

TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND TOUGH ANSWERS

1. Tell me about yourself.

Be thorough, but brief. Talk for no more than two minutes. Be logical. Be positive. Discuss your education and professional achievements and goals. Then briefly describe your qualifications for the job and the contributions you could make to the organization.

2. Why are you leaving your current position?

This is a critical question. Do not bad-mouth previous employers. Don't sound too opportunistic. It is good to state after long personal consideration you wanted an opportunity to expand your background/knowledge. You feel your chance to make a contribution at this time is very low due to company restructuring.

3. What do you consider your most significant accomplishment?

This can get you the job. Prepare extensively. Tell a brief story, which includes details and your professional involvement. The problem, action, resolution organization works well here. Describe a situation that presented a problem, detail what actions you took to resolve it, and discuss what the resolution was. This should be an accomplishment that was truly worth achieving. Some aspects that you could discuss include: hard work, deadlines, overcoming obstacles, important company issues and relations with coworkers.

4. Why do you believe you are qualified for this position? Why should I hire you?

Pick two or three main factors about the job and about you that are most relevant. Discuss for two minutes, with specific details. Select a technical skill, a specific management skill (organizing, staffing, planning) and a personal success story.

5. Have you ever accomplished something you did not think you could?

Show you are goal-orientated, have a strong work ethic, personal commitment and integrity. Provide a good example where you overcame numerous difficulties to succeed. Prove you are not a quitter and you'll get going when the going gets tough.

6. What do you like/dislike about your current position?

Interviewer may be trying to determine your compatibility with the open position. Stating you dislike overtime or dislike specific details, or that you dislike "management" can cost you the position. There is nothing wrong with liking challenges, pressure situations, opportunity to grow, or disliking bureaucracy.

7. How do you handle pressure? Do you like or dislike these situations?

High achievers tend to perform well in high pressure situations. Conversely, this question also could imply that the position is pressure-packed. If you perform well under stress, provide a good example with details, giving an overview of the stress situation. Try to relay the situation as a challenge rather than focusing on your ability to handle pressure. The interviewer will see you turn a negative into a positive situation.

8. Good employees can take the initiative and get the job done. Can you describe yourself in terms of this statement?

A proactive, results-oriented person does not need constant supervision. To convince the

interviewer you know how to take initiative you must describe a situation in which you were self-motivated. Try to discuss at least one example in depth. Demonstrate a strong work ethic and creativity.

9. What is the worst or most embarrassing aspect about your career? How would you have done things differently now with 20/20 hindsight?

This is a question to find out if you are introspective and if you learn from your mistakes. The right answer indicates an open, flexible personality. Do not be afraid to talk about negative results or problem issues, particularly if you have learned from them. Dynamic, high-performance individuals learn from mistakes. End your story on a positive note.

10. How have you grown or changed over the past few years?

To discuss this effectively is indicative of a well-balanced, intelligent individual. Maturation, increased technical skills, or increased self-confidence are important aspects of human development. Overcoming personal obstacles, or recognizing manageable weaknesses can make you an approachable and desirable employee.

11. What do you consider your most significant strengths?

Know four or five key strengths. Be able to discuss each with a specific example. Select those attributes that are most compatible with the job opening. Most people mention management ability or good interpersonal skills in response to this question. If you cannot describe the specific characteristics of management, such as planning, organizing, budgeting, staffing, etc., do not say you have strong management skills. If you mention interpersonal skills you should be able to clearly explain what you mean.

12. What do you consider your most significant weakness?

Show by specific example how a weakness can be turned into a strength. Balance any negative with a positive statement. Example: "I tend to be a workaholic, but have learned to better manage my time."

13. Deadlines, frustration, difficult people and silly rules can make a job difficult. How do you handle these types of things?

If you can't deal with petty frustrations you'll be seen as a problem. You certainly can state your displeasure at the petty side of these issues, but how you overcome them is more important. Diplomacy, perseverance and common sense can often prevail even in difficult circumstances. This is part of corporate America and you must be able to deal with it on a regular basis.