

## For Candidates...

### Interview Questions:

Be prepared to encounter most of the following "tough questions" in your interview, such as:



- "Why do you want to work here?" - To answer this question, you must have researched the company. You need to reply with the company's attributes as you see them. Cap your answer with reference to your belief that this can provide you with a stable and happy work environment - the interviewer's company has that reputation - and that such an atmosphere would encourage your best work.
- "What kind of experience do you have for this job?" - This is a perfect opportunity to sell yourself, but before you do, be sure you know what is most critical to the interviewer. The interviewer is not just looking for a competent Director, or Manager; they are looking for someone who can contribute quickly to current projects. When interviewing, companies invariably give a broad picture of the job, but the person they hire will be someone who can contribute to the needs of the business in the first few months. Only by asking will you identify the areas of your interviewer's greatest urgency and interest. If you do not know the projects you will be involved within the first six months, you must ask. Level-headedness and analytical ability are respected, and you will naturally answer the question more appropriately.
- "What did you like/dislike about your last job?" - Interviews may start with a preamble by the interviewer about his company. If this happens pay attention; this information will help you answer the question. Any statement the interviewer makes about the job or corporation can be used to your advantage. Use this to highlight all your positives points. Note: criticising a previous employer is a warning sign that you could be a problem employee. Keep your answers short and positive.
- "Why are you leaving your present position?" - If your current company is not meeting your expectations, you can often explain this in a positive way. "I need to be challenged to develop my potential further. I'm interested in additional responsibility and new opportunity, which unfortunately are limited at (name of current employer) because of (company size/limited product line/company restructuring or downsizing). The reputation and market focus of (name of prospective employer) offers many opportunities for someone with my training and experience. It's the ideal environment I've been seeking."
- "How long would you stay with the company?" - The interviewer might be thinking of offering you a job. But, employers are aware that the marketplace is such that new hires often do not stay with the company more than two years. Your reply might be:

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"I would really like to settle down with this company. As long as I am growing professionally, there is no reason for me to make a move."

- "Have you done the best work you are capable of doing?" - Say "yes" and the interviewer will think you're a has-been. As with all these questions, personalise your work history and include the essence of this reply: "I'm proud of my professional achievements to date, but my best is yet to come. I am always motivated to give my best efforts, and there are always opportunities to contribute when one is alert."
- "How long would it take you to make a contribution to our company?" - You are best advised to answer this question with a question, be sure to qualify the question i.e. In what area does the company need a rapid contribution? Or, do you have a special project in mind you will want me to get involved with?" This response could lead directly to a job offer, but if not, you already have the interviewer thinking of you as an employee.
- "What would you like to be doing five years from now?" - The safest answer contains a desire to be regarded and a true professional and team player.
- "What are your biggest accomplishments?" - Keep your answers job-related, a number of achievements should spring to mind. Do not exaggerate contributions to major projects. You might begin your reply with: "Although I feel my biggest accomplishments are ahead of me, I am proud of my involvement with...I made my contribution as part of that team and learned a lot in the process. We did it with hard work, concentration, and an eye for the bottom line." Always remember to quantify your achievements.
- "Can you work under pressure?" - You might be tempted to give a simple yes or no answer, but don't. It reveals nothing, and you lose the opportunity to sell your skills. Actually, this common question comes from an unskilled interviewer, because it is closed and does not give you the chance to elaborate. Whenever you are asked one of these, provide a brief yet comprehensive answer and seize the opportunity to sell yourself. For example, you could say: "Yes, I usually find it stimulating. However, I believe in planning and time management in order to reduce panic.
- "How much money do you want?" - This is a knockout question: give the wrong answer, and you will immediately be eliminated. It is always a temptation to ask for the moon knowing you can come down, but that is a poor approach. Generally, companies have salary ranges for every job; so giving an ill-considered answer can reduce your job-offer chances to zero. The solution? Try: "Currently/in my last job my package is... I'm interested in this opportunity and I will seriously consider any reasonable offer you care to make me."
- "What are you looking for in your next job?" - Avoid saying what you want the company to give you. You must say what you want in terms of what you can give to your employer. The key word in the following example is "contribution": "My experience at XYZ PLC has shown that I have a talent for motivating people. This is demonstrated by ... I am looking for an opportunity to continue that kind of contribution, and a company where I can develop in a professional manner."

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- "Describe the most difficult problem you've had to deal with?" - This is a favourite tough question. It is designed to probe your professional profile; specifically, your analytical skills: "Well, I always follow a five-step format with a difficult problem. One, I stand back and examine the problem. Two, I recognize the problem as the symptom of other, perhaps hidden, factors. Three, I make a list of possible solutions to the problem. Four, I weigh both the consequences and cost of each solution and determine the best solution. And five, I go to my CEO/Director/Manager, outline the problem, make my recommendation, and ask for my advice and approval." Then give an example of a problem and your solution.
- "What would your references say?" - You have nothing to lose by being positive. If you demonstrate how well you and your boss get along, the interviewer does not have to ask, "What do you dislike about your current manager?" Note: The higher up the corporate ladder you climb, the more likely it is that references will be checked.

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