

The C.A.R.R. Technique (Context, Action, Result, Reflection)

A great way to deal with competency – based questions at interview is to use the C.A.R.R. technique. The technique helps interviewees add structure to their responses. In a nut shell :

- Context** (introduces the situation or scenario and may include dates and time)
- Action** (the main body of the response)
- Result** (the conclusion and provides a summary of the overall process)
- Reflection** (statement of learning from the process)

*Below is a worked example of the C.A.R.R. technique in response to a question around team dynamics ; specifically how to deal with a member not contributing to a team project.

Context

Describe the context or task that you needed to accomplish. You **must** describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

Example:

A key feature of my degree is participation in a number of time-framed , group syndicated case-studies/projects set by academic staff. These case studies/projects are then presented for academic and peer evaluation with a group mark awarded. On one occasion a fellow team member was not contributing fully to the process thus jeopardizing team dynamics and final result.

Action you took

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on **you**. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what **you** did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't say what **you might do**, say what **you did** , what was **your** rationale for your decisions - '**because**' is a key word; Use active verbs - organised; planned; (dis)assembled; calibrated; managed; arranged; oversaw; researched; gathered; undertook; observed; etc.

Example:

Having noticed the situation, **I** decided to confer with colleagues as to the best approach to take. **I** offered to take responsibility to approach the individual and raise concerns about their behaviour. **I** contacted the team member in question and agreed to meet him/her at a place

where we could talk freely. I tried to ensure that the meeting was conducted in a way that suited both parties concerns. I enquired about difficulties with the workload/type and also tried to ascertain whether there were any underlying personal difficulties that were preventing engagement with the process.

Results you achieved and reflection.

What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? What was the outcome of you acting in the way you did; good bad or indifferent; what were the key factors that led to that outcome?

Example

My approach was appreciated and there were underlying personal factors involved which were discussed confidentially. Furthermore, I also discovered that at the initial team meeting the said individual had agreed to an aspect of the project that they could not cope with. Rather than admit this, and for fear of losing face, the student stayed away in the hope other group members would take on his/her aspect of the project. I explained that this would not be the case as it was a group effort but that I would convey any concerns about workload allocation to other team members.

As a result of my discussions with the other team members, an arrangement was made to provide the said individual with a workload that suited her/his individual strengths. The individual agreed and attended the group again. The group dynamic changed, communication skills between members improved and good standard group marks were secured.

Reflection

What did you learn from the experience - about yourself; about the skill (teamwork; problem solving; structuring a project) - what would you do differently next - again 'because' is a key word to use here.

Example:

In retrospect, I can now acknowledge/respect the importance of agreeing consensual ground rules at the beginning of any group project. I learned that ground rules allow team members to take ownership of the process, prioritise goals and set time lines. Key ground rules I have included in subsequent group projects have included:

- Agreeing consensus with other team members in defining parameters of task from the outset
- Allocating key roles from the outset (chair, minute taker, leader/s etc)
- Discussing sanctions with supervisor for dealing with non committed member
- Full attendances at ongoing meetings
- Giving all members equal floor time (where possible)
- Keeping disagreements objective while minimizing personal insults
- Equal division of workload to be completed in realistic time frame