

Storyboard Technique

This is a technique much loved by politicians when they have a message they wish to deliver, regardless of what the interviewer asks them. However as your objective is to endear yourself to the interviewer, we do not suggest that you mimic the technique of “answer avoidance” also perfected by politicians! The principles of the storyboard technique will help you illustrate a point and sell yourself positively.

Before the interview, try to establish the core competencies that are required for the role, and if possible the most important thing the interviewer is looking for.

Then prepare a storyboard of anecdotes that can be used at the appropriate time to illustrate your relevant competencies. Learn the salient points of each story so that you are able to spontaneously tell them accurately and concisely, however don't learn them word for word otherwise your presentation will seem unnatural.

Half a dozen good stories should be capable of addressing most of the questions you may be asked. Remember that you not only need to be able to emphasise your strengths, you also need to be able to address any weaknesses the interviewer may identify. So if you feel you have a weak area, don't just hope the matter doesn't come up, be prepared to deal with it by having a story ready that illustrates complimentary skills.

If the interviewer is conducting formal competency based interviewing, they will expect you to be able to talk in depth about situations where you displayed certain competencies or behaviours. So this technique is a great way to prepare, whichever approach your interviewer takes.

Each of these stories should:

- Be true!
- Illustrate *your* specific involvement in something, not just the team's activities
- Portray you in a favourable light
- Highlight different qualities
- Detail the *result* of the activity, being quantifiable wherever possible

By the end of the interview, you should have had the opportunity to naturally tell most of the stories. If this happens you won't be thinking “I wish I'd told them xyz”, as you're leaving the building.

We have provided four examples of the type of story you could use:

- In my last role as HR Director, the company was going through a period of extreme change, with staff turnover at an all time high of 41%. By initiating a new employee engagement programme that considered the entire journey an employee takes from recruitment to leaving, I implemented a comprehensive series of new initiatives.

These included establishing a comprehensive competency framework and embedding the competencies into formal recruitment and performance management processes. In addition, I introduced an employee survey and long service recognition rewards.

The result was reduction of staff turnover to 29% over a two year period, reducing attrition costs by £235,000 per annum.

This story illustrates the ability for the HRD to be creative and commercially-minded while supporting the business through a period of change.

- In my last company where I was Managing Director, I grew revenues by 15% from £20m to £23m during the last year, by exploring new markets in which to sell our products. We won two major new contracts from FTSE 100 companies, to the value of over £2m.

We also managed to reduce costs from £10m to £8m by a combination of streamlining in house processes and outsourcing some non-core activities.

The net effect was an increase in profit of 50% from £10 to £15m.

This story could be used to illustrate a number of qualities such as innovative thinking, salesmanship, ability to cut costs and form strategic business partnerships, ability to act as a change agent and ability to deliver etc.

- When I was appointed Sales Director at ABC Ltd I inherited a sales force of 50 staff selling car fleet services. Sales were down 20% year on year, market conditions were tight and morale was very low.

I initially analyzed the few successful sales people from the team to find out how they were delivering results whilst most others were not.

I identified a common thread to their approach: they had each built into their portfolio some incentive to their clients for personal car purchases. This personal side benefit seemed to sway many corporate buyers into using ABC for their fleet services, while the personal car sales side of the business also benefited from increased sales.

As a result I established creative cross-team incentives and working practises to formalise this successful formula. Sales increased by 25% in the first quarter, market share increased and morale was greatly improved.

This illustrates innovative thinking, ability to act as a change agent, ability to deliver.

Perhaps you may have a simple story such as the following:

- At my last company we had committed to the customer that we would deliver the product to him on Monday morning in order that he could have two days for testing, prior to going live on Wednesday. By the previous Thursday, I realised that we were going to miss the deadline.

I went to see the manufacturing director and he and I personally talked to a few key staff in order to persuade them to work through the week-end. They agreed. On both Saturday and Sunday I visited the factory to see that things were going OK, armed with some bacon sandwiches for the engineers. The product was delivered on time.

This story illustrates commitment, determination, hard work, ability to motivate staff, ability to communicate at various levels and passion for customer service.