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The Complete Interview Answer Guide

Expert answers to 75 common interview questions.

This guide contains expert answers to 75 of the most common and challenging interview questions. Use it to prepare and practice for your next interview.

Q1. Why do you want to leave your job?

This question can be answered in several ways, but do your best to keep your answer short. Avoid being dishonest with this question, for whatever reason, your interviewer may spot it and believe there is something you are not saying. There are usually only a few reasons someone really wants to leave their job and, surprisingly, money does not rank at the top of the list.

On the other hand, you may not have gotten along with your manager or co-workers. Maybe you were never very excited to be there in the first place and only accepted the job to pay the bills. Maybe your reputation was tarnished by a formal reprimand and staying there is emotionally draining. Perhaps you are severely underpaid and just need more money. But to be clear, do not list any of these reasons for leaving your current job in an interview because the interviewer will not be impressed and you will probably lose any chance of getting the job.

Avoid making negative remarks about your past or present manager, your fellow employees, or the company you are working for - even if they are true! Don't even hint at the fact that you hated your manager and avoid sarcastic remarks. Remember, the interviewer does not know your previous manager or fellow employees. If you start bad-mouthing them in the interview, you will immediately be flagged as having a negative attitude toward your co-workers. The interviewer will then assume you will act the same way at this company and be a bad influence. You will not get the job.

I don't care how bad you hate your current company, manager, co-workers, salary - never bring that up in the interview. Instead, tell the interviewer something positive about your co-workers and previous company.

There is no right answer to this question, only wrong ones. You don't need to make a book out of this answer, just something short and positive is best. After all, it really does not matter to the interviewer, if you don't say something foolish. The point here is to convey to the interviewer that you are not leaving because you are mad, tired, bored, overworked, underpaid, or job hopping, just that you are leaving your job because...

Best answer:

1. "I do enjoy working at my current job. The culture and the people make it a great place to work. But I'm looking for more responsibility with new and fresh challenges. I have worked on and successfully completed several projects from start to finish during the past two years. Currently, advancement

opportunities are scarce at my current job. I don't mind a slowdown in pace from time to time, but it's important to me to keep my career continually moving in a forward direction that is consistent with my career goals."

2. "Departmental changes and corporate restructuring have made it difficult to keep on track with my career goals. As a result of these changes, future advancement opportunities are limited, and I no longer see a future for myself with this company." Be ready to back up your answer if you are asked what happened to your department. Depending on time, the interviewer may just move on.

3. "After working there for three years, I have learned a great deal about the company and the way business was conducted. As much as I enjoy the relationships I have developed, it is time for me to move to a more progressive organization with more opportunities and new challenges."

4. "My spouse has received a promotion where she works and needs to move. We decided that it would be more beneficial for her to accept her new assignment than to pass up the opportunity."

5. "My current position is being eliminated as a result of corporate downsizing, and I have been informed that I have 30 days left to work there."

6. "My company recently moved their office across town and now my morning commute is about 90 minutes, and I need to be closer to home."

Q2. Can you work under pressure?

This is an easy question to answer even if it makes you nervous. This question is asked in a way that it requires a "yes or no" answer, but don't just say "yes." You should describe situations where you have worked under pressure at your job and had to meet deadlines that you had no control over.

Best answer:

1. "I most definitely can. In my current position, I can be faced with stressful situations that require me to work under pressure daily and have since learned to manage stress. Now it's just part of the job that I do well."

2. "Yes, I actually enjoy working under pressure, though I believe that proper planning and good time management will greatly reduce any alarming deadlines."

3. "Yes, I work well under pressure. But I believe that by simply reacting to a situation, you are creating the pressure. Instead of reacting to a problem, I will review the facts at a heightened pace and respond to the situation with a solution all while keeping a clear head."

Q3. Do you work well under pressure?

This is more of a follow-up from the previous question, and I doubt both questions will be directly asked to you, but both have slightly different answers. Saying no to this question may be an honest answer, but it is also a negative one. If you are a doctor, lawyer or in another demanding profession,

answering no to this question will surely disqualify you for the position.

The interviewer will probably ask for an example, so be prepared with a situation or academic scenario from a previous job. It doesn't even have to be from your most recent job, just a good example that demonstrates your ability to have a cool head when things are heating up.

Best answer:

1. "I enjoy working under pressure. Actually, I prefer it that way. To me it means that my time is utilized in a more productive manner and that I realize a greater sense of accomplishment at the end of the day."
2. "I like it when the pressure is on. Things really get clicking and that's when great ideas start coming to me. If it's too slow, I just feel stagnant."

Q4. What can you do for us that no one else can?

This is a pretty open-ended question and may or may not get asked directly, but some variation of it may come up. There is no right or wrong answer. The interviewer wants to see what you believe are your best strengths and that you can differentiate yourself from everyone else. If you trip up on this question, it does not mean the end of the interview, but if you trip up on a few of these types of questions, you can probably expect that you won't go any further in the interview process.

This is a time to talk about your job skills, training, and project experiences that make you better than everyone else. Describe your role and how you have contributed to the company and projects on past jobs.

Don't give a straight out answer, but now is a good time to brag about yourself and your abilities. Make sure you mention that you have the skills, training, and experience that are required for the job and describe how they will benefit the company by having you instead of anyone else. Differentiate yourself.

Best answer:

1. "I am a well-rounded individual with a very unique blend of skills. Past training and job experiences have allowed me to take on and complete projects and assignments of high importance and increasing difficulty while on time and under budget. And now, I want to be part of your team and solving problems for you."
2. "I believe that my unique blend of experience, problem solving skills and people skills differentiates me from most other candidates. I am motivated, disciplined and focused and am willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done."
3. "I have a great deal of experience in working with database products. In my past jobs, I have rebuilt databases to make them faster and more efficient, and as a result of my efforts, our sales department was able to run their daily and weekly reports 52% faster than they were before, thus saving them a great deal of time that could be better utilized making more sales rather than waiting for reports to run."

4. “In my last job, I helped increase third quarter sales by 30% and this increase was a direct result of my ability to work with our customers to find out what they need that we as a company were not providing to them.”

Q5. Tell me about yourself? Where to start? What do they want to know? Should I start in high school, college, first grade?

It's one of the most frequently asked questions in an interview. The way you answer this question will set the tone for the rest of the interview. This can be a challenging question to answer if you are not prepared for it, but it's really asked as an icebreaker.

This is an open-ended question, but the interviewer really wants to hear about your recent work experience, how you got started in your career and why you love it. Why don't they just ask that question? Because they want to see where you will go with an open-ended question. Your answer tells the interviewer where your mind is. If you start telling him that you are a Cleveland Browns fan, then you are way off base with what your interviewer wants to hear and you just made your first mistake.

What do you want the interviewer to know about you when you leave, your work experience or your personal interests? I'm confident their hiring decision will be based on your work experience and your passion for your work. So save your personal interests for the water cooler after you get the job.

Wrong answer:

1. “What would you like to know?” This statement completely throws the question back at the interviewer in somewhat of an insulting way and he/she is forced to reword the question.

Best way to answer:

Talk about what brought you to this point in your career and the related jobs you've held up to this point. But it's important to keep your answer related to your career. For some people, they might start their story when they were 18 years old and realized they wanted to be a banker. So they would talk about why they enjoy finance and what it is specifically they enjoy and why they want to pursue banking as a career. Then they would talk about the different types of finance jobs or related volunteer work they have done to support their career goal.

For others, they may have realized they wanted to be a fireman when they were 6 years old and carried that dream their whole life until they were of age. For them, they would start their story from age 6, but quickly progress up to current times. It would be ideal for them to talk about why they want to be a fireman and any extracurricular activities they have done that support this passion.

Focus on your answer and talk about your accomplishments from your current or most recent job and lightly touch on your daily duties. These are the things an interviewer really wants to hear. Because if he thinks you were successful at your past job, then you will be successful at this job.

Even if you don't feel that you accomplished anything, look deep and think of something you did that helped the company. Or better yet, describe an accomplishment that you contributed to the company,

just make sure it's in the same line of work. For example, don't take credit for boosting sales revenue if your job is to fix computers.

- Briefly talk about your current employer.
- Discuss 2-3 of your most significant accomplishments.
- Talk about a few of your key strengths as they relate to the job for which you are applying and how they can benefit from your strengths.
- Then discuss how you see yourself fitting into a position at their company.

1. Speak of how you completed projects on time and under budget.
2. Tell them how you increased sales revenues for two straight quarters in a row.
3. Describe of how you came up with a new procedure that saved the company money.
4. "I have been in the customer service industry for several years and most of my experience has been dealing with calls from our customers. I truly enjoy working with the people in this business as well as the challenges. In my last job, the good relationships I formed with my customers resulted in me holding the highest customer retention rate of everyone else in my department."
5. "One of my best strengths is my attention to detail. When I set out to work on a task or project, I always make sure it gets done on time."

Q6. Why do you want to work here? What are the reasons you want to work here?

This is a great question and is sure to come up during your interview and probably when you least expect it. Lack of preparation for this question could very well cost you the job. One of the most important things is to be honest, otherwise it will show. Ask yourself the question first, why do you want to work there?

If your answer is that you just need a job and paycheck, then dig a little deeper. If you still can't come up with an honest answer, then read on and hopefully I'll help you think of something. Make sure you have a clear understanding of why you want to work for them and that it's more than "just a job" to you. Do you admire this company? Do you like their products? Do they have a great success story? The key here is what is important to you about this company.

The best way to prepare for this question is to research the company before you attend the interview and learn everything you can, past, present and future. Remember, the idea behind the interview is to find the best and most qualified candidate for the job and one that will best fit in with its culture. At this point, you should describe how your past experience has prepared you for this company.

Your answer should demonstrate your familiarity with the company and its products and by doing this the interviewer will recognize you as a serious candidate. Interviewers like to hear praise about their company because it further solidifies the company's reputation in their own mind, but don't overdo it because it will come out sounding fake and cheap.

Best answer:

1. "I'm not looking to just change jobs for the sake of changing, nor am I looking for another or larger paycheck, I have been working for x amount of years and I'm proud of my profession. Your company has excellent products, provides superior service and has a reputation that the competition is envious of. I share the same values that make this possible, which should enable me to not only fit in to your

organization, but complement the team.”

2. “I have always wanted to work for Sterling Corp because I have always admired what they do and it always has been my dream job.” This answer only works if you are interviewing with a very high end company with a very prestigious reputation.

3. “I’ve heard so much about this company and they are a leader in the industry. I’m impressed with the background and stories of the founders. This is the company I have been looking to work and grow with where things are constantly developing and changing and I believe I have a great deal of experience to offer.”

Q7. Why should I hire you?

This is often the last question you will be asked in an interview. Prepare for it. This is your chance to restate the skills you possess that are most relevant to the position and to summarize your other qualities that make you the perfect person for the job. Outline your answer before you go in, so that you can answer clearly, concisely, and with confidence.

Your answer should be short and to the point. It should reflect your professional background as it relates to the current needs and problems of the position. Review the job description and tell how you are the right person for the job by matching up your skill set with each bullet point of the job description.

In formulating your answer, be sure to address these areas:

1. Determine their goals for the position. This should come up during your research into the company and the position. If possible, talk to others who work for the company. If you are unclear on this point, include it in the questions you ask at the interview and be prepared to incorporate it into your answer.
2. Show you have the skills needed for the job. Based on the goals you have identified in step one, determine how your skills and experience support those goals. If necessary, refer back to your list of skills.
3. Articulate shared values. Again, this should come up in your research. Look at the company’s mission statement and regular business practices. Explain why these are in line with your own values and goals.
4. State your interest in the position. Be enthusiastic about the opportunity to work for this company and/or within a certain team. Be sure that the interviewer is clear about the fact that you want this job.

The most important aspect of this exercise is to make you comfortable in identifying and articulating the skills you possess. Even with a prepared answer, it is important to be flexible within the script itself. You may need to modify the specifics based on the situation.

If an important issue comes up during the interview, be prepared to adapt your answer accordingly. For instance, if the interviewer stresses the need for a certain skill, you will want to address that, even if it was not one of the skills that you included on your resume.

Best answer:

1. "I have the qualifications you are looking for (briefly list them). I'm a team player, I take direction, and I have the desire to be successful."
2. "Three reasons: I meet deadlines. I deliver what I promise. As a result, I've always made my managers look good."

Q8. What were some of the things you did not like about your last job?

This is a fair question and is sure to come up in almost every interview. A short answer is all that is expected. Don't speak of being underpaid or that you did not like your co-workers or manager. One option is to tell the interviewer that in your current position, training and advancement opportunities are limited. Don't mention that you were singled out from training opportunities, just that the company did not make them readily available.

By asking this question all they are doing is fishing for incompatibilities. Be careful of how you answer this question. We all have something we did not like about our last job; it could be the people, culture, your boss, internal politics, the drive, etc. Don't start by rattling off any of these negatives. Be sure to keep your answer short and positive; no need to prattle on here because you are interviewing for a new job and are not here to spend time focusing on what you did not like about your last job.

Best answers:

1. If you work for a small company and are interviewing with a large corporation you could explain that: "working for a small company lacked the necessary financial resources to provide new learning opportunities for me."
2. If you are working for a larger company and interviewing with a small one, you could mention that: "my company is tangled in its own red tape and bureaucracy which makes new learning opportunities difficult to come by and get authorized."
3. If you work for a small company and are interviewing with another small company, you could say that: "my company has not been profitable for several quarters and has limited travel and training expenses until further notice. Based on their current situation, I'm not sure if they will ever return to producing a profit which forces me to question how much longer they will keep me there."
4. If you are working for a larger company and interviewing at another larger company, you could say that: "management positions are constantly shifting around and I'm never sure of who I am working for this week and that makes it very difficult develop a good working relationship with my boss. Plus, as a result of corporate shuffling, morale is low and my co-workers are constantly in a state of unrest about the company and I don't want to be a part of that."
5. You could also turn this question around and tell the interviewer there was nothing specific you did not like, in fact you liked everything about your last job and that you learned a great deal of things from your last or present employer. Basically, tell them what they want to hear. Tell them you feel you can't make as great of a contribution to your current employer as you would like to and that you don't

feel there is adequate room for continued career growth.

Q9. What are your biggest accomplishments?

It's okay to brag here, but just a little. Don't spend too much time with this answer as the interviewer is just looking for a short answer and is interested in what you have done recently. Make sure your answer is related to your career and not your personal life. Don't give frivolous answers, like: "I fixed the copy machine when it was jammed," or "I got all my work done in one day; the same day it was due."

It is essential for you to explain how and why you made these accomplishments.

Best answer:

1. "Though I'm very proud of where I am and what I've done, I feel that my biggest achievements remain ahead of me."
2. "My biggest accomplishment to date is graduating from Harvard where I achieved my Bachelor's degree in Business Law."
3. "My biggest accomplishment to date is increasing sales in my department by 30% simply by changing our marketing strategies. Sales were at an all-time low and we could not figure out why. So I approached our problem from a different angle, the customers' point of view and changed our marketing campaign to better focus on our products features and benefits."
4. "My biggest accomplishment to date is creating a new product that solved a big problem for one of our customers. As a result of the products success, we patented the new product."

If you are listing a specific accomplishment, make sure you say "to date, or so far." That will leave the door open for more greatness to follow from you and tell the interviewer that you have much more where that came from.

Q10. How do you take direction? How do you accept criticism?

This is a team player question and is asked to see how open and willing you are to being asked or told what to do. Are you someone who can follow directions? Can you accept criticism? Or, are you the type of person who does not like being told what to do or being criticized?

Best answer:

1. "I take direction very well. I don't mind being told what to do and feel that no task is beneath me. Sometimes, my boss may have time to explain what is needed in detail and other times she may only have a minute. I prefer the detailed version, but I can make it work either way. I know my boss is busy and I want her to be able to get on with her job as she does not need to babysit me."
2. "I openly accept criticism without taking any offense and politely thank the person for their comments."

Q11. What is the most difficult situation you have faced? Could you describe a difficult problem and how you dealt with it?

This question is sure to come up and though the interviewer asked how “you” dealt with or solved the problem, he really wants to hear how you worked with a team of people to solve a problem. This is a problem solving question that tests your critical thinking skills and is looking for two pieces of information: Your definition of difficult and how you handled the situation.

This is a great question for showing that you are creative and capable problem solver. You should have at least one of these stories ready to go that will make you look good (it’s okay to brag a little in an interview), but having a few of them will allow you to further expand on the question. Try to avoid co-worker related problems unless you had to fire someone.

The interviewer does not want to hear how you fixed a light bulb or un-jammed the copy machine. A good team player example is the best way to answer this question.

Best answer:

Your story should be one which puts you in a tough position where you analyzed and discussed the problem and reached a conclusion where it was a win-win situation for the company. Look back to a problem that you were faced with and define the problem, the expected outcome, and possible solutions. Then talk about the people you had to work with and what was expected of them and how you tied it all together to reach your goal. Don’t feel bad if you were not the superstar in the real life problem, but for the purpose of answering this question to the interviewer, cast yourself in the spotlight and talk like you were the star.

Q12. What are some of the things that bother you?

This is a common question, but don’t dwell on it. The interviewer is looking for a job related answer, more like “What bothers you about your job or the people you work with?” If you dig deep and think of what really bothers you, you’ll find that it’s other people and their ideas, right? But don’t tell the interviewer that.

Best answer:

1. “It bothers me the most when other people I work with don’t meet their deadlines or deliver what they promise.”

Q13. What do you consider your most significant strengths?

This is another top 10 question you can expect to hear in any interview. Prepare yourself and make sure you can rattle off three to five of your strengths as they relate to your past or present job. For an optimal answer, align your strengths with the job description requirements. Though it’s something to be proud of, they don’t want to hear that you’re a good mom, basketball player or golfer. Be prepared and know your strengths and don’t tell the interviewer that you don’t have any, even if you don’t. The best answer is one where you relate your strengths to the job for which you are applying.

Best answer:

1. "I have a solid background in Accounts Receivables, great problem solving abilities and I get things done with little direction." And then elaborate a bit on your specific skills, but don't turn this answer into a book. Keep it short and move on.
2. "I have great communication skills and can work with many different types of people of varying personalities and skill levels. I am motivated, disciplined, and focused and am determined to get my job done well and on time."
3. "I meet deadlines. I deliver what I promise. As a result, I've always made my managers look good."

Q14. What do you consider your most significant weaknesses?

Is there one particular area where your boss tends to criticize you the most?

I have never enjoyed this question as it basically forces you to tell the interviewer something negative about yourself. Don't feel the need to reveal deep character flaws, but tell the interviewer you have a few faults that you are working to improve and then give a few examples. A good way to turn this question around and turn a weakness into strength is the best way to answer this question. Don't actually tell the interviewer that you have a problem; though we all have something wrong with us, but don't come right out and say it as it will sound like a weakness and a reason not to hire you.

Best answer:

1. "I pay close attention to details which does result in a higher quality of work and saves additional time down the road, though it does take more time up front and sometimes overtime."
2. "I am a person who likes to meet deadlines and deliver what I promise and sometimes I can get a little frustrated with my fellow co-workers if I'm waiting on them in the last hour before something is due."

Q15. Do you prefer working with others or alone?

Basically, the interviewer is asking if you are a team player. If your answer is with others, then

the interviewer will think you can't work alone and if you answer alone, then the interviewer may think you have some personality issues working with other people. Your response needs to show that you can work well in a team atmosphere and still shoulder individual responsibility, as well. Before you answer, make sure you know if the job requires you to work alone or not.

Best answer:

1. "I enjoy working alone when necessary as I don't need to be constantly reassured of my work. But I would prefer to work in a group as I believe much more work can be accomplished when everyone is pulling together."

Q16. What are you willing to do to get what you want?

This question is asked in a general sense and the interviewer is just throwing this question at you to see what you will say and how resourceful you can be with a good original answer. There is no right or wrong answer, just keep it short and positive and the interviewer will just nod and move on.

Best answer:

1. "Whatever it takes." [don't elaborate with examples unless asked, but then it turns into a different question that we already answered]
2. "My very best. All the time."

Q17. How do you get along with different types of people?

The workplace is loaded with a variety of different people with varying personalities and the interviewer wants to know how you think you will fit in. You want to show the interviewer that it does not matter what kind of people you work with - just that work gets done. This shows the interviewer that you are more concerned with outcomes than personalities.

Best answer:

1. "I work well with anyone who delivers what they promise."
2. "I have always been able to get along with anyone. It does not matter how difficult some of my co-workers can be, I've always managed to get along with my co-workers. I even manage to get along with those that I don't work with on a daily basis. Getting along with others simply boils down to personality. When you can understand and recognize other personality types, other than your own, getting along becomes that much easier. I may not get it right on the first try, but once I learn more about that person and discover their hot buttons, I won't have any problems."
3. "Throughout my career, I have had to work very closely with some of the most mean and aggressive personalities. One place I worked, one of the employees was so angry all the time that I was the only one in the company who could get along with him on a personal and professional level except for the president. They only kept him around because customers loved him, but his co-workers hated him."

Give me an example of a project that didn't work out well.

Everyone has a skeleton in his or her closet. Make sure you don't place blame on you or your co-workers because that will only make you look bad. Your answer has no bearing on whether you will get the job or not. Think of a failure that happened early on in your career and discuss how you have bettered yourself since.

Best answer:

1. Describe a project you worked on and what the expected outcome was. Then explain what really happened and that you learned from that experience. This takes what is expected to be a negative

answer and turns it around into a positive one.

2. “Early on in my career, I tried to promise the world and thought I could get anything done in a short time. As a result of my inexperience, I over-promised and missed a deadline. But I have since learned to prepare and plan for unforeseen events and now I deliver what I promise on time.”

Use these positive faults to help explain the reason your project did not work out:

- “I have a tendency to take on a greater workload than I can always handle, but I’m working on this problem by delegating more of my task load.”
- “With closing deadlines, I can be impatient, so now I’m identifying holdups that could cause a missed deadline.”

What are some of the things that you and your supervisor have disagreed about?

Though it may sound like it, this is not a time to bad mouth your supervisor. Let’s take what is expected to be a negative answer and turn it around.

Best answer:

1. “Shifting priorities is usually the main reason for any type of disagreement. I may be working on a project that has a tight deadline and my supervisor may pull me from that project to work on something else. It can be frustrating to stop working on a project after I have built up a great deal of momentum, only to switch gears on the fly and start on something completely different.”

Q18. If you were a pickle, what kind of pickle would you be?

Believe it or not, I have been asked this question. He was not an experienced interviewer, but very technical. It’s really just a trick question and has no other purpose than to embarrass you in front of the interviewer and for the interviewer to get a good chuckle at your expense. The question comes in many forms so beware. Don’t insult the interviewer by saying that is a stupid or inappropriate question for an interview.

Best answer:

1. “I’m not a pickle, I’m a person.”

Q19. What do you feel your weaknesses are?

Don’t confess to any work-related weaknesses. The interviewer is simply trying to find out where you feel that you need improvement, but don’t confess to having any weaknesses. Instead, tell them of a weakness that is actually strength. Keep your answer very short and to the point.

Best answer:

1. “I believe that my past work experience, training and skills are a good match for this job. Were you concerned about something?”

2. “I can be impatient with people who do not deliver what they promise, especially when they are holding me up from meeting my deadline.”

Would your boss describe you as a go-getter?

Share with the interviewer an example of a project that you worked on, perhaps you had to put in long hours and time on the weekend to meet a deadline and that in the end you completed the project or task on time and under budget and made your department or company look good.

Best answer:

1. “Yes; absolutely. It is not uncommon for my boss to tell me that I am one of the most reliable employees he has. He even makes such remarks on my evaluations. I believe he thinks so because I am dependable and I just get things done without having to be supervised and in the end it just makes him look good.”

Are there any skills that you bring to the table that others in your field may not?

Tell the interviewer that you have been around the block a few times by reciting your skills, past employment record, and projects that you have worked on and that you can bring those experiences to this company and help them avoid costly mistakes. Just being able to show the interviewer that you have what they want and need is the key to answering this question.

Best answer:

1. “I am a well-rounded individual with a very unique blend of skills. Past training and job experiences have enabled me to take on and complete projects and assignments of high importance and increasing difficulty.”

2. “I believe that my unique blend of experience, problem solving skills and people skills differentiates me from most other candidates. I am motivated, disciplined and focused and am willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done.”

Why did you choose this particular career path or what led to your chosen profession?

Be specific and tell the interviewer what inspired you to take this career path while keeping your answer short and to the point. If you can, try to direct your answer so that it shows a logical progression between your profession and the company you are interviewing with. You really want to convince the interviewer that you are the right person for the job and that your education, dreams, and career goals match your profession.

Describe your thought process. Don't say that you majored in English because you thought it would be easy. Be specific and justify your answer. I chose because “I chose architecture because I have always admired beautiful buildings” or “As a child I was truly inspired by a certain TV show doctor which ultimately led me to pursue a career in medicine.”

Best answer:

1. "I chose medical school because I have always enjoyed helping other people."
2. "I chose sales because I have always been a good communicator. I enjoy working with other people in a dynamic fast paced environment. The rules of sales never really change, but the products or services are always changing and I can leverage my sales skills to almost any product or service offering in fluctuating markets and always remain employable."
3. "Since I was a kid, I have always enjoyed taking things apart and figuring out why they work and have always enjoyed fixing or improving existing products, so a career in Mechanical Engineering was a logical and natural step for me."

Q20. Why didn't you finish college?

No need to worry here if you did not complete your college work. Many people don't finish and for a variety of reasons. Timing could be an issue for them, but they plan to revisit college in the future. If you are applying for an entry level job that requires a college degree, then you may have to demonstrate why you are still the best person for the job and demonstrate why your skills are just as good if not better than a college graduate.

Best answer:

1. "I did not have adequate time to complete college because I was working 30 hours a week to support my family. I felt that since I could not give college my best effort and be able to devote adequate time to my studies, that I would be better off postponing college until a later time."
2. "My past employer was funding my education and because of a downturn in the market, they had to lay off several people and I was unable to complete my college work because I could not afford it at the time."
3. "I did not complete college because the job I had demanded a great deal of my time and efforts and because of the position I held, I was gaining more relevant work experience as it related to my career. So it was actually more beneficial for me to temporarily put college on hold and accept a position at Microsoft."

Have you made any special contributions to your past employers that were above and beyond the scope of your job?

The interviewer is looking to see what kind of employee you were and if you did things for the company that were outside your job description. This lets her know that you are happy in your work and generous with your time and that you enjoy where you work.

Best answer:

1. "I coordinated and hosted an annual fund raiser for an important local charity. Our company strongly supported this cause and I was happy to volunteer my personal time outside from my normal working hours which ultimately made this campaign a success."

2. “Though I was not required to do so, I took it upon myself to create detailed documentation about the various tasks that our department is responsible for. I created a web based form to make it quick and easy for all team members to document the status of the various tasks they are working on so that in the event of a team member’s absence, other members of the team could quickly and easily check the status of any task.”

Q21. What are your salary requirements?

This question is sure to come up, but I like to avoid it during the interview and ask it before I even go on the interview. Why waste time? If I am only willing to accept a minimum of \$70,000/year and the salary for this position is \$50,000/year, then why do I even want to waste my time by going on this interview?

If the original job posting that I replied to did not list a salary range, then I will ask this question on the phone when I am first contacted by the employer to schedule an interview. I will simply say “can you tell me the salary range for this position?” Usually they will, but sometimes the person calling me honestly does not know, so I accept the interview invitation anyway. Asking this question during your first contact with a potential employer can save you a lot of time.

We all want to make money and we always want to make more than we were making on our last job, but money is not everything. I have turned down jobs where I would have made 30% more than my current position, but I declined the offer usually because I did not want to travel.

Be honest here and tell the interviewer what you want to make. One time, I went to an interview where I did not find out what the position was paying until the interview was over and it was \$15,000 less than I was willing to accept. So I felt I had just wasted 2 hours of my time. But to turn the things around, I politely told the interviewer what I needed to make and why I was worth it.

The interviewer was so impressed with me that he went to his boss to ask for more money and eventually offered the job to me and met my salary requirements. I even negotiated two weeks of up front vacation. It was a win-win situation for everyone.

Avoid quoting published salary guidelines for your position unless you know the interviewer is way off base. Usually, the interviewer knows the fair market value for the position at hand.

DON'T tell the interviewer that you can make more by going to a different company because it comes across as threatening and that you are giving them an ultimatum. You'll quickly be out of the running for this position.

Don't bring up any benefits at this point. Remember, the question was only about salary.

Bring up benefits after you get the job offer. And if you get the offer and they are not meeting your salary requirements, then try to leverage additional benefits, like extra vacation to make up for lack of salary. Or, though very difficult at this stage in the game, tell them they have not met your salary requirements and ask them if they can increase the salary offer. It's a risky move at this point because if they say no, then you have to take what they are giving you or reject the offer.

At this point, it really depends on your posture. If you hold strong and stick to your guns and further educate them as to why you are the best person for the job and why you are worth more than they are offering, then you may get it.

If they just won't budge on salary and you really want the job, ask them to make the additional amount contingent on your performance over the first 90 days of employment. This way they will have adequate time to evaluate your performance and see for themselves why you are worth the extra money.

Best answer:

1. State a salary range and not just one specific number. You should have an idea of what the job pays and what you are worth in your industry. If you think the job pays \$60K, then say \$60 - 80K. If you don't know what the job pays and you need \$70K, then say \$75K - 85K. This way when you arrive at the negotiation phase and they offer you less than you asked for, you can easily make a compromise.

If interviewing for a large company, then they most likely already have a salary range for that position and based on what they believe your experience to be, is what they will offer

you. If it is a smaller company, they will probably try to keep you at the lower end of the salary range, but try to make up for it with other benefits.

2. "I am currently making \$45,000 per year and based on my current level of experience I'm looking to be in the \$55,000 - \$65,000 range."

Q22. What would your past or present boss say about you?

Don't tell them your old boss was a loser even if it's true. It just doesn't look good. The interviewer is trying to see if you will be compatible with a new boss. Make sure that if your past boss is listed as one of your references, that you make an accurate statement. Professional references commonly include past managers and co-workers.

Best answer:

1. "My boss would tell you that I'm one of the most reliable and dependable people on the team and that there is nothing he can throw at me that I cannot handle."

2. "She would tell you that I'm a strong team player, a valuable asset to the team and that she was sorry to see me leave."

Q23. Why did you leave your last job?

Give a positive answer no matter what happened at your last job. Don't mention that there are issues with management or their products as this is only your opinion. Don't spend a lot of time on this question as you may give the interviewer reason to doubt your story. Don't supply multiple reasons for leaving; just keep it to one simple reason.

If you are still working, it's okay, just tell them. But if she asks why you did leave the job before this one and so on, then see the answer below. I've actually had one interviewer go through seven of my jobs and asked why I left each one. He was very inexperienced and was clearly looking to drag out the interview.

Best answer:

1. "After working there for three years, I have learned a great deal about the company and the ways we conduct business. As much as I enjoy the relationships I have developed, it is time for me to move to a more progressive organization with more opportunities and challenges that can offer me continued professional growth."
2. "I worked as a contractor for this company, but our contract expired and we did not win the new contract. Unfortunately, the new contractor had their own people and did not hire most of us from the previous contract."
3. "I was laid off due to changes in the economy."
4. "The company could not offer me the type growth that I was seeking and I chose to move to a more progressive company that better suited my career goals."

Q24. Do you know anything about our company?

Before you go on any interview, you should research that company on the Internet. Just go to their website and read about them. If you don't have Internet access in your home, then try visiting your local library as most of them offer public Internet access.

Search the company out in Google or Yahoo and see what others are saying about them. See if they have any lawsuits against them. Find out who their competitors are. Read about all of their product offerings even if they have no bearing on the open position. If they are a public company, you can easily obtain their financials from the Standard and Poor's website. Learn everything you can about them as it will only impress your interviewer.

Best answer:

1. "I know you're an industry leader and have been so for several years. I know that your products are unique and used all over the world. I know that you have had a few slumps and did not show a profit for one year, but pulled yourself out and showed a 20% profit the following year."
2. "I know that you have been in business for seven years in the Columbus, Ohio area and that you are very good at what you do. I have heard from friends and acquaintances that you are one of the best consulting firms in Columbus and that your customers adore you and your competition is envious."
3. "I have recently read about your fantastic growth and the new line of products that you are coming out with next quarter. I leaped at the chance to apply for a position here."

Q25. What did you like about your last job?

This is a very easy question to answer and you can just say about anything positive to answer it. But don't respond with answers like: I was allowed to come in late and leave early. Or, we were allowed to take long lunches and our manager did not care. Stay away from those type of answers. They may be true, but the interviewer does not want to hear them.

Best answer:

1. "My last job gave me the opportunity to develop my leadership skills by placing me in charge of several projects and supervising a team of my co-workers. I was involved in the entire lifecycle of the project and was responsible for all aspects of the project until it was successfully completed 6 months later. As a result of my good project management and leadership skills, I was placed in this role on several other occasions."
2. "My past employer truly understood the value of training and made sure there were adequate training dollars in the budget which gave me the opportunity to further develop my skills and as a result the company enjoyed the benefits of my increased job performance."
3. "I really enjoyed the corporate culture at my last job as they just let you do your job. My manager was very hands off and allowed me all the professional freedom I desired because I have a strong work ethic and my job performance was exceptional."

Q26. What are your long term career goals? What would you like to be doing five years from now?

This question is asked to see how goal oriented you are with your life and if you have a short or long term goal or plan for your career. Don't say that you don't know. This is a good chance to tell the interviewer how you progressed through your career, how you started and where you are at, today, and that you are right on track. Be specific and to the point. Again, this is a short answer question.

You can really turn this answer around any which way that works best for you. The basic idea that you want to get across to the interviewer is that you have a plan for where you are going. Most people don't, they just wander around from job to job, but not you. For whatever position or qualifications you possess, identify the next logical step for that position and use that as your answer. Try to avoid job titles and focus on gaining experience and responsibilities.

Best answer:

1. "For the past 3 years, I have been working as a systems analyst and I see myself growing by moving into more challenging roles, with greater responsibility, perhaps in management or project management."
2. "Continuing to learn and applying my experience and knowledge to grow professionally in the field of Sales and Marketing."
3. "I have already proven that I can be a leader in all of my past jobs so I'm confident that I will continue to take on new challenges that require greater responsibility. I enjoy the whole life cycle of

new projects from developing the proof of concept, creating a plan and working toward its successful completion.”

Q27. What would your good friends say about you?

The interviewer may be asking this question to see if you reveal any character flaws. Another motive the interviewer may have by asking this question is to assume that your good friends share some of the qualities that you also possess and that you may reveal these good qualities about yourself where you may not have otherwise done so.

Best answer:

1. “Good friends of mine would probably tell you that I am a trustworthy and loyal friend. They would also say that I am a friend they can count on and would come to their aid at a moment’s notice.”

Q28. How would your co-workers describe you?

This question is similar to the previous question, what your friends would say, but again, it is the intention of the interviewer to discover additional hidden qualities about yourself.

Best answer:

1. “My co-workers will tell you that I am a team player and a colleague they can count on to pull his weight whether it’s a normal day or we’re in a crunch.”

Q29. What is your viewpoint of management?

The interviewer is trying to find out what kind of leader you are. Should you ever get placed in a management role, how will you delegate the workload or teach your co-workers.

Best answer:

1. “I believe the main goal of any management position is to get things done by evenly distributing the workload to the most qualified members of the team. They also make sure that each member of the team has all the resources and training that are necessary to complete the job. They are loyal and are always working in the best interest of the company. Their job is tough; they must evaluate employee performance, empower members of the team and be able to identify those who are not pulling their own weight.”

Q30. What is your definition of success?

The interviewer is looking for work related examples of how you measure success when know you have reached accomplishment. Use a work related example and keep your answer short and to the point.

Best answer:

1. “In my opinion and as it relates to the workplace, success is a measurable variable. If you don’t measure your accomplishments, success is lost. Success can be tied to everything you do each day.

If I plan to accomplish 3 tasks before the end of the day and I do so, then I have been successful. Success simply means accomplishing what you set out to do within the parameters you specify, whether they be time, money or learning, etc.”

Q31. What is your definition of failure?

This question is really just the opposite of your definition of success. What does failure mean to you and how do you know you have failed within a given timeframe? Failure is just a perspective.

1. “For starters, failure is an event and not a person and you only fail if you quit and I’m not a quitter. I may not complete a project on time or miss an important deadline, but that does not qualify as having failed in my book. If I complete a task, but miss a deadline, I still consider it a success because I finished, but without the desired result.”

What activities did you participate in at college?

The meaning behind this question is to find out if you participated in activities that were related to your major. For example, if your major was Math, did you work part time as a math tutor? Or if your major was Journalism, did you write for the school paper?

Best answer:

1. “My major was Accounting and I volunteered my extra time to helping other accounting students, as well as working in my schools Accounts Payable Department. I learned a great deal of how to work with other people and how to more effectively manage my time.”

Why are you looking for a job in a field that’s not related to your major?

It’s not uncommon for students to change their major and after four years of college, you may only then realize that you have no interest in your chosen career. Or, you may have majored in Economics because you had no idea what you even wanted to do. It’s okay, you can’t be expected to figure out what you are going to do for the rest of your life before going to college.

You can only expect this question if your major is way off base with the position at hand. For example, if you majored in Economics and you are applying for a computer programming position, this question is sure to come up.

Don’t panic, this is not a show stopper. Just explain to the interviewer that you have made some changes to your career goals and have decided to pursue another direction because you believe you are better suited for computer programming and then explain why.

Best answer:

1. “Although I majored in Economics, I feel that my computer programming skills in Java are a perfect match for this job. All throughout college I have been working as a freelance programmer in my spare time and have written hundreds of Java based programs for small companies.”

If you could start college all over again what would you do differently?

Keep your answer short. The interviewer is merely trying to uncover a planning or goal setting weakness. Don't fall into the trap and tell them that you wish you would have majored in something else or taken additional classes. Tell the interviewer that you have no regrets and would do the same thing all over again. And by saying it this way, you are telling the interviewer that you are sure of yourself when you commit to something which demonstrates discipline and perseverance.

If you are applying for a position that does not match your major, you could then say that you regret majoring in Economics instead of Computer Programming.

Best answer:

1. "Nothing. I'm satisfied with all of the choices I made in college. I chose my major early on in high school and then selected a college during my senior year in high school and stuck with it the whole way through. I have absolutely no regrets and wouldn't change a thing."

Q32. Have you found your internships to be a valuable experience?

Of course you will only be asked this question if you are fresh out of college and have listed internships on your resume. If you can tie your internship experience to the position for which you are applying, then you will have a real edge over your competition.

Best answer:

1. "I believe that my internship at General Motors in their product development division provided me with a vast degree of valuable and relevant experience. I learned so many aspects of the product lifecycle, from the white board to the final product. And I really feel that experience from General Motors has more than prepared me for a position in your product development department."

What were your weakest college subjects?

You will probably have to come clean on this one, especially if this position requires you to submit your college transcripts.

Best answer:

1. "Though I received a 3.5 GPA, I did struggle a bit with Economics and had to devote extra study time to that subject."

2. "My major was Biology, which I excelled in as well as all my other classes, but I did struggle a bit with Foreign Literature, simply because I did not enjoy it."

Q33. What was your favorite job and why did you like it?

If at all possible, tell the interviewer of a job that is similar to the one for which you are applying. Don't tell the interviewer that you liked your last job because you could wear jeans everyday especially if you're applying at company that has a formal dress code.

Best answer:

1. “My last job offered me the professional and creative freedom to perform my job in the best way that I saw fit. This freedom was not just handed down to me; I had to earn it by proving to my manager that I really understood our business and company goals.”
2. “My last job offered me the opportunity to travel all over the world and I enjoyed visiting so many different countries and meeting people from all walks of life.”

Q34. Did you ever have a boss that you did not like or get along with?

You should answer No, even if you could not stand your boss and he was a complete idiot. They want to hear you say something good. If you start bad mouthing your boss, the only one who looks bad is YOU.

Best answer:

1. “My past boss and I got along very well. We were always on the same page with where the business was going. We shared a lot about our personal lives and formed a strong bond.”
2. “My relationship with my boss was purely business and we did get along on a professional level. We did disagree on a few things from time to time, but this was nothing more than varying viewpoints. It was actually enjoyable for me to explain a different perspective on how we should approach a project. Sometimes my boss accepted my ideas and thought they were better than his and other times he pointed out flaws in my ideas.”
3. “I usually don’t have a problem getting along with anyone, but conflict in the workplace is practically unavoidable. When I’m confronted with conflict, I will always set my personal feelings aside and act with integrity and in the best interest of the company while maintaining a professional attitude. I don’t allow conflict to anger or persuade me.”

Q35. Who was your favorite manager and why?

Even if you did not have a favorite manager, just pick someone you worked for and build them up a little; they won’t mind. The interviewer wants to hear you say something good about one of your past managers and how you complement people you have worked with in the past.

Best answer:

1. “Susan Parker was my favorite. We had a great working relationship and our varying skills sets and experience nicely complemented each other which was a win-win situation for the company. We did disagree on a few things from time to time, but this was nothing more than varying viewpoints.”

Q36. Do you know who our competitors are?

Do your homework and research the company and find out who are their competitors. This question will quickly reveal how well you conducted your research prior to the interview. If you did your homework, then you’re telling the interviewer that you are serious about this job and it’s that little extra effort that you show in the interview that will clearly separate you from your competition.

Now, if you are interviewing at General Electric, obviously they have thousands of competitors as they make thousands of products. So focus your research on a specific division.

Best answer:

1. "Yes, I work for one of them, but I have always admired your company and have always wanted to work here."
2. "Yes, I understand that Johnson Corp and Alcoa are your two biggest competitors, but don't you hold a larger market share?"

Q37. Do you feel that you are an organized person?

They are not asking if you keep a messy desk. Don't reveal any organizational flaws you may have as that will be a strike against you and if you do have your act together, don't come across as being a neatness freak either. Instead, speak of your ability to manage time and workload.

Best answer:

1. "Yes, I consider myself to be very well organized. Every day when I arrive at work, I check my email and messages. Then I plan out exactly what I am going to do that day. Even if I already know that I am going to work on the Johnson proposal, I still review my current status and set my goals for the day. At the end of the day, I review my progress and plan for the following day."

Q38. How do you manage your time?

Obviously, your answer should reflect that you are a self-starter and never put things off. They want to hear that you set goals for your work and how you prioritize them.

Best answer:

1. "I only have so many hours in the day to get my work done and I have found that if I don't create daily, weekly, and monthly goals, it seems like nothing ever gets done. I keep track of all my responsibilities and goals in a spreadsheet and review them daily. I mark down when I am first assigned a task, how long I think it will take, when it needs to be completed and how much time I will need to spend on it each day to complete the job on time. This helps me in so many ways, but mainly it keeps me on track with what is important. It also helps me from getting overbooked and promising more than I can deliver. Now, I can always deliver what I promise and be on-time."

We are a fast moving company and things are always changing, how do you think you will fit in with our ever changing and fast paced environment?

This question is best answered with an example from one of your past jobs that casts you in the spotlight showing and demonstrating your capabilities of handling change.

Best answer:

1. "Our company has 20 field sales reps and they needed to receive their email on their cell phone. This is something the IT department knows little about and has never supported mobile devices for a

variety of reasons. The request came down from the president and we needed to make this happen immediately. I was out of my element on this one and knew little about the subject, but I was assigned the entire task with a short deadline.

So I researched the various technologies that would support our needs, tested several of them and after 3 weeks of hard work I presented my findings to the sales department and allowed them to make a decision on one of the three options. Once they accepted, I soon got to work and within two weeks every sales person could now retrieve their mail from their cell phone anywhere in the world.

It was a huge undertaking and we soon learned that sales went up 11% and that growth has been directly attributed to the success of this project because sales could now provide a faster response to our customers.”

Q39. What information do you need before making a decision?

You want to tailor your answer to match the job or their corporate culture. For example, if you're interviewing to be an airline pilot, don't tell the interviewer that you like to sleep on things before making a decision. Or, if you're interviewing for a medical position, you don't want to come across as one who makes decisions on a hunch.

Best answer:

1. “Before I make any kind of important decision, I first consider all the surrounding facts, possible outcomes and the desired goal. I won't hesitate to seek an outside opinion and I generally do, but I am the one who makes the ultimate decision. Once I have all of the information and have weighed the risks of each possible outcome, I will make my decision.”

Q40. How do you react to problems?

This question is basically asking if you panic when problems arise. So make it clear in your answer that you make all attempts to anticipate problems before they arise so you can deal with them in a more controlled environment.

Best answer:

1. “I don't react to problems, but acknowledge their existence and respond to them in a calm manner. Reacting to a problem causes a panic and the problem does not get resolved until everyone calms down, accepts the situation and then focuses on a resolution.”

2. “I do everything I can to anticipate potential problems and deal with them in a controlled manner before they turn into a real problem.”

Q41. Do you consider yourself a risk taker or do you like to play it safe?

Most of us are a little of each, but be careful how you tailor your answer. If you come across as a risk taker, you may be prejudged as one who will disregard corporate policy in the future. It is best to come across as one who generally plays it safe, but is not afraid of taking risks as long as everything

has been done to mitigate the risk.

Best answer:

1. "I believe that taking risks is part of life, but by mitigating the risk, I believe the best possible solution presents itself. I'm not afraid of taking risks; I just make sure that I have considered all the facts and possible outcomes my decision will have."

If you had the chance to start your career again, what would you change, if anything?

Interviewers love hypothetical questions, because they usually make you squirm and dig yourself into a hole. You need to make it clear to the interviewer that you would not change a thing, otherwise you are discrediting yourself and the profession you have chosen.

Best answer:

1. "Not a thing. I knew that I wanted to be a Magazine Editor early on in High School. So I put a plan together and made it happen, I'm doing exactly what I love to do, and would do it all over again."

When conflict arises between you and another co-worker, what do you do?

Keep your answer short and tell the interviewer that you keep a cool head in the heat of conflict and consider all aspects of the situation.

Best answer:

1. "I'm fairly thick skinned and don't really get offended too often, but conflict is generally unavoidable and is sure to come up. When it does, I try to be reasonable and work out the issue to both our satisfaction."

Q42. If you had a problem with a co-worker, what would you do?

This of course depends on the problem, but would be best answered with a past problem you had and how you dealt with it.

Best answer:

1. "I used to work with a guy at one of our customer's sites and we were there to perform a specific job. He could hardly put in an eight hour day for the customer; instead he was talking on the phone to our other customers. Basically, he could not focus and manage his time. His lack of effort on that current project caused us to miss our deadline.

I resolved this problem by making him responsible for specific tasks and told him that we need to have these done by the end of the day and that my progress is contingent on his work. I left him alone and he completed the work. It was as simple as that and I did not need to address his supervisor or ask him to stop making calls to our customers."

Q43. How do you motivate others?

Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. You need to learn how to pull from someone's strengths and downplay their weaknesses. Finding a balance in your co-workers talents is the way you will get the job done.

Best answer:

1. "I like to motivate people by complementing their strengths. It really depends on the person and the situation. At a past job, I once worked with a guy who never pulled his own weight. Consequently, he was holding me up because I would have to rely on him to complete certain tasks. So when I needed him to drop everything he was doing and get something done for me, I would stop by his desk and chat about some of his personal interests, just to break the ice. Then I would talk about the company and drop subtle hints about his abilities and that he was under appreciated and that he was the only one who could help me. It worked every time and he always helped me."

It looks like you have been working at the same company for over 10 years, how do you think you will be able to adjust to a new and different corporate culture?

Companies don't like to hire job hoppers because the whole hiring process is expensive. It does not look good to an employer if you have had several jobs in the last five years and some employers are just as cautious if you have never changed jobs because you may lack initiative.

Best answer:

1. "Though it's true, I have been with Dow Chemical for over ten years, but in my time there, I have worked for several different managers on many projects. I have had 5 different positions and titles and worked at three different divisions in varying capacities. Working there was like starting a new and different job every three years and the experience I have gained is second to none and I'm confident that my experience at Dow Chemical has prepared me to adapt to any corporate culture."

Q44. What skills do you feel you need to advance in your career?

Your answer will vary based on your career. But try to speak about a skill that you are developing as it relates to your career.

Best answer:

1. "The skill set is always changing for people in my career and is largely dependent on manufactures of technology products. For me to remain competitive I need to keep my skills sharp and continually develop new ones. I do this by researching what technology is most important to my customers or the business and focus in on those. Then I will try and subscribe to manufacture sponsored classes to gain an in depth product knowledge."

Q45. Have you ever been in the position where you had to fire someone?

Be diplomatic. Don't say you were glad to get rid of that big jerk. Tell them that everyone who works under you is held accountable for their job responsibilities and that firing someone is a last resort after

several other attempts to rectify the situation have failed.

Best Answer:

1. "Yes, I have had to fire several people over the last five years. It's usually a result of their lack of focus and lack of commitment to the company. Most of the people I have fired were not happy in their work and always complained about being underpaid and always threatened to leave. If I am going to fire someone, I base it solely on job performance. If they can't do their job, I try to find out why and clear any obstacles.

If poor job performance persists, I will write them up and make it clear that they need to improve their job performance and that I will do anything I can to help them. But I usually find that these people don't want to be helped. After six months of poor job performance and several warnings, I will discharge them and it will be no surprise to them."

Have you ever been in the position to hire someone? Tell me about your selection process?

The interviewer is simply trying to evaluate your management possibilities.

Best answer:

1. "Yes, I've hired a few people. First, I created an accurate job description to be sure that I attracted the right people. Then I created a checklist of everything the new position requires and a list of questions I needed to ask. I would take lots of notes during the interview process and look at more than just qualifications, such as personality, facial expressions, eye contact, manners, professionalism and anything out of the ordinary. Then I'd compare all my notes, usually with another colleague, and try to make a well informed decision."

See this laptop battery on my desk? Sell it to me.

You might expect this question if interviewing for a sales position. It comes in many forms, sell me this paper cup, sell me this pencil, etc. If you're not interviewing for a sales job and you get this question, you might just ask WHY?

But if you're in sales, don't get nervous, just play along and do what you do best, sell. Proceed to ask the interviewer about the laptop battery and his needs, and just continue to do this until you can match his needs up to the benefits of the battery.

Find out the features and benefits of the product and simply match them up to the needs of the interviewer.

Best answer:

1. "Do you have a laptop computer? YES. Well, this battery will keep your laptop running when you are in your car or on an airplane so you can get more work done while you are out of the office and don't have an electrical outlet."

Are you on the clock right now?

If you are interviewing during normal business hours, the interviewer may question your loyalty to your current employer. If you are not loyal to your current company, then you won't be loyal to a new employer. Play it safe and interview before or after business hours, unless of course you are unemployed. Another option is to schedule your interview over lunch and then make it clear to the interviewer that you are on your lunch break and you may score a few points by demonstrating your loyalty.

Best answer:

1. "No I'm not, I used my vacation time and excused myself this afternoon."

Q46. Are you still working at...?

An employer would rather hire someone who is already employed than someone who is out of work. It's more psychological than anything, but there is some truth to the fact that it's easier to get hired for a new job when you already have one. If you're out of work for whatever reason, it raises a red flag to the interviewer that you may be unemployable.

If you are still working at your current job, then just tell the interviewer, "yes I am" and no more needs to be said. There are other questions that are answered in this guide that pertain to why you are looking for a new job.

If you are not working:

Best answer:

1. "No, I stopped working there about 1 month ago due to a layoff. The company laid off about 5 others in my department to cut costs. We never saw it coming and my manager said she really fought to keep me on board, but it was out of her hands. She said I was her last choice of someone that she had to let go."

Describe a typical day at your past or present job?

There is no harm here, just answer truthfully and you'll be fine. But don't start off by saying: "I usually get there 20 minutes late, grab some coffee and shoot the breeze with my buds. Then we run out and grab a smoke." You get the point here, right?

Describing a typical day may be too difficult, so feel free to expand a bit and briefly describe a typical week, thus giving the interviewer a more detailed answer and more than he expected. Either way, it's up to you.

Anticipate their needs and describe your current job responsibilities as they relate to the job description. After you answer this question, the interviewer should be thinking to herself that you are perfect fit for this job because you are already doing exactly what they need someone to do.

It is important that you tie in your daily job responsibilities to your experience and the position for which you are interviewing. The interviewer is looking for you to make this connection and it will make you a better candidate for this job. For example, if you are already a sales person and you are

interviewing for a senior sales position somewhere else, then tell them what they want to hear by anticipating their needs.

Best answer:

1. "Typically I arrive 30 minutes before everyone else. It gives me a chance to get a few extra things done while the office is quiet. I'll start my day by catching up on email and voice mail and if there are any urgent requests, I'll immediately get to work on them. Then I'll start planning out my day and making a list of everything I plan to accomplish. Since I'm in Sales, I make it a top priority, every day, to call previous customers and make sure they are satisfied with their purchase and if they need anything else. And, I always call at least five new prospects every day. By the end of the day I start planning for tomorrow."

Q47. How long have you been looking for a new job?

If you are working and looking for a job, tell the interviewer that you have been looking for no more than 6 months. If you tell them more than a year, they will question why it is taking you so long or maybe you are too picky or that you are not too serious. If you tell them a few weeks or more, and you are still working, they may think that you have more searching to do.

Compare this to shopping for a new car; would you buy a new car on the same day you started looking? Probably not, because you want to see what else is out there and you also need more

time to compare various models and prices. Looking for a job when you already have one is very similar.

If you are not working, just be honest and tell the interviewer how long you have been looking. On average it takes 120 days to find a job. If you have been looking for 6 months or more and you are out of work, you may want to trim off a few months from the actual number just so you don't raise any eyebrows.

Don't get into the reasons why you are looking for a new job, simply answer the question, though a common follow-up to this question is "why are you looking," which is covered in this guide.

Best answer:

1. "I started looking for a new job about two months ago."

Q48. Have you received or are you expecting any offers?

This is more of a closing question the interviewer may ask. If she does, then it can be a very good sign that they are serious about you. It takes a lot of time and effort to generate a job offer, so the interviewer just wants to make sure that the likelihood of you accepting an offer is high. Even if you are expecting other offers or even have some on the table, there is not much to gain by mentioning them, unless you feel the need to push the interviewer into making an immediate decision.

I have tried to force the hand of a company into giving me an offer based on the fact that I already had one and it didn't work. But under the right circumstances it could. Say for example, that a good friend

of yours is trying to get you hired at his company and has given you his highest recommendation to management. Then dropping the bomb that you already have an offer that will expire in 3 days may be the ammunition you need to get your offer approved. Don't lie about having another offer, as your plan is sure to backfire and you'll end up with nothing in the end.

Best answer:

1. "Currently, I have not received any offers."
2. "Currently, I don't have any offers, but I am expecting one within the next two weeks, though based on our discussions today, I would prefer to work here."

Give me an example of an idea that you had at your last job that reduced costs and increased revenue?

Not everyone will be able to answer this question as it's quite an achievement to come up with such a great idea and many employees are not in the position to do so. This question is similar to: what is your greatest accomplishment?

Be prepared to say something that casts you in the spotlight.

Best answer:

1. "About six months ago I was credited with increasing sales in my department by 30% simply by changing our marketing strategies. Sales were at an all-time low and we could not figure out why, so I approached our problem from a different angle, the customers' point of view and changed our marketing campaign to better focus on our products features and benefits. As a result, we ended up reducing our marketing costs and increased our bottom line."

Your boss went on vacation for a week and sent you an assignment.

You have some important questions that you need answers to before you can begin working on the assignment and you are unable to contact your boss.

Q49. What would you do?

Here is a typical scenario question that comes in many forms, but the meaning behind this question is to see how well you think on your feet when there appears to be no easy way out.

After reading this question the first time, you automatically paint yourself in a corner because you assume your boss is the only one who knows about the details of the assignment and that there is no way to get the answer, so you panic; right? Wrong. Just methodically break down the question and attack it from that angle.

Basically, you need to complete an assignment. You need answers to some questions. You can't go to your boss.

Best answer:

1. “After unsuccessfully attempting to make contact with my boss, I would ask other members of my team for assistance in getting my questions answered. I’m sure I can get some useful information from them. Then I would ask other managers who are at the same level as my boss for assistance. As a last resort, I would ask for assistance from my manager’s boss. If I am unable to get all my questions answered and depending on the importance of this assignment, I will either put it on hold or make my best guess based on everything I know.”

The person we hire for this position will be working with three senior level professionals who have been with the company for over 20 years. How do you think you will fit in with them?

How well you get along with your co-workers is the basis for this question. Having one bad apple on the team makes for an unproductive team. Explain that you were always well-liked by your previous co-workers and that you never have problems getting along with anyone.

Best answer:

1. “I can get along with anyone, so I don’t expect any personality conflicts that would hinder our working relationship. I am looking forward to learning from these veterans as they certainly know more about your products than I do, but I’m confident that my professionalism, eagerness and willingness to learn from them will help create a productive working relationship that is conducive to innovation and creativity.”

2. “I can get along with anyone so I don’t expect any personality conflicts that would hinder our working relationship. In my past jobs, I have always maintained good positive working relationships with my co-workers and was well-liked by everyone.”

What would you say to your boss if he told you to do something that was wrong and you knew if you did it, there would be severe consequences?

Will you disagree with your boss and face a reprimand? Or, will you do as you’re told and then blame your supervisor when things go wrong? It’s a lose-lose situation which is why interviewers like to ask this question, but here is how NOT to fall prey to this question.

Best answer:

1. “My supervisor would expect me to cite any unnecessary risks that result from his decisions. Though I highly respect my supervisor’s decisions, if I knew he was wrong about something and was unaware of the consequences, I would have no problem explaining to my supervisor that his decision carries certain risks with undesirable consequences.

Either he will allow me to further explain my case or have me continue as planned while acknowledging the risks I presented. If he pressed me to continue and I knew the risks were severe, then I can only assume that I did not fully explain my point of view. I would start my explanation all over again.”

Q50. How would you react to unwarranted criticism from your boss?

How do you accept criticism, especially when you don't deserve it? Do you blow up at your supervisor and tell him off? Or do you just sit there and take it and the negative marks that go along with it. Try to avoid correcting your supervisor in the company of others as this will make him look bad in front of his peers. If you need to discuss something with your supervisor, ask to speak with him privately.

Best answer:

1. "This has never happened to me, but if my supervisor was criticizing me for something that I did not deserve, I would think my supervisor was misinformed and jumping to conclusions. I would request to meet with him in private where I could better understand his comments and then explain my point of view and listen to his."

Q51. If you could, would you take your boss's job?

Are you ready for a management promotion? Are you eager to move up in the company? That's where the interviewer is going with this. Be careful how you answer. If you say no, you are sending the signal that you are not interested in advancement. Simply saying yes is the best way to answer this question. Look at it this way, when your boss gets promoted to a higher position, the company would prefer to fill his position internally. And the interviewer wants to know if you are up for the challenge.

Best answer:

1. "I would gladly accept my boss's position as long as I was adequately groomed for the position and I had the support of my boss."

Do you have any questions for me?

This is a closing question you will get after your head is left spinning from a barrage of their questioning. You should have already prepared a list of questions you plan to ask. It's a good idea to write down additional questions that pop into your mind while you are being grilled with their questions.

Take note as to which questions they may have already indirectly answered. For example, if the interviewer briefs you on their company history at the beginning of the interview and tells you how many employees they have and one of your questions is: "How many employees do you have?"

Make a note that they already answered this question so you don't appear foolish by asking it again.

See Section III, Closing the Interview, page 109, for a list of potential question to ask employers.

What are you looking for in your next job that you don't have in your current job?

The interviewer is trying to uncover your true reasons for leaving your current job. You may have already told him why you want to leave, but this is just another way of poking and prodding you to uncover the real reason you are leaving. Most people aren't completely honest with why they are leaving because they fear their answer may disqualify them for the job.

You need to find out what this job or company offers that you do not already have. It could be many things, travel distance, training, promotion opportunities, etc. But don't cite benefits as one of your reasons or reason. It would be rather shallow of you to say that my current company does not have a fitness center and I know that you do.

Best answer:

1. "Because of the size of our [company or department] opportunities for promotion are scarce and I need to have room to grow so I can take my career to the next level."

2. "We work in a very small niche and there are few customers who need our products. My customers just buy from me because we have the best product and the best price. I would like to be in a position of acquiring new customer accounts so that I can continually hone my skills of bringing in new business to the company. I feel that if I continue where I am, my sales skills will suffer."

I have told you everything I can about this position, what do you like and dislike?

Even if there is something you dislike about this position, like the fact that you may have to work Friday night once a month; don't bring it up. If you do, it just sends a message to the interviewer that other conditions of the position will soon wear on you and that you'll be complaining about half of your job.

The best way to answer this question is to briefly tell the interviewer that everything we have talked about sounds great and that you don't have any issues with the position or job responsibilities.

If there are any issues that you feel strongly about that would prevent you from accepting the job, then cautiously bring them up but also offer a solution to your condition or issue otherwise you will create a barrier.

Best answer:

1. "John, everything that you have told me about the position sounds great. I don't have any concerns or reservations about coming to work here and I think everything will work out great."

2. "John, everything that you have told me about the position sounds great, though unexpected overnight travel during the week may pose a problem for me. And in these cases, I would need at least two days' notice. Is this okay?"

Q52. How do you deal with the least enjoyable parts of your job?

This is just another way of asking what you dislike about your job, but with a little dig that forces your hand to speak negatively. But remember, the question asks how you deal with it, not what you don't like about it.

Best answer:

1. "There is always something we don't enjoy about our job. I just focus on what is important to accomplishing my job. If that means I have to do a few boring and mundane tasks to get my job done,

then I just do it without complaint and move on.”

You don't have all of the skills and experience for this job, how do you intend to make up for your shortcomings?

This question usually arises if you are fresh out of college or are crossing over into a different field. You need to explain and demonstrate to the interviewer that you are resourceful and a fast learner. Use an example from your past work experience to demonstrate your ability to handle unexpected and difficult situations.

Best answer:

1. “I have always been able to pick up new things very quickly. It's not uncommon for me to work late and weekends to make up for any shortcomings. In my last job, the technology we used was always changing and I had to constantly read and study new product material to keep our company competitive.”
2. “I have always been able to pick up new things very quickly. In college, not only did I learn new ideas and methods, but more importantly, I learned how to learn. That skill alone has allowed me to take on virtually anything I have applied myself to.”

Q53. If we offer you the job, how long will you stay here?

Don't tell them you plan on retiring from here or they simply won't believe you. And on another note, no matter how you answer this question, it offers little to no useful information to the interviewer unless you tell her that you are job hopping and you will only be here until you can find something better.

Best answer:

1. “I would plan on staying here as long as the environment remains challenging and conducive to my professional growth.”

What do you do to stay in good health?

Be honest. Don't feel you need to have a membership to a fitness club and workout every day.

Best answer:

1. “I focus on eating a good balanced diet and stay away from foods that are high in fat and cholesterol.”
2. “I stay healthy by eating foods that are good for me and by exercising at the gym 3 days a week.”

Are there physical problems you have that may prevent you from performing all aspects of your job?

This position may require you to perform some occasional lifting or walking up and down the stairs. So just be honest. If you have a disability that will prevent you from performing this job, then now is an appropriate time to bring it up.

Best answer:

1. "I am in great physical shape and I don't have any physical problems that would impair me from performing my job."
2. "I don't mind occasional light lifting, but if it's anything more, then I would prefer some help."
3. "I do have some lower back pain and I will need to get up from my chair every 1-2 hours and stretch for a few minutes, but that won't affect my job performance."

How do you maintain a good and proper balance between your family and your job?

Most if not all companies want you to maintain a good balance between work and family. Because if you're a workaholic, and spend minimal time with your family, then you will soon burnout and become less productive at work. So don't feel the pressure to play down your family, in favor of work. Having a family demonstrates a wide variety of good moral attributes.

Depending on your situation, don't be afraid to turn down jobs because you feel they will be too demanding of your time and impact your family life. Over my career, I have turned down several jobs because they required me to travel up to 25% of the time which was something I was not willing to do.

Best answer:

1. "I find that when I'm happy at home, I'm happy at work. My family will always come first. There is a time for work and there is a time to be home with my family. Sometimes family and work will crossover onto each other, but I do my best to minimize that as much as possible."

Q54. Did you have any trouble finding our office?

The interviewer doesn't really care if you had trouble, they just want to casually catch you off guard to see how you react to the question. Be positive here, even if you did have trouble. Even if it's raining or snowing, don't complain about the weather or anything else. Keep your answer short and positive.

Best answer:

1. "No not at all, the directions were perfect and thank you for asking."

How old are you?

The interviewer is not allowed to ask you this question nor any other questions that would reveal your age. I've had inexperienced interviewers ask me my age before, but it never bothered me. Sometimes I will even volunteer this information. Your age should not be an issue.

Q55. Are you married?

To make this easy and because I want them to know, I usually just indirectly volunteer this information. I'm proud of my family and children and I want them to know. I also feel that it gives me an extra edge because if they know I have a family, they will probably think I am going to stick around longer than someone who is single. But being single has its advantages to an employer, in that you'll

probably work longer hours because you don't have to take the kids to soccer practice after work.

Q56. Can you work weekends?

Be honest here, if you can, then say so. But your answer should have little to no bearing on you getting the job unless the job requires weekend work. This is not the time to start asking for extra pay or compensation time for weekend work. Discuss that after you get the job and they ask you to work the weekend.

Best answer:

1. "I don't think I am off base when I say that no one likes to work weekends, but I understand that under certain circumstances there is no other choice. I'm okay with working weekends, but prefer it to be scheduled so I can adjust my personal schedule."

Have you ever been convicted of a crime or a felony?

Q57. Have you ever been arrested?

They are not allowed to ask if you have ever been arrested, but they can ask if you have been convicted of a crime. If you have not, then just say "no, I have not."

Now, if you were convicted of a misdemeanor or felony, try to get it expunged from your record. This only works if you are a first time offender. You can find out more by contacting an attorney or the court house.

There are two ways to answer this question if you have been convicted: Yes or No. If you say yes, then you need to explain what happened.

Q58. Are you willing to travel?

This is completely up to you. You should respond by probing the interviewer further for the type and length of travel. You may only need to travel twice a year for training or you may need to travel weekly for your job. Find out the specifics and if you are willing to make that compromise.

Best answer:

1. "I don't mind some overnight travel as long as it's scheduled several days in advance."

2. "I'm currently single and don't have any family commitments and I would enjoy traveling for the company."

Q59. Are you willing to relocate?

This is completely up to you. Be honest, but you should probe the interviewer for more details. Maybe the office location you will be working at is planned to be moved in the next two years and that is the reason for this question. Find out the details and make an informed decision.

Can we contact your current employer?

If I'm still working, I don't want a prospective employer contacting my current employer because I'm sure to get fired over it.

Best answer:

1. "Since I'm still working there, I don't think it would be a good idea, but I have other previous employers listed on my references that you can contact."

Q60. Can we contact your references?

You should bring a copy of your references to the interview and be prepared to give them to your interviewer. This is a good sign if they are asking about references as it means they are interested in you. Interviewers don't waste time by calling the references for everyone they interview, just the candidates they are most serious about.

Professional references commonly include past managers and co-workers, basically anyone who has worked with you at a past job. Listing your best friends will undoubtedly yield a biased opinion of you so try to keep it professional. Listing a past college instructor is also acceptable.

Be sure to personally ask each of your contacts if it's okay to use them as a reference.

Best answer:

1. "Yes, of course, would you like a copy of them?"

Q61. When would you be available to start?

This is a closing question that you hope they ask. If they do, then it means that you are probably in the running for the position, but you're not home yet.

If you are not working, then you want to say: "immediately" or "tomorrow."

But if you are working, tell them you need to give your current employer two weeks' notice. Don't burn your bridges with your current company and leave without notice, always give at least two weeks' notice. If you feel that your employer will not honor your notice and let you go immediately, mainly because of the secure nature of the kind of work you do, then convey this to your new employer. This way, if your two week notice is not honored, you can arrange to start sooner with your new employer.

Best answer:

1. "I will need to provide a two week notice to my current employer, so two weeks from now would be a good time for me to start."

2. "Since I'm currently unemployed, I can start immediately."

3. "Since I'm currently unemployed and it's Thursday, today, how does Monday sound?"

If we offer this position to you, is there anything that may prevent you from accepting our offer?

It takes a lot of time and effort for an employer to assemble a job offer and the interviewer just wants to make sure they are not wasting their time should they decide to extend an offer to you. If they give you an offer, they expect you to accept it.

Best answer:

1. "No, nothing at all." Don't attach any conditions to your answer, for example, "No, so long as your offer meets my salary requirements." Save all the conditions for the negotiation phase that will come about after you get the offer.

Q62. Have you made any mistakes that you have learned from?

We all makes mistakes and to answer this question, you need to cite an example from your past work experience that simply demonstrates a small mistake that you made and what you have learned from it. Put a positive twist on your answer and stay away from being negative. Keep your answer short and try to show the interviewer that you yourself realized the mistake and that you corrected yourself. In your answer, don't say that your manager identified your mistake. You

need to show the interviewer that you are capable of evaluating yourself and making the necessary changes.

Best answer:

1. "Though I always strive for perfection in everything I do, I don't hit my mark every time, but to stay on target, I perform a series of checks and balances on my work and make adjustments as I go. For example, I am ultimately responsible for a variety of small projects and need to delegate certain tasks to various team members and I do this through email. I have found that delegated tasks are more likely to be completed on-time if I take one extra step after sending out my initial request. That one extra step is to personally discuss the task and its due date with each team member. It's such a small thing, but a huge impact."

Q63. Your resume shows a gap in your work history. What happened?

Don't worry about it if you have a gap in your work history of a few months or more. It's really not that big of a deal unless you haven't been working for over a year or more. There are many valid reasons why people have been unable to work and probably one of the most common is being laid off or fired from your employer.

On another note, you may have decided to leave your job and start your own business, but after 1-2 years of being on your own, you decided that you would rather work for someone else. The key factor in explaining any gap in your employment history, no matter what the reason, is to explain to the interviewer that you were bettering yourself while you were not working. Maybe you took off 3 years from work to go back to school for an advanced degree or just to finish up your undergraduate work. This is a valid reason for not working and noteworthy to mention to the interviewer.

Best answer:

1. “Yes, at that time I was unemployed for four months because I was laid off from my employer as they were closing the office where I worked. During that time, and while looking for another job, I was able to learn and master a new project management tool and several techniques that are sure to strengthen my project management skills.”

Q64. Have you ever been fired from a job?

Thousands of people all over the world are getting fired every day; don't let it bring you down.

Don't try to cover up your tracks. If you only worked for an employer for three months before you were fired, then I would strongly suggest you omit that employer from your resume. Keep in mind that a resume is not a confession and you can put down as much or as little information about yourself. If asked, you could explain the employment gap as time you took off from work to better yourself or your career or cite personal reasons for your absence from the workforce.

Admitting that you were fired is a negative mark against you and depending on your circumstances; it could raise enough doubt to keep you from getting hired. Keep your answer very short, otherwise you may arouse suspicion.

Best answer:

1. “No, I have not.” (Don't lie)
2. “Yes, I have, but it was not big deal, let me explain.” Now is your chance to briefly explain why you were fired from your previous job.

Special cases if you were fired: Explaining why you were fired can be a bit tricky sometimes. Over the years I've dealt with hundreds of clients on this topic alone and I have a lot of experience dealing with issues like this. Unfortunately, covering this question from all angles is nearly impossible to do in this book because there are too many factors and possible outcomes. If you would like to speak with me personally about your unique situation to help you figure out the best way to answer this question, then I encourage you to register for my High Performance Coaching Program. This is where you and I will sit down to figure out the best course of action for you. Here is the link to read more about this program:

Q65. Is there any reason you had so many jobs in the last 10 years?

Your main goal here is to not appear as a job hopper because job hoppers actually cost companies a good deal of money. Now, there are many valid reasons for frequently moving around from job to job with contractor work being one of the most common. Contracting pays better and contractors usually make more than if they were directly employed by the company they are working at.

It would be very easy to answer this question and tell the interviewer that you have been a contractor for the last ten years and working somewhere for 1-2 years was the norm.

If you were job hopping and only worked a short time everywhere you went, then you will need to come up with a creative answer that clearly explains your past to the interviewer while validating the many jobs you have had.

The interviewer is ultimately trying to figure out if you will stick around if hired and prove to be a valuable asset to the company. If you don't, then you are just wasting their time.

Best answer:

1. "Being a contract project manager has proved to be more lucrative than permanent employment. I have been a contractor for the past ten years and have worked at several different companies on different projects and in varying capacities. The experience I

have gained as a contractor has far outweighed the experience I would have received working as an employee. But after ten years of contracting, I have discovered what I like doing best and would like to focus my talents on a single company."

2. "I have worked for many small companies during the past ten years. Most of those companies experienced severe growing pains and were forced to downsize their staff or in some extreme cases go out of business."

3. "Though I've had several jobs in the last ten years, I've continued to move on only because many of the companies I was working at lacked an opportunity for continued professional growth."

Can you give me an example of how you set goals and the steps you go through to achieve them?

Are you a planner? Do you know how to set goals and more importantly, how do you follow through to meet your goals? That's what this question is all about. You need to give the interviewer a work or career related example of how you set goals and then how you prioritize the steps leading to your goal. Avoid using personal goals, like saving up for a new car or dream vacation. Keep it work related.

Best answer:

1. "The way I set goals is to first identify exactly what I want to accomplish and spell out why I want to reach that goal. Then I'll identify any obstacles and the people I need to work with to get there. Finally, I'll develop a plan of action that supports my goal and put a date on it of when I expect to reach my goal. I use these same steps for every goal I create."

2. "Recently, I was charged with upgrading our main business software that controlled everything about our business; inventory, accounting, payroll, etc. The upgrade would affect everyone in the whole company and it needed to be completed within 6 months. I mapped out the whole project and broke it down into several smaller steps. I tracked all the time using a project management software tool.

We put the plan into action. Our software vendor did all of the hard work, but I managed the project and kept our vendor in check. There were a few minor things along the way that I did not count on, but since we had such a solid plan, we stayed on track and completed the project on time and with no interruption to our users. It could not have worked out any better."

How do you handle competition amongst your co-workers?

By asking this question, they want to see how competitive you are and how competition affects you. Does it make you mad or happy? Do you like to see everyone else lose? Do you hate to lose? It's okay to be competitive; corporations want their employees to be competitive because it is good for their business and employee morale.

Best answer:

1. "I am a competitive person and I enjoy competing against my co-workers. It's a great feeling to have something to shoot for. It's so much fun to see who generated the most revenue each month. I probably wouldn't sell as much product if I were not competing against my co-workers. A more productive work environment is clearly the result of healthy competition."

Q66. What is your idea of the perfect work environment?

I know this question opens the door for a humorous answer, but keep your answer serious and related to what you believe to be a healthy, productive and satisfying work environment.

Best answer:

1. "Where everyone feels they have a real purpose for being there. A place where people are motivated, empowered, and truly believe in the mission statement of the company. A place where everyone works together toward a common goal, where groups and individuals are recognized for their efforts and everyone is treated fairly."

2. "A place where everyone is inspired, respected, and trusted. A place that gives its employees the opportunity to excel within the company and to reach their ultimate career goals. Where everyone works together as a team towards a common goal and are recognized for their hard work and sacrifices."

Have you ever had to utilize the resources of another department within your company to complete a project?

You need to demonstrate that you have good people skills and are able to work well with other people. No one can do it all and we always need to rely on the help of others to reach our goals. You need to answer this question with an example from your current or past job. Think of a time that you needed help from another department or if you worked for a really small company, and there were no departments, just use an individual in your example.

The bottom line here is: do you know how to ask and persuade others to help you? Remember, you are seeking help from another department and they owe you nothing and they don't report to you or your manager. Treat them well and they will probably help you. Get snippy with them and they will surely put your request on the back burner.

Best answer:

1. "Yes, it was not uncommon for me to rely on assistance from other departments. These people in other departments don't know me that well so I would carefully craft my request and email it to them,

then I would always follow-up with them in person just so they can put a face to the request. I always treat them with kindness and respect.

And if there is no real urgency tied to my request, I'll just very politely ask them if they could find the time to squeeze me into their already hectic workload. It works every time and I usually get what I need quicker than they originally promised. Sometimes I think it's easier to get things done from other departments than from my own."

Can you give me an example of a situation in which you helped motivate other members of your team to complete a project?

This is a leadership question and they want to know if you have what it takes to get things done as a manager. To motivate people, you need to draw on their strengths and downplay their weaknesses. Managers can't do it all and need to delegate project responsibilities to a Team Leader. Are you up for the task, can you take responsibility, motivate others and delegate tasks?

Best answer:

1. "I simply treat others as I want to be treated. A while back, I was in charge of having our corporate website revamped. I'm not a web designer, so I had to work with a team of programmers and graphic artists to get the job done. I was firm but fair and did not want to come across as being too easy, otherwise they would walk all over me and we'd never

get done.

I took the time to understand individual strengths and weaknesses and assigned tasks accordingly and for the most part everyone remained in their comfort zone. Instead of telling everyone what to do, I asked them, and by asking, they are agreeing and are more likely to make a stronger commitment to getting the task done. I treated everyone with respect and listened to them and made them feel like their work was the most important part of the project.

When they needed help, I rolled up my sleeves and did whatever I could. It made them feel good to see me get my hands dirty and further motivated them. I held weekly meetings and made everyone accountable for completing their work. I even bought lunch for the team every Friday, as long as the project was on schedule. I ended up buying a lot of lunches and we had a lot of fun."

Q67. Have you ever had to work with someone who did not like you?

Difficult people are everywhere and we are all forced to work with them at one time or another or even every day! They want to know if your interpersonal skills are up to the challenge of dealing with difficult people or are you just as difficult and won't even try. Are you the kind of person who just complains that Joe is a difficult person and you can't even talk to him? Or do you find ways to bring out his strengths?

Best answer:

1. “Yes, I have had to make requests of people who did not like me, but I don’t really think it was me they didn’t like. I think they disliked where they worked more than the people they worked with, but it’s just easier to take out your anger on your co-workers than on the company. When I have to work with people that don’t like me, I actually try to treat them with extra kindness.

If I go in there with the same attitude they have, then nothing will ever get done. So I try to ask questions about their personal interests, thus taking their mind off work and it does wonders. Once they see I like some of the same things outside of work that they do, the flood gates open and that’s all they can talk about. Thus, I build a personal relationship with them and consequently they are happy to work with me.”

What makes a good leader?

Give me an example of when you were placed in a leadership role and how you handled it.

Every company is looking for good leaders. The job you are interviewing for may not be a leadership position, but more than likely you will be faced with having to lead a team of your co-workers to complete a project. It is important that you know what qualities make for a good leader.

This question is best answered by citing an example from your past where you were cast into a leadership role.

Best answer:

1. “People naturally want to follow someone who knows where they are going; someone they respect and trust. A good leader is one who has a clear vision of where he is going. He will be charismatic, believe in himself and inspire you to give your best.”

2. “Recently, I was placed in charge of a project to acquire and implement a new Contact Management System for the sales department. I had to work with several groups of people that I have never worked with before. Since I did not work with these people on a daily basis and they knew little about me, it was much easier for me to gain their trust and respect.

I also did my homework and tried to understand as much as I could about this project before meeting all of the players. Doing so gave me that extra edge and I was perceived as a knowledgeable and serious leader. I instantly gained the respect of all the players by demonstrating my vision and asking for their input and using their ideas as I saw fit. I made everyone feel good about their efforts and contributions toward the project and as a result we completed the project on time and under budget.”

How do you present ideas to a group of people with varying needs and personalities?

The focus here is on your presentation skills. Are you a good communicator? Can you understand the needs of your audience and relate to everyone in the crowd? You need to know exactly what the audience wants and give it to them in a way that they can understand and relate to while keeping it interesting and to the point. The best way to answer this question is to use a real life example.

Best answer:

1. “As a sales professional, it is not uncommon for me to present to a wide variety of people. I always prepare by first understanding my audience and ask myself: who are they, what do they need, and what I can do to solve their problems. Recently, we released a new CAD software package and I was selected to give a presentation to several companies. I knew there would be several types of people there from different industries. I also knew that managers and engineers or users of CAD software would dominate the audience, but they would all be from different industries and each company would use the product differently.

I decided to keep my presentation broad and explained the most popular features and benefits of the product, thus appealing to a wider audience. But I also understood all of the features and benefits of the product so I was able to speak intelligently when asked to go into more detail. I had a software engineer standing by to address more in depth technical questions. But overall, the presentation was a success – I captured their attention and related to their needs by explaining the benefits of the product.”

How do you handle it when others disagree with your ideas? Do you stick to your guns or compromise?

This question shows your willingness to compromise. Are you a hot head? Do you think you are always right? Employers want to hire people who are open minded to the ideas of others. Even if you know you are right about something, how will you react when someone pushes you to consider an alternate suggestion?

Best answer:

1. “I am always open to suggestions from my team members. I never believe that I have all the answers and I actually encourage members of my team to challenge my ideas. By doing so, any flaws are usually worked out before the idea is ever put into production, thus saving the company time and money which makes everyone looks good.”

Q68. Are you a good leader?

Again, this question is related to your management abilities. A good manager will hand off certain tasks and responsibilities to capable individuals and allow them to delegate to other team members as necessary. A good manager also knows how to motivate members of her team and

make sure projects get accomplished on time. If you can get things done quickly and efficiently by delegating, then you have the makings for management. Employers are always looking for good leaders.

Best answer:

1. “Yes, I think I am a very good leader and I am often assigned project team leader roles. I understand the various capabilities, skill sets, and workloads of everyone in my department and having that understanding greatly helps me to accurately delegate project tasks. It’s more a matter of just matching up a team members skill set with the right project task while taking into account their current workload. I have also found that if the team member is aware of the importance or severity of

the task and its purpose, they are much more inclined to complete it in a timely manner.”

Q69. Can you create well written documents?

You have been writing your whole life. Now is the ultimate test. Excellent documentation is a strong part of any company and employers document everything. Your ability to write well can be a strong asset for any job. If this question comes up in your interview, be sure to expand on it with real life examples. Maybe you were a publisher or editor for your school paper, or maybe you created product documentation at the last place you worked. If you can write well, your skills will be in demand.

Best answer:

1. “Yes I can. In my last job, I was responsible for creating technical documentation about our whole product line. The documentation was used internally for product training and our sales staff that is all over the country would rely on this documentation for product knowledge.”

2. “Yes I can. In my last job, I was responsible for writing sales proposals. Each sales proposal was unique just as each of our customer’s needs. It was my job to tailor each proposal to match the customers’ needs to the benefits of our product. Our proposals were usually about 15 pages long. The proposals I wrote were very effective and my company was so satisfied with my work that they gave me a 20% raise.”

Have you ever been stressed out at work? How do you deal with stress in the work place?

Everyone gets stressed out at one time another. Don’t claim to be any different. Instead, focus your answer on how you deal with stress and what steps you take to avoid it. Stress is nothing more than an emotion and you need to demonstrate that you can keep your emotions in check while on the job.

Best answer:

1. “Everyone gets stressed out, but I do my best to prevent all the little things that build up and cause stress. I establish deadlines for myself and stick to them. Some of the things I do that really make a big difference and lead to a more productive day are to get to the office 15 minutes earlier every day, thus taking the “rush” out. I don’t trust things to memory and write everything down. I like to maintain my humor, even in a disaster and I always have a Plan B.”

2. “Everyone gets stressed out now and then, but stressful situations are unproductive. When tensions are heightened and I feel stress starting to brew, I take two steps back and calmly look at the whole picture. I’ll then decide what is most important and beneficial to the company and the answer clearly presents itself. It’s really that easy.”

Q70. Do you feel that you are over or under worked at your current job?

If you tell them you are over worked, you could be sending a message that you are a complainer. Conversely, if you tell them you are under worked, you could be sending the message that you are getting paid for nothing and blindly costing the company money. Your answer should describe a balanced workload, one with peaks and valleys.

Best answer:

1. "I really don't feel over or under worked as I strive to create a balanced workload. At times, my workload will peak and I may work 50-60 hours a week, but only for a short time. It's all give and take, because other times my workload is light and I will have a more relaxed work week."

Are you a creative person? Tell me about some of the things you have done that you are proud of.

Creativity is a valuable asset in the corporate world. Competition is fierce amongst rivals and companies need to utilize every ounce of creative talent they have to remain competitive and profitable. Tailor your answer in a way that shows off your creative spirit and talents.

Best answer:

1. "I think I am a very creative person. At my last job, I turned a free service we offered to our customers into a profitable service offering that brought in \$5000/month per customer. I worked for an IT consulting company and it was our job to take care of our customers' networks. We did a lot of project work for our customers, but there was no real mechanism in place to bill the customer for post project support, so we basically gave away this service for free.

I had only been working there for three months when I realized what was happening. I suggested a paid maintenance program for our customers with a monthly fee. Initially, they discarded my idea because they thought customers would never pay for this, but six months later they decided to give it a try. The network maintenance program was well received by our clients and they could not wait to sign up for it, because it basically guaranteed that experienced professionals would be watching their network 24 hours a day and making sure their systems were always ready for business."

Can you describe what you think the relationship should be between a supervisor and an employee?

Show the interviewer that you are mature enough to build and maintain working professional relationships by using past relationships with your managers as examples.

Best answer:

1. "The longer I work with my supervisor, the stronger our relationship becomes. I have had some very good relationships with many of my supervisors and feel that some of the most important aspects that attribute to the success of a good working and professional relationship are trust, good communication, and expectations. It's important for me to understand what my supervisor expects of me so I can deliver and meet her expectations. Initially, our relationships are strictly business, but the longer we work with each other, we start talking about our personal lives and families. I think it's just a natural occurrence and I believe only strengthens our working relationship."

Q71. What motivates you on the job?

Try to avoid using financial incentives such as salary or bonuses as motivators and lean toward job commitment, self-satisfaction and competition. Nobody wants to beg you to get your job

done. The interviewer needs to know if you are a self-starter and can be productive without being micro-managed.

Best answer:

1. "There isn't any one thing that motivates me and money is probably at the bottom of the list of motivators. Challenging myself works the best and even dangling a carrot in front of me helps a lot. Maybe I'll treat myself to lunch if I hit a certain milestone."
2. "I'm also motivated by internal or external competition. Nothing gets me going like a good friendly race with a co-worker to see who can generate the most revenue from a new product launch. And I thoroughly enjoy beating out my competition when a competitor of ours is bidding on the same project that we are."

Q72. Have you ever delivered more than what was expected at your job?

Going that extra mile and doing more than expected will always make you and your company look good. Doing more than you were paid to do will clearly separate you from the competition and put you next in line for promotion.

Demonstrating to the interviewer that going beyond the call of duty is something you do often is telling them exactly what they want to hear. The workforce is a competitive place and if you have a tendency to give 110%, then the benefits of doing so are sure to follow.

Best answer:

1. "I always try to do more than I'm expected to do. Not because I want to impress everyone, it's just the way I am. I don't expect my extra efforts to even get noticed, though it sure feels good when I receive a compliment. I don't hesitate to work late or even on weekends, I just constantly strive to be the best. As a result, my managers and co-workers know they can always count on me. A while back, a client of ours had an emergency and needed someone from our team on a Sunday afternoon.

They were one of our best clients and I told them they could count on me to be there. Even though I had ball game tickets -- I passed them on to another co-worker. It was a win-win for everyone. The client was happy, a co-worker was thrilled with the tickets and my manager was thrilled. For my sacrifice, my manager gave me next Friday off and a \$200 gift certificate to a fancy restaurant. I didn't even ask for anything in return. What goes around comes around."

How do you evaluate your success?

This is a goal oriented question and is basically asking how you know if you are successful or not. If you set goals for yourself and achieve them then it's pretty safe to say that you are successful. Keep your answer focused as it relates to your job.

Best answer:

1. "Success is a measurable variable and if you don't measure your accomplishments, success can get lost and that's why I use goals to measure and evaluate my success from everything to my

personal life to my career. I set short and long term goals for everything I plan to do. I decide what I want, how I'm going to get there and how long it will take. When I can check one off the list as being accomplished, I feel I have been successful and recognize my achievement. I also set several milestones along the way so I can realize small tokens of success for my long term goals, which just further motivates me to complete the overall end goal."

What criteria do you need before you make a decision to resolve a problem?

This question targets your problem solving and management skills. You want to show the interviewer that you follow certain guidelines and consider all the facts before you make a decision. Don't come across as being a hasty decision maker, because hasty decisions cost companies money. Instead describe a time at work where you had to make a tough decision, the criteria you used, and the final outcome.

Best answer:

1. "Before I make any decision, I first consider all the facts no matter how insignificant they may be. Then I review all possible courses of action, expected outcomes and the risks involved with each them. Often times, the most risky course of action is the most attractive, because it's the fastest and least expensive. If that's the case, I will make every effort to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level and make the final decision. The overall goal in any decision making process is to find a good balance between the desired end goal and the risks involved to get there."

2. "Before I make any decision, I evaluate risks. Sometimes any risk is too great. For example, we needed to apply a new program update to our main business computer. The risk was high. If the update corrupted the database, then our worldwide main business computer would be down and since we run a 24x7 global shop, we would lose

\$500,000 for every hour our system was down. Any risk was unacceptable so we spent about \$25,000 and 250 man hours creating a test environment and tested the new program update. We completely eliminated all elements of risk from the upgrade project and were sure the upgrade would work and downtime would be limited to 10 minutes during non-peak hours. The planning paid off and the upgrade project was a complete success."

Q73. What are you most proud of about yourself?

The best way to answer this question is to discuss how you set meaningful and specific goals for yourself and use a real life example in your answer. Don't use an example where something good happened to you, like winning a new car, but focus your answer around an accomplishment you achieved.

Best answer:

1. "The best thing I have ever done and something that I am most proud of is getting into the field of website design. Ever since I was a kid I have always been very creative and artistic but I didn't know what to do with my talents. I knew that trying to make a living as an artist would be difficult. It wasn't until high school that I started getting into website design and by my senior year in high school I knew

exactly what I wanted to do.

I enjoyed building attractive, intuitive and functional websites for my friends and even did some professional freelancing work. I just got so much satisfaction out of each website I created that I knew I had found my calling. I soon went to college to study all aspects of website design. Soon thereafter I landed a job with one of the top web design companies in the area. Working there for three years further refined my creative talents and sharpened my people skills. I am really proud of myself for getting so far.”

2. “I’m probably the most proud of myself for getting into small business consulting. I’ve always enjoyed helping other people, but I had no idea I would ever end up being a business consultant. The self-satisfaction I get from consulting is second to none. I truly enjoy lending my experience and guidance to small business owners and helping them remain focused and achieve their business goals. I am proud that I am able to help so many people and I really feel good about myself each and every day.”

Q74. What interests you about this position?

This is very similar to the “why do you want to work here” question, but with a little more focus. Your answer should focus on your desire for more responsibility and advancement opportunity. You are looking for an opportunity to further refine your current skills and develop new ones. If

you have not already done so, now is a good time to demonstrate your knowledge of this company and how you can contribute to its success.

Your interest in this position should be strictly professional. Don’t cite added salary, benefits or being closer to home as reasons for your interest in this company.

Best answer:

1. “My interests are twofold, I have a great admiration for this company because of their outstanding reputation in the industry and being able to take part and contribute to their success as a senior sales engineer will put me in a position to work with more people and solve a greater degree of problems than I’m currently doing in my current position.”

Q75. What do you like to do in your spare time?

You are allowed to have other interests outside of your career. If you’re an accountant, don’t tell the interviewer that you enjoy balancing your checkbook when you go home for the day. Show the interviewer that you are a well-rounded individual and that you enjoy doing a variety of things. You do not need to go into any detail, just keep it real short. I like fishing, biking and hiking. If the interviewer shares some of your same interests, then she may ask you more about your hobby. That would be great if she did as you would develop a stronger bond with her which may increase your chances of getting the job.

You may score extra points with your interviewer if you can show that your hobby complements your current job. For example, if you are applying at a music store and you enjoy playing piano, then you

have a clear advantage over other applicants.

Remember, play it safe and use main stream hobbies and avoid controversial activities like hunting or politics. Don't go into a lot of detail unless asked and you may want to avoid off-beat hobbies such as your Star Trek action figure collection.

Best answer:

1. "Outside of work, I enjoy reading and taking bike rides with my family in the parks. We also do a lot of hiking in the park, too. I really like home improvement and I'm currently in the middle of remodeling my kitchen."

Is there anything that you would like to add that we have not already discussed?

Even if you think you have already discussed everything, think again. This is a closing question and it's your big opportunity to sell yourself again. Summarize your experience and strengths to let them know you are right for the job.

Best answer:

1. "I think we have covered everything. But I'd like to add that I believe with my 5 years of experience at General Electric and my unique blend of technical and people skills that I'm a perfect fit for this position. I'm confident that I'll be immediately productive and prove to be a valuable asset to your company."

If you could take off 1 year from work and money was no concern, what would you do?

This is a very open ended question and usually comes near the end of the interview, if at all. The purpose of asking this question is to release you of work related responsibility and pressure and see what you would do. Even if you would go to Las Vegas and gamble away every last dollar, you would do well to shy away from answers of this nature. Instead, focus your answer on being with your family, starting a business or volunteering your time to an organization that you support. Be sure not to stumble around with your answer, like "maybe I'd do this" or "maybe I'd go here." Be direct and believable.

Best answer:

1. "Without a doubt, I would spend more time with my family and visit exotic places. I've always wanted to write a book on southwestern ancient artifacts and this would be great time to start. I have also had a desire to start my own financial planning business and this would certainly give me a good opportunity to start a business plan and get some of the major obstacles out of the way."

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