The STAR INTERVIEW

HOW TO TELL A GREAT STORY, NAIL THE INTERVIEW AND LAND YOUR DREAM JOB

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Why I Wrote this Book

Like most people, I've had good and bad experiences interviewing.

I once received a job offer and almost moved across the world, but the company suddenly withdrew their offer. Fortunately I hadn't moved yet. I still wonder, was it something I did that caused them to reconsider? They never told me, and to this day it's still a mystery.

Another time I wore a suit to an interview where everyone was wearing flip flops and shorts. It was uncomfortable, to say the least. And, perhaps not surprisingly, I didn't get the job.

I had another interview, with a company I knew nothing about. Half-way through the interviewer pulled out a strange-looking device (which looked like a vibrator) and asked me to "sell it" to them, as I was applying for a sales job. It turns out the product was a face-massager. Needless to say, I didn't get that job either.

And like most people, the whole job search process was usually a black box for me: complicated, mysterious, full of the unknown.

I didn't really understand how to find a job, the best way to interview, or how to make a positive impression. I read books, sure, but the advice they gave only went so far.

For the most part I had no idea what I was doing.

That was until I landed a job in the recruitment industry where I stayed for over 4 years. I met with thousands of job seekers and dozens of CEO's. This opened up a whole new world for me. It was like opening Pandora's Box, but in a good way.

I gained a lot of perspective on how companies hire and what they truly value. I also got a lot of great experience helping people navigate through the job search process.

I realized that there's a pretty big gap between what job seekers are looking for and what companies are looking for. Each side has its own perspective, and this often causes a lot of issues — hiring mistakes, miscommunication, and ultimately, a lot of frustration.

Now my goal is to share what I've learned with as many people as I can.

Why? I believe transparency benefits everyone and increases the chances of achieving your goals. And that makes me happy.

How? I openly share interview advice on my blog and also write on Quora. And of course, in this book, I break down a lot of the concepts that I've learned over the years.

One of the most effective interview tools that I have found is the *STAR Method.*

STAR stands for:

- Situation

- Task

- Action

- Result

This is a technique to structure an answer and tell great stories. Although the method has been around for 20 years, it is more relevant today than ever. I didn't invent it — I just strapped a rocket to it and made it relevant to reaching your job-seeking goals.

Now you might be thinking — *there are tons of techniques you can use, how is STAR different?*

Usually, in life there is one thing, one skill, or one action that acts as a cornerstone for everything else.

It follows the 80/20 rule, also known as the "Pareto principle." This means that 20% of your actions can produce 80% of your desired results.

Less effort, better results.

INPUTS = OUTPUTS
20%   80%
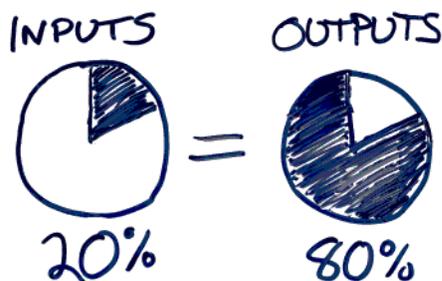
For example, perhaps you are always stressed and constantly make mistakes at work. You then add a few minutes of high-intensity exercise to your routine, which is a fraction of your daily schedule. Suddenly your anxiety is gone, you feel energized, and every aspect of your life is better. Your previous issues become miniscule. One small action can bring about big change and favorable results.

Since most companies use behavioral interview questions and are looking for detailed explanations of your history (stories), the STAR Method is going to work most of the time to address these two goals. It's that 20% you do that's going to give you the 80% of the result you're looking for.

Whether you're just starting your job search, already interviewing with a company, or looking for a different way to stand out — there are countless ways you can incorporate the technique into your life.

I've personally used the STAR Method for years to help hundreds of people find jobs at the world's biggest technology companies, like Facebook and Amazon.

I'm not saying this will solve 100% of your problems, but it's going to give you some serious bang for your buck.

Let's jump into it.

Introduction

Interviewing = Storytelling

Once upon a time, on a starry night, a caveman sat around a bonfire with his family and neighbors, and in his native dialect, grunted the events of the day. In other words, he told a story. And the story went a little like this:

My son and I were on our weekly hunt for wild boar, roughly four hundred steps from our village, toward the river. It had been several days since our last meal, and we were famished and eager to catch some fresh game. The heat of the sun pounded on us mercilessly.

Suddenly, we came face-to-face with a vicious, red-eyed lion. I froze, paralyzed for a moment.

I could tell it was thirsty for our blood. I felt my heartbeat pounding through my chest and sweat dripping from my forehead. I glanced over at my son, who was terrified, and knew it was my responsibility to protect us. This was not the first time I had come across a lion, so I kept my composure, and mentally analyzed our options.

Option 1: Remain motionless until the lion went away. However, I wasn't sure if we could both remain calm in this situation.
Option 2: We could use our slingshots to scare off the lion. This would require good aim, which would prove very challenging, given my trembling hands. Of course, there was a good chance that I would miss, and just make the lion mad. Then he would then definitely attack us.
Option 3: I could punch the lion in the face. But even if I gathered enough nerve to do so, I would most likely get my hand bitten off.

Option 4: We could run to a nearby tree and climb out of the lion's reach. This seemed like the most reasonable option because the lion had not made a move yet, and the tree was less than a stone's throw away from us.

Alternatively, there was also a combination of these four options — but we didn't have much time to decide. I did a quick calculation of the distance between us and the tree and how fast the lion could bridge the gap. It was a rough estimate based on my eyewitness of lions chasing gazelles.

It was time for a decision. I decided we should go with the element of surprise, and shoot the lion with our slingshots first. This might give us enough time to run to the tree, even if I only stunned the lion momentarily.

I signaled to my son. We aimed our slingshots —BAM! Smack in the center of the lion's head.

Nice shot.

The lion was stunned. We raced to the trees and climbed to the top — safely! After the momentary shock wore off, the lion ran to the tree. But by that time we were high up in the branches and safe from the lion's sharp claws.

We waited until nightfall for the lion to go away and climbed back down the tree, returning to the village.

I learned that we should be more careful hunting wild boar during this time of day and this area because there were many lions around. It was an experience I certainly don't want to have again.

I also learned to always carry my slingshot.

Let's say our caveman friend was asked during an interview, "*tell me about a time when you faced a difficult situation.*"

I think we can agree that he has a compelling story as mentioned above.

It's descriptive, raw, and logical. It has a beginning, middle and end. We get the feeling that he can think on his feet and take action quickly. He didn't just say "we came across a scary lion and ran for our lives," even though that would also be an accurate, albeit a much less satisfying answer. Rather, we understand exactly what he did, his decision-making process, and how he analyzed and broke down a problem. There's even a "lesson learned," which shows that our ancestor was not only brave but also self-reflective. It may not be the most intellectually stimulating story, but it sure as hell answers the interviewer's question and puts them in the shoes of the caveman.

If our caveman was applying for a job as "Chief Security Officer" at a nearby village, we would be pretty confident that he would be invited to the next round of interviews.

Fortunately, our caveman friend never had to participate in an actual interview. He simply retold a true story based on events that happened to him, based on real facts and real people. Perhaps he embellished it a little bit to make it more entertaining for the crowd (for example, using descriptive words like "vicious", and describing the hunger in the lion's eyes), but it just gives the listener a better understanding of the environment and situation he faced.

Now let's fast forward a few thousands years to the present day.

The World is Unpredictable

You've developed a certain belief about interviewing over your lifetime, shaped by the media, people around you, and your own experiences.

When you think about interviewing, the following thoughts might come to mind:

- First impressions are important
- Data-driven examples
- Ugh, I am nervous and sweaty
- What the f*ck should I wear?
- Think on your feet
- Stuffy interview rooms
- Ask good questions
- Unfair labor practices
- Network
- Behavioral interviews
- Get referred by a friend who works at the company
- Trick questions
- I hope I don't have to pee
- Write the perfect cover letter
- Trick questions that nobody could possibly answer

You were probably not consciously thinking about these things until I brought them up, but probably as I did your mind started to fill with related memories and feelings. You have certain beliefs about all of the above points. These beliefs shape your view and reaction to your environment. They exist regardless of whether you acknowledge the beliefs or not.

The problem is that we can fall into certain patterns of thought without realizing it.

For example, you might subscribe to the belief that "good-looking people tend to get the job." Or you might have read the study that showed that having a symmetrical face could increase your chance of attaining wealth. Or maybe you noticed that CEOs and successful people on the front page of the news always seem to be physically attractive.

There is certainly some truth to this. People who like one thing about you (your face) will tend to associate other good things with you, despite a lack of other supporting evidence. Also, if someone has a firm handshake, you might associate that with other positive traits. Such as, he is confident, or successful. Or perhaps if you hear that someone graduated from Harvard, it automatically evokes respect and you assume that they are intelligent, even though you have never met them before. This is referred to as the "halo effect."

However, there's a price we pay for falling for our own biases.

Situations and experiences will always change. There are interviewers who will not be distracted by your unusual facial features and will just listen to what you are saying. There are also interviewers who might do the opposite.

Ultimately, your beliefs become self-fulfilling prophecies. In this case, if you don't think you are "attractive" enough to be successful, then you subconsciously set yourself up for a downward spiral of negative thoughts.

On the other hand, if you think you are "attractive" and use it as a prop to maintain your confidence, you subconsciously set yourself up for disappointment when things don't go as planned.

I am not saying these biases don't exist. On the contrary — an infinite number of them exist!

The range of human experience and situations are so vast that it leaves the world open to much interpretation. There are simply too many factors at play for us to accurately predict outcomes consistently every time. A great example of this comes from trading in financial markets.

In a landmark study published years ago called "*Trading is Hazardous to your Wealth*," researchers found a startling fact after studying over 10,000 brokerage accounts. Professional traders whose job is to make money for their clients on average *lost* money by a substantial margin. The conclusion:

"Although professionals are able to extract a considerable amount of wealth from amateurs, few stock pickers, if any, have the skill needed to beat the market consistently, year after year. Professional investors, including fund managers, fail a basic test of skill: persistent achievement [....] The subjective experience of traders is that they are making sensible educated guesses in a situation of great uncertainty. In highly efficient markets, however, educated guesses are no more accurate than blind guesses."

Despite all of the skills, knowledge, and tools that these traders have, there are simply too many factors at play for them to beat the markets in the short term. The more actions (trades) they took, the worse it turned out for them. This is because their educated guesses were no more accurate than blind guesses, and at the end of the day it's a numbers game.

Interviewing is, of course, different than trading stocks.

First, obviously, people are not stocks. Past performance is an indicator of future events, generally speaking. If you run 10 miles every week for 15 weeks, then most people would predict that on the 16th week you are probably going to run another 10 miles. If you always bite your nails before giving a speech, then you'll probably bite your nails the next time you give a speech.

Second, in a job interview you have more control over the situation because you can directly influence the decision maker -- he is sitting in front of you. You are not dealing with a black box (the market) of dozens of trades, where people can make random moves.

But there's still a great deal of uncertainty.

Here are some of the ways that your job search, interview process and selection criteria could be totally random:

-*Interview Techniques*. A long-term study of job interview methods of Fortune 500 companies showed that most did not predict on the job performance after 1 year. This means that most of the new hires either did not perform as expected, left the company or were fired. The interviews were not indicative of their success on the job and were almost a random predictor. Companies could have randomly selected names from a hat and probably could have had more success in finding qualified employees.

-*Biological bias.* Your interview starts at 11am, right before lunch time. The interviewer's blood sugar level may be low, making him more irritable, distracted, hungry, and less likely to see you favorably. You could be 20% less likely to get the job than the person who interviews after lunch. (This was shown in study of Israeli judges who were less likely to grant parole to prisoners before lunchtime.)

-*Lack of Clarity.* The interviewer did a poor job of defining the job description and has a fuzzy idea of the actual accomplishments expected of you. This makes it difficult to assess what you have achieved, and the interviewer falls into "I have a good feeling about her" or "I have a bad feeling about him." This is psychic mumbo-jumbo, and the interviewer will probably just choose someone who reminds them of themselves.

-*Timing.* You might be qualified to get a job and get through the interview with flying colors. But then, the company receives an internal application for the position you are interviewing for. Because it's cheaper for them to hire/transfer the person, they give the job to the internal candidate instead. Ouch.

These are just a handful of things that could happen.

Once we realize the inherent bias in an interview, we can take some very simple steps. For example, you can schedule the interview after lunch when interviewers aren't distracted by their growling stomachs.

These are small things that you can do.

However, most of the biases are not on *your* side so there's little you can do to change or influence them. It's hard enough to change our own biases, let alone those of others! There are simply too many factors to account for all of them. Changing human nature is nearly impossible.

While we live in a world that our ancestors even 100 years ago could not have imagined, the reality is that biologically, we haven't changed. We still fall prey to our own psychological fallacies. Indeed, we are apes living in a modern world.

Gibbon   Human   Chimpanzee   Gorilla   Orangutan
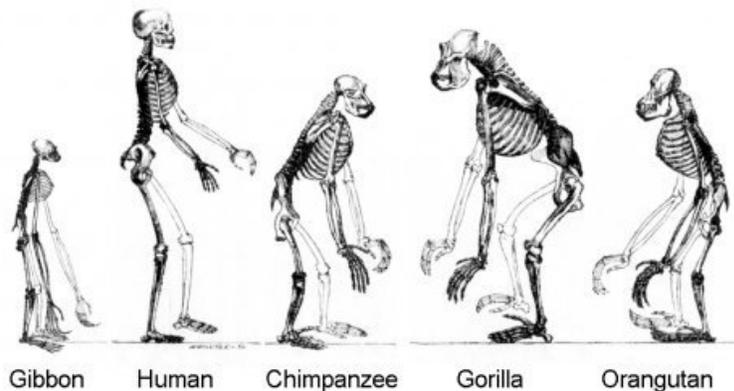
With that said, let's find a different approach that doesn't require genetic modification.

This leads us back to our caveman and the power of stories.

You are sitting across the room from someone and having a conversation. You are assessing the atmosphere, establishing a connection, and trying to solve a real problem that the hiring managers have (they need to hire someone).

Enter Storytelling 101

How can you increase your chances of being selected for a job when interviewers all use different criteria for judgment? When they are slaves to their own unconscious prejudices?

There is no silver bullet approach. When you google "job interview advice" you will get 23,000,000 results. You'll need more than a couple of lifetimes to read all of that.

The best answer lies in creating a consistent framework that we can apply to all interviews, no matter what, that will maximize our chances of presenting ourselves as well as possible despite inherent biases.

When we are able to "cover most of our bases," then we increase the likelihood of being understood. How do we do that? How can we make sure that we are heard in an interview and that we explain all of the relevant skills necessary for the job in a manner which is concise, compelling and thorough?

We tell stories.

Yes, stories.

When we tell detailed stories with precision and relevancy, we increase our chances of being selected for the job, based on our own experience. Even if you are nervous or awkward, if you can effectively communicate how you earned your previous company X amount of dollars, people are going to listen.

The interviewer might not like your haircut or maybe your handshake was kind of limp (it happens). It doesn't matter. If you can provide enough relevant information to show that you can do the job, you can change their perception of you.

By painting a great picture of events while including a subjective storyline and objective facts, we minimize the external biases that can get in the way of your evaluation. Even if the interviewer is not impressed by our wardrobe, he can see our thought process, and understand how and why we take actions.

We can connect with people on a logical *and* emotional level. Winning the hearts and minds of people is the best thing we can hope to do.

Storytelling is the human answer to operating in an environment full of bias.

Before we move on let me summarize the following concepts that we've established:

- We cannot account for all of the biases that an interviewer has. Interviewing techniques are random.
- Past performance is a good indicator of our future performance. How you do *anything* is how you do *everything.*
- Sharing stories about our past job performance (in a structured and detailed manner) can help mitigate the inherent biases we will encounter in an interview.

Why are stories so powerful?

We've been telling stories since the advent of the spoken word. Storytelling and knowledge sharing were key to our survival; passing along ideas, wisdom, and secrets.

Humans are emotional creatures. We are deeply moved by a tale of a girl who barely escaped with her life at the hands of a Nazi soldier. But when we hear facts like *"millions of people died,"* the *people* just become another statistic that we cannot fathom. We remain emotionless in the face of numbers and the meaning is stripped off and meaningless.

Airbnb started modestly - just a couple of guys running it with practically no money and no product, trying to build something on the idea of 'opening up and sharing your home with others,' going against centuries of tradition.

Their first ever 'pitch deck' developed by the 3 founders shared a powerful story about the problem they were solving and they had the market data to support it. Eventually they raised millions of dollars in venture capital funding and expanded to over 50 countries in just 5 years, without owning any physical assets. It takes a very carefully and well-orated story to convince someone that your idea, which is just an idea at this point, is going to be worth millions of dollars in the future.

Stories have taught us much of what we know about the world. For example, how do you know anything about what police work is like? What's the process for a criminal investigation or court hearing? We've seen these situations on fictional shows like *CSI or Dexter.* What would we know about the life of poor Indian children living in the slums or life in Afghanistan, if it were not for books like *Slumdog Millionaire* and *The Kite Runner*? Books, movies, shows and videos shape our view of the world, regardless of how accurate or inaccurate they may be.

We huddle in blankets, peeking through our fingers to catch a glimpse of the grisly murder scene about to occur on the TV screen. We know that movies are not real and that the actors are acting their part, but we *feel* as if they are real, and we respond physiologically through sweating, gasping, and yelling *"run for God's sake, run you idiot, you're going to die!"*

What about the darker side of story telling? How is it possible for an entire nation to be hypnotized by an art-school dropout with a funny mustache, who proclaimed war against humanity in the name of the Aryan race? How was he able to convince his followers to kill millions of people in a global bloodbath that shaped the course of human history forever? Hitler spent hours in front of the mirror practicing his speeches. While undeniably evil, he was one of the greatest storytellers of all time.

It's clear that stories have a powerful sculpting power over our imaginations and beliefs.

More importantly, all of this has a biological basis. Evolution has wired our brains to respond to stories and it has been shown that stories can influence our personality and form our opinions on everything from sex, race, violence and ethics.

When you tell a story, anything that you experience, you can get other people to 'experience' as well. In neuroscience this is referred to as "neural coupling" and it means that the listener's brain activity closely mirrors the speaker's brain activity. You're literally communicating on the same wavelength.

In one landmark neurological study, scientists found that:

Communication is a shared activity resulting in a transfer of information across brains. The findings shown here indicate that during successful communication, speakers' and listeners' brains exhibit joint, temporally coupled, response patterns ([...] Interestingly, some of these extralinguistic areas are known to be involved in processing social information crucial for successful communication, including, among others, the capacity to discern the beliefs, desires, and goals of others.

This has huge implications for how we present ourselves in an interview. If we can become good storytellers, then we can become good at influencing, convincing and persuading.

When we can tell a good story, we can connect with people and increase the chance that they will understand what we're *really* trying to say.

What's in a story?

Years ago, while I was in college, I was applying for my first sales job. It paid very well (for a college student) and was notoriously difficult to get into, so I spent time crafting a very long cover letter with a descriptive story about my childhood. When I was a kid I would gather and spray-paint pine cones, then sell them around our neighborhood during Christmas time for a quarter a piece. I linked this story to my *creativity, tenacity and sales abilit*y.

Really, I was just a bored kid with lots of pinecones in my backyard. But I was selected for an interview and they specifically commented on my story. Ultimately, I got hired for the job.

You might be thinking, *"That's great, but I'm not a good storyteller. I don't have any interesting stories."*

The fact that you are alive on this planet means you have a story to tell. It doesn't have to be over the top and full of wild gestures, nor does it have to be perfectly delivered. Using a mix of well-timed gestures and powerful words can help, but they're just part of the equation.

The key for storytelling in the context of a job interview is providing the right amount of relevant detail, in a structured format that makes sense. The words you choose matter and the relevance is key. You can add the cherry on top later.

You see, here's the caveat with storytelling in the context of an interview: It's not quite the same as other types of storytelling.

There's a subtle difference.

You can be a great speaker and have excellent delivery, but your story could lack substance. You could even appear very confident when you answer your questions, but your answers could be surface-level and fail to get to a deeper or relevant point. Or it could be an emotionally appealing story and make people cry.

But we're talking about interviews here, not coming up with a Pulitzer prize-winning story.

In fact, this is where problems arise and where hiring mistakes are made. In the case of a "convincing" story teller, he or she can bullshit their way through an interview. They get hired for the job, but then are gone within 6 months.

The purpose of telling a story is different depending on the situation. If you are telling a story to your friends, doing a speech for a TED talk or just recounting a funny story at a party, your goals are probably going to be different in all of these situations. Maybe you're just trying to get something off your chest or get a laugh out of someone.

If you are telling a story in a job interview, your goal is to make sure that the interviewer understands you 100%, so that you can get the job.

In order to tell this type of story you need three things:

- You have to pack your story with highly-relevant information. Facts.
- At the same time, you want to elicit a "neural coupling" response so that they connect with you on a deeper level and get the emotional connection.
- You want to have three, four or more stories in mind. That way you can pick and choose relevant stories depending on the context.

A STAR "story" for our purposes is going to be about your experiences. It's going to be about how you did something, why you did something, and deconstructing all of the details around that.

The point is you don't need to have unwavering confidence, a great voice or perfectly-timed hand gestures. Those are just nice-to-haves.

Fighting Human Nature with Human Nature

Once we understand the inherent bias in an interview we can take some very simple steps. For example, you can schedule the interview after lunch. And before the end of the day, when the interviewer is not tired.

These are small things that you can do.

However, most of the biases are not on *your* side and there's little you can do to change or influence them. It's hard enough to change our own biases, let alone those of others! There are too many factors to account for all of them.

That leads us back to story-telling.

What is it about a story that breaks through a person's bias?

The story is created partially to answer the questions and partially for emotional appeal. It's very possible, and likely, that the interviewer is going to ask you follow-up questions. It's not just about motives. It's about your logic. It's about numbers. It's about your deductive reasoning in particular situations. Remember, they are looking at your past performance.

It's often said that the fear of public speaking has its roots in biology. Having so many pairs of eyes staring at us triggers a reminiscent evolutionary response akin to the hungry gaze of a predatory lion. No wonder we get sweaty and nervous — we want to *escape from potential death.*

Interviewing is in a similar position. The fear of public speaking is probably greater, but interviewing is also seen as "unnatural" and a skill that needs to be honed.

Countless books have been written about interviewing. How to answer certain questions, how to avoid a faux-pas, about behavioral interviews, group interviews -- you name it.

There is some great advice in these books, but often they over-complicate things or cover them with an air of mystique. Also, the amount of information out there can be overwhelming. The first thing we can do is to detach ourselves from the word "interviewing." I'll use it interchangeably with storytelling, but note that I'm talking about the same thing. Storytelling is not as mysterious as it seems.

Now we know that...

Interviewing is full of human bias. And we can't change human nature (eh, I know the scientists are working on it and inevitably we *will.* I get it. But for now, we're 21st century beings stuck in bodies that have been shaped over millions of years of evolution, so we have to deal with the biases).

Humans will respond to a great story because we are hardwired to do so. We know that we cannot overcome human bias so the best way to fight it is by being as human as possible.

Sharing descriptive and thorough stories is a great way to overcome the inherent bias in interviews, and thus act as an effective way to increase our chances of success.

Knowing this, we can start to form our own stories using STAR.

What is STAR?

The STAR Interview, or as I like to call it, STAR *storytelling* method, is a way to answer questions. It's a way to structure your examples in an interview. It's also an outline for telling an effective story and I believe the *one thing* that is going to knock it out of the park for you. It's that 20% thing you do that's going to give you 80% of the results you're looking for.

There are four steps:

- Situation
- Task
- Action
- Result

Easy, right?

There are many companies, (Amazon is a great example) who explicitly recommend that you use STAR as the best preparation tool for their interviews. And although not all companies specifically talk about using STAR, most companies, including many Fortune 500 companies, use some method of behavioral interviewing.

A "behavioral interview" is a type of interview which tries to assess your past behavior in order to predict your fit for the job. It means they want to hear stories about your past, which might

indicate your ability to do the job you are interviewing for. All of these companies are essentially saying one thing:

"Please, oh please, tell us a good story!"

The best way to answer behavioral interview questions is with the STAR technique.

However, it's important to note that your past performance does not mean that you have experience in performing the job requirements of the job for which you are interviewing. In fact, even if you've just graduated, and have absolutely no work experience, or are switching industries midway through your career, companies can assess your past performance. But how?

Cheri Huber, Zen Buddhist meditation teacher and author sums it up nicely, *"How you do anything is how you do* everything*."* When you describe your leadership role on the tennis team at the university, it reflects your leadership ability. When you organized a large event for a political campaign as an intern, it shows your organizational ability. When you worked 3 part-time jobs to fund your education, it shows your grit and work ethic. When you broke the sales record at your previous company, it shows that you know a thing or two about sales.

All of these examples and more can be told in the format of a story. Companies have certain "job requirements" in mind when assessing candidates. However, they use these requirements (usually written on a job description) as more of a guideline. That's why you should not get hung up on every single detail of a job description. In reality the majority of companies are looking for *transferable* skills from your life and work experiences.

Thus the importance of being able to tell a story in relation to what you might be doing on the job, is one of the best ways to show them you are capable. Of course, you might have specific experience or achievement written on your resume that indicates, "Yes, I've done this before." However, it's unlikely that all of the details are spelled out on your resume, so greater *context* is necessary in order to explain the relevance. This is where your story telling powers comes in.

With a good story you will be able to answer questions such as, "Tell me about a time when you had to show leadership" or "what was your biggest achievement?"

Like any good story, you will need to start by painting a picture of what happened, where you were, and the people involved. This is the *situation*. There will likely be something that is required or expected of you to be done. You have to identify what this is and describe it clearly. This is the *task*. Once you've decided the goal or outcome you would like to achieve, you need to take steps to get there. What steps did you take and why did you take them? That's the *action*. After moving forward with your plan, what happened? Were you successful, and what did you learn? This is the *result*.
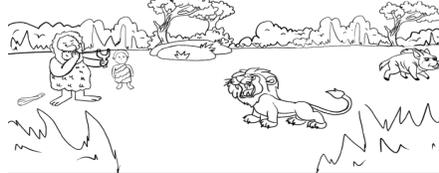
Let's break it down using our caveman example.

With a good story
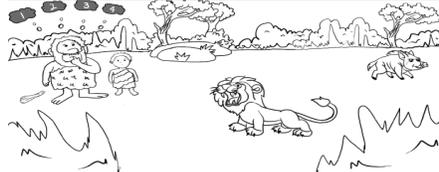You will be able to answer questions like

Tell me about a time when you had to show
LEADERSHIP

Situation:
My son and I were hunting wild boars and suddenly came across a lion. Our lives were in danger.
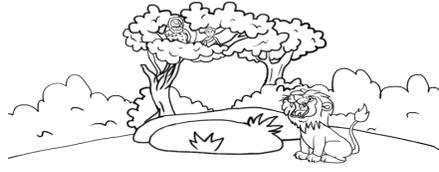
Task:
The goal was to find a way to escape, so I analyzed one of 4 options. As the elder, it was my duty.

Action:
We decided to shoot the lion with our sling shot and make a run for the tree.

Result:
We survived! I learned that we shouldn't hunt in that area, and to always carry a sling shot.

It doesn't matter if you are a caveman sharing a story about escaping a lion, or if you're a marketing manager talking about your most successful marketing campaign. You could be a lawyer talking about how you saved a company from destruction or a sales associate describing your most successful deal. The STAR Method is industry-neutral and can be used to frame all of your examples to make them more structured and compelling.

Where can you use STAR?

Ten or twenty years ago the most efficient thing you could do was use STAR to structure your response in an interview. It was a fun interview technique.

Nowadays, the landscape is different. Stories are more important than ever and STAR is even more relevant today than it was 20 years ago.

That's because the workplace has changed dramatically in the past few years. Think about this:

-The International Labor Organization estimates that 75% of workers **in the entire world** are employed on temporary or part time contracts. Currently there are 55 million freelancers in the U.S. It's expected that by 2020 over 40% of Americans will have freelancing jobs.

-Companies are risk-averse after the 2008 economic crisis. They don't want to hire full time workers and would rather hire part time or project workers. It's more cost effective. This means our jobs are less secure.

-Jobs are being disrupted, evolving or disappearing altogether. As Marc Andreesen famously said, "software is eating the world." 10 years ago we didn't have Uber drivers, Youtubers, driverless car engineers or social media managers. Today these are sought-after skills.

-It's hard to stand out in such a rapidly changing world. You can send hundreds of resumes and get no response. Any employer can Google your name and search your LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. They make an immediate judgment based on your online presence. Google is your new resume.

-Many people are hired without ever seeing a job description or for jobs that are not readily available online. They are hired because of the value they can bring to the company via an education that they can pretty much get online with services like Skillshare, Udemy and Khan Academy.

In a day and age when virtually everyone around us has access to the same information online, how are we supposed to stand out? When our jobs are not secure and people are shifting to multiple streams of income, or the 'gig economy,' how do we stand out?

You guessed it -- stories.

Yes, you can use STAR stories for any situation to do all the following:

- Reach out and apply to companies during your job search
- Interview for a full-time or part-time job
- Get yourself noticed as a freelancer
- Consulting gigs
- Write a badass LinkedIn profile
- Make a great blog or portfolio
- Network

If any (or all) of these apply to you, then you can use STAR.

Two types of job seekers

A top executive recruiter at Amazon told me about the two types of candidates that she has encountered over the years. She interviewed thousands of people and hired many. There are many personalities, strengths, weaknesses and so forth. But usually she noticed that people have fallen into two categories, which ultimately determine their success in the interview process.

Type #1: This person sees themselves as the victim. The employer they are interviewing with cannot be trusted because they are trying to weed people out of the interview process or might low-ball them on a job offer. They proceed cautiously. They are not open to feedback and do not accept the fact that interview preparation will take hours and is not something they are going to be naturally good at. They might be a good storyteller, but that doesn't mean they are telling the right stories. This person might have a lot of years of great work experience which allows them to believe that they are naturally good at interviewing. They are surprised when they don't get the call back for the second interview.

Type #2: This person knows that they don't know. They may or may not have a strong understanding of their own background. They may or may not be confident in how they express themselves. But they are open to learning about an individual company's interview process and can take constructive feedback from recruiters and hiring managers. They are always prepared. They realize that no matter how much job experience they have, that does not make them naturally great interviewees. They spend hours and hours preparing for interviews and are constantly learning. They are the ones who get the job despite not being the loudest in the room.

The point is that it doesn't matter how much experience you have. It doesn't matter if you have even interviewed hundreds of people yourself, as a manager. You're sitting on the other side of the table now. In fact, those who have a lot of experience interviewing others inevitably get used to a certain "style" of interviewing that may not be current or relevant. All of us have to hone our approach and remain adaptable.

What the STAR Method is NOT

We are using STAR in the context of behavioral interviewing, *"Tell me about a time when..."* It doesn't necessarily mean that you will be the subject of the example, but it's going to inevitably be about *your* experience. That's the whole point.

It's not going to help you answer a question like *"How would you construct a fishing net that can cover the Pacific Ocean?"* But honestly, if someone asks you that question, ask them how on earth that's relevant to the job, and if that is an actual project you'd be working on.

You can use elements of STAR to structure your response, or to think about a similar problem you have solved in the past. But unless it's something you've done before, then a story format is not going to make sense — you need to problem-solve.

What the STAR Method *will* do is allow you to answer most questions in an interview in a compelling way.

Summary:

#1: Don't get too tied up on the word "interviewing." It's basically storytelling and we can apply STAR to a variety of situations.

#2: Accept that we operate in a world full of biases, different situations, and different experiences that are unpredictable.

#3: Stories have been told since the beginning of time and remain an effective way to communicate about our past.

#4: Use the STAR Method to tell a good story AND get your point across. Maximize your chances of success.

How to Use This Book

Each chapter contains examples and tips to construct every step of your STAR story. We'll start with a brainstorming session, break down each step of STAR, and at the end I'll show you how to piece it all together. There are exercises and practice prompts throughout so you can formulate your STAR stories throughout the book.

By the end of the book you'll have over 55 stories to share during your job interview.

I've tried to keep my examples broad and industry-neutral. At the end of the book, I also provide a list of resources, over twenty STAR examples, books and other tools that should prove useful in your journey to master storytelling. **Let's get to it!**

Click here **to purchase the rest of the book.**