



## Job Interview Preparation

### Research the Organization

- Explore the organization's history, as well as present initiatives and future developments. Then relate your strengths and abilities to the organization.
- If possible, speak with professionals within the organization to develop an inside look into the workplace.

### Prepare Questions

- Compile a list of possible interview questions. This document includes common questions and appropriate answers.
- Create a list of questions you want to ask during the interview. For example:
  - What is the immediate need on your team that you are hoping to fill with this position?
  - What projects can I contribute to right away?
  - How does your organization define success?
  - How would you describe a typical day with this team?

### Prepare Answers

- Research common salaries for your job in your location, decide how much you would like to make, and determine how little you are willing to accept.
- Set aside time to prepare answers to possible questions.
- Prepare three stories about yourself at former jobs that you can share if they come up during the interview.

### Practice

- Practice the interview with a friend (or two).
- Take a test drive over to the interview location to get an idea of the route and traffic.

### Interview Questions

The following interview questions are common across all fields. When interviewing, always be prepared to list and describe *specific examples* related to the question. Examples should relate to previous employment; however schoolwork and other extracurricular activities are also appropriate.

#### • **Tell me about yourself.**

Have a short statement prepared in your mind, however be careful it does not sound rehearsed. Limit it to work-related items unless instructed otherwise. Talk about things you have done and jobs you have held that relate to the position you are interviewing for. Start with the item farthest back and work up to the present.

#### • **Why should we hire you?**

Point out how your assets meet what the organization needs. Do not mention any other candidates to make a comparison.

#### • **What do your co-workers say about you?**

Be prepared with a quote or two from co-workers. Either a specific statement or a paraphrase will work. For example: *Jill Clark, a co-worker at Smith Company, always said I was the hardest workers she had ever known.* It is as powerful as Jill having said it at the interview herself.

- **What experience do you have in this field?**

Speak about specifics that relate to the position you are applying for. If you do not have specific experience, get as close as you can.

- **What is your greatest strength?**

Numerous answers are good, just stay positive. A few good examples: Your ability to prioritize, Your problem-solving skills, Your ability to work under pressure, Your ability to focus on projects, Your professional expertise, Your leadership skills, Your positive attitude.

- **What do you know about our organization?**

Research ahead of time. Find out the organization's history, current plans and programs, and future endeavors. What are current issues facing the organization and who are the major players?

- **Why do you want to work for this organization?**

This may take some thought and should be based on the research you have done on the organization. Sincerity is extremely important here and will easily be sensed. Relate it to your long-term career goals.

- **Explain how you would be an asset to this organization.**

Your answer gives you a chance to highlight your best points as they relate to the position being discussed. Give a little advance thought to this relationship.

- **Why do you think you would do well at this job?**

Give several reasons and include skills, experience, and interest.

- **What have you done to improve your knowledge in the last year?**

Try to include improvement activities that relate to the job. A wide variety of activities can be mentioned as positive self-improvement.

- **Are you applying for other jobs?**

Be honest but do not spend a lot of time in this area. Keep the focus on this job and what you can do for this organization. Anything else is a distraction.

- **What kind of salary are you looking to receive?**

Instead of answering this question, say something like *That's a tough question. Can you tell me the range for this position?* In most cases, the interviewer, taken off guard, will tell you. If not, say that it can depend on the details of the job. Give a wide range if pressured to answer.

- **Are you a team player?**

You are, of course, a team player. Be sure to have examples that show how you perform for the good of the team rather than for yourself. Do not brag, just say it in a matter-of-fact tone. Specify which position you prefer (team member, leader) and explain why you prefer that role.

- **How long would you expect to work for us if hired?**

Specifics here are not good. Examples include, *I'd like it to be a long time—or—As long as we both feel I'm doing a good job.*

- **Why did you leave your last job?**

Stay positive regardless of the circumstances. Never refer to a major problem with management and never speak ill of supervisors, co-workers, or the organization. If you do, you will be the one looking bad. Keep smiling and talk about leaving for a positive reason such as an opportunity, a chance to do something special, or other forward-looking reasons.

- **What irritates you about co-workers?**

Be careful answering this question. Think real hard but fail to come up with anything that irritates you. A short statement that you seem to get along with folks is great.

- **What would your previous supervisor say is your strongest quality?**

There are numerous possibilities: Loyalty, Energy, Positive attitude, Leadership, Team player, Expertise, Initiative, Patience, Hard work, Creativity, and Problem solver.

- **What qualities do you look for in a supervisor?**

Be generic and positive. Safe qualities include knowledgeable, a sense of humor, fair, loyal to subordinates, and holder of high standards. All bosses think they have these traits.

- **Tell me about a problem you have had with a supervisor and how you resolved it.**

This is a test to see if you will speak ill of your boss. If you fall for it and share a problem with a former boss, you may well end the interview right there. Stay positive and develop a poor memory about any trouble with a supervisor.

- **What has disappointed you about a job?**

Don't get trivial or negative. Safe areas are few but can include: Not enough of a challenge, you were laid off in a reduction, company did not win a contract, or you weren't given enough responsibility.

- **Tell me about your ability to work under pressure.**

You may say that you thrive under certain types of pressure. Give an example that relates to the type of position applied for.

- **Describe your work ethic.**

This answer calls for more than *a strong work ethic*. One's work ethic involves their attitude, behavior, respect, communication, and interaction with their coworkers and their place of employment. Positive qualities include dedication, integrity, responsibility, discipline, teamwork, and quality. Explain your work ethic in detail and give examples.

- **What motivates you to do your best on the job?**

This is a personal trait that only you can say, but good examples are: challenge, achievement, and recognition.

- **Are you willing to work overtime? Nights? Weekends?**

This is up to you. Be honest.

- **Would you be willing to relocate if required?**

You should be clear on this with your family prior to the interview if you think there is a chance it may come up. Do not say yes just to get the job if the real answer is no. This can create a lot of problems later on in your career. Be honest at this point and save yourself future grief.

- **Describe your management style.**

Try to avoid labels. Some common labels such as progressive, salesman, or consensus could have several meanings or descriptions. The situational style is safe, because it says you will manage according to the situation, instead of one size fits all.

- **What have you learned from past mistakes on the job?**

Make it small, a well-intentioned mistake with a positive lesson learned. An example would be working too far ahead of colleagues on a project and thus throwing coordination off.

- **Do you have any questions for me?**

Always have some questions prepared. Questions prepared where you will be an asset to the organization are good. How soon will I be able to be productive? And what type of projects will I be able to assist on?