



## Typical Questions Clients Ask

You should give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. When possible, use questions as a basis for developing information that you want to make sure is presented. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way. Describe jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, and promotions. Include short stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them. Describe the results you achieved.

Typical interview questions generally fall into eight categories: Background, Personality, Motive, Job Satisfaction, Past Performance, Compensation, Tougher Questions, Behavioral Interviewing. Examples and suggested responses follow:

### Background Questions

#### **Tell me about yourself.**

Answer these questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position. Keep responses concise and brief. Avoid being derogatory or negative about previous jobs and bosses.

“Tell me about yourself” means, “Tell me about your qualifications”. Prepare a one-to-two minute discussion of your qualifications. Start with education and discuss your experiences. Describe your performance (in raises, promotions, innovative designs, sales volumes, increased profits, etc.)

#### **What are your greatest strengths?**

Interviewers like to hear abstract qualities. Loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, fast-learner, technical skills, politeness, and promptness, expressed in concrete terms are good examples. Avoid the simple generalization “I like people”. It’s not a good answer.

#### **What are your greatest weaknesses?**

Don’t be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won’t be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all your imperfections. (Do not state “not being able to go work on Mondays”, or “coming in late”, etc.). Present your weaknesses as professional strengths, (i.e., “Sometimes work too hard to make sure things are done accurately”).

### Personality Questions:

#### **What do you do in your spare time?**

Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well-rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies.



What do other people say about you?

**Motive Questions:**

Answer motive questions enthusiastically. Show the interviewer that you are interested in the position and that you really want the job. Remember to maintain eye contact and be sincere.

**How can you contribute to this company?**

Be positive and sell! Strong technical skills, enthusiasm, and desire to complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses.

**Why should I hire you for this position?**

Explain your qualifications and how they fit the available position. Address your interest in the job and the field and why you enjoy this style of work. Emphasize your ability to successfully perform the duties required.

**Why do you want to work for our firm?**

Make a compliment about what the company does, its location, or its people. Other positive remarks might be about the company's product or service, content of the position or possibilities for growth or advancement. Research about the company is important here.

**Where do you hope to be in five years?**

Use conservative growth positions that clearly show you plan to be there in five years, and that their investment in you will pay. Be sure that you know what can and cannot be achieved by the ideal candidate in this position. Never tell the interviewer that you feel you will be more successful than they are, but do show a strong desire for promotions.

**What interests you most about this position?**

Teasing the interviewer with a truthful one or two-word answer such as, "the challenge" or "the opportunity", will force them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have the chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the company.

**How long do you plan to be with company?**



As with marriage, most employers expect a till-death-do-us-part attitude, but they can be equally attracted to the candidate with ambition and candor. “As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field”, is a reasonable response.

### **What are your career goals?**

Your answer should depend on a specific time frame:

Short term – “I want to be the best in my current position, while learning additional responsibilities. This, in itself, will assure my commitment to the firm and raise me to the next level of responsibility and promotion. I see myself wanting to stay technical but learn the necessary skills to lead people.

Long term – “After proving my abilities, I see myself in a firm with the possibility of moving into a level of management that allows me to keep my skills sharp.

### **What are you doing to achieve your goals?**

I look at continued learning as the key to success. I continue my education, as you can see from my resume, by taking company educational courses, when offered, and college courses. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep me informed about the current and future directions in my field. When possible, I participate in professional organizations in my field.

### **Job Satisfaction Questions:**

Why did you leave your previous employer? NEVER speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Your answer will probably be checked. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities and recognition.

### **What did you like most about your previous position?**

### **What did you like least about your previous position?**

An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. You are also providing clues about the environment that you seek. What you liked most can include a strong teamwork atmosphere, high-level of creativity, attainable deadlines. What you liked least should include any situations that you are unlikely to encounter in your new position.

### **Why are you looking for another position?**

Again, be positive. “I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at Corporation. There are a lot of good people over there. But I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities



for growth, and recognition. I am looking for a team to join where I can make real contributions and advance my career.”

**What do you think your employer’s obligations are to you?**

Interviewers listen for employees who want a positive, enthusiastic company atmosphere with the opportunity to advance. Such a person, they surmise, has motivation and staying power.

**Are you applying or interviewing for any other positions?**

In your answer, show that your search is geared for similar positions. This demonstrates a welldefined, focused objective. Make it known that your talents are applicable to other businesses and that you have explored ways to maximize your potential and are serious about finding the perfect opportunity. Don’t give an indication that you are just shopping.

Past Performance Questions (To determine behavior based on past examples)

**What kinds of decisions are most difficult for you?**

Again, be truthful and admit that not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice that you can to make the best decision possible.

**What causes you to lose your temper?**

Everybody has a low boiling point on some particular issue. Pick one of yours (something safe and reasonable). People who are late to meetings, blame shifting, broken appointments and office “backstabbing” are suitable responses. Don’t say that you never fly off the handle. You won’t be believed.

**What are your greatest accomplishments?**

Be ready to recite one or two stories that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. A special project that you pioneered at your previous job, cutting department expenses, increasing productivity or receiving frequent promotions.

**How do you feel about a younger male or female boss?**

A question like this usually means that your boss will either be younger or of the opposite sex or both. Be certain that if you register any concern, you will probably not be hired. Explain that their age or sex is of no importance to you. You are only interested in their capability and what you can learn from them.



**What kind of Manager are you?**

Again, no one is perfect. Showing that you tackle every assignment with all of your energy and talents is admirable but mention that you also learn from your mistakes.

**Salary Questions:**

Salary discussions should be avoided, if possible.

**What type of salary do you have in mind?**

Do not state a starting figure. A suitable reply: “ I am looking for the right opportunity and I am confident that if you find me to be the best candidate for this position, you will extend to me your best and most fair offer.”

**What is your current salary?**

Answer truthfully. Remember that “salary” includes base, bonuses, commissions, benefits, and vacations as well as sick days and personal days. Also, if you are due a raise in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect.