The STAR(R) Technique for Researchers

What is the STAR(R) Technique?

• A useful tool to answer competency based questions (examples below)

• Using this to answer questions (on your application or at interview) to provide comprehensive and concise answers

• The second ‘R’ is a new addition, it may be useful for some situations or you could end with ‘R’ for Result

Examples of competency/skills based questions

• Tell us about a time you have successfully worked as part of a team.

• Provide an example of where you have analysed a large amount of complex data, how you achieved this.

• Describe a time when you have demonstrated excellent time management skills.

• We are looking for problem-solvers. How do you solve problems?

Using STAR(R) to answer questions:

| Situation: | when/where – set the scene |
| Task:      | the goal, aim or challenge |
| Action:    | what you did/your role     |
| Result:    | the outcome                |
| Reflection:| what did I learn           |

Some notes:

• See the examples below, these help explain the use of STAR

• Remember if you are demonstrating your ability to work in a team make sure you talk about the action YOU took (not the team)

• Results need to be as quantifiable as possible, something that can be referred to or looked up if necessary

• You can use the table below to build your STAR answers
# Academia STARR examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job spec criteria</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Teaching skills   | University of Southampton Post-Doctoral Research Associate | • Lecture PhD students and UG students in C++ programming language | • Created course materials  
• Delivered lectures  
• Assessed students’ work  
• Ran discussion groups | • 95% pass rate over 3 years  
• Student award | • Learnt how to design and deliver effective learning to a range of students to high standards |
| Research funding experience | University of Bath Research Assistant | • To secure funding for 2 years from EPSRC to continue Systems Methodology research | • Supporting construction of EPSRC bid  
• Co-presented to funding committee | • Funding secured and project commenced  
• 4 research papers  
• 3 co-authored  
• 1 sole author | • Learnt to work collaboratively  
• Experienced difficulty of successful bid writing |

## How to translate into application or interview answer

### Teaching experience

As a Lecturer in IS at Southampton University I was responsible for delivering modules in C++ programming to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. To achieve this I created course materials, delivered lectures, assessed students’ work and supervised students’ projects. Over a three year period I achieved a 95% pass rate and one student received an award for their high quality work.
Industry STAR examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job spec criteria</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td>Loughborough University</td>
<td>To manage research project to be completed on time and within budget</td>
<td>• Created project plan</td>
<td>• Project delivered on time and to budget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Associate</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Identified milestones</td>
<td>• Funding for further project awarded as a result</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Managed resources and personnel</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Monitored progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team working</td>
<td>University of Bath</td>
<td>To work with interdisciplinary team to deliver research findings on project</td>
<td>• Organised team meetings with members from different locations</td>
<td>• Team members met each other face to face or virtually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Operated IT equipment to include off-site contributions</td>
<td>• Good team relationships developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How to translate into application or interview answer

Managing a complex project

Whilst completing my PhD at Loughborough University I was responsible conducting research in *** and delivering results to meet submission, conference and publication dates. To achieve this I created a project plan, plotted milestones, managed resources and personnel and monitored progress. As a result of my excellent project management, I was able to submit my PhD thesis ahead of the three year timeframe.

Creating your STAR(R) stories

• These can be collected and prepared in advance of application completion or interview attendance
• Identify your areas of experience eg. jobs, PhD completion, area of interest, voluntary work
• Think about key competences for roles you seek and start creating your STAR(R) stories
• It’s useful to have two or three examples for the same competency, so that you can chose which is the most appropriate to use

Preparation and practice

• Practice your answers by talking through your STAR(R) stories, either to yourself or by answering questions from others
• You could record yourself and listen to your responses (be kind to yourself!)
• Take care not to just remember answers to regurgitate as they will sound stilted

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