



## Interviewing Questions and Tips

### **How would you describe yourself?**

This classic question can be particularly tough to answer if you have not prepared for it. Most interviewers want to know if you are able to give a brief, sequential summary of your life and career that relates to the job for which you are interviewing. You should prepare a brief presentation (about 250 words) that includes a short introduction (perhaps where you were born and raised, your education and your personality strengths), your work history, and recent career experience. Keep in mind that your accomplishments reflect your strengths; your answer to this initial question is your opportunity to point the interview in the direction that you want it to go, by focusing on your strengths.

**Remember to maintain a conversational tone** so that you don't sound as if you've memorized your presentation and are just repeating it word for word. When you have finished, ask the interviewer if he/she would like you to elaborate on any points.

### **What do you know about our organization?**

If you have done your research thoroughly, using both networking and published sources, you should be able to discuss the company's products, services, reputation, culture, mission and goals, history etc. However, you shouldn't act as if you know everything about the organization: you can't and don't. While your answer should show that you have taken the time to do some research, you don't want to overwhelm the interviewer with your encyclopedic knowledge of the organization.

Make it clear that while you have done your homework on the organization, you want to learn more from those who know the most about it – particularly the person across the desk from you. Then be prepared to ask questions.

### **Why do you want to work for us?**

Here the interviewer is probing for your motivation for joining the company. Indicate that from your study of the company, the business issues they face are the kind that excite you and match up well with your skills, abilities and past experience. Your answer should also reflect your desire to contribute to the company and grow as a professional.

### **Why are you leaving (did you leave) your present (last) position?**

This question must be answered briefly. If you get defensive or explain and rationalize to excess, you will only stir up questions and concerns in the interviewer's mind. If you were laid off as part of a downsizing or staff reductions, say so. If your move is a voluntary one, give your reasons, not in terms of your dissatisfaction at your current job, rather in terms of the contributions you would like to make at the new company. If you were actually terminated, be as positive and honest as you can.



**Why should we hire you? / What do you bring to the table that is unique?**

Your answer here should be based on your knowledge of the job, the company and the "hot buttons" or concerns that you know exist. You also should know exactly what you have to offer that meets the organizations most immediate needs.

**Talk about your record** of getting things done in areas which relate directly to the most pressing needs in the department and organization – cite specific examples of accomplishments from your resume. If you have a special skill that truly sets you apart from others, now is the time to mention it.

**What do you look for in a job? / What would be your ideal job?**

The interviewer is looking to see if you have thought about what you enjoy and what you are best at. He/she also wants to know that there is a reasonably good fit between your skills and interests and the job. Your answer should therefore be made with this job in mind. A good approach is to give a general breakdown of the types of activities in which you'd like to engage, the type of culture in which you work best (giving examples from past experience), and then to relate that to your research of the organization and the department.

**Describe a time when you had to make a difficult decision. What were the results of the decision?**

To answer this question, choose a decision that was indeed difficult and challenging; also, be sure it is one that turned out reasonably well.

Describe your thought processes, the people you consulted, and how you integrated their advice. Explain how you thought out the impact on particular individuals as well as on the company as a whole. Stress how you worked to magnify the positive results of the decision and reduce any negative consequences or reactions.

**Where do you see yourself in five years? / What are your long-range plans?**

This is one of the most frequently asked questions. Be sure to relate your answer to the company interviewing you rather than giving a very broad, general answer. Keep your ambitions realistic.

It's best to start by saying that your immediate goal is to perform excellently in the position at hand, and that you would hope to be able to grow as you proved yourself and as opportunities opened up in the organization. You might then ask the interviewer, "What kind of career path would be realistic for someone who performs well in this position?"



### **Competency based interviewing**

These are called behavioral interview questions and the interview is looking to your past behavior to be an indicator of future behavior and how you might act in a similar situation in the available position. Or you may be asked similar role playing questions in future format asking you what you think you might do in a certain situation.

When answering this type of question, be sure to:

- Describe the situation.

- Describe how you reacted in the situation or how you might go about working in the given situation.

- Describe the end result of your action and the resolution of the situation.

To determine which types of situations they may ask you to describe so you can practice and think of examples, take the skills or tasks you think are required for the position or those that are listed in the job posting.