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Answering Competency Interview Questions – The STAR Approach

STAR is an acronym that stands for: **Situation   Task   Action   Result**

STAR is a widely used and recognised structure for providing meaningful and complete answers to questions asking for examples. At the same time, it has the advantage of being simple enough to be applied easily to any competency.

Step 1 – Situation or Task

Describe the situation that you were confronted with or the task that needed to be accomplished.

1. With the STAR approach you need to set the context. Make it concise and informative, concentrating solely on what is useful to the story.

2. For example, if the question is asking you to describe a situation where you had to deal with a difficult person, explain how you came to meet that person and why they were being difficult.

3. If the question is asking for an example of teamwork, explain the task that you had to undertake as a team.

Step 2 - Action

This is the most important section of the STAR approach as it is where you will need to demonstrate and highlight the skills and personal attributes that the question is testing.

Now that you have set the context of your story, you need to explain what you did. In doing so, you will need to remember the following:

1. Be personal, i.e. talk about you, not the rest of the team (use "I" not "we" to describe the action you took).

2. Go into some detail. Do not assume that they will guess what you mean.

3. Steer clear of technical information, unless it is crucial to your story.

4. Explain what you did, how you did it, and why you did it.

Step 3 – Result

Explain what happened eventually – how it all ended. Also, use the opportunity to describe what you accomplished and what you learnt in that situation. This helps you make the answer personal and enables you to highlight further skills.