

# How to Answer The Toughest Interview Questions Part-2: -

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LINK OF PART-1: - [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/himanshukumarmahuri\\_toughest-interview-questions-part1-activity-6921333406102417408--MVT/?utm\\_source=linkedin\\_share&utm\\_medium=android\\_app](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/himanshukumarmahuri_toughest-interview-questions-part1-activity-6921333406102417408--MVT/?utm_source=linkedin_share&utm_medium=android_app)

## QUESTIONS OF PART 2: -

Q11 Aren't you overqualified for this position?

Q12 What are your career options right now?

Q13 Why have you been out of work so long?

Q14 Tell me honestly about the strong points and weak points of your boss (company, management team, etc.)!

Q15 What good books have you read lately?

Q16 Tell me about a situation when your work was criticized !

Q17 What are your outside interest?

Q18 The "Fatal Flaw" question !

Q19 How do you feel about reporting to a younger person (minority, woman, etc)?

Q20 On confidential matters?

## **Question 11-Aren't you overqualified for this position?**

**TRAPS:** The employer may be concerned that you'll grow dissatisfied and leave.

**BEST ANSWER:** As with any objection, don't view this as a sign of imminent defeat. It's an invitation to teach the interviewer a new way to think about this situation, seeing advantages instead of drawbacks.

*Example:* "I recognize the job market for what it is – a marketplace. Like any marketplace, it's subject to the laws of supply and demand. So 'overqualified' can be a relative term, depending on how tight the job market is. And right now, it's very tight. I understand and accept that."

"I also believe that there could be very positive benefits for both of us in this match."

"Because of my unusually strong experience in \_\_\_\_\_, I could start to contribute right away, perhaps much faster than someone who'd have to be brought along more slowly."

"There's also the value of all the training and years of experience that other companies have invested tens of thousands of dollars to give me. You'd be getting all the value of that without having to pay an extra dime for it. With someone who has yet to acquire that experience, he'd have to gain it on *your nickel*."

"I could also help you in many things they don't teach at the Harvard Business School. For example...(how to hire, train, motivate, etc.) When it comes to knowing how to work well with people and getting the most out of them, there's just no substitute for what you learn over many years of front-line experience. Your company would gain all this, too."

"From my side, there are strong benefits, as well. Right now, I am unemployed. I want to work, *very much*, and the position you have here is exactly what I love to do and am best at. I'll be happy doing this work and that's what matters most to me, a lot more than money or title."

"Most important, I'm looking to make a long-term commitment in my career now. I've had enough of job-hunting and want a permanent spot at this point in my career. I also know that if I perform this job with excellence, other opportunities cannot help but open up for me right here. In time, I'll find many other ways to help this company and in so doing, help myself. I really am looking to make a long-term commitment."

**NOTE:** The main concern behind the "overqualified" question is that you will leave your new employer as soon as something better comes your way. Anything you can say to demonstrate the sincerity of your commitment to the employer and reassure him that you're looking to stay for the long-term will help you overcome this objection.

## **Question 12 - What are your career options right now?**

**TRAPS:** The interviewer is trying to find out, "*How desperate are you?*"

**BEST ANSWER:** Prepare for this question by thinking of how you can position yourself as a desired commodity. If you are still working, describe the possibilities at your present firm and

why, though you're greatly appreciated there, you're looking for something more (challenge, money, responsibility, etc.). Also mention that you're seriously exploring opportunities with one or two other firms.

If you're not working, you can talk about other employment possibilities you're actually exploring. But do this with a light touch, speaking only in general terms. You don't want to seem manipulative or coy.

### ***Question 13 - Why have you been out of work so long?***

**TRAPS:** A tough question if you've been on the beach a long time. You don't want to seem like damaged goods.

**BEST ANSWER:** You want to emphasize factors which have prolonged your job search by your own choice.

*Example:* "After my job was terminated, I made a conscious decision not to jump on the first opportunities to come along. In my life, I've found out that you can always turn a negative into a positive IF you try hard enough. This is what I determined to do. I decided to take whatever time I needed to think through what I do best, what I most want to do, where I'd like to do it...and then identify those companies that could offer such an opportunity."

"Also, in all honesty, you have to factor in the recession (consolidation, stabilization, etc.) in the (banking, financial services, manufacturing, advertising, etc.) industry."

"So between my being selective and the companies in our industry downsizing, the process has taken time. But in the end, I'm convinced that when I do find the right match, all that careful evaluation from both sides of the desk will have been well worthwhile for both the company that hires me and myself.

### ***Question 14 -Tell me honestly about the strong points and weak points of your boss (company, management team, etc.)***

**TRAPS:** Skillfull interviewers sometimes make it almost irresistible to open up and air a little dirty laundry from your previous position. DON'T

**BEST ANSWER:** Remember the rule: Never be negative. Stress only the good points, no matter how charmingly you're invited to be critical.

Your interviewer doesn't care a whit about your previous boss. He wants to find out how loyal and positive you are, and whether you'll criticize him behind his back if pressed to do so by someone in this own company. This question is your opportunity to demonstrate your loyalty to those you work with.

### ***Question 15 - What good books have you read lately?***

**TRAPS:** As in all matters of your interview, never fake familiarity you don't have. Yet you don't want to seem like a dullard who hasn't read a book since *Tom Sawyer*.

**BEST ANSWER:** Unless you're up for a position in academia or as book critic for *The New York Times*, you're not expected to be a literary lion. But it wouldn't hurt to have read a handful of the most recent and influential books in your profession and on management.

Consider it part of the work of your job search to read up on a few of these leading books. But make sure they are *quality* books that reflect favorably upon you, nothing that could even remotely be considered superficial. Finally, add a recently published bestselling work of fiction by a world-class author and you'll pass this question with flying colors.

### **Question 16 - Tell me about a situation when your work was criticized.**

**TRAPS:** This is a tough question because it's a more clever and subtle way to get you to admit to a weakness. You can't dodge it by pretending you've never been criticized. Everybody has been. Yet it can be quite damaging to start admitting potential faults and failures that you'd just as soon leave buried.

This question is also intended to probe how well you accept criticism and direction.

**BEST ANSWERS:** Begin by emphasizing the extremely positive feedback you've gotten throughout your career and (if it's true) that your performance reviews have been uniformly excellent.

Of course, no one is perfect and you always welcome suggestions on how to improve your performance. Then, give an example of a not-too-damaging learning experience from *early* in your career and relate the ways this lesson has since helped you. This demonstrates that you learned from the experience and the lesson is now one of the strongest breastplates in your suit of armor.

If you are pressed for a criticism from a *recent* position, choose something fairly trivial that in no way is essential to your successful performance. Add that you've learned from this, too, and over the past several years/months, it's no longer an area of concern because you now make it a regular practice to...etc.

Another way to answer this question would be to describe your intention to broaden your master of an area of growing importance in your field. For example, this might be a computer program you've been meaning to sit down and learn... a new management technique you've read about...or perhaps attending a seminar on some cutting-edge branch of your profession.

Again, the key is to focus on something *not essential* to your brilliant performance, but which adds yet another dimension to your already impressive knowledge base.

### **Question 17 - What are your outside interests?**

**TRAPS:** You want to be a well-rounded, not a drone. But your potential employer would be even more turned off if he suspects that your heavy extracurricular load will interfere with your commitment to your work duties.

**BEST ANSWERS:** Try to gauge how this company's culture would look upon your favorite outside activities and be guided accordingly.

You can also use this question to shatter any stereotypes that could limit your chances. If you're over 50, for example, describe your activities that demonstrate physical stamina. If you're young, mention an activity that connotes wisdom and institutional trust, such as serving on the board of a popular charity.

But above all, remember that your employer is hiring you for what you can do *for him*, not your family, yourself or outside organizations, no matter how admirable those activities may be.

### **Question 18 - The "Fatal Flaw" question**

**TRAPS:** If an interviewer has read your resume carefully, he may try to zero in on a "fatal flaw" of your candidacy, perhaps that you don't have a college degree...you've been out of the job market for some time...you never earned your CPA, etc.

A fatal flaw question can be deadly, but usually only if you respond by being overly defensive.

**BEST ANSWERS:** As every master salesperson knows, you will encounter objections (whether stated or merely thought) in *every* sale. They're part and parcel of the buyer's anxiety. The key is not to *exacerbate* the buyer's anxiety but *diminish* it. Here's how...

Whenever you come up against a fatal flaw question:

1. Be completely honest, open and straightforward about admitting the shortcoming. (Showing you have nothing to hide diminishes the buyer's anxiety.)
2. Do *not* apologize or try to explain it away. You know that this supposed flaw is nothing to be concerned about, and this is the attitude you want your interviewer to adopt as well.
3. Add that as desirable as such a qualification might be, its lack has made you work all the harder throughout your career and has not prevented you from compiling an outstanding track record of achievements. You might even give examples of how, through a relentless commitment to excellence, you have consistently outperformed those who do have this qualification.

Of course, the ultimate way to handle "fatal flaw" questions is to *prevent them from* arising in the first place. You will do that by following the master strategy described in Question 1, i.e., uncovering the employers needs and then matching your qualifications to those needs.

Once you've gotten the employer to start talking about his most urgently-felt wants and goals for the position, and then help him see in step-by-step fashion how perfectly your background and achievements match up with those needs, you're going to have one very enthusiastic interviewer on your hands, one who is no longer looking for "fatal flaws".

### **Question 19 - How do you feel about reporting to a younger person (minority, woman, etc)?**

**TRAPS:** It's a shame that some interviewers feel the need to ask this question, but many understand the reality that prejudices still exist among some job candidates, and it's better to try to flush them out beforehand.

The trap here is that in today's politically sensitized environment, even a *well-intentioned* answer can result in planting your foot neatly in your mouth. Avoid anything which smacks of a patronizing or an insensitive attitude, such as "I think they make terrific bosses" or "Hey, some of my best friends are..."

Of course, since almost anyone with an IQ above room temperature will at least try to steadfastly affirm the right answer here, your interviewer will be judging your *sincerity* most of all. "*Do you really feel that way?*" is what he or she will be wondering.

So you must make your answer believable and not just automatic. If the firm is wise enough to have promoted people on the basis of ability alone, they're likely quite proud of it, and prefer to hire others who will wholeheartedly share their strong sense of fair play.

**BEST ANSWER:** You greatly admire a company that hires and promotes on merit alone and you couldn't agree more with that philosophy. The age (gender, race, etc.) of the person you report to would *certainly* make no difference to you.

Whoever has that position has obviously earned it and knows their job well. Both the person and the position are fully deserving of respect. You believe that all people in a company, from the receptionist to the Chairman, work best when their abilities, efforts and feelings are respected and rewarded fairly, and that includes you. That's the best type of work environment you can hope to find.

## **Question 20 - On confidential matters...**

**TRAPS:** When an interviewer presses you to reveal confidential information about a present or former employer, you may feel it's a no-win situation. If you cooperate, you could be judged untrustworthy. If you don't, you may irritate the interviewer and seem obstinate, uncooperative or overly suspicious.

**BEST ANSWER:** Your interviewer may press you for this information for two reasons.

First, many companies use interviews to research the competition. It's a perfect set-up. Here in their own lair, is an insider from the enemy camp who can reveal prized information on the competition's plans, research, financial condition, etc.

Second, the company may be testing your integrity to see if you can be cajoled or bullied into revealing confidential data.

What to do? The answer here is easy. *Never* reveal anything truly confidential about a present or former employer. By all means, explain your reticence *diplomatically*. For example, "I certainly want to be as open as I can about that. But I also wish to respect the rights of those who have trusted me with their most sensitive information, just as you would hope to be able to trust any of your key people when talking with a competitor..."

And certainly you can allude to your finest achievements in specific ways that don't reveal the combination to the company safe.

But be guided by the golden rule. If you were the owner of your present company, would you feel it ethically wrong for the information to be given to your competitors? If so, steadfastly refuse to reveal it.

Remember that this question pits your desire to be cooperative against your integrity. Faced with any such choice, *always choose integrity*. It is a far more valuable commodity than whatever information the company may pry from you. Moreover, once you surrender the information, your stock goes down. They will surely lose respect for you.

One President we know always presses candidates unmercifully for confidential information. If he doesn't get it, he grows visibly annoyed, relentlessly inquisitive, *It's all an act*. He couldn't care less about the information. This is his way of testing the candidate's moral fiber. Only those who hold fast are hired.

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