

**Behavioural
Interview
Questions
&
Sample responses**

For every question please note the responses are just suggestions.

Also, remember the S-A-R (situation-action-result) technique and see a sample S-A-R story.

Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way?

Sample excellent response:

Recently my company asked for bids on a phone system for our new college campus. Two companies came in very close with their bids, and most of my department wanted to go with a vendor that we have used in the past. After I looked over the proposals, it was clear that this was the wrong decision. So, I talked individually with each member of our staff and was able to change their minds and get the best product that would save money and provide the highest quality.

Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.

Sample excellent response:

When I was a resident assistant at my college, a student I did not know asked me if he could use my phone to call another room. Although I did not know the student, I allowed him into my room. He used the phone and in the course of his conversation, he stated that he had just come from a fraternity party and was high from taking some drugs. Well after his conversation, I had to enforce the student conduct code by writing him up. He became very hostile towards me and would not give me any identification or information. I stood in the doorway to prevent him from leaving. I noted the serial numbers on his keys, so when the situation got to the point where I felt unsafe, I allowed him to leave. I still performed my job without jeopardizing my or his physical welfare.

Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.

Sample excellent response:

I had a client come into the bank where I worked and request a \$5,000 personal loan to "pay off some bills." In the customary review process, I determined that what was really needed was a \$25,000 debt-consolidation loan. Rather than giving the customer a "quick-fix" to the problem, I logically solved the problem in a way that was in the best interest of both the bank and the client.

By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.

Sample excellent response:

I've shown my ability to adapt by successfully working in several very different jobs. For example, I lived with a native family in Costa Rica. I worked as a nanny for a famous writer in Cape Cod. I was responsible for dealing with Drug Court participants. And I catered to elite country-club clientele. I did it all well and had no trouble adapting.

Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.

Sample excellent response:

Arriving at the language school I was attending in Costa Rica in the middle of the night with very minimal Spanish-language skills, I found my way to a very small town with no street addresses or names and found my temporary residence. I was scared, but I handled the situation very well, very calmly. In very stressful situations, I am always the one in the group to stay calm and focused. My friends, family, and professors have always said that I am an oasis of calm in a storm.

Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

Sample excellent response:

This happens often in the IT industry, but one recent example was when we had a core backbone switch die. It died at the worst possible time -- during exams -- as they always seem to do, and I needed to get it back up and running quickly. I analyzed the logs and system status, and using my previous experience, I made some quick decisions that rectified the problem and got the equipment back up only minutes later.

Describe a time when you had to use your written communication skills to get an important point across.

Sample excellent response:

As an Administrative Coordinator, I had a staff of 27 students. Having such a large student staff all working different shifts and having varying class schedules meant that meetings could not be held with everyone at one time. I needed to communicate with everyone about important policies and information often, so I came up with the idea of designing a Web page for my staff with written announcements. Each Desk Assistant was required to check the Web page daily at the beginning of his/her shift. I also sent email communications by a distribution list that allowed each Desk Assistant to keep informed about anything. The one situation that stands out in my mind is a last-minute summer camp that decided to come in a day early with only one day's notice. I had no staff scheduled to check in the camps or to organize the keys. I posted an update to the Web page and sent an email. Within four hours, I had the following day completely staffed and desk assistants there to organize room keys for the campers that night.

Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.

Sample excellent response:

When I worked at Home Depot as an assistant manager, I was always looking for way to boost my employees' morale. Unloading trucks is a very routine and physical job and can become very boring and exhausting, so to improve the unloaders' attitude toward their duties and make the best of the situation, I put a radio in the receiving dock. It worked; however, the district manager did not approve of the radio in the workplace even though it did not interfere with any set policy of company objectives. The radio was also out of any areas where customers would hear the music. I did not agree with my DMs decision to remove the radio; however, I understood his point of view once he explained it to me and promptly complied to his request. The employees were not happy that their radio was gone, so I found an alternative method of reward and morale boosting by

implementing a program in which we provided lunch for the unloaders from any restaurant of their choice if they unloaded the trucks faster than normal. This program succeeded by increasing their unloading time from 2 1/2 hours to only 1 1/2, a savings in payroll of 8 percent of sales for that shift.

Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.

Sample excellent response:

As a senior in high school, my goal was to attend college and play college golf. But I was nowhere near the player I needed to be able to play or even get on the team. So over that summer I worked on my golf game to the point where I won almost every tournament I entered. I spent every hour I had during the day to make myself a better all-around player. I eventually walked on my freshmen year and was exempted from qualifying because I played so well in my first outing.

Describe the most significant or creative presentation that you have had to complete.

Sample excellent response:

The most significant presentation I have ever had to present was at a national research symposium. I was presenting research I had completed on digital analysis of mammograms and had to present to a panel of more than 100 judges who were at the top of their field. I focused on the research, which could sell itself, and just let the information flow. It went over very well, and I received many more invitations to present the research, including on national television.

Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Sample excellent response:

Although I had already punched out, I stayed behind to help a colleague solve a problem. A customer was very angry as he had waited very long for his coffee. My colleague was new, she was quite slow. I came out and explained things to the customer. Although he was very angry at first, I just listened to him and told him that we try to bring our best out to each customer who walks in to our store. After a one-hour discussion, he left with a happy face and was satisfied. [Submitted by "Fizah."]

Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).

Sample excellent response:

During my time in the theater, I had one director with whom I absolutely did not work well. However, because of my track record, she would assign me as stage director and/or assistant director. I was usually involved in the day-to-day operations of the play and the details of how the play would be performed. I handled the operation for the play by directing scenes the best way I could and then showing them to her for approval. If she did not like the way a scene worked, I gave her my opinion as to why it should be my way. If we still could not compromise, I would follow her directions to the best of my ability. Understanding that people don't usually have malicious intentions

is key, and understanding that you will never be able to convince some people that your way is right is the best way to avoid conflict and still get the job done.

Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head." Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.

Sample excellent response:

It's impossible to know everything in the IT field because of rapidly changing technology, so recently when we were having troubles with our circuit emulation over our ATM network, I had to call in some engineers from North Carolina to come help me out. The nice thing about asking for help is that when you get the assistance, you can learn from what you are told and apply it to future situations.

Give an example of how you applied knowledge from previous coursework to a project in another class.

Sample excellent response:

Last semester I was taking a microeconomics and a statistics course. One of the microeconomics projects dealt with showing the relationship between the probability that customers would stop buying a product if the price was raised a certain amount. Through what I learned in statistics I could find the median where the price was the highest and still kept most of the customers happy.

Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

Sample excellent response:

I was on a project team in a business class in my freshman year in college, the group brainstormed ideas for the video we were assigned to produce, and everyone but me was leaning toward an idea that would be easy. I suggested instead an idea that would be more difficult but would be something different that no other group would be doing. I used my communications skills to persuade the rest of the group to use my idea. During the project, we really learned what teamwork was all about, became a close team, and ended up putting a lot of hard work into the project. All the team members ended up feeling very proud of the video, and they thanked me for the idea -- for which we earned an A.

Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your professor's or supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?

Sample excellent response:

Recently I was asked to put together a proposal for a migration of network systems. Misunderstanding my boss, I thought it was just an informal paper. When I presented it to him days later, he was upset with the quality since it had to be presented to our VP. I explained my misunderstanding, apologized, reworked the paper, and had it back to him with enough time for him to review it before he presented it successfully at the meeting.

Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his or her share of the work. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it? Did the manager take any steps to correct your colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager's actions?

Sample excellent response:

During a group project in college, we had one member who would do no work whatsoever. The project was to compare and contrast four companies in a single industry, so his work was vital. We first discussed the situation and asked for the bare-bones minimum of what we needed from him. We got just below that. As a result we as a group went to the professor and told her our situation -- not expecting or requesting action -- just informing her the situation we were dealing with. Then we as a group split up the non-contributor's work, and completed our work collectively on his share. In phase two in which we analyzed the information and reported how each of our companies fared compared to the others, we did not get a paper from the group member. As a result, we told the professor that we had our work done, and were willing to do the extra paper but that we would rather spend time polishing our own work, and not picking up slack. She agreed and said to focus on the three companies we had compiled the most info on while not entirely neglecting the fourth. The papers came out very well, but were understandably weak when comparing the fourth company. The professor understood, and we received the grades we deserved. I was pleased with our teamwork and the way we handled the situation.

Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.

Sample excellent response:

My first semester in college, I was a political-science major. My introductory government class professor had a differing political view than I. We disagreed on everything, and many classes were filled with criticizing each others' view. However, on one test I answered a question with the view I believe in, and she marked it wrong. So I asked her how an opinion can be wrong, and she said because her opinion is the way she taught it in class. I pointed out that my answer showed I understood the concepts of the question. She agreed, and I also agreed not be so combative in answers on tests. Compromise is the key to problem resolution.

What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision.

Sample excellent response:

Following standard models for problem-solving and decision-making can be very helpful. Here are the steps and how they helped me solve a problem with a group project:

1. Define the problem to be solved and decision to be made. For a project in an introductory management class the assignment was to report on the corporate structure and financial situation of a couple of companies. The decision to be made was what companies to profile and how to present the information.
2. Gather the necessary information. Some group members wanted to report on automakers, while others wanted to do electronics firms. We gathered information on both types of company.
3. List all possible choices. We made lists of companies in both categories.
4. Consider possible outcomes for each choice. We decided that a report about car companies could have a positive outcome, but one about electronics firms might be more futuristic with high-tech products such as HDTV, video game consoles, and DVD players.
5. Check out how you feel about each of the choices. Given that this was a group project, we had to

- consider the feelings of all group members.
6. Relate the choices to your values and priorities. Again, all group members weighed in on their values and priorities.
 7. From the possible alternatives, choose one. We decided that we'd do electronics companies because we could bring in products from each company and show what lies ahead.
 8. Commit yourself to your chosen decision and disregard the others. Concentrate your energies in one direction. Once we made our decision, we focused all our work on electronics forms.
 9. Take steps to turn your decision into positive action. All group members got interested in how the companies were doing.
 10. Evaluate your progress from time to time. Change your decision if necessary. We were pleased with our progress and didn't feel a need to change our decision. We got an A on the project.

We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.

Sample excellent response:

When I worked in a large retail store, the standard procedure was to leave a product on the shelf until it ran out, then place more items out. This practice obviously wasted a lot of man-hours. Of interest particularly to me were the air conditioners. Not only did I have to put the heavy thing on the shelves, but they were selling at a very high rate. So if somehow AC units ran out on a day in which I could not restock them, they would not be available to customers. As a result I started making a list of products (including the AC units) that the overnight stock people could put on the shelves. As a result, the people on duty always had a job to do, so labor hours were not wasted, and the shelves were always stocked full of product.

In a supervisory or group leader role, have you ever had to discipline or counsel an employee or group member? What was the nature of the discipline? What steps did you take? How did that make you feel? How did you prepare yourself?

Sample excellent response:

As president of a community-service organization, I was faced with a board member not carrying out his duties as management development vice president. I consulted with him as to what we could do together to fix the problem. We agreed that he really couldn't devote the time that it took to carry out certain projects, and he ended up resigning his position, but he also stated he would help his replacement in whatever capacity he could. It made me feel as though we had come to the conclusion together, rather than him thinking I was criticizing his performance, which was not the case. I had a plan of action and carried it out successfully.

Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?

Sample excellent response:

My supervisor was absent once when I was in charge of a soccer game. An actual assault took place at the game. A player hit the referee. With no supervisor to turn to, I immediately called the police, who quickly restored order to the situation. I felt I made an effective decision.

Recall a time when you were assigned what you considered to be a complex project. Specifically, what steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What one step would you have done differently if given the chance?

Sample excellent response:

I had to give a marketing presentation while attending community college. The project was about Anheuser-Busch. We were assigned to report on key management personnel (CEO, Chairman of the Board, President, key VPs), divisions and subsidiaries, major products/brands/services, key financials for the most recent year (sales revenue, expenses, total income, net income, sales growth or loss for the last year), market share, key competitors, mission statement, product positioning, and number of employees. Among the steps I took were visiting the company's Miami branch to interview employees and gather visual aids for the project. I spent a lot of time organizing and writing the presentation. Then I spent time reviewing my speech over a period of several days. As a result I was calm while giving the presentation and received an "A" for the project. The one additional step I perhaps wish I'd taken would have been to talk to some consumers and store owners about the product.

What was the most complex assignment you have had? What was your role?

Sample excellent response:

My senior research was my most complex assignment. It took two semesters to complete and was made up of many components. I had to make many critical decisions along the way that would affect the outcome of my research. I made these decisions independently with minimal influence from my professor. I was very successful and happy with my final product.

How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular problems?

Sample excellent response:

The transition was somewhat challenging for me because I traveled a great distance to attend college. To help myself adapt, I got involved with as many organizations as I could. I also made it a point to get to know my professors. I used my interpersonal and communication skills to the best of my ability to make a lot of friends, and college became one of the best experiences of my life despite a beginning that seemed a bit overwhelming.

Tell of some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?

Sample excellent response:

The bank in which I worked instituted a policy that centralized the lending process. An application was to be taken from the client and sent off to be approved/declined, processed, prepared, and returned to the branch to be signed by the client. While the process was streamlined, it also took away valuable face-to-face knowledge about the client and the loan. If the employee did not have any prior lending experience, he or she couldn't answer simple loan questions from the client. While I appreciated the newly created time on my schedule, I felt that the clients were being slighted. I did adjust quickly to the new procedure and did my best to help those around me by sharing my knowledge.

Compare and contrast the times when you did work which was above the standard with times your work was below the standard.

Sample excellent response:

I was involved in two group projects in a psychology class. In the first, we had to decide on a research experiment to conduct and gather results from it. The group I was in was not very motivated, and the members wanted to do a simplistic comparison on color preferences of men and women. I felt that project was below the standard I was capable of. For the second project, I proposed a study in which we compared how people of different age ranges valued money. I knew the project would go over well with the teacher and would not be difficult to conduct. I proposed the idea in a way that sounded fun. Instead of collecting data in someplace boring, I suggested we could go to the mall. The group agreed and worked relatively well on the project. Discussion is the key to mediation, and the key to my achieving a second project that I felt was above the standard.

Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

Sample excellent response:

I failed my first business calculus test, which made me very unhappy. I wasn't going to let this incident set the trend for the rest of the semester. I went to my counselor and arranged to meet with a tutor once a week. My tutor helped me out incredibly. My grades soon improved, and I went on to redeem myself from my one slip-up on the first test.

What are your standards of success in school? What have you done to meet these standards?

Sample excellent response:

I don't believe in trying to get by with the least possible effort, and I am always willing to ask questions to learn how to perform an assignment successfully. In my human-resources management class, for example, we were assigned a paper on "Why corporate culture is a practical way to increase income and productivity." All of the literature on the subject was written in the language of PhDs. I asked some other students what they were doing, and they said just writing their opinions and not doing any research to back up the claims. I felt I could do better. So I worked closely with my professor, who "translated" the academic literature for me, and over time I understood what was being written. Working with the professor's guidance, I turned in a very good paper. Asking questions is one thing I am not afraid to do and realize that without them I will be turning in work that is not as beneficial as it could be.

How have you differed from your professors in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?

Sample excellent response:

After I wrote a paper for an English class, my professor told me that I was not doing the paper in the proper format or with the proper content. I went to him and asked if he would help me learn the correct way so that I could succeed with the paper. He did help me, and I ended up doing well in the course.

Give examples of your experiences at school or in a job that were satisfying. Give examples of your experiences that were dissatisfying.

Sample excellent response:

I turned a dissatisfying experience into a satisfying one when I was on the crosscountry team in college and had never run the whole race in under 30 minutes. With only a month left in the season, I decided that I would run the race in 25 minutes. I ran every day to build up my stamina, and in that last race I achieved my goal time of 25 minutes, which was a very satisfying experience.

What kind of supervisor do you work best for? Provide examples.

Sample excellent response:

I like to work for a supervisor who allows me the autonomy to perform my job to the best of my abilities. I also like constructive criticism and feedback so I can improve myself and the organization. One example was my boss at a university. He hired me as an administrative coordinator because of my administrative and organizational skills. He knew that I had many new ideas and allowed me the opportunity to implement many new programs. Of course, I kept him constantly informed and sought advice when needed. I improved communications in the department by implementing a departmental Web page. I also streamlined the check-in process by preparing the amount of work that could be done the day before. I improved staff morale by implementing a desk-assistant-of-the-month, which led to lower turnover. These are just a few examples. I was given the Recognizing Outstanding Student Employees Award for my efforts and unique ideas. I gained not only my boss's confidence and support but his respect as well.

Describe some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were implemented, or carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.

Sample excellent response:

I had been recently given the duty of being the head swim team coach for the YMCA I was employed with. A swim meet was just around the corner, but only five swimmers had enrolled for the program, none of whom had ever been a part of an organized team. Funding would be cut for the team if more interest could not be generated. So I decided that I would take action and actively recruit people to join. Not only did I have to run the practices and correct any technical mistakes the swimmers were making, but I had to contact other local swim teams to invite them to join the meet. I had to meet with the parents and the children separately and organize a way to help pay for t-shirts, swimsuits, goggles, and swim caps. By the third week of the program, I had gained 15 more swimmers and every single one had beat his or her own time in practice. When the meet came, I organized the events, ordered ribbons, and recruited volunteers. At the end of the meet, my team had come in first place among four other teams. The parents were delighted, and the profits from the swim team had skyrocketed to the approval of the board of directors.

Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?

Sample excellent response:

In my current job, I have to handle multiple responsibilities in developing new projects, maintaining existing ones, and maintaining good client relations. I allocate a certain amount of time for each area daily. That way clients can see very clearly that projects are progressing, and I have more satisfaction in accomplishing multiple tasks under pressure.

Have you found any ways to make school or a job easier or more rewarding or to make yourself more effective?

Sample excellent response:

I find that taking a proactive mindset to recognizing and solving problems before they happen make any job more rewarding. It not only saves time and effort but gives me a sense of accomplishment and ownership in my job. I demonstrated my proactiveness when I worked with Food Lion. As a bookkeeper, I was responsible for the offices. The safe was kept outside of the office in front of the cash registers, where anyone could get inside of it if I or another office associate had it open to drop a deposit or get money in and out. I realized that the situation was a security hazard. Although we could not move the safe to the inside of the office where it was more secure, I ordered a time lock compartment and had it installed, and the safe could be opened only at a specific time when the store closed each day. Only money could be dropped through a slot in the compartment door. We kept large sums of money in that compartment. We kept operating cash on hand since we needed some excess money to perform daily functions. One month after I left that store to attend college, I learned that it was robbed. Because of my efforts and foresight, the robbers only got a small amount of cash. My previous supervisor thanked me for my efforts, which gave me a great feeling, and I carried this proactive mindset to my other jobs thereafter.

How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.

Sample excellent response:

I took a time-management course in which I learned to prioritize all tasks on A, B, or C lists. I always try to tackle the A list first. In every working situation, coworkers have always complimented me on how well I manage my time. I enjoy the social atmosphere of the office, but I make it a point not to waste much time on chitchat with colleagues. I've also learned that the average office worker spends about an hour a day handling e-mail. I make it a point not to deal with my e-mail more than once or twice a day, and I filter my messages into folders so I can prioritize the way I deal with them.

Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you -maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.

Sample excellent response:

When I presented my senior research in college, I was questioned by the members of my major department as a "panel." My grade was determined largely on my ability to answer the questions effectively and smoothly, which depended very much on my ability to listen carefully to what was being asked. I had seen other students slip up when they misunderstood what the panel was asking because they didn't listen well enough. I succeeded in listening well and did well on my presentation.

What has been your experience in giving presentations? What has been your most successful experience in speech making?

Sample excellent response:

I have grown to be a confident presenter. My most successful presentation took place at my university when I was responsible for presenting a leadership development program for a class of Resident Assistants. The point of my program was to teach each RA his/her leadership style, so he/she knew how to interact on his/her floor as a student leader. The most significant aspect of this program is that it taught them about their leadership styles without their knowing it. Each student filled out a general questionnaire that asked about preferences. Each person according to his/her responses were assigned to a group with a general name. I then gave each group a book to read. Each group had to read it aloud. After each group read each book, I then explained how each group tackled the task. They all had handled the task differently. Each student successfully understood how they approached tasks and from that how they would approach their job as an RA. Not only did I engage the audience in what was being presented, I have since seen the program adapted in other presentations by RAs in that class. Not only did they enjoy it, they learned something about themselves that would help them help their residents.

Tell of the most difficult customer service experience that you have ever had to handle -- perhaps an angry or irate customer. Be specific and tell what you did and what was the outcome.

Sample excellent response:

I was making business phone calls behind the membership office at the YMCA when an angry man came up to the counter demanding a refund. He began yelling at the membership workers and complaining about the swimming program, saying that it was a rip-off. The other workers were flustered, and even though membership services were not my department, I calmly asked the man what was wrong. He said that his son had been in swimming lessons for four weeks and was still afraid of the water. Instead of instantly giving him the refund, I offered to personally give his son private swim lessons for a week, explaining to him that sometimes children react differently to each instructor's teaching techniques. He finally agreed to accept without the refund. After a week of private lessons, his son was no longer afraid of the water and he could swim nearly a lap of the pool. At the end of the lessons, not only did he sign his child up for another paid session of private lessons, but he bought a family membership and apologized to me for his behavior the week before.

Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle that person?

Sample excellent response:

As a Resident Advisor, I had another RA who often sought me as a person to confide her complaints to and shared quite a bit of information about activities she'd engaged in that violated the rules. Although I did not mind being a resource for this person, I knew that I could not compromise my integrity or her residents' safety. Although she became very outraged and angry with me, I talked to her about the situation and told her that I would have to tell my supervisor. She eventually understood my responsibility and why I had to come forward with information. She knew that what she had done was against the rules, but never realized before I talked to her that she had jeopardized her residents' safety.

Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?

Sample excellent response:

When I first began working at the YMCA, I was the youngest member of the staff. An older woman really "knew the ropes" of the place. When I first got there she barely acknowledged my presence, and through word of mouth I discovered that she thought that I was too young to successfully fulfill my duties because I was so inexperienced. She assumed I was immature. I did my job and took every opportunity to make a good impression. I was a very diligent worker and behaved in a highly professional manner at all times, learning quickly the best way to do things. After about two weeks of the silent treatment from her, she came up to me and told me how impressed she was with me. She told me that I had done an excellent job and was the fastest learner that she had ever seen. She apologized to me for ignoring me and took me under her wing and shared what she knew with me.

Give me a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others,

Sample excellent response:

When I was coaching my swim team at their first swim meet, the swimmers on my team were intimidated by the other team because they were bigger and obviously more experienced. The other team members looked like pros in their matching swimsuits, unlike my swimmers' mismatched suits. I encouraged them and told them that they had practiced for so long and so hard that they deserved just as much respect as those other teams. I told them that it didn't matter whether we had matching swimsuits or not and that I would stand behind them 100 percent no matter what. They were so excited and pumped after my speech. They cheered each other on, and not only did every child break his or her own record, but my team won first place in the meet among four other teams that had been together for a much longer time.

Tell me about a difficult situation when it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude. What did you do?

Sample excellent response:

While directing a play, I was faced with numerous problems. The sets were not coming together; the performers were fighting and not working hard; the technical aspects of the play were far from complete, and in general it was a mess. I was the "stage manager," which means that I tell people when to go on stage and tell the crew when to bring pieces of the set on stage. So I organized everything and told people to do specific jobs and asked them in a firm yet positive manner. People began to have fun, and the production went on extremely well (all performances sold out). The play was regarded as one of the smoothest shows to have been produced by the group.

Give me an example of a time you had to make an important decision. How did you make the decision? How does it affect you today?

Sample excellent response:

My sophomore year was about to begin and I had to decide on a major. I could not waste any more credits figuring out what I was interested in. I took some personality and career assessments to get

a better handle on my interests, skills, and values. I talked to faculty in several departments to decide which faculty members I was most comfortable with. I studied the course offerings to see which courses appealed to me the most. I decided on communications studies and feel it is the best decision I ever could have made.

Give me an example of a time you had to persuade other people to take action. Were you successful?

Sample excellent response:

I was the leader of my macroeconomics group in college. As leader, I had to delegate parts of the assignment to other group members. Not only did I do a written part for each paper, but I gathered all of the props we needed for our oral presentation, and I typed all of the five papers assigned. I was also taking four other classes at the time. By the fourth paper, I decided to persuade some of the other group members to edit and finalize it. I learned a lot about delegation and leadership when I discovered that they were happy to help out.

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation?

Sample excellent response:

I have participated in several groups throughout my academic career. Recently, I had to work with a group in my statistics class and I had some personality clashes with one of the group members. However, I realized the importance of completing the assignment in a prompt and efficient manner. I made it a point to put my differences aside and complete my part, along with offering assistance to the other group members. As a result, we finished our assignment without any conflict.

Tell me about a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize the work you needed to do?

Sample excellent response:

While attending college, I also worked at a law firm. I was successful because I practiced good time-management skills and I made a to-do list every day. As I completed each task, I checked it off the list. It is funny how something so simple can keep you so organized. As a result of my to-do lists, I was able to visualize my daily progress.

Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision, but didn't have all the information you needed.

Sample excellent response:

I had to make a decision recently between two configurations on one of our routers. Time was quickly moving away from me, and I had to have all the equipment back up in a matter of minutes. I chose the configuration that I had the most data on because I knew at least that I could better troubleshoot it if there was a problem. My decision was the right one.

What suggestions do you have for our organization?

Sample excellent response:

After examining several sources, including your company's annual report and Web site, as well as some of your competitors' sources, I see that you have a strong product line with good demographic segments, in a growing industry. I did notice that your competitors seem to direct more of their efforts to the baby boom market, and while that is certainly a large market for your products, I think you have a great opportunity to expand your target market and increase your market share by marketing your product line to the Baby Boomers' kids -- Generation Y. These teens and preteens are extremely brand conscious and have a high discretionary income -- and you are in a great position to attract them to your product and build a very large core of brand loyal consumers on top of your existing customer base.

What is the most significant contribution you made to the company during a past job or internship?

Sample excellent response:

My organization was undergoing an accreditation process. I developed two detailed accreditation self-evaluation reports that documented how the organization met accreditation standards. These self-evaluations served as basis for accreditation site visits and enabled all eligible programs to be accredited in record time.

What is the biggest mistake you've made?

Sample excellent response:

The biggest mistake in my life that I have made is taking for granted the sacrifices my parents endured for me. I look back and realize that everything they did for me was so that I could succeed in life. I am thankful now and do everything to my best ability to make them proud because I am so thankful that they have been there for me so that I can give back to society and to my job the opportunities that they never had.

Describe a situation in which you had to use reference materials to write a research paper. What was the topic? What journals did you read?

Sample excellent response:

In my academic career I have had to write several research papers. The most recent one I wrote was on whether zero-tolerance policies about drugs and weapons in high schools are reasonable. To answer this question, I went to several high schools and interviewed their principal or top-level employees. I also interviewed students and parents. I visited the Health Department to gather data. Finally, I conducted the remainder of my research on the Internet. As a result, I was able to get perspective from every group this topic would effect.

Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker or classmate criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others?

Sample excellent response:

Another manager became upset with me since some projects were not being completed. Without discussing the situation with me first, she criticized me in front of one of the employees I directly supervised. I was upset that she made me look bad in front of my workers, but I remained calm and asked her to step into the office so that we could talk about it in more detail. We discussed the problem, and she learned that the non-completion of the tasks was not my fault. Another manager did not receive his instructions telling him the tasks he needed to complete. After that I learned not to jump to conclusions when dealing with others that I work and that sometimes a miscommunication can lead to a much larger problem. I've learned to get the complete facts.

Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor or professor on an idea or concept. How did you proceed? What was the result?

Sample excellent response:

Last summer, I wanted to help organize a summer camp for local low-income children. My supervisor knew the demand would be there but feared we would not have enough staff. I convinced her that since I went to the facility daily, I could network with acquaintances and convince them of the importance of this camp. My supervisor trusted me. We had hundreds of children sign up for the program, and I had reached so many people that we were able fully staff the camp, as well as have a backup supply of people who were willing to volunteer their time and services to the organization.

Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? How do you stay focused?

Sample excellent response:

I keep an electronic hand-held organizer that I synchronize with a schedule on my computer. I keep track of each task in order of priority and due date. I use an electronic organizer because it is very portable and has an alarm to remind me of about what is due so I don't have to waste time by looking at my organizer every hour. I start with the projects with the closest due date and the highest priority. I take these tasks and then schedule times in my calendar for me to work on them to ensure I meet deadlines. I stay focused by going over my organizer each night before bed so I know immediately what I have accomplished and where I need to start the next day. Here let me show you...

Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your company/class/organization was facing. What was the challenge? What role did others play?

Sample excellent response:

The trucks at Wal-Mart come loaded by personnel at by a distribution center, box-by-box. After receiving a few trucks, I noticed that my employees were unloading broken merchandise that took a lot of time to clean up before the rest of the truck could be finished. The broken glass, paint, or

whatever material it was prevented the employees from preceding farther into the truck, causing more person-hours than normal. I noticed that the merchandise was broken because heavier boxes were on top of lighter boxes. After a couple of days of this situation, productivity decreasing, I learned that the rest of the stores in my district faced the same problem. As a result, I asked each store to take pictures of the mess so the distribution centers could see exactly what was happening. I also asked each one to write down how many additional person-hours it took to clean up the mess. After we gathered this information for a four-week period, we had a pretty a good estimate of how much the company was losing, approximately \$9.50 per person-hour...an average of \$125 per store times 15 stores times 30 nights a month amounted to a substantial sum. We took the information as a group to our district manager. Once he realized how much money his district was losing each month because of broken merchandise in the trucks, he contacted his regional manager, and the trucks after that were loaded more carefully. The district made our Profit and Loss the next month by a 9 percent increase.

Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer or professor. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?

Sample excellent response:

When I was working as a receptionist at an apartment complex, a tenant argued that he had turned in his rent payment the day it was due. He stated that he had slipped it under the door because our office was closed for the day. I decided to consult my manager because I realized that maybe the office needed a sign that stated that we did not accept rent money that is slipped under the door. My boss agreed, and we posted the sign. We never again had a problem with tenants who claimed they'd paid their rent that way.

Describe a time when you got co-workers or classmates who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome?

Sample excellent response:

When I worked for a law firm, my co-workers and I had a huge mailing to complete. We had the choice of working more efficiently as a team -- or individually in a much more time-consuming manner. My two co-workers did not care for each other and they wanted to complete the mail-out on an individual level. When I presented them with the evidence that we would finish at least an hour earlier by working together, they decided that working together was the right path to take. As a result, we finished the mail-out in a short period of time and could work on other tasks that day.

Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?

Sample excellent response:

I recently failed to meet a deadline in my communications course with a project I had to do on the Internet. I did not meet the deadline because I underestimated the amount of time the assignment would take me to complete. Therefore, the assignment was incomplete when I turned it in. As a result I lost points on my final grade. I learned the importance of examining tasks more carefully so I can better estimate the amount of time required to complete them. I also learned to build some flex time into projects so that if my estimates are wrong, I'll still have time to complete the tasks.

Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker or classmate understand a task. How did you assist him or her? What was the result?

Sample excellent response:

I was studying right before a major finance test. As the class came into the classroom a couple of students indicated that did not understand a concept that I did. Although there was a small section of material that I had not completely mastered, I realized that I knew enough about that section that I could perform well enough to earn a good grade. I knew that the section that the other students did not understand was a major portion of the exam since the professor had an interest in this particular subject. I stopped what I was doing to explain to the small group about the Multiplier Effect of Bank Reserves on the overall supply of money. Those students learned enough from what I taught them that they did well on the exam. I missed a few points on the section of material that I had not mastered, but I did well enough to get an A, and the satisfaction I got from teaching others the concept made me feel proud.

Give two examples of things you've done in previous jobs or school that demonstrate your willingness to work hard.

Sample excellent response:

The day we had inventory at Best Buy, I worked a 13-hour day. I did this because I knew we were understaffed and that a lot of the lower-level employees who would be working with the inventory team were very nervous about being in charge of the inventory when many of them had never done it before. Conveniently, I used to work for the inventory company that was handling our store, so I still had a fairly deep understanding of their processes and methods. I typically work 8-9 hour shifts, but I stayed longer after my shift to ensure that our lower-level employees felt comfortable and that the inventory got started on time and that it took off in the right direction. I met with a few of the lower-level employees, and I told them a few tips on how to solve problems they may encounter, and it worked; they all seemed to feel a little more comfortable. Then I walked the store and made sure that it was presentable for our guests and in case we got a surprise visit from headquarters. I couldn't stay for the inventory myself because I had class in the morning, and it would've put me over my 40 hours for the week, but I was glad I could stay long enough to make everyone feel a little more comfortable, and that I had time to make them all feel appreciated.

Another example of something that merited a lot of effort on my behalf was my marketing research paper. I enjoy group projects because I enjoy learning about the perspectives of others; however, sometimes the burdens appear to outweigh the benefits. Having a group project such as this one with 5-6 team members was a difficult task when most of us had school and jobs to juggle. We created an online survey and sent it to everyone on our contact list. We were doing research for a museum, and they had a contact list of award-winning artists whose perspectives they wanted us to use in our project. Anyone whose email didn't work or who didn't fill out the survey we tried to contact over the phone. Then we ran all of that data through SPSS and started to create our paper -- in completion our paper was 120 pages. The project was an amazing experience and I am so proud to say I've done it, I love having the opportunity to talk about what I have accomplished, but it merited a great deal of effort and a lot of learning along the way. My group was good; they were a solid group of people who were smart and willing to put in the time, and we got the highest grade in the class. *[contributed by Cynthia Buenger]*

Describe the last time that you undertook a project that demanded a lot of initiative.

Sample excellent response:

During my internship with World Market, we were asked to pick an area or a problem and create a way to improve World Market process. I noticed that our food vendors were not really pulling their weight -- with the economic downturn and the price of gas especially, our sales are down right now, which often means decreased payroll -- so at this juncture it was critical that our vendors perform up to par so we don't have to waste our payroll hours doing their work. Initially I just wanted to change our vendor survey. The survey had 4 questions for each vendor, who got rated green (good) or red (bad) on each question -- that was it. So I turned it into 10 questions that each fell under the categories of one of the initial 4 questions. I also changed the rating scale to a 1-5 scale, 1-2 were red, 3-4 were yellow, and 5 was green. I did a Likert scale rather than a simple red, yellow, green concept because I wanted to be better able to track improvement. This didn't seem like enough to me; I decided there were so many other ways I could tweak the process. So then I created a new vendor scorecard (their feedback -- this shows them their weekly ratings in each area) and a new Vendor notes card (this is where any comments go and shows them any specific dates we had problems with their products, like spoiled milk, for example). I also created a new vendor expectations guide that was a little more professional and attuned to be consistent with the changes I made to the survey. Finally I created an idea for development, putting the survey on a hand-held scanning device so the Team Leader in charge of that area of the store could take the scanner around with her as she did the survey, increasing its accuracy. The survey would also show the vendors' scorecard history (last month, quarterly average, biannual average, and annual average) so we could determine whether or not the vendor was improving. *[contributed by Cynthia Buenger]*

What is the most competitive work or school situation you have experienced? How did you handle it? What was the result?

Sample excellent response:

I worked at a retail store, where we had a competition to win an extra discount at the store. Our task was to get more credit-card applications than any other employee. I handled this task by presenting the customer with the benefits of signing up for the credit card and taking the time to explain to them what exactly they were getting into. This seemed to be a great way to deal with this task because people appreciated the honesty and were happy to get the card because of the benefits. I did very well with this task and ended up winning the contest. *[contributed by Kell]*

Describe a project or situation that best demonstrates your analytical abilities.

Sample excellent response:

During my Marketing Research course, we were assigned a group project to do marketing research for a local business. After we collected all of the data, we had to analyze the data in a meaningful way for the business and report the results. It turned out that I had the strongest analytical abilities in the group, so I led the rest of the group in analyzing the data. Because of my analytical skills, we found that the business had been targeting the wrong market all along and were able to show the owner the market segment that the business should be targeting. *[contributed by M. Kearney]*

Give an example of when you took a risk to achieve a goal. What was the outcome?

Sample excellent response:

When I decided to study abroad in the spring of 2007, I had to weigh the pros and cons of the decision. People who study abroad typically get worse grades abroad than at home because of the educational and cultural differences, so I had to consider the risk to my GPA. I also had to consider how expensive it would be to live abroad without being allowed to have a job, so there was a financial risk as well. On top of this, when studying abroad at this particular university, because of the difference in education, I was allowed to take only 3 courses, which was significant to me because I already was on a strict schedule from switching majors so late in my college career. So I also had to consider the risk of cramming my schedule with difficult classes in my senior year. But I knew that this was going to be a life-changing experience that I may never get to participate in again. So I took the risk and studied abroad. Now, I have that experience, and it has made me a better candidate for places in my career. It shows that I can overcome great challenges and have been immersed into foreign culture, which is important in my career in the art industry.

[contributed by M. Kearney]

Tell about a time when you built rapport quickly with someone under difficult conditions.

Sample excellent response:

While managing a high-end mall jewelry store in which the clientele are usually quite well-mannered and soft-spoken, I returned from a lunch break to find one of our newer sales associates struggling with an irate and somewhat irrational customer. Voices were escalating, with the customer spewing negative comments that could be heard from within the mall. While maintaining good relationships with our customers is a hallmark of our company, this particular situation was not ordinary by any means. I could tell the sales associate was in over his head with this encounter, so I quickly walked into the conversation-argument -- and proceeded to ask the customer several key questions so that I could both calm her down while also discovering more about her situation so that I could then defuse the confrontation and restore order in the store. In the process of talking with her, I found we had a common love of dogs and were able to talk about our dogs -- sharing some funny stories -- before getting back to her specific problem with the store. In the end, it turns out the company that handles our credit card had been double-billing her account, and I was able to make a phone call and solve her problem.

Some people consider themselves to be "big picture people" and others are detail oriented. Which are you? Give an example that illustrates your preference.

Sample excellent response:

I believe that to be successful, you have to be both a big-picture person and detail oriented. You can't get caught up in just the details or you will lose sight of the long-term goals. And you can't get caught up in just looking at the big picture, or you will fail because of the lack of detail. As the group leader of a project for my marketing class, I definitely had to be both a big-picture person and detail oriented. I had to make sure that everyone was doing their part and working toward the goal of the project while, at the same time, checking every piece of the paper to make sure even the minuscule parts of the paper were correct and in place. Through using both skills, we earned an A on the project. *[contributed by M. Kearney]*

Describe a situation where you felt you had not communicated well. How did you correct the situation?

Sample excellent response:

Recently I had a situation where I was giving a presentation to a company and one of the upper managers had to step out during my presentation. He returned after I was done and was taking down my setup, and he asked if he could ask a question, I jokingly replied "no more questions" and then offered, "yes, of course, I would be happy to answer a question for you." Despite the fact that he had laughed at my initial joke, it was clear to me that it had not been received well. I then made certain that I went up to him and apologized and made it clear that I meant no disrespect and that sometimes I just become comfortable with people very quickly. He told me that I needed to be aware of my audience. This is something I have always known, but I believe the sting of this specific event has really brought it to light for me. *[contributed by Cynthia Buenger]*

Describe a time when you took personal accountability for a conflict and initiated contact with the individual(s) involved to explain your actions.

Sample excellent response:

As a member of the executive board of my fraternity, I was involved in decisions with where to do our community-service projects at times. At one point, the community-service chairman asked me where I thought he should make the next event. I told him we should do an event at the Boys and Girls Club. Some fraternity members complained to the community-service chairman for the decision because they wanted an easier event. I took responsibility for the choice and spoke to the individuals about my reasoning. I told them that I felt the event would make more of a difference in the community than cleaning up a road as we usually do since it would allow us to be mentors to troubled youth as well as provide them with a cleaner building to use. It was better than simply doing manual labor and ended up being a successful event that everyone plans on doing again in the future. *[contributed by M. Keamey]*

Give me an example of when you were able to meet the personal and professional (or academic) demands in your life yet still maintained a healthy balance.

Sample excellent response:

My sophomore summer I studied abroad in Europe for six weeks with a program through my university. We were in Innsbruck, Austria, and I loved everything about the town and its surroundings, as well as every place I traveled to on the weekends. There was always something to see or do that was more fun and exciting than class, but I also knew that I couldn't make bad grades that would lower my GPA. To get the most time out of my weekend travels and weekdays in Innsbruck, I always did homework on the train on the weekends and for a few hours every day after class. I ended my summer abroad with many new friends, good grades, and great stories to tell of the cities I saw and adventures I went on. *[contributed by Carly Watson]*

Everyone has made some poor decisions or has done something that just did not turn out right. Give an example of when this has happened to you.

Sample excellent response:

In my freshman psychology class, we had to do a group project and presentation, and we got to pick our group members. I was a freshman, and inexperienced with group projects, so I picked two of my friends, even though I knew that they were not hard workers and didn't care about their grades. At the time, I didn't care that they weren't good students, I just wanted to be comfortable with the people I was working with. I ended up doing most of the project very last minute and by myself because I couldn't get them to work on it with me. The project and presentation were both really bad, and all three of our final grades were almost 10 points lower because of it. Needless to say, I never picked a friend as a group member, again, unless I knew they were diligent in school. I learned to be more strategic about team members and also how to motivate people who are not as enthusiastic as I am. *[contributed by Carly Watson]*

What do you do when you are faced with an obstacle to an important project? Give an example.

Sample excellent response:

When faced with an obstacle to an important project, I always find a way to complete the project in the best manner possible. As an intern at the insurance company I worked for last summer, I was responsible for designing the marketing materials that are handed out at the conventions and to insurance agents to keep the company on top of their minds. Since I was unfamiliar with the materials and the designing software, it took me a little while to get a grasp on it. By the end of the workday on the deadline, I did not have all of the materials completed. So I spoke to my supervisor and tried to work something out. She told me that I was not allowed to do more than a certain number of hours in a week and that the materials needed to be done to turn in to production early the next morning. So I suggested that I stay after work that day to complete the project without hourly compensation. After a little persuasion, she allowed it, and I had the materials completed for the next morning successfully. *[contributed by M. Kearney]*

Tell about the most difficult or frustrating individual that you've ever had to work with, and how you managed to work with that person.

Sample excellent response:

I had a boss who would micro-manage every single project, often causing missed deadlines and frustration throughout the department. We all worried about our department's reputation within the organization, but since he was our boss, we felt helpless to try and change anything. It was indeed frustrating knowing you could complete a project on time, only to have your boss need to stop you and question what you were doing and suggest changes. But I got the idea that maybe if I talked with the boss and showed him that we could get more done as a department if we all worked together to have better communications and to trust each other to ask for help and direction when we needed it. Since we worked together, rather than against each other, the boss gained confidence in us to do our jobs, and we were able to do our jobs and also regain the reputation of the department.

Tell about a time when your trustworthiness was challenged. How did you react/respond?

Sample excellent response:

For my public-relations course, we had to do a group project to make a publicrelations campaign

for an organization. At the same time, I had three other group projects and six classes that were becoming extremely challenging to juggle. Some of the group members knew this, so they expressed their concern and some doubt after I offered to take a significant portion of the project upon myself. I persuaded them to trust me and told them about the many things I am able to successfully juggle. I asked them to let me prove it to them, so in the end I completed my part early and we earned a high grade on the project. *[contributed by M. Kearney]*

Describe a situation when you were able to have a positive influence on the actions of others.

Sample excellent response:

Last semester my organization raised more than \$1,500 for a local organization, The Children's Home Society. It was a last-minute fundraiser. We did this over the course of a week, and it was right before the holiday season. There were 16 children who we were looking to help, and the goal of our campus was to raise \$200 per child. Ultimately the campus just took the total amount raised and divided it by the number of children; it came out to about \$179/child. This money was to help get these underprivileged kids who came from broken homes a good holiday season. What the math comes out to is that we made this happen for approximately 9 children. I was the one who took on this challenge and made and distributed fliers to the business-school faculty. I orchestrated the event, and I like to think that everyone in our organization feels as good about it as I do. I get goose bumps talking about it because it is one of the things of which I am most proud -- I really feel like I had a positive impact on a few lives, and that is what I live for -- I hope I made others in my organization feel the same. I am fairly certain I did. *[contributed by Cynthia Buenger]*

Tell about a recent job or campus experience that you would describe as a real learning experience? What did you learn from the job or experience?

Sample excellent response:

My recent internship would be the greatest learning experience I have had lately. The format of the internship is to work in each of the varying departments for a few days to get the lay of the land. We were supposed to spend the rest of our 10 weeks working on our projects and running the store (acting as manager). I learned a lot about the processes of this specific organization and how they all work together, but I also learned a lot about applying management techniques. We had multiple training sessions that honed my leadership skills, but the application was where I really learned. I learned a lot about how to effectively interact with people. I made sure that before I would coach a team member on how to do something correctly, according to brand that I knew exactly why that was the way we chose to do it, because I wanted them to understand. I learned that understanding is the key to implementing -- I guess that's why I've always liked math, if I understand why I need to do a formula a certain way, then I will remember it and even appreciate it. *[contributed by Cynthia Buenger]*

Describe a team experience you found disappointing. What could you have done to prevent it?

Sample excellent response:

I recently worked on a project where we had to make a film, a documentary of sorts, on any topic we wanted -- it was really just about the medium of film. My team picked the project of exploring Diet Fad trends through the decades; we thought it would be amusing to see the crazy things

people have done for a better body image over the years. Although the project turned out very well, and I am pleased with the end result, I was disappointed in the communication, or lack thereof. Because of everything else I had going on this semester, I had opted not to be the group leader and thus the main communicator -- which was good for me. I like taking on the leadership role but once in a while I sit back and make sure somebody else does it so I still know how to be a supportive follower. Regardless, some of the group members did not turn in their research at the deadline, and our leader did not follow up with them on it. After it was a week overdue I had to jump in and map out a timeline for our team so we could get the project done. I had wanted to make sure we did not put it off because I knew film editing would be much more time consuming than we would anticipate. We got everything done with time to spare but most of our work ended up being during the busiest week of the semester for me and for some of the other members, so I wish the communications had been more thorough earlier on in the project. To improve the situation I could have jumped in earlier and been in touch with the leader about following up with the rest of the team, but I wasn't certain she hadn't followed up with them until I brought it up in class and they all asked, "wasn't that due last week?" The lesson I learned was to ensure that I am a consistently active participant even when I am not the leader; that way I am still maximizing my relationships with the group and working to improve my skills as well as those of the people working with me. *[contributed by Cynthia Buenger]*

Recall a situation in which communications were poor. How did you handle it?

Sample excellent response:

I worked on a team with several members, and while we worked in the same building, we often used email to communicate with each other. One of the members was not as comfortable with email as the rest of the team, and would always slow the team process down by repeatedly asking people to repeat or rephrase their emails -- always reading way too much into whatever was written in the emails. At one point, after an agonizing day of emails back and forth trying to explain a critical part of the work, I decided I simply needed to go to her office and talk with her about the problem. We met, and I listened to her issues, and together we worked out a solution in which the team still did most of its communications via email, but whenever this team member did not understand something, instead of sending a confusing collection of emails, she would either pick up the phone or walk to the other person's office and solve the miscommunication quickly and efficiently.

Describe a time when you had to make a difficult choice between your personal and professional (or academic) life.

Sample excellent response:

At the very beginning of my senior year of college, my best friend from home passed away. Classes hadn't even been in session for a week when I heard of the car wreck on Saturday night; at first the news wasn't very bad, but as days went on her condition got worse, and by Tuesday, the doctors declared that she would be brain dead forever. I was the mediator between her family and our friends, so when they made the difficult decision to let her go, I was the first to know and had to keep everyone else informed. I was in total shock in the beginning, so I immediately told my professors the situation and that I might be going home for the rest of the week. After getting upset and dealing with the pain that Tuesday afternoon, I realized that I couldn't skip a whole week of classes to go home because I would be way too far behind, and I didn't want to start my senior year like that. Even though I really wanted to be home with my family and friends during that whole

week, the funeral wasn't until that Saturday, I didn't have Friday classes, and it was Labor Day weekend, so there was no class on Monday. I ended up finishing the week at school and still got to have a nice, long weekend at home to mourn over my great loss. *[contributed by Carly Watson]*

On occasion we are confronted by dishonesty in the workplace or in school. Tell about such an occurrence and how you handled it.

Sample excellent response:

I worked for a magazine that had two main competitors, and at the time I worked there, the economy was a bit slow, and the competition for readers and advertiser among these three publications was fierce. We had just finished a market-research study that showed that our audience was just a bit larger and more attractive (better educated, higher incomes) than our competition. We sent the good news to our publisher, who called us in for a meeting to tell us he wanted to combine some numbers to make our position appear even stronger -and then put those numbers in an ad campaign touting how much better we were than our competition. We told the publisher that he was mistaken and that you could not combine the numbers the way he suggested, but he replied he knew that, but no one else would, and it would strengthen our position in a bad market. It took a lot of courage, but after the meeting, I went back and talked with him one-on-one so as not to embarrass him in front of my colleagues, and told him that what he was doing was dishonest -- and could get us all fired. I knew I risked getting fired for even talking to him this way, but I felt pretty sure he was not dishonest at heart. He did not decide right then, but he did call back the next day to say he decided not to run the ad.