

## Typical Interview Questions

You will often encounter the same types of questions from one interview to the next. Here are suggestions for how to answer questions you will encounter in a typical interview.

No one can predict the exact questions that an interviewer will ask, but your recruiter should be able to give you a good idea of what to expect.

You should give complete answers to all interview questions. Be brief and relaxed. When possible, use questions as a springboard to address topics that you want to cover. Always sell yourself in a positive way.

Here are the types of questions you can expect:

- Background Questions
- Personality Questions
- Motive Questions
- Satisfaction Questions
- Past Performance Questions
- Salary Questions
- Other Questions

### Questions to Explore Your Background

To prepare for questions about your background, keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Answer these questions in terms of the qualifications required for the position.
- Keep responses concise and brief. Avoid derogatory or negative answers about previous jobs and bosses.
- Describe jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, and promotions.

- Tell short stories describing problems or challenges you encountered and how you were able to address them.

- Describe the results you achieved.

Tell me about yourself.

"Tell me about yourself" means, "Tell me about your qualifications." Prepare a one to two minute discussion of your qualifications. Start with education and discuss your experiences. Describe your performance in terms of raises, promotions, innovative designs, sales volume, increased profits, or whatever is appropriate for your level of expertise.

It is OK to ask your interviewer to clarify any question. With an open-ended question like this, you could ask "Where would you like me to begin?"

What are your greatest strengths?

Interviewers

like to hear abstract qualities. For example, loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, fast learner, technical skills, politeness, and promptness, expressed in concrete terms, make good answers. Avoid simple generalizations such as "I like people," or "I'm a good listener." These do not make satisfying answers.

What are your greatest weaknesses?

Don't be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won't be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all of your imperfections. It's certainly not the time to tell your interviewer that you hate to work on Mondays, or you're always late after a big Sunday-night game. Instead, present your weaknesses as professional strengths. For example, you might say that you work too hard to make sure things are done accurately.

Personality Questions

An employer wants to see that you get along well with others.

What do you do in your spare time?

Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies.

Are you creative?

The correct answer is yes. The interviewer is probably not asking whether you paint, draw or play an instrument. Instead, describe ways that you have solved a business problem in an inventive way.

#### Motive Questions

Enthusiasm is often a defining characteristic and goes a long way to helping you land the position. Show the interviewer that you are interested in the position and that you really want the job. Remember to maintain eye contact and be sincere.

How can you contribute to this company?

Be positive and sell! Bringing strong technical skills, enthusiasm, and desire to complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses.

Why should we hire you for this position?

Explain your qualifications and how they fit the available position. Address your interest in the job and the field and why it's work that you enjoy. Emphasize your ability to successfully perform the duties required.

Why do you want to work for our firm?

Make a sincere compliment about what the company does, it's location, or it's people. Other positive remarks might be about the company's product or service, the position or the possibilities for growth or advancement. Research about the company is important here.

Where do you hope to be in five years?

Use conservative growth positions that clearly show you plan to be there in five years, and that their investment in you will pay future dividends. Be sure that you know what can and cannot be achieved by the ideal candidate in the position. Never say that you'll be more successful than the interviewer has been, but do show a strong desire for promotions.

What interests you most about this position?

Teasing the interviewer with a truthful one or two word answer such as, "the challenge" or "the opportunity," will force them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have a chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

How long do you plan to be with this company?

As with marriage, most employers expect a till-death-do-us-part attitude, but they can be equally attracted to the candidate with ambition and candor. "As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field," is a reasonable response.

What are your career goals?

Your answer should depend on a specific time frame:

Short Term &mdash; Say you want "to be the best in the current position, while learning additional responsibilities. This in itself assures my commitment to the firm and raises myself to the next level of responsibility and promotion." You might mention whether or not you want to develop the necessary skills to lead people and projects.

Long Term &mdash; "After proving my abilities, I see myself in a firm with the possibility of moving into a level of management that allows me to keep my skills sharp."

What are you doing to achieve your goals?

"I look at continued learning as the key to success. I've continued my education by taking company educational courses and college courses, as you see on my resume. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep me informed about the current and future directions in my field. When possible, I participate in professional organizations related to my position."

What have you done in the last year to improve yourself?

This is a similar question to the previous one. Describe business books you've read, conferences you've attended, or seminars that have helped you grow in your chosen field.

Job Satisfaction Questions

Why did you leave your previous employer?

NEVER speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Your answer will probably be checked. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities and recognition.

What did you like least about your previous job?

An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. What you liked least should include any situations that you are unlikely to encounter in your new position. Your answers also provide clues about the environment you seek. If possible, try to turn the question towards things you'll enjoy in the new position such as a strong

teamwork atmosphere, high level of creativity, or attainable deadlines.

Why are you looking for another job?

Again, be

positive. "I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at (my current employer). There are a lot of good people, but I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities for growth and recognition. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions and advance my career."

What do you think your employer's obligations are to you?

Interviewers

listen for employees who want a positive, enthusiastic company atmosphere with the opportunity to advance. Such a person usually has motivation and staying power.

Are you applying for any other jobs?

Show that your search is geared for similar positions. This demonstrates a well-defined, focused objective. Make it known that your talents are applicable to other businesses and that you have explored ways to maximize your potential and are serious about finding the perfect opportunity. Don't give an indication that you are just shopping.

Past Performance Questions

What kind of decisions are most difficult for you?

Again, be

truthful and admit that not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice as you possibly can, so you can make the most informed decision possible.

What causes you to lose your temper?

Everybody has a

low boiling point on some issues. Pick one of yours that sounds safe and reasonable. A few examples of suitable responses include people who are late to meetings, those who shift blame, people who break appointments and office back stabbing. Don't say that you never fly off the handle. You won't be believed.

What are your greatest accomplishments?

Be ready to tell one or two stories that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. You could describe a special project that you pioneered at your previous job, or a situation where you were able to successfully cut department expenses or increase productivity, or that you have received frequent promotions are all good examples.

Describe a situation in which your work was criticized.

Focus on how you solved the situation and let the interviewer know how you became a better person because of it.

How do you feel about a younger boss? What about a male (or female) boss?

A question like

this usually means that your boss will either be younger, of the opposite sex, or both. Be certain that if you register any concern, you will probably not be hired. Explain that age or sex is of no importance to you. You are only interested in the manager's capability and what you can learn from your boss.

What kind of worker are you?

Again, no one

is perfect. Showing that you tackle every assignment with all of your energy and talent is admirable, but mention that you also learn from your mistakes.

Salary Questions

Salary discussions should be avoided, if possible.

What type of salary do you have in mind?

Do not state a

starting figure. A suitable reply:

"I am looking for the right opportunity and I am confident that if you find me the best candidate for this position, you will extend a fair offer to me."

What is your current compensation?

Answer

truthfully. Remember that compensation includes: base, bonuses, commissions, benefits, and vacations as well as sick days and personal days. Also, if you are due a raise in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect.

Other Questions

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Are you willing to relocate?

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May we check your references?

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May we verify your income?

Answer a question to the best of your ability and then relax. If there is a period of silence before the interviewer asks the next question, stay calm. Interviewers often use silence to see if you can handle stress and maintain poise.