



Forum: Educational Consulting

Topic: Ten Tough Interview Questions And Ten Great Answers

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Many of you students will oneday have to go out and look for a job and one of the most important factors is the interview process. If you fail this then you will find it hard to find a good position...

Mental fear of the unknown is often what produces the physical symptoms of nervousness. In addition to preparing yourself physically, you also need to prepare yourself mentally. The best way to prepare mentally is to know what may be coming. Fear of the unknown can only exist when there is an unknown. Take the time to understand some of the "standards" when it comes to interviewing questions. Start preparing now

The following are some of the most difficult questions you will face in the course of your job interviews. Some questions may seem rather simple on the surface--such as "Tell me about yourself"--but these questions can have a variety of answers. The more open-ended the question, the wider the variation in the answers. Once you have become practiced in your interviewing skills, you will find that you can use almost any question as a launching pad for a particular topic or compelling story.

Others are "classic" interview questions, such as, "What is your greatest weakness?" Questions which most people answer inappropriately. In this case, the standard textbook answer for the "greatest weakness" question is to give a veiled positive--"I work too much. I just work and work and work"--which ends up sending the wrong message. Either you are lying or, worse yet, you are telling the truth, in which case you define working too much as a weakness and really don't want to work much at all. Think about it.

The following answers are provided to give you a new perspective on how to answer tough interview questions. They are not there for you to lift from the page and insert into your next interview. They are there for you to use as the basic structure for formulating your own answers. While the specifics of each reply may not apply to you, try to follow the basic structure of the answer from the perspective of the interviewer. Answer the questions behaviorally, with specific examples that show clear evidence backs up what you are saying about yourself. Always provide information that shows you want to become the very best _____ for the company and that you have specifically prepared yourself to become exactly that. They want to be sold. They are waiting to be sold. Don't disappoint them!

1. Tell me about yourself.

My background to date has been centered around preparing myself to become the very best _____ I can become. Let me tell you specifically how I've prepared myself . . .

2. Why should I hire you?

Because I sincerely believe that I'm the best person for the job. I realize that there are many other college students who have the ability to do this job. I also have that ability. But I also bring an additional quality that makes me the very best person for the job--my attitude for excellence. Not just giving lip service to excellence, but putting every part of myself into achieving it. In _____ and _____ I have consistently reached for becoming the very best I can become by doing the following . . .

3. What is your long-range objective? Where do you want to be 10 or 15 years from now?

Although it's certainly difficult to predict things far into the future, I know what direction I want to develop toward. Within five years, I would like to become the very best _____ your company has. In fact, my personal career mission statement is to become a world-class _____ in the _____ industry. I will work toward becoming the expert that others rely upon. And in doing so, I feel I will be fully prepared to take on any greater responsibilities that might be presented in the long term.

4. How has your education prepared you for your career?

As you will note on my resume, I've taken not only the required core classes in the _____ field, I've also gone above and beyond. I've taken every class the college has to offer in the field and also completed an independent study project specifically in this area. But it's not just taking the classes to gain academic knowledge--I've taken each class, both inside and outside of my major, with this profession in mind. So when we're studying _____ in _____, I've viewed it from the perspective of _____. In addition, I've always tried to keep a practical view of how the information would apply to my job. Not just theory, but how it would actually apply. My capstone course project in my final semester involved developing a real-world model of _____, which is very similar to what might be used within your company. Let me tell you more about it . . .

5. Are you a team player?

Very much so. In fact, I've had opportunities in both athletics and academics to develop my skills as a team player. I was involved in _____ at the intramural level, including leading my team in assists during the past year--I always try to help others achieve their best. In academics, I've worked on several team projects, serving as both a member and team leader. I've seen the value of working together as a team to achieve a greater goal than any one of us could have achieved individually. As an example . . .

6. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How was it resolved?

Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but certainly there have been situations where there was a disagreement that needed to be resolved. I've found that when conflict occurs, it's because of a failure to see both sides of the situation. Therefore, I ask the other person to give me their perspective and at the same time ask that they allow me to fully explain my perspective. At that point, I would work with the person to find out if a compromise could be reached. If not, I would submit to their decision because they are my superior. In the end, you have to be willing to submit yourself to the directives of your superior, whether you're in full agreement or not. An example of this was when . . .

7. What is your greatest weakness?

I would say my greatest weakness has been my lack of proper planning in the past. I would over commit myself with too many variant tasks, then not be able to fully accomplish each as I would like. However, since I've come to recognize that weakness, I've taken steps to correct it. For example, I now carry a planning calendar in my pocket so that I can plan all of my appointments and "to do" items. Here, let me show you how I have this week planned out . . .

8. If I were to ask your professors to describe you, what would they say?

I believe they would say I'm a very energetic person, that I put my mind to the task at hand and see to it that it's accomplished. They would say that if they ever had something that needed to be done, I was the person who they could always depend on to see that it was accomplished. They would say that I always took a keen interest in the subjects I was studying and always sought ways to apply the knowledge in real world settings. Am I just guessing that they would say these things? No, in fact, I'm quite certain they would say those things because I have with me several letters of recommendation from my professors, and those are their very words. Let me show you . . .

9. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?

The key quality should be leadership--the ability to be the visionary for the people who are working under them. The person who can set the course and direction for subordinates. A manager should also be a positive role model for others to follow. The highest calling of a true leader is inspiring others to reach the highest of their abilities. I'd like to tell you about a person who I consider to be a true leader . . .

10. If you had to live your life over again, what would you change?

That's a good question. I realize that it can be very easy to continually look back and wish that things had been different in the past. But I also realize that things in the past cannot be changed, that only things in the future can be changed. That's why I continually strive to improve myself each and every day and that's why I'm working hard to continually increase my knowledge in the _____ field. That's also the reason why I want to become the very best _____ your company has ever had. To make positive change. And all of that is still in the future. So in answer to your question, there isn't anything in my past that I would change. I look only to the future to make changes in my life.

In reviewing the above responses, please remember that these are sample answers. Please do not rehearse them verbatim or adopt them as your own. They are meant to stir your creative juices and get you thinking about how to properly answer the broader range of questions. There are many other questions but this gives you a idea of how to start preparing for interviewsâ€¦