

How to Answer Tough Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself.

Stick to your resume. Do not discuss personal interests, hobbies, or how you feel about the current state of politics in America.

Where do you see yourself five years or ten years from now?

Be careful; this is an example of a "Trick" question at its best. Hiring managers routinely ask this question because they are looking for someone who knows what they want to do and who is focused on achieving measurable professional goals.

Do not answer "in 5 years; I want to be in your role" Instead, emphasize the immediate role in which you are interviewing. *"While I do have a series of goals that I want to achieve, I want to focus on meeting your immediate needs in this role. You are hiring a person to do this job and achieve immediate results. Over time, as I remain productive, we can discuss additional opportunities for professional growth that will benefit the company and myself."*

What are your strengths?

Thoughtfully pick two or three skills you have that will bring maximum benefit to the company. Offer specific evidence and avoid cliches or generalities. Then describe how these strengths can benefit the company.

What are your weaknesses?

Do not treat this as a counseling session where you spill the beans on how dysfunctional your home life is or was. Conversely, this is also not the time to act your like you do not have weaknesses either. The best way to address this question is to hit on a professional weakness that you have already improved up or are engaged in improving.

"I tend to take on too much on my own. I am working on this by delegating more." or "I have high expectations of myself. As a result, I have, in the past, projected those same expectations onto others. Over the years, I have learned to accept people where they are, and if I can help them achieve their goals, usually they will help me achieve my goals."

What type of decisions do you have difficulty making?

Show that you are generally decisive but mention that there are situations that not appropriate for the decision to be made just by you.

"I have difficulty making decisions that should also involve others on my team. I want input from my team when at all possible."

What are the top reasons for your success?

Do not toot your own horn and act and arrogant but rather try to emphasize how you worked in a team to achieve success. Keep in mind that employers are often looking for team players and not lone wolves. An excellent response to this question may relate to a boss or co-workers that you worked with to address a specific goal. After answering this question, use a followup question like "How important is teamwork in this role?"

We're considering other candidates for this position. Why should we hire you rather than someone else?

Face it, interviewing is a process that involves candidates other than you. Do not be foolish by thinking you are the only game in town. When it comes to other candidates, you don't know anything about them. You can only represent you, so describe yourself and focus on what strengths you bring to the table. These strengths should be consistent with five things most employers are looking for in a candidate: coachability, aptitude, professionalism, passion, and likability. Chemistry can go a long way in the interview process. Be prepared to summarize in 1 minute why you are the best candidate for the job. Also, let the employer know you want the job, and that you will enjoy working with them. Anything short of this may show a lack of interest or enthusiasm for the job.

Why do you want to work for our company?

There are moments during an interview that get to answer their question with a question, and this is one interview question you can do this. Yes, you should give 1-2 compelling reasons why you believe you would be right for the role, but followup by asking them why they were interested in interviewing you for the position. Their response will give you the ability to reinforce what they already perceive as your strengths. Remember, you are interviewing them as well!

Tell me what you know about this company.

Research and do it again!

Maybe you were exposed to the company in the past by having a partnership of sorts, or perhaps they were your competition. Go online! Get the particulars about the history of the company, the leadership, and even how their stock is performing. Another way to address this is to reference conversations with current or past employees that you have encountered. Connecting with them on LinkedIn is always smart.

What other firms are you interviewing with, and for what positions?

Resist trying to impress the employer by naming some large companies in unrelated industries with entirely different types of jobs. This type of answer shows you are not dialed-in on a specific career path or specialty. What employers want to hear is that you're interviewing for similar jobs in the same industry at related businesses (such as their competitors). Answering like this shows that you are committed to finding a role in your field of interest and won't be easily tempted to be drawn away to another company.

What would you do if one of our competitors offered you a position?

The hiring manager is trying to determine whether you are genuinely interested in their company, or if you are data mining for information. Be candid about your perceptions of the company you are interviewing for at the moment compared to the competition. Explain which company you believe is the most viable and why? Don't forget to ask the interviewer for his or her opinion as well.

Why should I hire you?

Hopefully, you already understand why they were interested in interviewing you in the first place and revolve your answer around those points of interest. Offer three enthusiastic examples that explain why you're talking to this particular company. Then follow this up with what you believe you can offer the company by being hired in the immediate and long term.