6 STORIES TO NAIL AN INTERVIEW

With Natalie Fisher of www.asknataliefisher.com

I once took a Legal studies class in college, and there was a fellow student who had just failed a test. As the tests were handed back and she looked at the big "F" on her paper, she became visibly angry. I could almost see the vein showing itself on her forehead. She had studied for the test (or at least that's what she said). The next thing I remember was her screaming at the professor, blaming him. She said "You blind-sided us! How are we ever supposed to succeed when we're being blind-sided like this?!"

This scenario stuck with me vividly because of the professor's response.

He said:

"That's kind of the point of a test isn't it dear?!"

If they told you everything that was going to be on the test before the test, then that would defeat the purpose of the test wouldn't it? That's why getting test answers beforehand is considered 'cheating'.

I, on the other hand, did fine on this test. I had studied also--except I studied the general concepts, so I didn't feel blindsided at all! This is what I feel was the distinction between myself and the girl who will be known as 'mad girl who failed'. We both studied, but I studied smarter not harder.

I was able to understand the general concepts. Therefore, I was able to pull from that knowledge to formulate answers. I wasn't memorizing specific lines or phrases; I was understanding the bigger picture.

What I'd like to share with you today is what I've seen a large part of an interview can be, and the general themes that come up repeatedly. If you are able to understand the themes and how to skillfully address each one, you'll be head and shoulders above other candidates. These are the 6 themes you'll most likely be asked about (in one form or another) in most interviews, you'll feel much more confident, and you'll have stories that you can apply to many different questions. The themes might not come in the exact form of "Tell me about a time when..." or "Give me an example of a time..." but when they show up, you'll know because you'll be listening specifically for them. If you have your story file handy and ready to go in your back pocket, you're a lot more likely to connect and pass through the interview with flying colours.

After working with so many clients (my favourite thing is helping them shape their own stories), I've narrowed it down to 6 general themes that you'll be asked about with the behavioural interview questions. Remember also that these themes could come at you in many different ways, so be listening astutely for them as they start to show up in your interviews.

You'll be able to use these 6 stories over and over to answer different questions in different interviews. This is what I call the foundation.

The 6 themes are:

1 LEADING PEOPLE

Some example stories to tell:

- Leading a team from point A to point B
- Leading by example - where others followed suit
- Teaching someone something they didn't know before that made them more efficient
- Organically stepping up and taking the lead (on a group project or team activity)
- Making a decision when no one else would that others followed

2 TAKING INITIATIVE

Some example stories to tell:

- Seeing something that needed to be done and doing it without direction
- Improving upon something that benefited from your improvement or contribution
- Helping someone that needed help without being asked to
- Going above and beyond in a customer-focused setting without being asked
- A quick response in an emergency situation

3 CHALLENGING WORK

Some example stories to tell:

- A personal situation where you persevered despite many obstacles being in your way
- A situation where many people working together were colliding or miscommunicating
- A time you finished a task from beginning to end despite the roadblocks

4 ACCEPTING FEEDBACK

Some example stories to tell:

- A time when your boss asked you to change something or make changes to a document
- A time when someone gave you feedback on your presentation (for example, instructor or teacher)
- A time when a colleague asked you to improve upon something or change something you did
- A time when internal or external customers advised you of what you could do differently next time

5 DEALING WITH FAILURE

Some example stories to tell:

- A time you made a mistake (I.E. a fail)
- A time you didn't successfully achieve a goal you had set for yourself
- A time when you failed to understand what someone meant and proceeded incorrectly
- A time when you felt like you failed at something (but really it wasn't that bad)

6 ACCEPTING FEEDBACK

Some example stories to tell:

- A time you disagreed with a boss or a co-worker
- A time you disagreed with the rest of your team
- A disagreement between you and a customer or client
  - A disagreement on how to manage a change
  - A disagreement on how to word a specific email

Check out the examples guide to get concrete examples of the above scenarios for your own inspiration.

THANK YOU

Please feel free to email us at natalie@asknataliefisher.com with any feedback on this guide. Any ‘aha moments’ or big wins? No win is too small.

Thanks for being a part of our community.

In work & life,

Natalie Fisher