

Interviewing: Typical Questions

TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me about your self.
- Why do you feel that you will be successful in...?
- Why did you decide to interview with our organization?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- Why did you choose your major?
- What course did you like best? Least? Why?
- Tell me about your extra-curricular activities and interests.
- What have been your most satisfying and most disappointing school or work experiences?
- What did you learn from your part-time or summer job experiences?
- What supervisory or leadership roles have you held?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Did (do) you have plans for graduate study?
- How do you spend your spare time?
- Why should we hire you?
- Describe briefly your philosophy of education or nursing (etc.)
- Tell me about your practice teaching or clinical experiences (etc.)
- Why did you choose to become a teacher, nurse...?
- How would last supervisor describe you?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years?
- How do you work under pressure?
- Why do you want to leave your current job?
- Describe one or two achievements which have given you the most satisfaction.
- In what ways would you contribute to our organization?

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Tell me about a time when you....

- Worked effectively under pressure.
- Handled a difficult situation with a co-worker.
- Were creative in solving a problem.
- Missed an obvious solution to a problem.
- Were unable to complete a project on time.
- Persuaded team members to do things your way.
- Wrote a report that was well received.
- Anticipated potential problems and developed preventive measures.
- Had to make an important decision with limited facts.
- Were forced to make an unpopular decision.
- Had to adapt to a difficult situation.
- Were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.
- Were disappointed in your behavior.
- Used your political savvy to push a program through that you really believed in.
- Had to deal with an irate customer.
- Delegated a project effectively.
- Surmounted a major obstacle.
- Set your sights too high (or too low).
- Prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
- Got bogged down in the details of a project.
- Lost (or won) an important contract.
- Made a bad decision.
- Had to fire a friend.
- Hired (or fired) the wrong person.
- Turned down a good job.

TOUGH INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

Here are some tips for those tough interviewing questions:

“Tell me about yourself “

A common opener, this broad question can “throw” many interviewees. It is in fact a “sell me” invitation. Develop a brief summation of your background leading into your interest and desire to work for an organization as well as your qualifications for the position.

“Why should we hire you?”

From your research, you should have gathered information on entry level opportunities within the organization and necessary qualifications for those positions. From your own self analysis you will have gained insight into your strengths and accomplishments. Mention key functions of the job and discuss your skills in relation to these functions. Use experiences from previous jobs, internship, and activities as examples to support your answer.

“What are your long range goals?”

This Question is popular because it gathers a lot of useful information: maturity, foresight and realistic outlook, degree of preparation in career planning, and commitment to the organization and profession. In your research determine what position you could reasonably reach in five years. Speak to others who have successfully advanced themselves in the organization or profession. Express your desire and capability to grow within the organization. While you may be unsure of your future plans, demonstrate your knowledge of potential career paths.

“What is your greatest weakness?”

Everyone has a weakness but remember not to answer in a negative way. Turn your weakness into a positive thing. For example: “because I tend to procrastinate, I have learned to work well under pressure and to always get work done on time”.

“Tell me about your schooling”

The key to this question is to keep your reply positive. Speak well of your alma mater. You are a product of your school’s educational programs. Be prepared to address questions about low grades, major changes, etc.

QUESTIONS TO ASK EMPLOYERS

Ask only those questions to which you want an answer. This may seem obvious, but many people will ask questions merely to impress the interviewer. Why waste your time and theirs when they are likely to see through your smoke-screen?

Ask Questions that reveal the depth of your research and your interest in the job. In other words, don't ask questions that are easily answered on the company web-site or in the job description. (You do have a copy of the job description, don't you?)

Don't ask questions about vacation or other benefits until you are offered the job. If you do ask, the interviewer will be inclined to think that you are more interested in the money and benefits than the position.

Sample questions:

- How and when will my performance be evaluated on this job? How is success measured in this department / organization?
- I read in your literature that your training program is comprised of three six-month rotations. Does the employee have any input into where he will go at the end of each rotation? How do you evaluate the employee's performance during the training period?
- I read in Business Week that a major competitor of yours is increasing its market share in your main market. What plans does your firm have to regain its lost market share?
- Can you please tell me how your career has developed at this organization? Would someone entering the firm today have similar opportunities?
- What is an average week in this job really like?

- Does the management encourage the policy of promotion from within the organization?
- Describe typical first year assignments on the job.
- What are challenging facets of the job?
- What are the organization's plans for future growth or change?
- What makes your firm, hospital, school system, ad agency, etc., different?
- What are the organization's strengths, and what challenges does it face?
- How would you describe your organization's personality and management style?
- What are your expectations for new hires within their first three to six months on the job?
- Describe the work environment.
- What is the overall structure of the department where the position is located?
- What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
- What characteristics does a successful person have in your organization?
- Nursing candidates may wish to ask about orientation, promotions, shift differentials chain of command, malpractice policies.
- 19. Education candidates may wish to ask about in-service training and opportunities for professional development; textbook selection procedures; approaches to curricula; parental involvement in school-related issues or PTA; median age/turnover of faculty; master's degree requirements.