



LESSON 2

THE SOAR METHOD: A SUPERIOR ALTERNATIVE TO STAR

Introduction: Upgrading Your Interviewing Toolkit

For many years, the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result) has been the standard framework for conducting behavioral interviews. However, in today's complex and rapidly changing work environment, the STAR method has some limitations. It can feel a bit rigid and can sometimes fail to capture the full story of a candidate's experience.

That's why we are introducing the SOAR method, a more dynamic and insightful alternative to STAR. The SOAR method (Situation, Obstacle, Action, Result) is designed to give you a more complete and nuanced picture of a candidate's abilities, especially their problem-solving skills and their resilience in the face of challenges.

The SOAR Framework: A Step-by-Step Guide

S - Situation:

This is where you set the stage. You want the candidate to describe the context of their story. What was the situation? Where and when did it take place? Who was involved?

- **Probing Questions:** "Can you give me some background on this situation?" "What was your role?" "What was the goal?"

O - Obstacle:

This is the key difference between STAR and SOAR, and it is the most important part of the framework. Instead of asking about the “task,” you will ask about the “obstacle.” What was the challenge? What made the situation difficult? What stood in the way of success?

- **Why This is More Powerful:** Asking about the obstacle forces the candidate to talk about their problem-solving skills, their resilience, and their ability to overcome adversity. It reveals how they think, not just what they did.
- **Probing Questions:** “What was the biggest challenge you faced?” “What made this situation so difficult?” “What were the potential risks or negative consequences?”

A - Action:

This is where you want the candidate to describe the specific actions they took to address the obstacle. It is crucial to focus on the candidate’s individual contribution, not on what the team did as a whole.

- **Probing Questions:** “What specific steps did you take?” “What was your thought process?” “What other options did you consider?” “How did you involve others?”

R - Result:

Finally, you want the candidate to describe the outcome of their actions. What was the result? How did they measure success? What did they learn from the experience?

- **Probing Questions:** “What was the final outcome?” “How did you measure the success of your actions?” “What was the feedback from your manager or your customers?” “What would you do differently next time?”

SOAR in Action: A Real-World Example

Interview Question:

“Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a major guest complaint at your hotel.”

Candidate’s Response (using the SOAR method):

- **Situation:** “Last year, I was working the front desk on a sold-out weekend. A VIP guest who had booked our top suite arrived at 10 PM to find that his room had been given to someone else due to a system error.”
- **Obstacle:** “The guest was furious, and rightfully so. He was a loyal customer who spent thousands of dollars with us every year, and he was threatening to take his business elsewhere. We had no other suites available, and all the other hotels in the area were also sold out.”

- **Action:** “The first thing I did was to listen patiently to his concerns without interrupting and to offer a sincere apology. I then immediately got on the phone with our sister property across town and was able to secure their presidential suite for him. I arranged for a complimentary limo to take him there, and I personally called the manager at the other hotel to ensure he would be treated like royalty. I also waived the cost of his stay and sent a bottle of champagne to his new room with a handwritten apology note.”
- **Result:** “The guest was so impressed with the way I handled the situation that he not only continued to be a loyal customer, but he also wrote a glowing review about his experience on TripAdvisor. My manager was so pleased with the outcome that she used my story as a training example for the rest of the team.”



ACTIVITY: MASTER THE SOAR ANSWER METHOD

Time needed: 30 minutes

What You'll Do

Practice answering behavioral interview questions using the SOAR framework. Learn to tell compelling stories that prove your skills.

The SOAR Framework

SOAR = Situation, Obstacle, Action, Result

This structure turns rambling answers into powerful stories.

Bad answer: "I'm good with difficult customers. I just stay calm and help them."

SOAR answer:

- **Situation:** "At my restaurant job, a guest complained their anniversary dinner was ruined"
- **Obstacle:** "The kitchen lost their special order and they were about to leave"
- **Action:** "I apologized, comped dessert, moved them to our best table, and personally ensured their meal was perfect"
- **Result:** "They stayed, left a 5-star review, and now request my section every visit"

Instructions

Step 1: Choose Your Question (5 minutes)

Pick ONE behavioral question:

Hospitality:

- "Tell me about a time you turned an angry guest into a happy one"
- "Describe a situation where you had to handle multiple urgent tasks at once"
- "Share an example of going above and beyond for a customer"

Corporate:

- "Tell me about a time you missed a deadline and how you handled it"
- "Describe a conflict with a coworker and how you resolved it"
- "Give me an example of improving a process or solving a recurring problem"

Step 2: Build Your SOAR Answer (15 minutes)

Download the worksheet and complete each section:

S - SITUATION (2-3 sentences)

Set the scene. When? Where? Who was involved?

Example: "Last summer at the Hilton, I was working the front desk during our busiest weekend. We were fully booked for a wedding."

Your situation:

A - ACTION (4-5 sentences)

What went wrong? What made it challenging?

Example: "The bride's parents arrived to find we'd overbooked and had no room for them. They were furious and threatening to move the entire wedding."

Your obstacle:

A - ACTION (4-5 sentences)

What did YOU specifically do? Use "I" not "we."

Example: "I immediately called our sister property to secure a suite. I arranged complimentary transport. I upgraded their room to our presidential suite at no charge. I personally walked them through the amenities and sent champagne to their room with an apology note."

Your actions: 1. 2. 3. 4.

R - RESULT (2-3 sentences)

What happened? Use numbers if possible.

Example: "They stayed. The wedding went perfectly. They wrote a letter to my manager praising my service, and I received Employee of the Month. The hotel kept their business for future events worth \$50,000."

Your result:

Step 3: Practice Out Loud (5 minutes)

Read your SOAR answer aloud.

Time yourself. Aim for 60-90 seconds total.

Too short? Add more detail to Actions

Too long? Cut unnecessary details from Situation

Step 4: Add Probing Questions (5 minutes)

Now play the interviewer. Write 3 follow-up questions:

Good probing questions:

"Why did you choose that approach?"

"What was going through your mind when...?"

"What would you do differently now?"

"How did your manager react?"

Your 3 probing questions: 1. 2. 3.

Now answer them (1-2 sentences each)

Self-Check

Review your SOAR answer:

- ✓ Is the Situation clear and brief?
- ✓ Is the Obstacle challenging enough?
- ✓ Did you use "I" not "we" in Actions?
- ✓ Are your Actions specific and detailed?
- ✓ Does the Result include a positive outcome?
- ✓ Did you use numbers/metrics in the Result?
- ✓ Is the whole answer 60-90 seconds?

Common Mistakes

- ✗ Spending too long on Situation
- ✓ Keep it to 2-3 sentences
- ✗ Vague actions like "I handled it"
- ✓ Specific steps you took
- ✗ Using "we" instead of "I"
- ✓ "I did..." "I decided..." "I created..."
- ✗ No measurable result
- ✓ Include numbers, outcomes, recognition

Submit Your Work

- 1 Your complete SOAR answer (all 4 parts)
- 2 Recording of yourself saying it out loud (optional but recommended)
- 3 3 probing questions with answers
- 4 Self-check score

