Volunteer Guide

Discuss What Makes for Good Interview Answers

- Interviewees should be informed on the position and company, through company website, social media, word-of-mouth, and other avenues.
- Interviewees should be honest, but also paint themselves in a positive (and humble) light. Everyone has weaknesses, but showing you're working on weaknesses makes a good impression. On the other hand, being way too positive about yourself makes you sound arrogant and like you lack self-awareness, which are not good qualities in teammates.

Reviewing Common Interview Questions and Possible Answers

- There could be multiple answers that would be good in an interviewer's eyes, or multiple that aren't.
- Get the students' honest opinions about why they think answers would help them get the job or not.
- Discuss the good vs the bad to illustrate some of the principles!

Question 1: "Tell me a little about yourself."
Some possible answers:

a) *I'm looking for a job and would like you to hire me.*
b) *I'm passionate about food – I like to cook and eat good food, and I like to help other people enjoy a good meal. A few weeks ago, I helped my father cook a big meal for about 30 family members and friends, and I played the role of "server" for that meal. I brought all the food from the kitchen to the table, made sure my vegetarian sister got the plate she asked for without meat, brought more drinks when people's glasses were empty, and brought extra silverware for the young children because they kept throwing theirs on the floor.*
c) *I like eating and cooking, and I like helping others. I have some experience with serving food as I've helped my family to serve big meals before. It can be challenging, but it's fun.*

Most likely answers to get the job? **B or C.** B is good because it's a personal story that also illustrates experience. C is good because it gives an overview on experience and is nice and short (the interviewer can dive in further if they want). Least likely answers to get the job? **A**. Demonstrates lack of passion, interest, self-awareness, preparation

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 2: "What do you know about our restaurant?"
Some possible answers:

a) *I looked up some information about you on the Internet and see that you've been in business for 50 years. That's a long time! I like that there's so much history for this restaurant – I think that would mean you have a long future ahead of you, too.*
b) *I've never heard of this restaurant or eaten here. What are you guys all about?*
c) *I actually used to eat here when I was younger – we moved away a few years ago, but I really enjoyed the atmosphere. It's not too crowded, and the servers are always friendly. The food is good, too! You guys have really good reviews on Yelp and Facebook, and my friends who still live near the restaurant like to come here.*

Most likely answers to get the job? **C**. Personal connection, illustrates research was done, knows some specifics about "the inside".
Least likely answers to get the job? **B**. Demonstrates lack of interest, preparation.
A could go either way. Some research was done, but it's pretty shallow. Shows that the candidate appreciates stability, but that could also portray the candidate as a "fair weather" employee who quits when the going gets tough.

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 3: _"Why do you want this job?"_

Some possible answers:

    a) _Customer service is a big part of being a server, and I really like to see others enjoying themselves. Eating meals together is a fun activity, so being a part of that when friends and families come to eat is awesome._

    b) _I need money and I don't really want to work at the gas station I applied to._

    c) _I have enjoyed being the "server" at some events my family puts on, but I'd really like to challenge myself in a new environment. I like to meet new people, and learn from them, and in this job, I'd not only get to know my fellow servers, but also lots of customers who have interesting stories to tell or who give me new perspective on what people are like._

> Most likely answers to get the job? **A or C**. C reiterates the experience of the candidate and indicates the candidate likes a challenge. A gets to the core of what it means to be in the position, and speaks to personal joy about the opportunity.
> Least likely answers to get the job? **B**. Shows no passion; even rude about the opportunity.

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 4: _"What do you consider to be your weaknesses?"_

Some possible answers:

    a) _I am a perfectionist, so I have to talk myself down sometimes – there's a balance between "done" and "perfectly done", and I am always learning about how to get to "well done" so that I can finish with a task and move on to the next. We all have lots of things to manage (especially in a fast-paced environment like a restaurant), so it's important to make progress on lots of things._

    b) _I wish I were a better public speaker. I prepare myself well, and try to have good visuals to help get my message across, but sometimes I get nervous and stumble over my words or forget to say something important._

    c) _I don't have any – I work hard and I learn really well. I like to work in teams and I can be successful taking care of tasks on my own._

> Most likely answers to get the job? **A**. Indicates the candidate knows there are things to improve on, and how they're doing that.
> Least likely answers to get the job? **C**. C indicates a lack of honesty or self-awareness because everyone has weaknesses. **B is somewhere in the middle**. Indicates a possible lack of desire for personal improvement.

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?

Question 5: _"What do you consider to be your strengths?"_

Some possible answers:

    a) _I can lift a lot of weight, so I can carry a server's tray really easily and not drop anything. I also don't get sick very much, so I wouldn't have to call in sick and have people cover my shifts._

    b) _I like to have conversations with people, so they feel comfortable with me. I learn quickly, by watching how others do the job, listening to their advice, and trying things on my own (even when it makes me a little nervous)._

    c) _I am good at managing data. I can use spreadsheets and organize paper data as well – I have a filing system at home that makes it easy to find things whenever I need to. I'm also great at caring for animals. I always take my pets to the vet for their annual check-ups, and I make sure they're eating right and getting enough exercise._

> Most likely answers to get the job? **B**. The answer is straightforward, so it comes across as a humble, factual self-assessment rather than bragging. The strengths correspond well to the role of a server, too.
> Least likely answers to get the job? **A or C**. A gives no insight into who you really are for the interviewer – it's a given that servers can handle trays, and "not getting sick" isn't a strength so much as the result of good habits and luck. C lists some good strengths, but they are irrelevant to the position or, in the case of pet care, the restaurant industry.

Discuss in your group: What makes the best answer the best? What makes the worst answer the worst?