

Questions You Can Expect

1. Tell me about yourself.

This is an open-ended question that gets you talking. The interviewer listens to the way you express yourself and probably how you elect to answer. It is not unusual to hear individuals respond to such a question with revealing personal information. But please understand that you *need not* reveal anything personal in your response. Simply present an idea of your personal background on place of birth, educational information, and professional experience. You should speak no longer than 2 minutes in response to this question.

2. What are your strengths?

Some Idea of what you do best is a good way to respond to this question. Obviously, if you have knowledge about what is important to this company/individual, and you happen to possess a strength that corresponds to their interests/priorities, mention that. Speak clearly and confidently. This is easier when you are speaking of the skills/abilities in which you excel.

3. What are your weaknesses?

Obviously, we all have developmental needs. What the interviewer needs to know is how you are addressing whatever it is you feel necessary to improve. It is recommended that you make your need “sound like” an asset to the company, but this is not critically important. An example might be: “I have a tendency to expect a great deal of myself as well as of my people.” The assumption, is, of course, that although that may be something you must work to control, having “high expectations” from the corporation’s perspective is not a negative.

4. Why are you interested in a position with our company?

Do the research. Say something specific that reveals you are interested and intelligent enough to have “done your homework.”

5. What was your most significant accomplishment?

Of all those you are proud of, it makes good common sense to select the one which responds most appropriately to that company’s needs. Express it in terms of what you did, how you did it, and how it contributed to the company’s success. You might also choose an accomplishment that specifically speaks to your own self-development, such as completing a degree, etc., particularly if you have achieved it while working full time.

6. What do you know about our organization?

Again, speak to specificity. Remember, you are interviewing with this company because there is a reason you wish to work for them. Know what it is and express it knowledgably.

7. How would you describe yourself?

The point here is to be honest, open and confident. Naturally, if you are able to slant your response in the direction of their needs/desires, do so.

8. Why did you leave your last position?

If your exit had to do with a corporate downsizing, restructure or “re-engineering,” say so, but be careful not to sound negative or make disparaging comments about your previous employer or supervisor. Don’t be defensive; lots of people are affected by corporate decisions to eliminate jobs or restructure the organization.

9. What are your career goals?

Employers usually like to know a little about your career aspirations. Information on the direction of your intentions is helpful to the perspective employer. It is increasingly important the higher up you are on the “corporate ladder”.

10. Have you ever fired anyone?

This provides not only another aspect to your experience, but leads to discussions on how you handled particular sensitive personnel issues, how you felt about it, and tells a bit about your attitudes and management philosophy.

11. How long would it take you to become productive in this job?

This is a good question. And if you have considerable experience that allows you to assume responsibilities with little disruption to workflow, this is your time to sell yourself. This could easily become the “tie breaker” between two equally qualified candidates.

12. What have you done to improve yourself during the last year?

Self-development is more important with some companies than with others, but it is generally pertinent as it speaks to your willingness to seek out and acquire than which you feel will add to your marketability and attraction as a qualified contributor to the workplace.

13. What did you like best about your last position?

Like many questions, the answer to this one reveals something about you and the kinds of activities that represent job satisfaction to you.

14. What did you like least about your last (current) position?

Job “dissatisfiers” represent activities that you probably should avoid as they create some degree of anxiety. Be careful how you respond, but you need to consider the honest truth, particularly if the position you are considering involves a good deal of what you do not like to do and/or you will be engaged in such activities for a long time (i.e. opportunity for promotion is a long way down the road.)

15. Tell me how you resolved a difficult problem in your past.

Again, a question that gets you talking. You need a plan for these kinds of questions so that you do not get caught off guard. Have a ready example or two, and select the most pertinent to this position and/or company’s needs.

16. Describe your leadership style.

Whether or not you are in management, stating a position or philosophy is important, particularly as the workplace moves more and more toward team orientation and the self-managed work group concept. Think of how you have performed in the past, whether managing your household, orchestrating your way toward a college education or some on-the-job accomplishment.

17. You are overqualified for the position, aren't you?

Nowadays, we have many individuals out there on the job market as a result of a company's decision to do more with less. It is a recurring theme and somewhat of a trend. If this issues arises, it is because there may be a question of your commitment to the task, given your obvious experience. In other words, will you be taking this position on an interim basis, to fill a need, while you continue to look elsewhere for what you "really want," either in monetary remuneration or position. You ought to explain that:

a) You are interested in working for this company, that you accept the fact that you will need to "begin again," for the time, as long as you perform well, meet and even exceed expectations, you might look at (and expect) promotional opportunities.

OR

b) This is a conscious decision, given that you are "starting over" in a related but dissimilar position.

OR

c) Money is not nearly as important as doing something you love to do at this juncture in your life.