



interconnect

The network for women studying Science, Engineering,  
Technology and the Built Environment in Scotland

### A Quick Tip to Answering Interview Questions

Interviews can be tricky. You're face to face with the interviewer and they are asking you demonstrate your suitability for the job. And then there are those questions.. you know, the ones that start with "Tell me of a time when....."

Oh no you think – how can I answer this? Hopefully you will have read our last newsletter and will have filled in your competency worksheet and the answer will appear almost instantaneously in your head! But still it's easy to ramble – especially when you're nervous.

So here is the answer to your problems: a quick little way that will help you structure your answers and sound very professional indeed. It's as simple as **STAR**

S/T – Situation or task

A - Actions

R – Results

Let's take any example. Say the interviewer says "tell me of a time when you demonstrated leadership". You have thought of a good example. First you need to set the scene, introduce the interviewer to the situation. This should NOT be War and Peace – just a few lines. So if we look at our example this might look like:

"I am a member of the uni football team. The captain got injured during a match and got taken off. We were wondering what we should do and I stepped in and took on the leadership role for the remainder of the game"

So now we come to the really interesting bit – actions. What you actually did, not what the team did, not what your colleagues did, but what YOU did. This is the main part of your answer and so should take up most of the time. This is the bit where you demonstrate you have the skills and competencies that the interviewer is looking for. So going back to our example, an answer might look like (note the use of lots of I statements):

"We were all standing round wondering what to do. I volunteered to take on the role of captain for the remainder of the game. Most people on the team supported me, but couple of people were unhappy, but I explained to them the experience I have got and also that we needed to make the decision quickly and focus on winning the match. We should win the game for the captain. They did come round. Change in a team can sometimes cause problems, so I made sure everyone was on board, by giving a talk before we went back on about winning this for our captain and saying how important communication is – especially now. I also changed over a couple of players. The captain was a great striker, so without her I needed to think about how the whole team would work together. I congratulated the 2 team members that scored goals and also the others involved in setting them up. I was really pleased about how we all came together.

And finally the result – what happened as a result of your actions. Again a short conclusion to your answer:

"As a result we won the game. We were really pleased and felt we had done our Captain justice. I was pleased about how I had stepped up to the captain's role and people came up to me afterwards and said I had done a great job"

By structuring your answer in this way, you're not only helping yourself to answer the question, you're also helping the interviewer – it makes it easy for them to spot the competencies and the evidence they are looking for. And we want to make their job as easy as possible!

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