



HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD  
JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3

# CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE?

OR Tell Me A STORY!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)



**TERRY KOZLOWSKI**

# CAN YOU CONVINCE ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE?

OR Tell Me A Story  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

TERRY KOZLOWSKI

## Limits of Liability / Disclaimer of Warranty

The authors and publisher of this book and the accompanying materials have used their best efforts in preparing this program. The authors and publisher make no representation or warranties on the accuracy, applicability, fitness, or completeness of the contents of this program. They disclaim any warranties (expressed or implied), merchantability, or fitness for any particular purpose. The authors and publisher shall in no event be held liable for any loss or other damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages. As always, the advice of a competent legal, tax, accounting or other professional should be sought. The authors and publisher do not warrant the performance, effectiveness or applicability of any sites listed in this book. All links are for information purposes only and are not warranted for content, accuracy or any other implied or explicit purpose.

This manual contains material protected under International and Federal Copyright Laws and Treaties. Any unauthorized reprint or use of this material is prohibited.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>7</b>
How This Guide Will Help .....	7
What You'll Learn .....	7
Why I Wrote This .....	8
<b>Your Quick Reference to Example Answers .....</b>	<b>9</b>
How to Get the Most from the Examples .....	9
Tell Me About A Time When You . . . - Questions And Example Answers With Ratings .....	9
What Would You Do If . . . - Questions And Example Answers With Ratings .....	11
<b>Interview Mistake to Avoid #5: The Common Two Letter Word You Must Stop from Automatically Coming Out of Your Mouth .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Movie Reminder .....	14
Have the "Camera" Follow You .....	15
Two Safe Places to Include the Word in Your Story .....	15
Brainstorm "I" Messages in Three Categories .....	16
Final Reminders .....	17
Your Action Steps to Avoid this Mistake .....	17
<b>Interview Mistake to Avoid #7: Your S.T.A.R. Response to a Behavioral Job Interview Question Doesn't Include These Two Crucial Elements .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Movie Reminder .....	18
My "Movie Moments" Method Covered in How to Answer: Tell me about a time . . . ..	19
S.T.A.R. Method and a Behavioral Interview Question Defined .....	19
First Key Ingredient You Must Include in Your Stories .....	20
One Important Caution .....	20
Second Key Ingredient You Must Include in Your Stories .....	21
Why This Works .....	21
Your Action Steps to Avoid this Mistake .....	22
<b>How To Answer: Tell Me About A Time When You... ..</b>	<b>23</b>
"Tell Me About ATimeWhen You . . . "Movie Tip .....	23

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

Alternate Versions of this Question Include .....	24
Your Answer Should Be .....	25
Your Answer Should Not Be .....	25
Here's How to Create Your Answer .....	25
Use Movie Moments Format to Tell Your Stories.....	26
Best Ways to Prepare Your Stories in Advance.....	27
Example #1 .....	29
Example #2 .....	29
Example #3 .....	30
YOUR TURN NOW .....	31
Tell me about a time when you... Dana's Answer .....	33
Tell me about a time when you...Jessica's Answer .....	35
Tell me about a time when you... Amy's Answer.....	36
Tell me about a time when you... Fabian's Answer .....	38
Tell me about a time when you... Don's Answer .....	39
Tell me about a time when you... Denise's Answer.....	41
Tell me about a time when you... Steven's Answer.....	43
Tell me about a time when you... Leonard's Answer.....	45
Tell me about a time when you... Wendy's Answer.....	47
Tell me about a time when you... Allen's Answer.....	48
Tell me about a time when you...Bonnie's Answer.....	49
Tell me about a time when you... Margaret's Answer.....	51
<b>How To Answer: What Would You Do If . . .</b> .....	<b>54</b>
"What Would You Do If . . ."Movie Tip.....	54
Alternate Versions of this Question Include .....	54
Your answer should be:.....	55
Your answer should not be:.....	55
Here's How to Create Your Answer:.....	55
Example #1 .....	56
Example #2 .....	57

---

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

Example #3 .....	57
YOUR TURN NOW .....	58
What would you do if... Dana's Answer.....	60
What would you do if... Jessica's Answer .....	62
What would you do if... Amy's Answer .....	63
What would you do if... Fabian's Answer .....	64
What would you do if... Don's Answer.....	65
What would you do if... Denise's Answer .....	67
What would you do if... Steven's Answer .....	69
What would you do if... Leonard's Answer .....	72
What would you do if... Wendy's Answer .....	73
What would you do if... Allen's Answer .....	76
What would you do if... Bonnie's Answer .....	77
What would you do if... Margaret's Answer .....	79
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Your Next Steps .....	82
Final Thoughts.....	82
<b>About the Author .....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Additional Resources .....</b>	<b>85</b>

## Introduction

### How This Guide Will Help

This is Guide #3 in the Hollywood Movie Method Job Winning Series. This guide is designed to help you quickly discover how you can win the job with advanced strategies that will take your interview stories and examples to the next level.

This Guide is for you if you need to tell the right stories to impress the interviewer, but don't know which stories or what details to include or leave out for your unique situation.

Here's the TRUTH you need to know about the stories you tell, often in response to the questions:

- Tell me about a time when you . . .
- What would you do if . . .

In fact, here's the biggest problem you face with them right now: Many interviewers have been trained in a technique called "Behavioral Interview Questions." They're looking for specific things when you respond.

And if you don't give them the kind of information they're looking for, you are not going to be one of the finalists for the job.

This guide will show you the key ingredients job-winning stories **must have** that even people trained with S.T.A.R., S.P.A.R. and other methods often miss.

### What You'll Learn

By following the "How To's" included here and reviewing the 24 example answers given by real people in their interviews and checking your ratings against my own, you'll be able to develop your unique job winning answers to these frequently asked questions. In just 30 minutes you will get the essentials you need so you can:

- Include crucial elements that make your stories dramatic and memorable . . .

- Discover which common 2 letter word is most dangerous to your advancing, and where and how to safely include in your answers . . .
- Identify your own unique best sources for job-winning stories and the best ways to prepare them in advance . . .
- Decrease your nervousness and increase your confidence and control . . .
- Have fun and begin to enjoy interview preparation with interview success tips from Hollywood movies.

As a special bonus, I have also included how you can avoid two of the fatal mistakes I have seen most often during interviews I have personally conducted.

## Why I Wrote This

I committed myself to write this guide because during the more than 10,000 hours I've spent coaching candidates to prepare for their interviews and win their desired new jobs, I observed something over and over again. I saw that even experienced professionals pulling down six figure salaries can stumble badly with these common questions.

Since my team of coaches and I can only help so many people 1-on-1, I decided I needed to share this information in a form that would be more widely available. So I have summarized the essentials into this guide for highly accomplished people who struggle in their interviews despite their excellent qualifications.

If you would like some additional help and feedback from one of our expert career coaches or for additional guides and resources, please visit us at

<http://JobInterview911.com>

Turn the page and let's get you started right now. Your next better job is waiting for you to claim it!

*Terry Kozlowski*



## Your Quick Reference to Example Answers

### How to Get the Most from the Examples

Every person quoted here gave their permission to share their answer to pay it forward and help others. You can learn quickly by reviewing the actual answers given in a mock interview session.

After you've reviewed the how-to information for each question, I suggest you look at the sample answers included here.

First, read them and decide what you like and don't like about their answers and what rating you would give their answer. Use a scale from A to F. A represents a great answer, and F represents an answer that failed.

Then take a look at my rating and see if your assessment was the same as mine.

You will find some great examples that you'll want to adapt or additional things to avoid in your answers from a quick glance at ALL the samples, even those not similar to the position you're pursuing.

However, if you want to look at sample answers for specific situations or from specific industries or types of positions, here's your quick reference. Refer to the Table of Contents for the link to jump to the specific example you want to review.

### Tell Me About A Time When You . . . - Questions And Example Answers With Ratings

*(Who is Dana? Dana - Media Planner and Buyer with 4years experience seeking Marketing PR Specialist role)*

**Tell me about a time where you had to work with a team to accomplish something and there were really tight deadlines.**

*(Who is Jessica? Jessica - Over 2years experience in insurance industry seeking Customer Service Representative job)*

**Tell me about a time when you had to handle an irate customer.**

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

*(Who is Amy? Amy - Administrative Assistant seeking Project Manager position in Marketing Services)*

**Tell me about a time when you absolutely yourself managed the project.**

*(Who is Fabian? Fabian - IT professional with 10years experience seeking SQL Analyst Programmer job)*

**Tell me about a time when you had a really big workload, maybe more than you felt you could really handle. How did you handle it?**

*(Who is Don? Don - MBA and International Communications Manager seeking Manager of Corporate Communications role)*

**Tell me about a time when you had to address cultural differences on a global basis in terms of the message.**

*(Who is Denise? Denise - Global Integrated Marketing Executive seeking Director of Strategy position)*

**Tell me about a specific time when you - oh let's say, you made a mistake in business.**

*(Who is Steven? Steven - Human Resources Professional seeking Senior Human Resources Generalist role)*

**Tell me about a time when you had to handle a workplace injury.**

*(Who is Leonard? Leonard - Non-Profit Leader with 25 years experience seeking Executive Director role)*

**Leonard, I'm actually going to let you come up with your own scenario and situation. Tell me about a specific instance in your career that was typically memorable.**

*(Who is Wendy? Wendy - Executive and recent Chief Operating Officer seeking Controller position)*

**Tell me about a time when you took on a position in an area that was perhaps unfamiliar to you.**

---

*(Who is Allen? Allen - QA Analyst and Programmer since 1985 seeking Quality Assurance Tester job)*

**Tell me about a time when you were working with someone who was difficult to work with and how you handled it.**

*(Who is Bonnie? Bonnie - CPA with over 6years experience seeking Accounting Manager position)*

**Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult situation with a co-worker. Maybe there was some conflict, maybe there was a difference of opinion - tell me how you handled that.**

*(Who is Margaret? Margaret - Senior Level Marketing Communications Professional seeking position with University)*

**Tell me about a time when you may have had a conflict with your boss and how you were able to resolve it.**

## What Would You Do If . . . - Questions And Example Answers With Ratings

*(Who is Dana? Dana - Media Planner and Buyer with 4years experience seeking Marketing PR Specialist role)*

**Clearly, you've had experience working with vendors. We really have a problem here, what would you do if a vendor wasn't delivering what was needed? Either the quality was off or it was completely the wrong stuff or a combination thereof, you know all kinds of things could potentially go wrong. What would you do if you had a vendor that really wasn't earning their money?**

*(Who is Jessica? Jessica - Over 2years experience in insurance industry seeking Customer Service Representative job)*

**Tell me what you would do if a situation came up and you decided to take control and resolve it, even if it wasn't necessarily your responsibility.**

*(Who is Amy? Amy - Administrative Assistant seeking Project Manager position in Marketing Services)*

**Tell me about what you would do if you needed to use MS Project as part of your responsibilities. We're an MS Project house. I don't see anything on your resume that says that you've used Project before. How would you go about addressing that if we were to require you to use Project?**

*(Who is Fabian? Fabian - IT professional with 10 years experience seeking SQL Analyst Programmer job)*

**What would you do if you were in a situation where the user came back to you with questions about a report that you had created for them?**

*(Who is Don? Don - MBA and International Communications Manager seeking Manager of Corporate Communications role)*

**Let's talk about a scenario. You may not have had this experience yet, but what would you do if a senior leader was asking you to write a presentation based on information that you knew was actually false?**

*(Who is Denise? Denise - Global Integrated Marketing Executive seeking Director of Strategy position)*

**What would you do if you were in a situation - let's say you were doing media buys and we realized that we need to make some shifts and some adjustments. How would you go about making those decisions if you don't have any agency background? How would you approach the situation?**

*(Who is Steven? Steven - Human Resources Professional seeking Senior Human Resources Generalist role)*

**Let's talk about another situation. What would you do if you were called in by an associate with a claim of sexual harassment?**

*(Who is Leonard? Leonard - Non-Profit Leader with 25 years experience seeking Executive Director role)*

**What would you do if we were not able to recruit new funders to the table for the XXX XXX Association?"**

*(Who is Wendy? Wendy - Executive and recent Chief Operating Officer seeking Controller position)*

**Tell me what you would do if you identified some improprieties within the accounting transaction.**

*(Who is Allen? Allen - QA Analyst and Programmer since 1985 seeking Quality Assurance Tester job)*

**What would you do if you were in a situation and you saw and had the feeling that you might not be able to meet the deadline that you've been given?**

*(Who is Bonnie? Bonnie - CPA with over 6years experience seeking Accounting Manager position)*

**We were talking about creating reports and identifying things people don't need; tell me about what you would do if you were confronted with a piece of software that you had never seen before or had to work with.**

*(Who is Margaret? Margaret - Senior Level Marketing Communications Professional seeking position with University)*

**All right. What would you do if you were in a situation where you needed to supervisor a pretty large pool of people, you know, subcontractors, designers? We have a pretty big operation here and, clearly, it's one thing to do a lot of the work yourself.**

**That takes a particular kind of skill set, but part of the different skill sets is to manage artistic personalities, temperaments, multiple projects and keep things moving. Tell me what you would do if you had a large team that you had to run with multiple documents, reports and things you need to do to make sure were of an appropriate quality and on time. How would you handle that situation?**

## Interview Mistake to Avoid #5: The Common Two Letter Word You Must Stop from Automatically Coming Out of Your Mouth

### Movie Reminder

In the 2001 movie remake of Ocean's Eleven, we watch in fascination as an eleven member team pull off a complicated heist. Each team member has different talents. George Clooney as Danny Ocean gathers an acrobat, a gifted pickpocket, an explosives whiz and every other person with the special skills necessary for their combined success.

I share this with you because too many times I hear the word "we" misused when people are responding to interview questions or even worse when they're telling their own previously prepared stories. Using "we" inappropriately hurts you and could cost you the job you really want.

This using "we" too often in your story or example is a huge mistake I've seen too many times during the more than 10,000 hours I've been coaching candidates to improve their interview skills.

Now if I could talk to you right now, you'd probably tell me, "But I don't want to sound arrogant. I didn't do it completely by myself." And most organizations say that their culture is one that supports and encourages teamwork.

So with those motivations, many people have just gotten into the habit of using the word "we" to describe anything and everything that happened. This is such a pervasive habit for most people they don't even realize they need to take a different approach during their interviews to be successful.

But you need to recognize that when you say "we" it is impossible for the interviewer to identify and pull out your unique contribution(s.) And they are thinking about hiring YOU, not your complete team.

---

## Have the "Camera" Follow You

When you're selecting which details to cover in your story and how you're going to share them, remember Ocean's Eleven. One of the reasons I think the movie was so interesting is that we got to see each team member "doing their thing." We watch the most important parts of the heist unfold through their individual actions.

Think of telling your story as if you will be describing a movie that starred you. If you were the star in the movie made about that situation, what details would the audience see because the camera had been following YOU around? What behaviors would we see you performing? The details you share in your story should focus on your individual contributions that created or contributed to the great results you share at the end of your story.

(I explain in more detail how to construct an impressive and interesting story through my "Movie Moments" approach in the chapter in this guide that covers How to Answer: Tell Me About a Time . . . question.

## Two Safe Places to Include the Word in Your Story

Yes, it would be appropriate at the beginning of your story or example to set the context of the effort. A "we" message there is perfectly appropriate before you begin to share your individual actions and "I" messages. For instance:

- **"We** were asked to \*\*\*. It was a five-person team. My role was to \*\*\*. The first thing I did after getting the assignment to \*\*\* was to \*\*\*. Then I [action verb] \*\*\*. My next decision was to \*\*\*."

You might also need to come back to sharing a "we" message at the end of your story. You might be talking about an award your project or part of the organization won from your team's stellar performance. For instance:

- "We were one of only 3 projects honored with the President's Award that year from across the organization of more than 20,000 employees."

## Brainstorm "I" Messages in Three Categories

Make sure that you provide enough factual "I" messages that they understand what you did. Fill in your specific details and examples by including specific activities and your impact and contribution to results. Think in terms of sharing the 3-5 major actions you took.

The actions you'll share will vary depending on the position you're pursuing and the specifics of the situation that's the basis for your story. However, as you're thinking in advance about stories you could share that were proud accomplishments for you, there are three categories to consider for details to have ready.

- Strategic

When sharing your strategic thinking would be an important element to emphasize in your story details, why did you decide to proceed as you did? Were there other options you considered?

- People

When you choose to include details in your story to address the people aspects, where did you need to persuade a key individual or a group? Or which of your oral or written communication skills were critical in motivating a team, gaining cooperation or winning support and from whom?

- Tactical

Perhaps there are tactical or technical components you want to include because of the specific skills specified in the job description. To give you a simple example, did you create the persuasive powerpoint or use Excel or Access or another tool to organize and analyze the data yourself?



When you're able to also naturally weave proof of your personality traits or important factors to the interviewer during your telling of your prior experience, they will become even more comfortable that you're the person they've been looking to hire/promote.

## Final Reminders

You will sometimes include a significant aspect from each of the three categories in your answer to give them a comprehensive view of you. Sometimes you will choose to go deeper into just one category based on the specific question you've been asked or the position and interests of the person with whom you're meeting. The important thing is to be sure to primarily be sharing your "I" messages as you identify what you personally did that led to the overall great results at the conclusion of your story.

When I was a little girl, my mother would always do "this little piggy . . ." when she was putting on my shoes and socks. Unlike the nursery rhyme, going "we, we, we" will not bring you home with the job offer in your hand!

## Your Action Steps to Avoid this Mistake

- Rework your stories and examples to include the most relevant "I" messages in the middle of your story for the opportunity you're pursuing.
- Use "we" messages as you need to establish context in the beginning.
- Use "we" messages sparingly and only as needed in the middle for clarity.
- Use "we" messages at the end when you share the results and benefits produced by the larger group of which you were a member, but generally even better to share your individual results or acknowledgments.
- Adapt and share your more specific stories in your interviews and notice their positive reactions to you.

## Interview Mistake to Avoid #7: Your S.T.A.R. Response to a Behavioral Job Interview Question Doesn't Include These Two Crucial Elements

### Movie Reminder

Have you ever watched a very boring movie? What made it boring? When I've asked people that question I usually get one of two answers: "too talky" or "nothing was happening." You might be boring your interviewer when you tell your stories and examples if, like most people, you're missing these two key ingredients that will instead make your stories memorable to your interviewer.

Since we were cavemen sitting around a fire and telling stories, an interesting story has always included an obstacle or a conflict. We're fascinated as we experience through the story a person being creative and persistent to solve their problem and accomplish what they intend. We automatically visualize them in action and experience their ups and downs and even their emotions ourselves.

Over the years I've taken several screenwriting and playwriting classes. One mentor, Robert McKee, shared an example where conflict was missing from a story. He talked about the movie *The River* (1984) with Mel Gibson and Sissy Spacek.

He suggested that too much of the movie included details that didn't show the main characters confronting a problem head-on. The movie didn't depict how they were attempting different actions to solve their problem. The movie showed their daily lives. But since nothing was happening that directly related to a struggle to accomplish something specific, watching them wasn't particularly interesting.

He believed that was one of the reasons why it didn't do well at the box office. Apply this storytelling wisdom to help you win your next promotion or better job. It's important to include obstacles and make your stories as compelling and relevant to your interviewers as you can to gain and keep their interest in you as a top candidate.

## My "Movie Moments" Method Covered in How to Answer: Tell me about a time . . .

When I work with clients, I teach them my own unique "Movie Moments" approach to telling a story. Many of my clients have told me they find it makes it even easier to remember the important storytelling aspects and they prefer using it instead of their former S.T.A.R. method.

Learn how to create your own job-winning answers in the How to Answer: "Tell Me About a Time When You . . ." chapter later in this guide. The "Movie Moments" approach is covered in depth, and you can see how others have applied it in their own answers later in this guide.

## S.T.A.R. Method and a Behavioral Interview Question Defined

S.T.A.R. is an acronym that stands for Situation, Tasks, Actions and Results. This method to structure an answer is often used when responding to a behavioral interview question. A behavioral interview question asks the candidate to describe their past behavior in one specific situation.

That kind of question is sometimes worded as, "tell me about a specific instance where you . . ." and then they fill in what they want you to describe. Those insights into you and your behavior in an actual real life situation are what they want to gain from your story.

Here are some further details on structuring a traditional S.T.A.R. response:

- **Situation:** Identify a recent situation that matches what your interviewer has requested.
- **Task:** Identify what you were asked to accomplish or were trying to achieve in the situation.
- **Action:** Describe what you did and why.
- **Results:** Identify whether you met your objective.

Since the S.T.A.R. approach is so widespread, and since you may already have your stories in S.T.A.R.format, I want to help you immediately fill in what might be missing in your stories. This is because not including these key ingredients is a huge mistake that I've seen too many professional candidates make in my over 10,000 hours of coaching.

## First Key Ingredient You Must Include in Your Stories

The first key ingredient is to make it dramatic and include some conflict. This could be something unexpected that you had to personally address or an obstacle in the form of a person or a situation that arose. Show them something that you had to go over, go through or go around to produce those successful results that you share at the end of your story.

Without that component of an obstacle or conflict surmounted, most S.T.A.R. stories have no life and are not very interesting. Just sharing the actions you took might actually be dull, depending on what those actions were and the context you gave them.

Remember your story is also an opportunity for them to make an emotional connection with you through their experiencing your experience. What you ideally want to do is to make sure that they understand you and your style and skills better through the situation you share.

## One Important Caution

Although you need to include a conflict or an obstacle to make it interesting and true-to-life, be careful that you're professional in what you share. You don't want to slip into "bad-mouthing" or having them think you're complaining about a former employer or colleague. Keep the details of your remarks focused on the constructive things you did to produce your positive results and the positive feedback you received from all involved parties.

## Second Key Ingredient You Must Include in Your Stories

You may think this is just common sense, but you'd be surprised by the number of bright people who have missed this customization when telling their stories.

When you share the details in the middle of your story, be sure to include the traits or skills that you believe are particularly important to them. This may be based on the job description or based upon your first-hand knowledge or your research of their situation and this opportunity.

For example, if you know that dealing with senior level executives who are difficult to persuade is something that you will be facing when they bring you into this new position, you could include those details in your telling of your story. (Assuming of course, that those skills are relevant to the situation they've asked you about.)

When meeting with a different interviewer in the same organization who may have different priorities based upon their role, you can adjust the details you provide in the middle of the same basic story. For example, is the CFO (Chief Financial Officer) more likely to be interested in your financial management activities than perhaps your communication activities in that particular situation?

## Why This Works

When you include relevant details of how you accomplished your impressive results and you include some of the obstacles that you had to overcome, you make your stories come alive with drama and color that engages your interviewer and keeps their attention. A good story is inherently visual as they see you in action in their mind's eye. You want to show them someone who was highly accomplished and successful in confronting what is likely to be some similar situations you may face when you are working for their organization.

## Your Action Steps to Avoid this Mistake

- Revisit your stories and identify which ones would become more interesting with the addition of some conflict or obstacle successfully overcome.
- Review the job description or your research of the situation and identify which personality traits or skills are particularly important to them.
- Rethink your stories and add in your selected trait(s) and/or skill(s) in action through how you overcame the relevant obstacles.
- Adapt and share your more interesting and dramatic stories in your interviews and notice the positive reactions in your interviews.

## How To Answer: Tell Me About A Time When You...



### “Tell Me About A Time When You . . .” Movie Tip

A great movie example for how to answer this interview question is evident in the comedy *Airplane* (1980.) It shows what not to do through the character of Ted Stryker as he talks to different people that are seated next to him as he goes on and on and on.

His unlucky seatmates are then shown killing themselves as the only way to escape him, while he is seen continuing to talk completely unaware of their distress.

Selecting the right stories to tell, choosing which details to leave in and which to take out and following the proven Movie Moment format can be the difference between your winning the job offer and not.

Avoid the risk of making your interviewer want to reach for a rope or samurai sword (as they had to do in *Airplane*) to escape you.

## Alternate Versions of this Question Include

Almost unlimited questions for any situation, skill or behavior they see as potentially arising in the job or their organization. This type of question is referred to as a "Behavioral Interview Question." They want you to describe what it was you specifically did when faced with this situation in your past. Questions might include:

- "Tell me about a time when you had a disagreement/confrontation/conflict with a boss/coworker."
- "Tell me about when you made a mistake and what you did to fix it."
- "Tell me when you had a really difficult client or customer."
- "Share an instance when you faced a significant barrier to accomplishing something."
- "I'd like to hear about when you were facing a deadline you discovered couldn't meet."
- "What was a significant achievement in a prior job?"
- "How did you handle it when a coworker wasn't pulling their share of the workload?"
- "Tell me about the most difficult assignment you've ever had."
- "Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a change quickly."
- "Can you give me an example of what you did to keep up when you were working in a fast-paced environment."
- "On your resume, you say you are a hard worker. Can you give me an example of a specific time when you were working very hard?"

. . . . and on and on . . . They can ask about anything and everything so you should be prepared.

Be ready to address technical or task related challenges you've faced as well as personal and interpersonal behaviors and habits.



## Your Answer Should Be

- About one specific instance, not a collection of incidents
- A complete story that follows the Movie Moments format with all three parts (See Here's How to Create Your Answer below)
- Inclusive of the lessons you learned, particularly if you would handle the incident differently in the future

## Your Answer Should Not Be

- General
- A combination of multiple situations
- Missing the beginning, middle or end
- Too long (three minutes or less is a good target)
- Including unnecessary detail that isn't focused on what you thought and did

## Here's How to Create Your Answer

Since the interviewer could also ask you for an example from your resume or from something you said about yourself in a prior answer, prepare as much as possible in advance by reviewing your own history and reminding yourself of key life and work experiences that you may have the opportunity to share.

The best sources for your own unique job-winning stories begin with the job description and what you know about their priorities.

Start with the personality traits, behaviors, skills and knowledge that are identified in the job posting. Then look through your own resume (and your memory) to find the specific moments in your past that match, are similar or provide proof and evidence of your accomplishment and effectiveness.

If you don't remember or want more, ask your family or your colleagues:

- “What do you remember I was proud of from that time?”
- “What was I really good at in that situation?”
- “What do you remember that I did that made a big difference or helped us reach our goal?”

Once you've identified your matching situations, then create your stories by turning them into the Movie Moments format. I love movies and movie scenes serve as a perfect model of what you need to do to prepare each of your examples in a story.

## Use Movie Moments Format to Tell Your Stories

1. **Establish the Opening Scene of Your Movie** – In a movie, they usually do two key things at the beginning. *First, they set the scene.* Are we in the old west or a spaceship on Mars? For you, was this something that happened at your current employer last month or was this a situation at a non-profit where you provided leadership as a volunteer a year ago?

The second thing they do at the beginning of a movie is to *identify the problem our hero is asked to solve or the situation that our hero faces.* For you, what's the problem, crisis or situation that you were asked to solve, or did you see the need or the opportunity to make something better and so jumped into action?

This first section could take up to 20% of your total story time when you share, particularly if you're able also to include why you were chosen to tackle this challenge. If you were selected because of your superior performance in another situation or their assessment of your special talent or skill, this is a great time to share that factual evidence to differentiate yourself further from your peers.

2. **Show You in Action** – In the middle part of a movie, and in your story, the attention should focus on you as the star. Think of the camera following you around, catching shots of you in action. What are you doing? What are the key actions you're taking?

Consider the major categories of actions you're taking to solve this whether they are strategic, tactical, involve persuading other people or a combination of actions in all the major categories.

Choose the details that you share of what is most relevant to what they've asked you. Depending on the specific situation and which aspects of your behavior you want to emphasize, you might consider including who else you are involving. HOW are you taking effective action? What specific obstacles or conflicts do you have to overcome?

And, beware of too much use of the word "we." Make sure you talk about your individual contributions, even if it's in the context of the team's solution. This second section should be the majority of your story, so approximately 60% of your story time.

- 3. Share Your Successful Movie Ending** – Since you've established the problem in your opening, don't forget to include if you were successful in meeting your goal. Just like people will stay through even a bad movie to see how it turns out, don't deprive your interviewer of the satisfaction of seeing your triumph. *Talk about how things turned out and how the company benefited from your actions and the solution.* If your solution is still in use or if you received private or public acknowledgment of your contribution, be sure to quote those statements or facts. Your story ending could take about 20% of your total story time.

## Best Ways to Prepare Your Stories in Advance

It is impossible to predict what behaviors or situations they may ask you to describe in your interview. However, if you look at the job posting or description of your target opportunity, those often provide hints of the specific areas for which you should prepare relevant stories and examples. Even if they ask just you an open-ended or general

question, by thinking through your stories in advance against the job posting, your stories are likely to be highly relevant to their needs and interests.

The second method that can assist you to prepare powerful stories in advance is to review your resume or consult your memory and ask yourself which have been some of your proudest accomplishments to date. Consult any notes or prior performance evaluations you may have to remind yourself of exactly what you did and how you did it.

You may write bullet points to remind yourself, but even if you don't write anything down, just your focus to actively recall those details will assist you with whatever question the interviewer may ask.

When you prepare this way, you're creating building blocks from your peak experiences. You can then pull them up from your memory and just adapt slightly to fit their precise question. You will choose which details to emphasize in the middle of telling your movie moments formatted story, but your story opening of the problem you faced and your successful ending are ready for immediate recall.

So with all the written, online and human sources you can consult about your target opportunity, research which stories you should prepare and consult your memory and files for your best experiences to share.

An additional benefit of preparing your stories with this movie moments and building blocks format is that since no one can take away your unique life experiences, the building blocks of your unique stories will be potentially reusable in all your future interviews.

Following are some specific story examples as given by clients during their mock interviews with my comments for your review and as thought starters for your own stories.

## Example #1

Q: Tell me about a time when you had to handle an irate customer.

A: "I work part-time with my mother in a coffee shop. There was one time where there was a mistake made on my part on their order. The person was in a hurry and this was their first time there. I rectified the situation by remaking their drinks, giving them a free coupon, apologizing profusely and telling them that we appreciate their business. They became a regular. Not only do they still come in but they've also brought other people from their office over to us."

Terry's Comment: This is very short example of the movie moments simple outline in action. They did set the scene, described what they did specifically in response to the problem they faced and shared a positive ending. Not only did they describe the recovery of turning the customer into a regular, but they expanded on the value they provided by including that the customer referred other customers.

## Example #2

Q: Tell me about a time where you had to work with a team to accomplish something, and there were really tight deadlines.

A: "During my time at XXX, I was in media planning and buying. So, I was given marketing goals and objectives as well as a budget by the client. I had to take those objectives and the budget, the monetary amount, into consideration and work with various vendors having to keep in mind that the vendors we worked with had to fit within that client's marketing goals and objectives to make sure that it was the right platform for their marketing messages.

One particular client that I had worked with was an auditing and consulting firm and didn't really have a whole lot of experience with that sector, but kind of got thrown into the project. My strength is working in the business-to-business arena, so I gladly took it on and kind of took on the role of the account manager of that account.

We, as a team, had to develop an annual meeting plan for this particular client and since I was the account manager, I spearheaded reaching out to the vendors and requesting proposals and also coordinating those proposals with a digital team and working with the broadcast team.

So, there was the vendor relationship I had to manage as well as the client relationship and then the various people on the team. I had to complete the project within about a month's time, which usually we're given about eight weeks for a project like that.

So I really just, you know, kept in excellent communication with the vendors, with the client, with my team, just to keep everyone in the loop and make sure that everyone was on task and that we were going to meet the deadline, which we did. We were able to complete the media plan; it was in the four-week period.

The client was very pleased with the final outcome and ended up signing off on the plan without a whole lot of edits and I was actually able to, last minute, go and meet the client directly at their office. So that was a really nice way of appreciation of my work on the team and how I was able to get everyone together to complete this project in a short amount of time.”

Terry's Comment: In this example they set the scene and context, provided specifics of personal actions taken in the middle and ended by confirming success in meeting the tight deadline, which was the focus of the question.

### Example #3

Q: Tell me about a time when you had a really big workload, maybe more than you felt you could really handle. How did you handle it?

A: " I can think of a previous position I had at XXX. We had a bunch of fixes for the database that went in. It changed the way some queries in our back end function worked, so what we ended up doing for about a week and half was putting in a lot of

emergency changes, doing a lot of tweaks to the queries we were running, and it was a challenge.

I put in a lot of overtime hours on that even though I was on salary because it was the right thing to do. I was supporting some other people on my team and they were supporting me. The way I got through it, the way we all got through it, was breaking things down – what things have to absolutely act on, what things can wait and then do it piecemeal one at a time. Eventually, we did get things back to normal production runs going in and we were all able to breathe a massive sigh of relief.”

Terry’s Comment: In this example they did set up the situation and included the end of the story. It would be stronger if they added what was the benefit to the organization or the impact. They could also add more specific “I” messages to detail what they did instead of using “we” which doesn’t allow us to more clearly see their personal actions.

## YOUR TURN NOW

You can see more example answers given by real people in their mock interviews in the following pages. They will give you more reminders of sources of stories in your own past, as well as details to include or leave out.

- Look at the details of the job description or online posting for the position you want. Analyze what’s on the page or screen and also identify what isn’t there, but you know based on your experience is an important component of what the successful candidate needs to bring to that specific opportunity.

After you’ve identified all of what they want, prioritize your preparation.

- Select the 3-5 most important aspects of your target job. Then consider which of your experiences you could share through a story or stories that would demonstrate your prior accomplishments for each aspect.

If your mind has gone blank, review your resume and prior annual performance evaluations, your personal folder that you keep of prior triumphs or ask your family,

---

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

friends or professional colleagues. They can often remind you of prior projects or your individual contributions in those settings.

You bring your own preferred preparation style and habits that have made you successful, so do what works for you. However, I DON'T recommend you write out your stories in full. Instead, if you want to write, just identify bullets or short phrases to remind yourself of key facts or aspects.

- Then build multiple stories about yourself from your past that match those needs and desires you've identified. Follow the Movie Moments or another effective structure such as SPARE (Situation or Problem, Action, Results, Enthusiasm) or STAR (Situation or Task, Action, Results.) Make sure your story is illustrating one specific time from your past. Include all the important components, so your response is powerful and effective.

By thinking through your stories in advance, you will decrease your nervousness because you will be able to adapt them on the spot for whatever situation they may ask you to describe.

This preparation will increase your confidence and control and save you time because it is very likely your stories will be adaptable to any future situation you may pursue.



## Tell me about a time when you... Dana's Answer



*(Who is Dana? Dana - Media Planner and Buyer with 4years experience seeking Marketing PR Specialist role)*

**Terry: Tell me about a time where you had to work with a team to accomplish something and there were really tight deadlines.**

**Dana:** During my time at XXX, I was media planning and buying. So, we were given marketing goals and objectives as well as a budget by the client.

We had to take those objectives and the budget, the monetary amount, into consideration and work with various vendors having to keep in mind that the vendors we worked with had to fit within that client's marketing goals and objectives to make sure that it was the right platform for their marketing messages.

One particular client that I had worked with was an auditing and consulting firm and didn't really have a whole lot of experience with that sector, but kind of got thrown into the project. My strength is working in the business-to-business arena, so I gladly took it on and kind of took on the role of the account manager of that account.

We, as a team, had to develop an annual meeting plan for this particular client and since I was the account manager, I kind of had to spearhead reaching out to the vendors and requesting proposals and also coordinating those proposals with a digital team and working with the broadcast team.

So, there was the vendor relationship I had to manage as well as the client relationship and then the various people on the team. We had to complete the project within about a month's time, which usually we're given about eight weeks for a project like that.

So I really just, you know, kept in excellent communication with the vendors, with the client, with my team, just to keep everyone in the loop and make sure that everyone

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

was on task and that we were going to meet the deadline, which we did. We were able to complete the media plan; it was in the four-week period.

The client was very pleased with the final outcome and ended up signing off on the plan without a whole lot of edits and I was actually able to, last minute, go and meet the client directly at their office. So that was a really nice way of appreciation of my work on the team and how I was able to kind of get everyone together to complete this project in a short amount of time.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – DANA QUICK RATING - B

Did pick specific instance, included set up of situation and end of story, could strengthen and include more "I" messages of what you did in the middle.

## Tell me about a time when you...Jessica's Answer



*(Who is Jessica? Jessica - Over 2years experience in insurance industry seeking Customer Service Representative job)*

**Terry:** Tell me about a time when you had to handle an irate customer.

**Jessica:** I work part-time with my mother in a coffee shop. There was one time where there was a mistake made on my part on their order. The person was in a hurry and this was their first time there. I rectified the situation by remaking their drinks, giving them a free coupon, apologizing profusely and telling them that we appreciate their business. They happen to be a regular now.

**Terry:** That's great. It's good when you can turn that around.

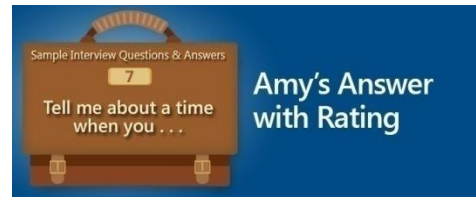
**Jessica:** Yes.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – JESSICA QUICK RATING - A

Good specific instance and what you did, should probably prepare more customer service stories too if they ask for another one in insurance.

## Tell me about a time when you... Amy's Answer



*(Who is Amy? Amy - Administrative Assistant seeking Project Manager position in Marketing Services)*

**Terry:** Tell me about a time when you absolutely yourself managed the project.

**Amy:** A great example of that most recently was with XXX. I was their office manager and administrative assistant for a very small team.

I joined the team 10 weeks before their office move so I was able to utilize all of my project management skills. Coming in and being a new person, quickly identifying who the stakeholders would be and establishing a rapport.

There was an internal XXX team and then I had vendors of all types to seek out whether it was for our phones, telecommunications and also the electricians and getting the wiring done. It was a whole new world for me. Like I said, I've been able to jump into project – I had no construction experience and was able to read floor and construction plans.

We also had a budget and that was a great time to work with this budget. I didn't make the budget, but I was responsible for sticking to the budget.

For example, when they estimated the project the team left out this local wiring fee for pulling the wires through the building and it was a significant fee. It was a great exercise in learning.

If I need to add this to the budget, where are places where I can pull back from in order to stay on track on the overall budget? I was exposed to more vendor contracts than I had been previously exposed to before.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

When somebody sent you a contract with the small print, I assumed you had to follow that so I learned more about vendor negotiation on the contract and the terms. We asked for addendums to suit our specific billing needs or the needs of the move project regarding timing.

I was a key stakeholder in the vendor selection for a variety of things down to the appliances for the kitchen and picking out the color for the kitchen to also like I mentioned the telecommunications.

Throughout the whole project, I was the project manager for XXX so I always had my team's goals focused, but I had to open up and ask a lot of questions. I developed an understanding of tech specs to the point that I ended up having to create drawings for the construction team, an electrician and a telecommunication team.

Understanding how the pieces fit together and how to keep the project flowing toward the timing deadline. First the project was the construction part, then we had the actual move and closed the project with processing and paying the vendor invoices. Also part of the project was the post move.

The move and construction was complete, but as we mostly know there is usually stuff to be done after the close of what you didn't originally scope out. That included getting the team functioning in the new space, getting training on the equipment that we had delivered and creating training documents, getting everybody all up and running.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – AMY QUICK RATING - D

Would be better if you follow story structure, set up of situation, lots of I did this, this, this, in the middle and tell the end of the story in result or accomplishment in terms of value to employer.

## Tell me about a time when you... Fabian's Answer



*(Who is Fabian? Fabian - IT professional with 10years experience seeking SQL Analyst Programmer job)*

**Terry: Tell me about a time when you had a really big workload, maybe more than you felt you could really handle. How did you handle it?**

**Fabian:** I can think of a previous position I had at XXX. We had a bunch of fixes for the database that went in. It changed the way some queries in our back end functioning worked, so what we ended up doing for about a week and half was putting in a lot of emergency changes, doing a lot of tweaks to the queries we were running, and it was a challenge.

I put in a lot of overtime hours on that. I was supporting some other people on my team and they were supporting me. The way I got through it, the way we all got through it, was breaking things down – what things have to absolutely act on, what things can wait and then do it piecemeal one at a time. Eventually, we did get things back to normal production runs going in and we were all able to breathe a massive sigh of relief.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – FABIAN QUICK RATING - B

Did set up situation and tell end of story, could add what was the benefit to organization or impact, could add more specific "I" messages to detail more of what you did instead of "we."

## Tell me about a time when you... Don's Answer



*(Who is Don? Don - MBA and International Communications Manager seeking Manager of Corporate Communications role)*

**Terry:** We're going to talk about a specific instance now, **so tell me about a time when you had to address cultural differences on a global basis in terms of the message.**

**Don:** Well, one of the things that is dealing with countries that are close to each other, but have extremely different cultures. It's very easy to assume by folks that the Japanese and the Chinese cultures are similar and their values and so forth, which is very different

The Japanese culture has a very detailed culture where they're willing to express themselves to their management or their leaders vocally. Whereas, the Chinese culture is a bit more reliant on looking up to their leaders as providing for them almost everything as far as guidance and decision making and so forth.

So, when I did speak on behalf of or write something for the CEO, I had to be careful not to insult either culture by saying part of your behavior, 360 degree communication and other exercises that drive and develop openness in an organization.

That way they didn't feel comfortable that their leader was telling them something to do that would be uncomfortable or very difficult for them, to a point, because we are trying to get everybody to grow and expand the way that they do things and communicate, but I had to be very careful.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

It's also the same the French with the English. You've got different ways of presenting yourself and you have to find the common thread that you can communicate. At various times you can create custom communications for one region over another, but that doesn't happen as often.

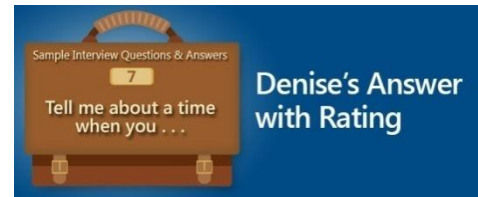
**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – DON QUICK RATING - D

Suggest instead to follow story format, you didn't talk about a specific instance, tell just one time, tell what was situation, what I did was this, this, this, and this is how it turned out and how company benefited.



## Tell me about a time when you... Denise's Answer



*(Who is Denise? Denise - Global Integrated Marketing Executive seeking Director of Strategy position)*

**Terry: Tell me about a specific time when you - oh let's say, you made a mistake in business.**

**Denise:** The time that I think comes to mind is my first assignment at XXX. I was 18 months into a pilot program where XXX or my executive team has invested significantly in a new channel business opportunity that they cast me to lead.

While I had the support of the executive team, unfortunately within the ranks of my peer group there was a lot of pushback. If you know the XXX culture, that's not uncommon.

Unfortunately sometimes depending on your perspective it's encouraged where they sort of put two trains on separate tracks and whichever one is left standing is the train and then they figure out how to rebuild it later.

I was experiencing enormous success and traction in terms of organizing something that had previously failed about three years in a row, and unfortunately, one of the things it created is this territorial battle.

I had an opportunity to band-aid that situation and work on it to turn it around. The mistake I made is that I focused more on the business result after having spent about 18 months working on the pilot. I had a strong sense of the revenue potential globally and I knew there was significant opportunity in Europe, Asia and the U.S. I also believe it had the potential to grow double digits.

The field team or the account team in the U.S. was probably the most combative. What I did, the mistake that I made is that I forced my opinion around what I thought the

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

business results should be rather than allowing it to come from the ground up, even though I knew there was resistance from the ground up.

Even though globally we hit our revenue goals and the US team did finally make their numbers, they struggled and it created morale issues and there was fallout as a result of it.

I think in hindsight going back I had the opportunity to probably bring them along a lot slower and probably should have rather than trying to make them do the right thing.

Did that make sense?

**Terry:** Yes. I believe that my experience has certainly been that people support what they help create. It sounds like you were in a situation where you didn't allow them the opportunity to do much of that so therefore it was sort of imposed on them.

**Denise:** It wasn't so much my decision to allow them. It was a management or executive level initiative, but I think I could've been a hero in the situation by giving them an olive branch and saying, even though I know your pushback is not legitimate, you're not where we need you to be.

Therefore, I'm going to give you an olive branch and give you a lower quota so you can come along and get to where the rest of us are. Instead what I did is I took the other tack, which is I know the business is there so we're going to give you a double-digit quota because I know you can do it.

They did do it, but again it was the morale and the fallout around not getting the opportunity to set the quota themselves I guess.

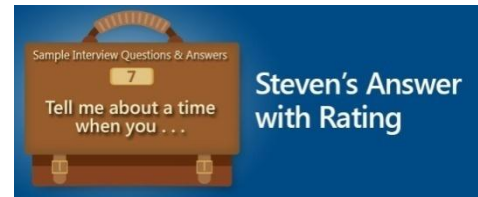
**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – DENISE QUICK RATING - F

Was long and confusing, suggest instead to follow story format, what was the situation, what did you do, and how did it end. Might need to pick simpler incident to talk about.

---

## Tell me about a time when you... Steven's Answer



*(Who is Steven? Steven - Human Resources Professional seeking Senior Human Resources Generalist role)*

**Terry:** Tell me about a time when you had to handle a workplace injury.

**Steven:** With worker's compensation it was an issue. What we found when we really looked at the data and what injuries were occurring is that it was really a two pronged problem.

We weren't doing what needed to be done as far as prevention and the process in that every manager was knowledgeable on the correct process to follow.

We really tackled the problem in those two areas, making sure that every employee, manager and front line alike, knew all the safety procedures, ran through it, make sure they're all wearing their equipment, and I held people accountable to that from top to bottom.

I made safety part of that culture and the other side of that was having everybody be aware of the process to follow. We posted procedures to follow, we made sure that all the managers got training in those procedures and in turn, they trained every employee on what to do in those scenarios.

I think there was a tendency to believe that we didn't want to tell them too much about the worker's comp process because we didn't want too many people filing claims which is really the opposite case.

If you have people ignorant of the system then you really prolong the problem and then when it does become an issue it's actually more costly. It's better to have everybody aware of the process and to get in front of it.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – STEVEN QUICK RATING - D

Not following story format, no set up of specific situation, need more "I" in what you did not "we", need end of story with how company benefited.

## Tell me about a time when you... Leonard's Answer



*(Who is Leonard? Leonard - Non-Profit Leader with 25 years experience seeking Executive Director role)*

**Terry:** Leonard, I'm actually going to let you come up with your own scenario and situation. Tell me about a specific instance in your career that was typically memorable.

**Leonard:** I would say -- going way back in my career and having done direct service with young people -- the ones that stand out are when you've reached a young person who is struggling with their life. Whether they were abused, having mental health issues or addiction issues and you were able to work with them to get them the resources and the support so they could turn their life around.

I remember way back when I was working in Boston, I was working with a young woman who already at age 19 had two children and had dropped out of school. We got her into a GED program and then an LPN Program. I remember telling a funder . . . She said we funded you to support 100 of people like this and you only work with 12 or 15.

I remember saying wasn't it worth it? The fact that 10 of the 15 that we work with are no longer on public aid, they're now back in school and functioning members of society.

Those are the memorable ones, when we can really reach those young people who were high-risk young people going down the wrong path and we could turn their lives around and make them productive members of a community.

**Terry:** Yes, that's true. I'm just curious, what was the funder's response?

**Leonard:** She laughed. She got what I was saying. I put money into it. I said you gave us \$100... whatever it was...\$100,000 to work with these 100 children and I said turning

this one young woman's life around saved the state and those two children, because she's now a nurse.

So, the likelihood is that those kids are not going to ever be on welfare or public aid. They're going to grow up and get through high school. We not only affected this one young woman's life, we affected her two children's lives. We're talking about we saved a lot of money over the long run, just from that one family, so I did it that way. Then she got it and she was like okay, you've convinced me.

**Terry:** Wow.

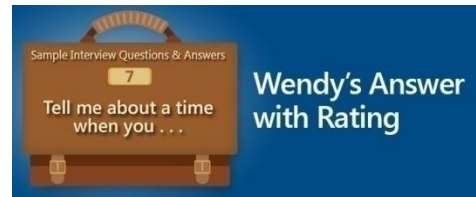
**Leonard:** It was also a learning lesson to be more proactive with my funders and to be able to tell them upfront hurdles that we were having either in recruiting or to turn these young people's lives around we needed to be more intense and therefore we had to work with less rather than more.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – LENNY QUICK RATING - C

Didn't give you a great question setup, in other situations you would have more to tell about what you specifically did in the middle and remember to tell the end of what happened and what benefits there were. Your lessons learned section was great.

## Tell me about a time when you... Wendy's Answer



*(Who is Wendy? Wendy - Executive and recent Chief Operating Officer seeking Controller position)*

**Terry: Tell me about a time when you took on a position in an area that was perhaps unfamiliar to you.**

**Wendy:** I think as a consultant every time you go into a new client situation it's unfamiliar. What I like to pride myself on is that I take the appropriate amount of time to understand the organization, to know the nuances of how they work, how they make decisions, to also understand the business.

Again, having started my career in public accounting, it was very important -- to be effective in my role -- to really understand the underlying business, so I kind of get excited and charged up about that.

So I do a lot of research. The Internet is a great thing to be able to do research not only about operational issues, but people issues. Like I said, I spend the appropriate amount of time understanding the dynamics and culture.

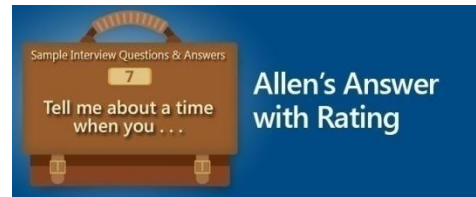
Then, most importantly, I leverage my network of professionals, my past associations with XXX to make sure that when I can't do my own research and understand something I reach out to my network to support me.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – WENDY QUICK RATING - F

See suggested story format, you didn't talk about one specific instance, then when I prompted again you did set up the situation, could add more in middle on specifics of what you did, didn't tell the end of story, should wrap up with benefits received by organization in that specific situation.

## Tell me about a time when you... Allen's Answer



*(Who is Allen? Allen - QA Analyst and Programmer since 1985 seeking Quality Assurance Tester job)*

**Terry:** Tell me about a time when you were working with someone who was difficult to work with and how you handled it.

**Allen:** I had a woman like that and she actually disturbed the whole office. She would get up and complain all the time and everybody was upset by it.

I tended to look at it as a reminder that people are different and it takes all kinds of people that work in an office, take it in stride and focus on my job. Whatever her issues were hers and it wasn't my business. I just keep focused.

**Terry:** Was she doing anything that was disturbing your productivity? How was she being difficult?

**Allen:** In my office, we have five-foot cubes and it's a very open space. During the day at different times, she would stand up and say, "Oh, it's just too cold in here. I can't stand it." Or, "It's too hot. Can someone do something about it?"

Everyone was giving her the eye, because they're trying to work and she's disturbing everybody. I thought she's hot or cold, whatever and that's her problem. I just kind of laughed at it in a way, not in front of her, but inside. I chuckled, thinking that this was comic relief. I just don't let it bother me.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – ALLEN QUICK RATING - F

Missing middle of what you did and not sure this situation actually answered what you did, sounds like you didn't let it bother you instead of fixing. Perhaps look for another example to share rather than using this story.



## Tell me about a time when you...Bonnie's Answer



*(Who is Bonnie? Bonnie - CPA with over 6years experience seeking Accounting Manager position)*

**Terry:** Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult situation with a co-worker. Maybe there was some conflict, maybe there was a difference of opinion - tell me how you handled that.

**Bonnie:** The one that comes to mind is - and this is something that does come to mind. At times, it's not so much difficult situations but I've had to deal with co-workers who maybe didn't have all the tools or people that didn't really have all the tools to get done what they needed and they needed help in performing tasks.

It was kind of frustrating. I sat down with them, listened to them and asked them what the problem was. They told me what the problem was, I empathized and they knew that I empathized with them.

What I realized is that they didn't have the proper tools in place or maybe they needed more training, and I was able to help them and give them a little bit of training they needed and help them develop some new tools that were able to help them accomplish the task.

I had one person where I was doing part of her work because she didn't really have the tools to do it or didn't know how to do it. So, I, along with the IT manager helped develop some new reports that would help her get her work done and then we were able to move forward.

I was relieved of doing her work, which gave me more time to concentrate on what I needed to get done. Is that what you were looking for?

**Terry:** When you said they didn't have the tools, are you talking about - what kinds of tools? What things did you create or help them with? You said reports, but were there other kinds of things?

**Bonnie:** It was rhetoric because she had to balance AR and she wasn't always balancing it, because she didn't know where to put things or where to book things too. Therefore, she would sometimes leave out receipts that she needed to book.

What this report did is it made her book them in an expense account or someone else. The report was on a deposit-by-deposit basis. We would get deposit slips all day long, sometimes twice a day we would get deposit slips from the bank and there could be multiple deposits in each delivery.

What she had to do with this report we designed, was to input each deposit but she had to input them in total. The total balance had to be booked; otherwise, she could not go on to the next deposit.

This made her deposit all of it and it gave her the ability to then put something in an expense account and come back later and figure out where it really went.

In that respect, this report helped her to balance her work, which was a very good report for her because she wasn't always booking the amounts she didn't know where to put. Plus it gave her some guidance. I don't think she knew how to use expense accounts, so I gave her some guidance.

It took away some of the frustration she was feeling from not knowing what to do.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – BONNIE QUICK RATING - D

Use story structure, set up one specific situation, go through I did this, this, this, and end the story with the results or benefit the organization received from this.

## Tell me about a time when you... Margaret's Answer



*(Who is Margaret? Margaret - Senior Level Marketing Communications Professional seeking position with University)*

**Terry:** Tell me about a time when you may have had a conflict with your boss and how you were able to resolve it.

**Margaret:** When I worked at XXX, I was talking with my boss about what we needed to put together for the XXX magazine. There was a conflict about whether we should spend the money that I thought we should spend on an excellent designer, why that designer should come from XXX and not from XXX.

I had already done some research and found not a single designer in XXX that I thought was appropriate. I was able to convince her that a particular designer that I had found in XXX was just the right designer for us. We wanted a publication that had a lot of energy and looked modern.

This was all part of our branding and I just felt that it was very important to use a designer of the same caliber that I'd found in XXX. In the end, she agreed with me that we picked just the right designer and we won many design awards over the years, so it worked out successfully.

**Terry:** Was it a serious conflict? I mean it sounds like there was a difference as to whether and how. Are you saying this was actually a real conflict?

**Margaret:** No, it depends on what you mean by real conflict. It was a decision that we were at-odds about and it took me a while to convince her. But no, I wouldn't say it was a real conflict.

**Terry:** How did you go about convincing her? What did you actually do in those terms? It sounds like you were at-odds initially on this, so how did you actually convince her?

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

**Margaret:** I showed her the work of the designer that I'd found in XXX and showed her the work of the designer in XXX. I said that even though I would have to take some trips to XXX it was worth the extra effort. A lot of it was just showing her the visual proof that the designer in XXX was the best designer for us to use.

**Terry:** Tell me about a time, maybe, where you were working in a team environment and there was a disagreement within the team as to how something should be done or how you should proceed.

**Margaret:** That's a good question. I cannot think of anything off the top of my head, but I'll try. Gosh, I can't think of anything. I honestly can't think of anything. Every time I've worked in a team there hasn't been any kind of difference of opinion that I can think of, I'm sorry.

**Terry:** I wish I had worked in the places that you've worked, because I don't know of any team where there weren't, in fact, some. Again, not that people were impolite about it, but people have their own point of view and their own way of seeing things. You're saying that you can't remember any situations where people just thought things should be different?

**Margaret:** I really can't think of anything. A lot of the projects that I worked on I did pretty much by myself. I did the Annual Report at the XXX by myself until, after a while, it became clear that when I started doing more and more publications and direct mail pieces I couldn't do it all. I was doing a magazine by myself, an annual report by myself and the media relations, as well, by myself.

What I mean by, by myself, I wrote them all, every word, except, on occasion, I would hire a freelance writer to write one of the articles, but I wrote all the rest of the magazines, the annual reports and handled everything on the art direction side and even went on the photo shoots. Now when that responsibility was turned over to one of my team members and then she was in charge and I was part of the team, everything went very smoothly. We didn't have any differences of opinion that were anything serious.

---

The only thing I can think of is when we were doing that Annual Report and she was in charge, we had a difference of opinion on which design to choose out of several designs.

But that's resolved pretty easily. It's the sort of thing where one person will say oh, well I really like this one, the other one will say I really like that one and then the designer would ask why we liked one design over another. We ended up just saying which design we liked and why and then it was kind of majority ruled, so you can't say it was any kind of difference of opinion that was a problem.

**Margaret:** Honestly, that is the only thing I can think of out of all of those years of working in teams. Terry, the only reason I'm telling you that I don't think I can think of anything is because I did so much by myself. I didn't work with teams a lot.

**Terry:** So you're more an individual performer and the role that you're going for in terms of this specific organization is also an individual performer role?

**Margaret:** No, it's not. I guess it's a problem that I can't think of any team-oriented examples.

**Terry:** That's all right, we'll just keep moving on. Today we're laying the basic groundwork for where you're at now in terms of your interviewing skills.

**Margaret:** Okay.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

Tell me about a time when you . . . – MARGARET QUICK RATING - D

Believe you might be able to come up with better conflict example,. If you stick with the one you did here, need to expand in the middle on what you did.

## How To Answer: What Would You Do If . . .



### “What Would You Do If . . .”Movie Tip

A great movie example for how to answer this interview question is suggested by the movie, *The Martian* (2015.)

An astronaut played by Matt Damon is left behind on Mars and is faced with a series of unexpected problems that he has to use his creativity and experience to solve to survive.

This question may require you to demonstrate your ingenuity as it's impossible to prepare in advance for every possible question you may face. However, there are some strategies you can follow to shine even with the unexpected.

### Alternate Versions of this Question Include

- The potential or typical challenges in the job ( They may be interested in the approach you have taken or might take when confronted with a particular set of circumstances)
- A wild “out of the box” situation (They may want to see how you respond to something completely unexpected or how you think on your feet)

- If the office were a jungle, what would you do to establish your territory if you were a jungle animal consistent with your normal personality at work? (some questions won't make much sense!)
- If you had to arrange to move our entire business office to a foreign country in less than 30 days, what would you do?"

Just as with some other questions, there are an unlimited variety of these kinds of "what if" questions you may face.

### Your answer should be:

- A behavioral interview answer (as described in the How to Answer: Tell Me About A Time . . . Chapter) if you have faced it before (this is optional, but is a powerful way to demonstrate your expertise as their "what if" situation is about something you have already successfully faced and learned from)
- Taking them through a high-level series of steps you would take in your thinking and /or your actions.

### Your answer should not be:

- Unorganized
- Too detailed so too long.

### Here's How to Create Your Answer:

You may not have the chance to prepare in advance for all of these "what if" questions. As you read the job posting you may identify typical situations that you could be asked about and prepare answers in advance, just as you prepared for the behavioral interview questions such as "tell me about a time when you . . ."

A "what if" question frees you to use your imagination and share what you think. It doesn't require you to share a specific incident from your past. However, if you have a

relevant experience, you could use that in your answer as the foundation and also identify what you might do differently knowing what you know now.

If you're in an interview and get a "what if" question and your mind goes blank, just take a very deep breath and trust that something will occur to you to say. Just trust your instincts in the moment and just go with anything that pops into your head then.

Following are some specific story examples as given by clients during their mock interviews with my comments for your review and as thought starters for your own stories.

## Example #1

Q: Tell me what you would do if you identified some improprieties within the accounting transaction.

A: "That's a really good question and I think the first thing would be to make sure that I gathered sufficient factual evidence. So if something looked a little unusual or there were some red flags I would first delve into it a little bit more.

So I would look back at some documents, do some analysis of some numbers if it looked unusual, ratios or to look for approvals that didn't seem appropriate, depending on what the issue was.

Then I would discuss the situation with the person. Before I even got to the person I would communicate my concern to the appropriate legal counsel within the organization to make sure that we were doing this completely on the up and up. If the company has a policy around how you handle these things that I follow that policy.

Then I would address it with the individual. I have been involved, in the past, with some interrogations around potential fraudulent activity, so I do know how to ask those kinds of questions that at first appear like you're a little ignorant and then you let the person



get their guard down. Then, all of a sudden, they start to disclose some things that allow you to zero in on it.

But I would be very quick to address it. I would not let it drag on, because if you handle it the right way and you're wrong, you know, you've investigated, but hopefully you haven't created any further issues. If you're correct in your assumptions the quicker you bring this to a head the less exposure you have for your organization."

Terry's Comment: Good identification of what would do, strengthened by the inclusion of past experience.

## Example #2

Q: What would you do if we were not able to recruit new funders to the table for the XXX Association?

A: "What I would do is sit with the board and the active members of the staff to try to think of outside-the-box ways of potentially doing a public relations or advocacy campaign that attracted the attention of possible funders.

While at the same time, perhaps looking to the families and the young people in the schools that we've worked with to see whether or not there could be an alumni association or organization built among those young people and families. That way they would then become the spokespeople and help raise the additional dollars that we needed to continue the program."

Terry's Comment: Good specifics are provided in the answer, and I also liked the fact that they identified multiple options, not just one.

## Example #3

Q: Tell me what you would do if a situation at work came up and you saw a need but it wasn't your area of responsibility.

---

A:” I believe in teamwork. So, if I see I can help out and contribute to a goal, that I see as something you shouldn’t even back down from.

One example would be at my old job at XXX. I took on some responsibilities as an Account Manager, even though I was just a Service Rep. An Account Manager has a lot more detailed involvement with the insurance policies and they understand the coverage more.

They just don’t invoice and send certificates or process paperwork, they do a lot of calculating and managing to see if coverage is placed correctly and I helped out in a lot of that. I placed coverage with some of the smaller accounts myself and did well in that regard.

I wasn’t ask to do it, I just took over, because I knew that the Account Managers were struggling and having a hard time keeping up, so I just went for it. They of course approved what I did before I sent it on to the customer. So if I saw a situation here where I could jump in and help out even if it wasn’t my responsibility, I would do that.

Terry’s Comment: This is a good example of taking a “what if” question and responding with what actually did in prior situation.

## YOUR TURN NOW

You can see more example answers given by real people in their mock interviews in the following pages. Review them for new ideas.

- Remember that by also following the suggestions given to prepare your stories for your “Tell Me About A Time . . . “ answers, you are also reminding yourself of what you might be able to share to respond to an unexpected “what if” question.
- If you have identified any gaps in your background when you analyzed the job description or posting, I suggest you do some research on those areas in

particular as you want to be prepared for a “what if” in those priority areas.

- One easy method to prepare yourself for areas that are new to you or to close your gaps to their requirements is simply to “google” the phrase or topic and see what information is readily available for your self-study crash course.
- Some light reading may give you some great points to make in response to a “what if” question. It will give you the opportunity to demonstrate that you are knowledgeable in an area where you may have no actual experience.

## What would you do if... Dana's Answer



*(Who is Dana? Dana - Media Planner and Buyer with 4years experience seeking Marketing PR Specialist role)*

**Terry:** Great, thank you. Clearly, you've had experience working with vendors. We really have a problem here, **what would you do if a vendor wasn't delivering what was needed? Either the quality was off or it was completely the wrong stuff or a combination thereof, you know all kinds of things could potentially go wrong. What would you do if you had a vendor that really wasn't earning their money?**

**Dana:** Obviously, since I feel that I am a great communicator I know how to reach out to people, I would definitely try to communicate what it was. That what they had given us was incorrect or we need to change things or it needed to be edited and just make it clear to them, you know just kind of reiterate what I had asked for at the first request.

Just to go over that again, to make sure they felt comfortable and if they had questions or concerns to absolutely, you know, communicate those questions or concerns with me, just to make sure that were both on the same page with what we were trying to accomplish.

To open the paths of communication and make sure that they felt comfortable coming to me if they had a question. Then we'd just kind of work it out that way and go back and forth until the final product was what we had anticipated.

**Terry:** So how would you actually get them to address... I mean I hear that you would look out to them for what their questions or concerns were, but in this particular scenario, they're not doing what we need them to do. How would you approach it with them?

**Dana:** I mean I would definitely set a timeline for them to get back to me with the information. It would definitely be over email and a phone call. Just reiterate the fact that we value our relationship as their being our vendor.

We don't want to jeopardize the business relationship that we have, but we just want to make sure that they're going to meet the requirements by (X) time or (X) day, depending on the particular project.

**Terry:** Have you had any situation in the past where you actually have had to deal with a vendor that wasn't performing that you could give me a specific instance of what you did in that case?

**Dana:** I've definitely been in that position. With media planning and buying everything is on a very tight deadline and we're under pressure from the client and the team, so there's definitely been times where I've been put in that situation.

I'm trying to think about an individual situation that I could give you an example for. I mean this was a day-to-day thing that I dealt with at my previous job, so it wasn't uncommon for me to pick up the phone and call a vendor just to let them know that we really needed this information and we need it by this time.

They were always willing to work with me and get me what we needed in order to accomplish the project.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – DANA QUICK RATING - D

Not as strong an answer, could have been more comprehensive initially on all the steps you would take as a progression if needed rather than stopping with just the first one, also you sounded so nice in your approach that wasn't sure you would have the strength to be really assertive if the work with them didn't get us what we needed, or perhaps you could describe a specific instance where you did have to use multiple steps.

## What would you do if... Jessica's Answer



*(Who is Jessica? Jessica - Over 2 years experience in insurance industry seeking Customer Service Representative job)*

**Terry:** Tell me what you would do if a situation came up and you decided to take control and resolve it, even if it wasn't necessarily your responsibility.

**Jessica:** I believe in teamwork. So, if I see I can help out and contribute to a goal, that I see as something you shouldn't even back down from.

One example would be at my old job at XXX. I took on some responsibilities as an Account Manager, even though I was just a Service Rep. An Account Manager has a lot more detailed involvement with the insurance policies and they understand the coverage more.

They just don't invoice and send certificates or process paperwork, they do a lot of calculating and managing to see if coverage is placed correctly and I helped out in a lot of that. I placed coverage with some of the smaller accounts myself and did well in that regard.

I wasn't ask to do it I just took over, because I knew that the Account Managers were struggling and having a hard time keeping up, so I just went for it.

**Terry:** I suspect they were probably appreciative.

**Jessica:** Yes, they were.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – JESSICA QUICK RATING - A

Loved specific example. Have question for you regarding this answer: what you did didn't exceed the licensure, etc. requirements did it? Or did you have them bless the work that you had done before forwarding to client? Just want to make sure we're not creating problems in their mind that you're exceeding your legal authority by stepping in and doing what you did.

## What would you do if... Amy's Answer



*(Who is Amy? Amy - Administrative Assistant seeking Project Manager position in Marketing Services)*

**Terry: Tell me about what you would do if you needed to use MS Project as part of your responsibilities. We're an MS Project house. I don't see anything on your resume that says that you've used Project before. How would you go about addressing that if we were to require you to use Project?**

**Amy:** That's a great question. In all of my roles, I wasn't ever specifically exposed to Microsoft Project. In my history and career, I have been exposed to new software and I've proven able to learn quickly.

I would go straight to the web and start looking at some online training as well as right now I am looking into getting specific hands on training with different project management schools and I'd be more than happy to complete that before my start date.

Historically, when we went from different time management systems, whether it was from Silent Partners to Project Arena, from Project Arena to Prism I was one of the key people who learned quickly, quickly became a power user and then I was called on to train other people on the software.

I've proved myself able to get up and learn and I definitely have confidence that I'll be able to do that with Project as well.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – AMY QUICK RATING - B

Good specifics on what you'd do backed up with items from past, stronger if you were learning MS Project now on own via self study.

## What would you do if... Fabian's Answer



*(Who is Fabian? Fabian - IT professional with 10 years experience seeking SQL Analyst Programmer job)*

**Terry: What would you do if you were in a situation where the user came back to you with questions about a report that you had created for them?**

**Fabian:** If the user came back to me about a report about the results he was getting, I'd sit down with him and talk with him about how I was going after the data. I'd reconfirm with him that he actually understood what he was asking for, and I would also backtrack my work. If he was giving me specific items he's got questions about, then that would just involve going through the database to the point of the computer coming up with the results, and being able to show the user okay I went through the process again with this problem piece of data that he had, which he thought was problematic.

I went through the process that the report goes through, here's the answer I got. Then if it matches what's in the report, at that point, we can say the computer did what we told it to do. What was your intention? What were you trying to get out of it?

Then, if he wanted me to go back and redo it, I'd want to be very clear on exactly what kind of results or numbers he's expecting, even have him give me a range or some number that he would expect back as the kind of normal range, what it would usually look like.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – FABIAN QUICK RATING –B Because you were specific and I see you taking specific actions. Could you add a story about a time when you had an interaction with the user that demonstrates an accomplishment and your skills at working with people in that scenario?



## What would you do if... Don's Answer



*(Who is Don? Don - MBA and International Communications Manager seeking Manager of Corporate Communications role)*

**Terry:** Let's talk about a scenario. You may not have had this experience yet, but what would you do if a senior leader was asking you to write a presentation based on information that you knew was actually false?

**Don:** First of all, what I would do in that situation is identify a few things that stand out to me as a possible very large red flag that I'll need to be waving. What I would do is try to give to this leader, first, time to say examples or things I have heard otherwise that this may not be completely accurate.

It also goes to that next level. Often I had the opportunity to provide what I'm writing to pass through the legal department. And, more often than not, we will also red flag these and I allow them to work with this leader to make sure everything is above board and we'll not be making, basically, false statements.

But, of course, it's a situation where I'd keep a very tight paper trail of everything to say why, you know, these things should not be discussed or released within this context or manner.

**Terry:** So it sounds like you wouldn't confront the senior leader directly on this.

**Don:** It depends on my relationship. You know as I grow in a job and receive more trust from the influential people in the company I would gladly confront them directly, depending on the relationship.

But until I get to know them and develop their trust and the open dialogue that I would hope to have and I have enjoyed with the leaders I've worked with, I may take more of a structured level working with the legal department to make those changes.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – DON QUICK RATING – D

Not sure impression you give here is what you intend, also shifting from what you would do to "often what we and them did" is confusing. Are you also saying if asked to do something illegal you wouldn't address unless they trusted you? Be more direct with I would do this, this and this and involve the legal department in this way in this situation. Need to rework this example to be cleaner and show you taking charge. Or find another example.

## What would you do if... Denise's Answer



*(Who is Denise? Denise - Global Integrated Marketing Executive seeking Director of Strategy position)*

**Terry:** Thank you. **What would you do if you were in a situation - let's say you were doing media buys and we realized that we need to make some shifts and some adjustments. How would you go about making those decisions if you don't have any agency background? How would you approach the situation?**

**Denise:** I realize that's an area where I will have to ramp. One of my first professional developments would be meeting with our media buyers, the folks that we deal with from a supplier perspective.

Ramping quickly, in terms of understanding the services they provide, the business processes in place to make things happen, and then really benchmarking and understanding who is considered the best out there from a quality perspective, who is considered the best from a pricing perspective and just really ramping as quickly as possible.

I recognize that this is a scenario that is a gap so I intend to address it immediately and ramp. My hope would be that if there were a crisis that happened that I would have established a relationship, have started the communication and started the ramping, so I could then work selectively with my counterparts in the agency to make the right decision as to what direction we need to move in.

**Terry:** How would you go about identifying who is considered the best?

**Denise:** I think that working with my counterparts first internally within the agency as well as talking to industry experts. My experience is that there are always subject matter experts or people who track performance of this kind.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

First of all, all of the changes that are happening in media so again one would be internal research, external industry perspectives, and then benchmarking our competitors and understand who is actually getting the business at our competitors and trying to get a sense for the level of satisfaction.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – DENISE QUICK RATING - D

Would be stronger answer if you could talk about what you are doing now to close that gap and how you would address it then more specifically, for instance, reading on own now, have contacts you would call, personal network you would tap, industry groups where you have memberships and resources, etc.

Don't know enough about agency realm to know if they would accept the answer you gave.

## What would you do if... Steven's Answer



*(Who is Steven? Steven - Human Resources Professional seeking Senior Human Resources Generalist role)*

**Terry:** Let's talk about another situation. **What would you do if you were called in by an associate with a claim of sexual harassment?**

**Steven:** In that case, we would conduct an investigation. We would have to explain to that person that once we are aware it's going to be kept as confidential as possible but we do have to follow up.

Like anything, confidentiality is not - the parties involved will be aware of it but we will explain about retaliation, about if you do feel that there is any kind of retaliation you come to us, but we want to get the whole story, we want to conduct a thorough investigation.

It is amazing how the initial story can be completely different than the pieces we put together at the end of it. You want to make sure your investigation is thorough.

You want to interview all the parties involved and really piece together what is actually happening there. Once you do that you follow up. You do the correct disciplinary actions.

**Terry:** Were you ever in a situation where you personally had experience with that?

**Steven:** Yes. It was harassment, it wasn't of a sexual nature where you had to get those issues out there but it was a harassing situation.

It turns out that this was taking place, we had to sit the manager down and we actually had to go through a termination with the manager. That creates an awkward situation

for all parties involved so you just want to make sure you have that open door policy where the employees can come to you with these issues and you go from there.

**Terry:** We have a couple of minutes here; I'd be interested in you taking me through that specific situation in terms of what was your role and your actions in terms of that?

Tell me certainly, not the specifics of what occurred, but what your actions were in regards to being notified, resolving and then adjusting the situation?

**Steven:** What we had was an integrity hotline, that's how the situation was addressed. The employee called the integrity hotline it was within one of the communities that was within my region, so that was forwarded to me.

There was a claim, and it really boiled down to harassing unfavorable treatment. There really was a mentality of kind of management versus front-end staff, us versus them.

This was coming from the associate, from the employee, so I wanted to get everybody involved with this. What we ended up doing was I went out there to talk to all the employees and they did not know that this issue was there, but I didn't want to single this person out.

It was basically just a general climate survey that we do from time to time. I didn't want to alert management of something hey, this is going on, but I wanted to get the general feel for what was going on there.

What I discovered was that they really did have an us versus them with management and this particular person, she was put in the middle of that because she worked directly with the front line staff in the evenings but she was on the management team.

The executive director was really putting her between a rock and a hard place, telling her to do things she didn't feel comfortable with, not treating her as though she was part of the management staff and belittling her.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

We did get some collaboration on this. After I did this and talked to everyone involved, I sat the manager down and got his take on it. I let him know what was going on, he – as people tend to do– became defensive, but once we were able to work that out it was a decision that we came to mutually. This wasn't the right place for him.

At that meeting, when I'm sitting down with the manager, people tend to terminate themselves. Were we able to work that out and recognize the issue it may have had a different outcome but it was plain at that time that was not going to happen so that was the outcome in that particular situation.

**Terry:** I'm sorry, so what became plain wasn't going to happen is that they were going to terminate themselves?

**Steven:** No, it became plain that they couldn't continue their employment there. It could've been at that meeting that if we were able to work that out, if they were able to recognize the problem and I was able to coach them through that management issue, that they would've been able to continue their employment.

There might've been some corrective action involved but we would've been able to work with them.

From that meeting it was clear that was not going to happen, that the mutual decision came to a termination.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – STEVEN QUICK RATING - D

Could put into story format even though "what if" scenario. Take more active, I would do, this, this, this instead of "you." Suggest more work on this answer.

## What would you do if... Leonard's Answer



*(Who is Leonard? Leonard - Non-Profit Leader with 25 years experience  
seeking Executive Director role)*

**Terry:** The next question is sort of a scenario situation, what would you do if...? So pick a feasible situation that we may be facing here and tell me what you would do to address that.

**Leonard:** I would say “**What would you do if we were not able to recruit new funders to the table for the XXX XXX Association?**” What I would do is sit with the board and the active members of the staff to try to think of outside-the-box ways of potentially doing a public relations or advocacy campaign that attracted the attention of possible funders.

While at the same time, perhaps looking to the families and the young people in the schools that we've worked with to see whether or not there could be an alumni association or organization built among those young people and families. That way they would then become the spokespeople and help raise the additional dollars that we needed to continue the program.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – LENNY QUICK RATING - A

Good specifics in answer.



## What would you do if... Wendy's Answer



*(Who is Wendy? Wendy - Executive and recent Chief Operating Officer seeking Controller position)*

**Terry:** Tell me what you would do if you identified some improprieties within the accounting transaction.

**Wendy:** That's a really good question and I think the first thing would be to make sure that I gathered sufficient factual evidence. So if something looked a little unusual or there were some red flags I would first delve into it a little bit more.

So I would look back at some documents, do some analysis of some numbers if it looked unusual, ratios or to look for approvals that didn't seem appropriate, depending on what the issue was.

Then I would discuss the situation with the person. Before I even got to the person I would communicate my concern to the appropriate legal counsel within the organization to make sure that we were doing this completely on the up and up. If the company has a policy around how you handle these things that I follow that policy.

Then I would address it with the individual. I have been involved, in the past, with some interrogations around potential fraudulent activity, so I do know how to ask those kinds of questions that at first appear like you're a little ignorant and then you let the person get their guard down. Then, all of a sudden, they start to disclose some things that allow you to zero in on it.

But I would be very quick to address it. I would not let it drag on, because if you handle it the right way and you're wrong, you know, you've investigated, but hopefully you haven't created any further issues. If you're correct in your assumptions the quicker you bring this to a head the less exposure you have for your organization.

**Terry:** Tell me more, I mean obviously not names or individuals or even organizations, but walk me through that process that you eluded to where you said you were involved in a situation where you did have to be part of an interrogation. Take me through what happened there and what you did.

**Wendy:** The initial identification, let's say it's a potential problem, it was in my audit days, in my internal audit days, and it came from a report that we would get from a number of distribution centers. That report had some key ratios that we looked at every month, things like inventory turns, inventory shortages, different ratios and you compare the ratios among the different distribution centers and you identified the out liar.

In this particular case, one of the centers, the inventory shortages were averaging about 25 to 30% where in most of the locations they would say 5 to 10%, so it was definitely an out liar. It was an operation where there was one person that handled the inventory and the walk up, if you will, the cash collections when people walked up and purchased things just off the counter. It wasn't a very sophisticated system.

So there was some concern and what I did was I scheduled an audit there, had my audit team go in and conduct our traditional field audit. I led them in the right direction by saying here are some specific transactions I'd like you to look at, but I did not make the auditors aware, so they were going in somewhat unbiased.

They gathered data, provided their feedback to me and then I came out on the last day of the audit and conducted an interview with the individual who managed the center. I said I just want to follow-up on some things we found. What do you think about this? What do you think about that? Got some feedback, I guess, that was somewhat contradictory.

So, I still wasn't comfortable that I had enough to confront them, so what we ultimately did is we engaged an outside private eye to come in and watch the warehouse.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

It turned out that in the evenings people were coming up and this individual was putting inventory in vans and trucks and non-authorized vehicles. With that information we were able to go to the police and file a complaint and file charges against the individual.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – WENDY QUICK RATING - A

Good response initially, but even better when you gave specific example, even though didn't need to because situational "what if." Your experience telling like behavioral interview answer made it much stronger.

## What would you do if... Allen's Answer



*(Who is Allen? Allen - QA Analyst and Programmer since 1985 seeking Quality Assurance Tester job)*

**Terry: What would you do if you were in a situation and you saw and had the feeling that you might not be able to meet the deadline that you've been given?**

**Allen:** In the past, I had a good manager and he would say that, as you know, sometimes test cases can take a little longer than some other ones. You can get into a difficult situation where it takes more than a half hour. It may take a couple of hours to develop the case and then run it and things can fall behind.

The two things we've always done is to push back, tell the manager the scenario that this test case or these test cases are taking much longer. Is there someone else that maybe has time to step in? Sometimes he has people that are freed up and we help each other and in the other way, I would help somebody who's falling behind.

The other thing we've done is to work overtime. That is part of the job, either staying an extra hour or two at night and even working weekends, because deadlines sometimes can't change, because of release deadlines. That is part of my job and I understand that. It's not a problem.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – ALLEN QUICK RATING - D

Your answer is missing the "I " of what you did, tell the story that shows your specific actions when you did face this situation if you're not responding with an example that's a made up, if I had to address this situation.

## What would you do if... Bonnie's Answer



*(Who is Bonnie? Bonnie - CPA with over 6 years experience seeking Accounting Manager position)*

**Terry:** We were talking about creating reports and identifying things people don't need; **tell me about what you would do if you were confronted with a piece of software that you had never seen before or had to work with.**

Occasionally, here at the city, we have software that may not necessarily be the most up to date, but it's what we have to work with and it's what our systems are set around.

What would you do if you had to deal with a piece of software you'd never seen before?

**Bonnie:** Actually, at every job I've had, the software has been new to me. I've had a couple where I've repeated, but a lot of my jobs have been where I had to step in and I didn't know the system.

At XXX, I walked in and I didn't know anything about MIP and in two weeks, I learned it. What I do is if there is a manual, I can look at the manual and I can read the basics.

However, what I've found the best thing for me to do is to just dig in and start using the software and to try and write a report or to try and see how I would post a payable. The way you do things might be different, but the processes are pretty much the same. I worked at a client where I walked in and I'd never used (inaudible).

They did send me to a training session but prior to them sending me I walked in and I was able to use the system just by looking at the modules. Because I've so much experience, I can look at a module or look at a system and figure out how it works. Then maybe I'll stay at night an hour later and just work with the software and go in and look at different modules.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

That's good because then I can just learn the modules by playing around with them. You can read a lot, but until you do hands on you don't really know what you're doing. So, I would step in and try to create some things or do some samples that would teach me how to use the software.

I've used it in two weeks or less. I was given the assignment at All-Timers to upload 42 chapters worth of chartered accounts. Each chapter had two databases and I was told to input that manually.

I had a feeling that there was a way to upload and my co-worker showed me how to use the data porter function. I started using it and got comfortable so I was able to upload - it's basically 86 charts of accounts, which I had to put together and then upload on a chapter-by-chapter basis using a chapter number and account number.

It took me under one week. It probably would've taken me months if I'd done it manually.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – BONNIE QUICK RATING - A

Targeted and relevant and used past to describe steps you would take (have taken) in that situation.

## What would you do if... Margaret's Answer



*(Who is Margaret? Margaret - Senior Level Marketing Communications  
Professional seeking position with University)*

**Terry:** All right. **What would you do if you were in a situation where you needed to supervisor a pretty large pool of people, you know, subcontractors, designers? We have a pretty big operation here and, clearly, it's one thing to do a lot of the work yourself.**

**That takes a particular kind of skill set, but part of the different skill sets is to manage artistic personalities, temperaments, multiple projects and keep things moving. Tell me what you would do if you had a large team that you had to run with multiple documents, reports and things you need to do to make sure were of an appropriate quality and on time.**

**How would you handle that situation?**

**Margaret:** Each publication and project would need to have its own set of deadlines, so each project would have its own Excel spreadsheet with interim deadlines. Then for all the projects, there'd be another Excel spreadsheet that had all the projects on it.

One thing that one has to know in organizing creative people is that they really need a certain amount of time. You can't short trip the amount of time that they're going to need, because their creative process takes a long time. That goes for writers as well as for designers and photographers.

If you don't give them that amount of time they're not going to come up with the product that you expect and they also will get frustrated with the process, so those are important things to keep in mind.

Also, it's important for the administrative assistants to feel very much a part of the project, so I would not exclude them from meetings. I would keep them in the meetings. There has to be a lot of meetings with everyone included for each project.

**Terry:** So you would have meetings for each of the projects?

**Margaret:** Yes. Well, not for each of the projects. Sorry, I misspoke, when you're meeting on several projects. We're all doing several projects at once, so you'd meet with the team working on all of the projects at once, but sometimes there would be separate meetings because not everyone would be involved in every project.

For the Annual Report there'd be Annual Report meetings, for the magazine there'd be magazine meetings and that sort of thing. There would be some crossover, but you can't have everyone involved in every single project, except for the administrative assistant. That person would need to be involved in pretty much every project.

**Here's how I would rate this answer . . .**

What would you do if . . . – MARGARET QUICK RATING - B

Good addressing both the task side and the people side. Question to you: are there any other aspects you'd want to include? Is there an opportunity to organize and list all the factors up front before going into the specifics?



## Conclusion

Congratulations, you have now learned how to respond more effectively to some of the common questions you are likely to get in your interviews.

This guide gave you the essential advice for your success with the classic behavioral interview questions you face when you need to tell interviewers a story. You can now develop better answers for yourself very quickly.

- During fatal interview mistake #5 you discovered how dangerous the word “we” can be, what to do instead and where you can safely include in your stories.
- In fatal interview mistake #7 we discussed the two crucial elements you must include to make your stories come alive with drama and color that engages and keeps your interviewer’s attention and positions you as the match for their needs.
- For the tell me about a time question, you have discovered how to use the movie moments format to set the scene, show you in action and give them a memorable ending.
- For the what would you do if question, you have discovered that the best thing to do is to share an actual example of when you did face that situation. If you haven't, then you'll take them through the key steps you would take.
- For all of those questions, you have also had the chance to review and rate how real people have answered them too.

You now have great ideas on what to say, what not to say and some new inspiration from examples that you can adapt to create your own unique job-winning answers. You have also learned how you can prepare relevant stories in advance so you can adapt them for unexpected questions that may arise.

## Your Next Steps

Beginning with a specific job description or posting (that you're pursuing or would like to pursue) to focus your responses, review their requirements and expectations and:

1. Draft your own unique answers to these classic questions.
2. If you've already been preparing your own answers as you went along, take a fresh look at them and see if you want to make any additional changes.
3. Remember that these questions come in slightly different forms, so also prepare some variations.
4. Say them out loud to check if they sound natural. (Record yourself or ask someone you trust to give you some feedback.)
5. Continue to refine and adjust over time as you identify alternate answers or when a new job pursuit requires a change as prior message no longer appropriate in new context.

## Final Thoughts

Be sure to look at the following **Additional Resources** section. You'll find a few links that I have specially selected for you to be particularly valuable to you now.

You will see new areas that were outside the scope of this guide where we can also help you. You are eligible for those special offers at a greatly discounted rate because you are a client. So don't miss the chance to take advantage of them.

Be sure to register at the <http://jobinterview911.com/> website if you have not already, so we can let you know when we release new tips, tools, resources and special offers to assist you to advance and meet your career goals. Membership is Free.

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE METHOD JOB WINNING SERIES GUIDE #3  
CAN YOU CONVINC ME YOU'RE THE BEST CANDIDATE? OR Tell Me A Story!  
(Behavioral Interview Questions)

---

And be sure to use the [Contact Us](#) feature on the website to share new questions or topics you would like to see us cover in our blog, online trainings or new products and services. We pay attention to every message we receive.

## About the Author



Terry Kozlowski created JobInterview911.com to more widely share her unique interview success strategies with a global audience.

Since 2001 and founding AchieveMentor Group LLC, advisors for career success, she has helped more than 573 people win new jobs and advance in their careers.

She has been seen on TV nationally as a Career Strategist and Interview Expert including NBC and FoxNews, heard on radio stations across country, and contributed to or been profiled in print media including The Wall Street Journal and Chicago Tribune.

Terry is a popular Speaker and Facilitator of dynamic meetings and interactive workshops. She started with a degree in Theater, and then earned multiple promotions in her business career.

Prior, she was a Partner and Global Leader at CSC (Computer Sciences Corporation) Consulting, an internationally recognized technology consulting firm. She has innovated, applied and led best practice organizational change, leadership and employee development approaches that deliver performance and bottom line results in organizations for more than 20 years.

Her clients have included the leaders in commercial, government, nonprofit and health care organizations including the City of Chicago, Kraft Foods, Aon, Chase, Nationwide Insurance, General Motors and many others.

A graduate of Northeastern Illinois University, she has been an instructor and guest speaker in continuing education and degree programs offered through Northwestern University, University of Georgia, National-Louis University, Institute for International Research and the American Management Association.

She holds over 20 additional certifications in employee selection, leadership development, executive coaching and career instruments and approaches including being a Certified Executive Coach, Certified Interview Coach, Certified Job and Career Development and Certified Job and Career Transition Coach.

She also serves in leadership roles in arts and community organization. In 2007 she led a non-profit coalition project for women returning to the workforce with funding from U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau.

Terry combined her love of movies, live theater background and decades of business experience to create her unique Hollywood Movie Method Interview Success System that assists worthy candidates improve their interview performance and so win the job they really want.

For more of Terry's Tips for your career or to contact her, visit <http://jobinterview911.com>

## Additional Resources

You have just completed one of the guides in the Hollywood Movie Method Job Winning Series. Additional Guides that have already been released include:



If you would like to purchase both these guides at a deep discount, then just follow this link: <https://secure.jobinterview911.com/multiple-guide-1-and-2-sales-order-form>

If you would like some additional help and feedback from one of our expert career coaches, this is a special coaching package that will get you **1-on-1 assistance at a 50% discount**. You are eligible for this offer because you are an existing client. Follow this link for full details and to order: <http://jobinterview911.com/special-private-60-minutes/>

For additional 1-on-1 coaching options, to make arrangements to have Terry Kozlowski or our other experts speak to your organization or for additional resources, please visit us at <http://jobinterview911.com>