk of turnover and the added costs of vacant positions. Losing administrative employees also means you could miss out on budding talent for your team, as skills in admin and office roles can transfer into greater positions over time. Sixty-seven percent of hiring managers see office and administration positions as a springboard to higher level roles in the organization.

The time spent on your recognition and appreciation efforts will be minor compared to the time spent to fill a position due to turnover. According to the 2018 SHRM/Globoforce Employee Recognition report, employee retention and turnover ranks as the top workforce challenge as reported by 47 percent of HR leaders. Don't leave retention to chance by assuming your admins feel rightfully acknowledged. Rather, build a plan that will keep all employees engaged and motivated to further challenge themselves at your company. As entrepreneur Sam Walton once said, "Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune." And as a leader, you should create an environment that inspires and pushes your team forward, whether it's through kind words or other gestures suitable for exceptional admin talent. 



Greg Dyer, President of Commercial Staffing, Randstad US

Greg leads Randstad's in-house services concept and enterprise strategic accounts team, where he is responsible for strategic commercial sales, client delivery and account management for many of Randstad's largest, most complex clients. Greg oversees a team of strategic account directors and in-house leaders and has a proven track record of establishing solid go-to-market strategies, setting and communicating clear vision and goals, and executing and delivering outstanding results in terms of growth and profitability. Under Greg's leadership, Randstad has significantly improved its strategic client delivery and fulfillment in many client staffing programs.

Incentive Travel: The Five Keys to Success

By Kristopher Charles Hewkin

Although we have written volumes about the value of travel incentives, it is important to remember how many business objectives and return on investment initiatives are actually achieved when these programs are implemented correctly. Incentive travel is vital to maximizing relationships and profitability with your three key audiences: customers, channel sales affiliates, and employees. Increased customer loyalty, higher sales revenues and reduced employee turnover are the three prominent goals that travel incentives can achieve for you. ►►

LIFESTYLE



Executing a successful program however is extremely difficult. Melissa Van Dyke, President of the Incentive Research Foundation, has drawn on 20 years of expertise and feedback from industry executives to compile five keys to success for incentive travel programs in a recent issue of *The Meeting Magazines*.

1. Communication is key

When asked about what could lead a program to fail, the most common response was substandard communication efforts. This has been our experience as well. Too often marketing the program effectively and allocating a proper budget to do so takes a low priority in the overall travel incentive program budget. Poor timing, an already stretched budget and mundane emails to promote a program are all recipes for disaster. Many companies incorrectly expect a few text-heavy emails devoid of

enthusiasm or exciting imagery to suffice.

Communication must be a top priority, not an afterthought, to properly motivate and achieve incremental performance and participant buy in. Understanding the exact steps the participants must take to receive the trip, their progress and standings in relation to others and how close they are to ultimately winning the prize need to be clearly communicated as the program progresses. Crystal clear communication is only the beginning however.

These communication pieces must also be inspiring and eye-catching. The communication channels must vary to catch the attention of even the most mobile sales person. The majority of the world has an attention deficit disorder in this age of instant gratification, social media and information overload. It is imperative to

break through with compelling graphics, crafty language, strategic deployment and proper communication medium selection.

2. Visible management is a must

Management must ensure that their best producers feel like their efforts are recognized, appreciated, and valued. Top performers don't typically expect or crave a formal award ceremony, but they are appreciative when managers show up onsite at events and interact with them in meaningful ways.

3. Culture is crucial

The program should be a direct reflection of your corporate culture. Just as the branding and marketing collateral of your company should fit the values of your organization, so should the incentive travel programs. A young, conservative company's trip should differ greatly from that of a conservative firm comprised of older individuals.


4. Fairness is fundamental

To properly motivate participants, rules should be easy to understand and perceived as fair. The way the brain processes perceived unfairness is similar to the way it reacts to a threat to one's life. Your contest should be challenging, yet fair and clearly communicated.

5. Lead with location

The biggest draw of your incentive travel program will be the location, plain and simple.

Selecting a destination that resonates with your target audience is crucial. Emphasizing the great qualities of your destination should be obvious, but many fail to realize that this is aspect of the trip that speaks to participants the loudest. While management speaks in dollars and cents, participants have their eyes on the prize and respond to visual imagery and descriptive language about the destination. Does your current incentive travel program address all five keys to success adequately? Do you see room to improve?

Don't have a program in place but are thinking of implementing one? Does your company possess the resources to address all 5 keys in-house, or is outsourcing an option? 

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