

Interview Tips and Questions

Interviews can be very formal and structured; most of the questions will be formed to uncover your past behavioral patterns and will be more rapid in pace. On the other hand, they can be informal and more conversational; pieces of your background are uncovered more randomly. Let the interviewer set the tone and match your style with theirs, within your own personality.

The candidate that shows the most enthusiasm for the job, opportunity and company, and who can effectively and persuasively demonstrate their competency is usually the one that gets the offer. Make your actions positive and smile a lot. Always maintain good eye contact and listen carefully to what they say - show your excitement and interest in the position and conclude the interview telling the interviewer that you are very interested in the opportunity to work for them (even if you are not sure). Your goal is to be offered the position.

Be prepared to answer specific questions regarding your short and long-term career goals; the best system you designed or worked on; your worst career mistakes, and where you see yourself in 2/5/10 years. Also, prepare for questions regarding your style and approach when dealing with difficult users. How you answer all questions must be carefully weighed; negatives are sometimes more memorable than positives.

State why you want this particular job as things are explained to you, emphasizing your strengths in those areas. Do not answer too many questions with just a yes or no, explain your answer.

Know the company's background – research the company with whom you are interviewing. Do not rely on people you know; take time to go to the library or research the Internet to find information about the company and their history. Make sure to know their Mission Statement.

Good questions to ask:

- What will be my first project?
- After that, what will be next?
- In which areas do you expect me to develop new expertise?
- How do you envision my growth in responsibilities?
- What problem areas do you have?
- Why is this position open?
- What types of people typically succeed in your department?
Within your organization?
- Avoid questions about benefits, salary and financial issues; while important, these can be handled later after the company has seen what you have to offer.
- It is ok to ask for a benefits package to review at your leisure.
- Make a list the night before; do not rely on your memory. The stress of the interview may cause you to forget key questions.

Get a good night's sleep. If your interview is early morning, get up early enough to go over your questions and company information before going to the interview. Be on time. If this means finding and mapping out a route before hand, then do it. You should arrive 3 to 5 minutes before the actual time of the interview. If you arrive early, stay in your car until time to go in. You can take the extra time to go over your notes again. Make sure you have enough copies of your resume; references and work samples to give to everyone you meet.

Sometimes clients want to conduct a behavioral interview, especially if you are interviewing with an HR manager or for a management post. Below are some of the types of questions that are asked during the interview process.

The behavioral interview is founded on the premise that the best predictor of future performance is past performance. Rather than asking you directly if you have a particular skill or trait (to which you would probably answer "yes!"), the interviewer asks you to provide an example of a time when you demonstrated the skill or trait that they are seeking. These questions will often begin with phrases such as: "Tell me about a time when..." or "Describe a situation in which..."

An effective response to a behavioral based interview question will possess certain characteristics. It will be specific in describing the example situation or problem, clearly spell out the action taken by the candidate to resolve the situation, and state the result of that action or intervention.

The following are examples of behavioral based interview questions listed under the area that the interviewer is trying to probe:

Professional or technical knowledge

Q. Describe a situation where your professional/technical expertise made a significant difference.

Decision making

Q. Tell me about a time when you took a public stance on an issue and then had to change your position?

Q. Describe a situation where you handled decisions under pressure or when time limits were imposed?

Enthusiasm

Q. Relate a scenario where you were responsible for motivating others.

Q. Describe a really tough or long day and how you dealt with the situation?

Personal attributes or qualities

Q. Tell me about a time when you set and accomplished short term, medium range and long term goals? What were the differences in your approach to each?

Unpleasant situations

Q. Relate a personal story in which you persuaded someone to do something that initially did not appeal to him or her.

Team Work

Q. Tell me about a time when, if it hadn't been for teamwork, your goal might not have been achieved.

Leadership

Q. Describe a scenario in which you have gone above and beyond what was expected of you.

Q. Describe a time in which you took initiative rather than waiting to be told what to do.

Flexibility

Q. Narrate a situation during college in which you experienced a particularly high level of stress.

Q. Describe a project or goal that has caused you frustration.

Communication

Q. Tell me about a time when you did your best to resolve a customer or client concern and the individual still was not satisfied. What did you do next?

Q. Describe an opportunity in which you've had to make a presentation to a large group. Describe an opportunity in which you've had to make a presentation to a small group.

What did you do differently to prepare for each?