Interview questions

1) Tell Me About Yourself

Well, up until a few months ago I was a development manager, managing a database development team. As you can tell from my CV. But my career in data and databases started over 20 years ago when I worked for FMB. I was a membership clerk and every member’s record was on a piece of card. Having learnt how to create a relational database in university, I decided to create them a membership database.

From there, I decided I wanted a database job so looked for any job that had ‘database’ in the job title. So that I how I got the database manager job at Sweet & Maxwell. Where I also created a number of Access database along the way.

Even in new Zealand I was creating Access database and complex Excel stuff.

Back from NZ I took a job in a team where I would be querying a PostGres database and generally managing data. My boss left after a few months and I ended up leading the team which was first experience of managing.

Really, I wanted a database development job and a contract came along to redevelop an Oracle data warehouse. I had done an Oracle course so, even though it was just a contract, I decided to take it up. So that was the start of my database development career. I moved into SQL Server and, as you can see from my cv, eventually led a team of developer.

So, I am a lot about data. But I also collect records. As in Vinyl. Which I also have an access database for.

2) Why are you applying?

In short, because I looked at the job description and felt I was a good fit and that I had a lot to offer. When I was doing my CV recently and reflected on what I have been doing for the last few years, I realised that my role was split over technical activities and basically talking to people, stakeholder relationships, users. And that I enjoyed that split and that I was good at it. And if I look at the job description, I think this is what you need. Looking at the first two points, you need someone who can architect a data warehouse one day, and then talk to end users the next. And I can do that.

3) What is your greatest strength?

I have many technical strengths but I would say my greatest strength is getting the best out of those who work for me. My objective is to enable them to do what they are good at and to deliver. So, writing understandable technical specs, briefing these in, removing blockers, talking every day to ensure they are on track and motivating them. This is what I think good leadership is and I think I’m a good leader. This is absolutely essential for dealing with an off-shore team. My off-shore team always delivered and I got good feedback from them and about them when I left.

4) What is your greatest weakness?

Managing upwards. Something I have to work on. I lived with a lot of technical debt and other bugs which I wasn’t able to pay-off because I wasn’t able to get anyone to priorities. There were always features to deliver. Have read-up on DevOps I now feel more confident in explaining the costs of not clearing technical debt.

5) What can you bring to the job?

I have the technical skills. I know how to architect a data warehouse and an ETL solution. But I also have the softer skills, to motivate developers, to talk to end users and understand requirements. I know how to support a team to get them to deliver. Delivering is what I’m passionate about and what I get the most job satisfaction from.