

1. Tell me about yourself

This is not an opportunity to tell your life story or to recount your entire resume. In just a couple of sentences, describe your top strengths and motivations and the experiences that underscore these characteristics. Then connect these characteristics to your specific objectives and to what you can do for the hiring organization. Your answer should be around 60 seconds.

Here's the response of a young professional who landed a job at ESPN:

"I love sports, in the game, in the stands, watching sports center in the morning, or debating the Knick's roster with my friends at a bar at night. And as the captain for my soccer team, I enjoyed how my words could impact the outcome of a game or a season. I have also learned how to influence others with my writing - having had 2 professors use my work as their class examples. So, I want to apply my communication skills and my love for influencing others to energize fans of professional sports. More specifically, I hope to write provocative articles that cause fans to think about sports instead of anything else. From what I know so far, your firm looks like a great opportunity to pursue this path, and I hope to learn more today."

2. Why this job, at this company?

Your response to this question should include three things: the people, the mission (or the product), and the work. You would likely get a passing mark if you said:

"When I look at this organization, from what I have learned of the people who work here, culturally, I see this company as a strong fit. Furthermore, I have always been strongly connected to the products this company produces. Finally, from what I understand of this job, it aligns with what I enjoy doing on a daily basis and with where I want to my career to be headed."

But you would definitely do better by mentioning specific cultural attributes, by focusing on one or two key products and why that product connects to you, and by explaining what specifically about the work, you would find energizing.

Remember to do your homework ahead of time about both these topics. When surveyed, hiring managers said the top reason job seekers were unprepared for an interview was because they were clueless about the company.

3. What makes you better than other candidates?

Your answer needs to explain how your skills and experiences will enable the company to succeed. Your answer should basically say, "I bring a unique combination of strengths, experiences, and knowledge that will address the challenges your organization is facing better than anyone else."

In addition, your response should itemize both a few of your defining characteristics and a few of the challenges that the organization/department is facing which you can help them solve. Mention specific accomplishments or a track record of strong performance (rather than only broad claims which make you sound like you are bragging).

4. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

This question is an opportunity to demonstrate you are motivated and driven. Your answer should show that the work you would do for this company is something you will be excited about 5 years from now. Employers also want to make sure their new hires don't start with one foot out the door. So unless the position is explicitly temporary, you want to suggest that you will stay with the company for this period.

For example, you might say something like:

"In 5 years, I hope to continue doing the work I enjoy everyday, but from a position of greater responsibility. On a daily basis, I am motivated by work that allows me to put the pieces together to look at the big picture and to analyze complex problems. I also value having autonomy and flexibility in my approach to delivering results and having work that is financially rewarding for me and my company. From what I have learned about your company and this opportunity, I believe this organization is a strong fit for me, both now and 5 years from now."

5. Why are you leaving / did you leave your current job?

Do not fall on your sword with this question by being negative. Do not speak poorly of your old boss or of your co-workers or even of the work itself. If you were fired, tie the context of your separation into being part of a group of people who left.

If it's a voluntary departure, you might say something like:

"I very much enjoyed the people I worked with, and generally the work that I performed. But I am hungry to take on more responsibility and to take be in a position that leverages my abilities in... more fully. I am excited about this position, because I know that working for your organization I will have the opportunity too..."

Or, if it's an involuntary departure, you might say something like:

"I very much enjoyed the people I worked with, and generally the work that I performed. Unfortunately, I was part of a group of people who were let go due to a company restructuring. I think that this may ultimately be to my advantage due to the opportunity I see with your company. I know that working for your organization I will have the opportunity to..."

6. What is your biggest weakness?

By asking this question, the interviewer may be hoping that you describe a massive flaw that can cause them to exclude you from hiring. You're welcome to try an answer like, "flourless chocolate cake. Every time it's on a menu, I have to order it." This answer may help you build rapport with the interviewer, but there is still the fair chance that they will want a more serious answer.

For this answer, you will want to use, "The Sandwich Technique." Select a trait that you consider a strength, and then identify how this strength can also be a weakness. Then conclude with how you learned to adapt to this weakness. For instance,

- Strength: "Well, I am a strong writer and found that other people really respond well when I write."

- Weakness: “But, I’ve discovered in the past that for people who are auditory learners, I tend to use writing too much.
- Adaptation for this weakness: “So I’ve learned that whenever I work with a new co-worker or client to ask them about their preferred balance of

communication medium, and I do my best to communicate with each person as he or she prefers.”

After you take our online assessment, you will receive two custom-built responses for this question as part of your Interview Cribsheet™ report.

7. Why don’t you give me your understanding of the position, and explain how your experience lines up?

Don’t answer this question until you feel as though you really understand the job. If there are specific aspects that you aren’t sure about, begin with, “Before I can answer that question, I was hoping that you could clarify what X entails. What would my responsibilities be in this regard?”

Once you feel you understand the job, describe it to the interviewer briefly, then ask, “Did I leave out anything important?” If you did leave something out, thank the interviewer for pointing out the omission.

With this context set, you want to mention a couple of your key strengths, the context in which you have used these strengths, and how these strengths can help you succeed.

As an example (with many specifics omitted):

“So correct me if I am wrong, but my understanding of the work is that I will be asked to... In short, I will combine rigorous quantitative analysis and qualitative feedback to help devise new web marketing strategies. My quantitative analysis skills are pretty deep running from experiences in... While I’ve learned about interpreting qualitative customer feedback through... and I’ve helped devise a number of marketing strategies as... Looking at these past experiences, I can help your company (group) be successful by...”

8. Walk me through your resume?

Don’t get caught up telling every detail. Articulate your top selling points, and cite the past experiences that support these points. Your response to this question is pretty similar to “Tell me about yourself,” though it can run closer to 2 minutes (speaking at a normal speed). The difference between the two responses is that for this answer, you will reference specific experiences as they are described in your resume rather than describing these past experiences in another manner.

9. What do you do during your free time?

This is an informal question designed to get to know you better and to show that you’re not a totally dull person. The key is to give an answer with specific details and to describe experiences in a way that show you are proactive. Be ready to include two to three different types of activities. If you are lucky the interviewer will be excited by one of your responses and ask follow up questions.

Everyone can create a good answer for this question. Even if you are a busy parent who just has time to get home, play with your children, cook dinner, and watch a bit of TV before bed, you could answer:

"Well I have two children. Kaylie is 5 and Alex is 7. I really enjoy getting to know them better and taking them for bike rides in the park."

"I've also been honing the art of kid-friendly healthy cooking, learning tricks like blending cauliflower into mash potatoes, or adding carrot juice into orange juice."

"Finally, I have to admit that I've become a bit of a fanatic for the TV show 'Dancing with Stars' (smile). When I can, I do my best to fit in an episode."

10. Do you have any questions for us?

You should always have a couple of questions. This is an opportunity to show how excited you are about the work. Good questions include, "so what big projects are coming up for this group?" or "What has been the best experience you have had working for this company." Never ever ask about salary, benefits or vacation. There will be a better time to ask these questions. Our website has a more complete list of questions. This includes questions to ask early in the interview to give you an edge, and to ask late in the interview to leave a positive and memorable impression.

11. How would you define teamwork? (What does cooperation mean to you?)

An employer asking this question wants to know whether you are completely selfish or actually like working in teams. They are trying to ask you, "Are you good at working in teams; do you play nice with others and take instructions well." So your response should demonstrate that you do play nice and respect your boss. "Teamwork is leveraging the different talents of a group of people to efficiently get the job done. Teamwork also means taking time to support other members of the team to make sure that everyone and the project are successful."

12. Why do you want to leave your current job / Why did you leave your last job?

Remember never to speak negatively about a past employer. Instead focus on the positives of what you would like to gain in a new job. "While I really enjoyed my work in many ways, I am ready to take on new challenges. In this position I had accomplished A and B and C. With your organization, I believe I can do more (if you can list what you hope to accomplish in the new position). And this makes me really excited about working for your firm."

Note, if you were let go (not asked to resign), and wish to disclose it in your response to this question, include it in your answer without skipping a beat. "While I was part of a (large) group of people who were downsized in the economic downturn, I was feeling ready to take on new challenges. In this position I had accomplished A and B and C. With your organization, I am excited to do more. (Then list what you hope to accomplish in the new position.)"

13. Why do you want to work here?

This is one question where your company research can pay off. What did you find most interesting about the company when you read about it? How do its goals and mission connect with your personal goals and values? How does the work at this company connect with "What motivates you?" or "Your ideal career" as described in your Interview Cribsheet™ Report or as you would describe them? Three reasons are sufficient.

14. How are your time management skills?

"I am a self-starter who conscientiously manages my time to get the job done. If I am concerned that a project will take longer than expected, I try to communicate this to my boss as soon as I can." This is like being asked, are you smart? Just check the box yes, and move on.

15. Do you feel comfortable going wherever the company sends you?

This question might be about relocation or it might be about business trips. You should clarify before you respond. By saying yes now, keep in mind that you reserve the option to say no after they have offered you the job. But if travel is a deal-breaker from the beginning, you may as well say no and save everyone time.

16. When do you expect a promotion?

"I'm not sure I have a definitive answer for you. Within any position, I expect to be given new and sometimes greater responsibilities as I successfully complete the projects that are given to me. At some point, my past track record of performance will suggest that I am ready for greater responsibility than my current title allows. I hope at that point, when an opportunity for promotion arises, that my manager will support my candidacy for the position."

17. How long do you plan to stay in your next job?Where do you plan to be in five years?

Giving a longer time horizon is generally better, since hiring and training new employees is expensive for a company. "I would like to be a part of my next organization for the long haul. I am looking for an opportunity where I can provide a really valuable contribution and where I can continue to learn and grow. What kind of career path can I expect when I join this company?"

18. Do you mind if I check your references?

"You are more than welcome to." Either they really like you or they want to push you to see whether you're giving honest answers. Either way, show that you have nothing to hide with a clear open answer.

19. Overall, how do you feel about your career progress to date? Do you feel that your past work reflects the best you can do? How do you feel about your contributions to XYZ Company? (somewhat similar; How would your boss rate your performance?)

This question tests you on two fronts: Are you a slacker? Are you all washed up? Show that you have a healthy sense of self-esteem and that you are hungry for more. “I am proud of what I have accomplished so far. I feel that on a daily basis, I’ve had the opportunity to learn and grow and make valuable contributions to my organization. And I am excited about now taking on new challenges and making even more significant contributions.”

20. How long would it be until you were able to make a serious contribution to your organization?

“While I intend to start adding some value from day one and will do everything I can to get up to speed as quickly as possible, I’d like to give you a more specific answer about a timeline for making a real contribution. Can you tell me what projects you were thinking I would work on?”

21. What interests you most about this job? Why do you want to work here? Why are you interested in working for our organization?

Warning: This question can be one where you hang yourself. You need to make sure you understand exactly what the job is. If this is at the end of the interview, you should be okay to identify some of the characteristics.

If you’re not 100% confident about what the job looks like on a day-to-day basis, say, “Before I jump, I want to confirm that I have a clear understanding of the position. From what I understand so far the job is like (insert details of the job here). Are there any critical details that I have missed? I also understand the culture to be like (insert company details here). Are there other strong cultural characteristics that I didn’t include?”

Then identify one or two characteristics of the job that you like and tie your answer into your core values or motivations described in your Interview Cribsheet. “Once piece of the job that I find really exciting is (insert job characteristic), as I am very much motivated by work that allows me to... Further, working for an organization that (insert company characteristic) aligns well with my own aspirations to... (insert one of your top values).”

22. How do you make decisions?

This question is less about you as an individual and more about you being a good employee. “Well, obviously for any major decisions I would want to discuss with my boss and determine if there is protocol or policy that I should apply. That considered, in making decisions I rationally evaluate the different potential options and the pros and cons of each choice. Whenever possible, I seek input from others who have been in a similar position or who would be impacted by the decision. What kind of decisions would I be expected to make in this position?”

23. How do you motivate other people to perform?

“It depends a lot on the individual. Some are more responsive to praise than others. Some need more of a push. In general, I create an environment in which individuals feel respected for their ability to contribute but are also expected to perform to a high standard. I do my best to support my team and make them feel that they have the tools and freedom to do their best work. But I’m also not afraid to call aside individuals who are underperforming and let them know that I expect more from them.”

24. How is this job different from your current one?

This answer has two purposes: to test whether you were listening, and to assess whether you are likely to split for another job as soon as there is a larger paycheck available. So, sound excited while telling the interviewer what interested you most in what they said about the job. If you can't give a thorough answer based on what the interviewer has already told you, say, "Before I jump, I want to confirm that I have a clear understanding of the position. From what I understand so far, the job is like (insert details of the job here). Are there any critical details that I have missed?..." Then give a response based on what the interview has highlighted to you during the conversation.

25. How long have you been looking for a new job?

If you have a job, let them know it, and keep the time frame relatively short. You want to appear decisive and not as a chronic job-swapper. "Over the past couple months, I've realized that I was ready for greater challenges and new responsibilities. I have been looking in earnest for a new position only recently." If you have been unemployed for several months, you need a more careful answer.

Negative Questions: The ones designed to be "Tricky"

An interviewer may try to throw you off by asking about what you didn't like, whom you didn't like, where you failed, etc. The key is to brush these questions off, and give positive responses. You want to appear an optimistic and resilient person who speaks well of your old company and your old co-workers. While you occasionally may have made a mistake or hit a bump in the road, you quickly corrected them, learned from them, and made sure they never happened again. Remember to always stay positive.

26. What did you dislike about your last job?

If they push you for a more specific response to what you didn't like, you can say that, "Even when I occasionally came across a specific task that wasn't fun, I knew that getting the job done right meant taking on whatever came up."

27. How would you describe your relationship with your old boss?

Tell me about the worst boss you ever had.

No matter what your boss was like, you should give the same response, "My boss and I had a great professional relationship, and I liked him/her as person. I also learned a lot from working with him/her and am grateful for having had that opportunity."

28. Overall, how do you feel about your past company?

"I feel that it's an excellent company that I valued being a part of."

29. Do you have any pet peeves? Describe a couple of things that bother you. What annoyed you / angered you in your previous jobs?

A terrible question, one just designed to be tricky. Use it to demonstrate you have a good work ethic. "I'm someone who is committed to my work. So it bothers me when a co-worker is

there just to punch the clock or when a co-worker chooses to play hooky near the deadline of a project.”

30. Did you ever have difficulty with a supervisor (co-worker)? How did you resolve the conflict? What do you do when you disagree with a manager? How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict?

31. Do you want your boss's job?

This is like asking, “Do you lack drive or are you bloodthirsty?” Don’t let yourself get caught in this trap. “I want my manager to be someone who I can learn from and who I can help to become more successful. If I can help my manager get promoted and the opening seems like a good fit for me at the time, then I would obviously be interested.”

32. What's the worst thing you heard about our company?

“I heard that you could be pretty tough interviewers.” Feel free to smile.

33. How do you feel about my performance as an interviewer?

“Overall, I’ve enjoyed our conversation, though I would say that you aren’t afraid to test me with a tough interview question like this one.”

I don’t think you’re the right candidate for this job. This question could be asked for a couple of reasons. One, the interviewer is trying to stress you out, by asking a very abstract, hard-to-answer question. In this case, you want to demonstrate that you can stay calm and, even under pressure, that you can solve problems. The other (and less likely) reason is that the interviewer is offering you a lifeline before showing you the door. Either way, your response should be the same. Stay calm, learn what his or her concerns are, and show that you can either speak directly to his or her concern, or show that you have other skills that are an effective substitute.

34. Would you mind telling me what you feel are the key characteristics for this position where I don't match up?

List off skills and talents that can help you achieve whatever your (apparent) shortcomings are, and indicate how your other skills make you distinctly better than other candidates. “Though I don’t have much experience in XYZ, I believe that my experience in ABC will help me get started. I will work extremely hard to get up the curve as quickly as possible, and my skills in QRS, will enable me to learn more quickly than most others. Furthermore, my experiences in ABC provides me with a distinct skill set that puts me ahead of other candidates.”

35. How are you able to interview while still employed?

“I took a bit of my vacation time to be here.” You don’t want to suggest that you took advantage of sick days or something else along those lines.

36. Describe something you did, that looking back on it, seemed a bit reckless / that wasn't completely thought through.

Use innocuous examples from your personal life. As an example answer, "In college, I decided to adopt a cat with my girlfriend at the time. Entering into the workforce, I traveled often for work, and caring for a pet became tricky."

37. Looking at your resume, it seems like you have changed jobs quite frequently in the past. How can we be sure that you will stay around here?

Articulate how you now have clearer career direction compared to the past and are now ready to commit to a longer-term career. If you can, describe what you are looking for by pulling your response from your Interview Cribsheet report. Be sure not to play the game of blaming your past employer.

38. Looking at your resume, it seems like you have spent a long time with your past company. Will you be able to adapt?

You need to describe how your job evolved and you adapted. Have you held different positions? Worked for different bosses? Worked in different departments? Worked with different people on different projects? You've also likely worked with other companies on projects be they clients, vendors and/or partners. You've seen and learned from them in action. Reference all of the ways you've needed to be flexible, and then close with the following: "Not only am I adaptable, I am also someone who has a track record of being loyal and supporting my organization."

39. Have you ever been fired?

Note that if you were asked to resign, and chose to resign, the answer is no. You left of your own accord. If you were fired and it is reasonable to explain your firing as part of a downsizing, put it in that context.

"My company faced some major setbacks in the market downturn. As a result, they let off a sizable portion of their workforce, particularly for people like me in the position of... I was one of xx people to be let go (or in a small company use percentages or say "3 people from a 10-person" company). My managers always felt very highly of me and even said they would like to bring me back when the company turns around (or, and will provide a very strong recommendation if you contact them)."

If you were fired with cause, due to documented misbehaviors on your part, you can take the following actions.

If you can, reach out to the manager at the job from which you were fired. As graciously and respectfully as possible, tell them you are trying to learn from your past experiences. Ask how they would articulate your termination. Find out whether they would tell a prospective employer that you were fired in a future employment screening. If they will say you resigned, you are in the clear.

If you need to say you were fired, deliver the answer as softly as possible. Make your termination not seem like an exceptional action on the part of the employer. Also, be humble and show that you have matured since then. "Unfortunately, I need to say I deserved it. I

faced some tough family (personal) issues for a short period of time that impacted my work performance. I was also one of a number of people that were let go as the company tried to trim its costs. Obviously, I have grown since then." If someone at your prior organization will speak well of you, you can add, "You are welcome to speak to so-and-so about my experience there."

40. Have you ever been asked to resign?

It is pretty safe to answer this question with a no, even if you were asked to resign. If this employer is contacted, they cannot say that they asked you to resign without putting themselves in legal danger. In essence, the employer would be admitting to firing you. If you were fired, they owe you certain unemployment benefits, and since the organization failed to provide you with these entitlements they're in trouble. So, you should feel pretty good about answering with a no in whatever case.

41. Your job involves some long-term projects and day-to-day unpredictable events a fast-paced environment. How would you manage this?

"I keep on top of my long-term projects by setting internal deadlines and benchmarks. So if something urgent comes up, I will address it, and then put in the time necessary to make sure that the long-term projects hit these benchmarks and stay on schedule.

42. If you could be any animal in the world, what would you want to be, and why?

Don't let this question throw you off. Smile. Pick something relatively benign, and then provide a simple reason. For example: "Well, I've always loved dolphins. They just seem to really enjoy life and are very smart too."

43. Are you interested in this job?

Either the interview wants you to prove your sincerity, or they just don't know how to interview. Either way, your answer should be an enthusiastic yes with supporting evidence: "I am very interested in this position. What I am most excited about is:

The job asks me to do... , and I very much enjoy that kind of work.

The people here are like... , and those are people I work well with.

The company values... , and that's something I really care about. Overall, I think that I am a great fit for this position"

44. If I check your references, what do you think they will say about you?

Don't let this question trick you up. Think about the positive comments you received from your references. If it was a previous boss, think about any reviews you may have had. Then, instead of repeating all the comments you received, provide a short and simple summary - something like: "Based on the feedback that I received in my previous jobs, they would

probably say that I work hard, deliver superior results, and am great to have as a member of *their team*."

45. Are you a fast learner?

"Yes. In my previous job I learned to do A..., B..., C... in a very short time frame."

46. Why are you proud of your work?

Provide an answer that mentions two pieces: the effort put into the work and the results. "I am proud of my work because I know that through my thorough efforts, I have created as strong a deliverable as possible, and I am also proud of my work because of how it improves the lives of my customers (or co-workers) by...."

47. Tell me how you spend your time. For example what does a typical week look like for you?

On it's face, this question is all about time management. The interviewer is trying to assess whether you are organized and a hard worker. But, sometimes your answer to this one can distract your interviewer. Your past job will be different from your next job, including how you spend your time. Interviewers forget this. Sometimes, upon hearing an answer that shows you spend your time on activities different from his or hers, they start to think that you aren't a good fit. To avoid this, give the basics in a short answer that gives broad strokes (not too much detail). After your response, ask a question about the new position to both change the subject and get them reconnecting you to the job. (As a side note, if you are worried that the number of hours you worked will vary in your next job, don't mention your weekly schedule.)

"Over a 70-hour average work week, I spent 60% of my time in the field improving operations. This meant visiting our restaurants to see them in action, provide feedback, and coach the individual managers. I then spent 30% of my time evaluating project performance and setting and assessing. This included working with my team of direct reports and with fellow members of the leadership team. For the remaining 10%, I focused on improving and coaching my team. I know that the schedule in my past job will vary from what I would do for you. From what I understand about this position, it seems that the mix would be more like XX% of A, XX% of B, and XX% of C. Is that right?"

48. Tell me about a time when you handled a challenging situation

One straightforward way to respond to interview questions like "Tell me how you handled a difficult situation at work" is to use the STAR technique.

- Situation/Task: Describe the challenging situation/task that you needed to deal with.
- Action: What action(s) did you take to remedy things? Be specific.
- Results: What were the results of your action(s)? What would have happened if you hadn't reacted that way?

here's an answer using the STAR technique:

Situation ->	Task ->	Action ->	Result
I was managing the creation of a new website that was supposed to launch in two weeks.	One of our senior editors found a major bug in the code and he wanted to push back on the deadline, which I knew the company wouldn't appreciate.	I understand the editors push to move the deadline but I also knew the company has to have the website running on time. I didn't want to push him and the team too hard but instead focused on finding out what they need that could help solve the situation. We created a list of	In the end, the team understood the priorities and we were able to work together to direct resources where they were needed. In the end, we launched the website on time, increasing company sales by 20% in the first week and we had to fully functional

things we could delay and work on after the launch and put the effort in fixing the bug to allow the launch – even if not in the most perfect way possible.

site up within 2 weeks of launch.

49. How do you work under pressure?

Showing how you successfully dealt with pressure in the past

“Throughout my career, I have done some of my best work under pressure. I find that routine makes us complacent, and I am always looking for challenges that push me to give my best and to quickly come up with working solutions.

One time I was supposed to deliver a project to a client in five days. A colleague who was working with another client had the same deadline, but he had to take a leave of absence due to personal reasons. I was forced to take up both projects at the same time, but I did not let the stress affect me. Instead, I came up with a very detailed time management plan and found new ways to boost my efficiency that enabled me to deliver both projects on time.”

50. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake. What did you do to correct it?

The interviewer understands that everyone makes mistakes. What they want to know, with this question, is how you handle mistakes. A great response to this question is one in which you take full responsibility for the mistake, worked hard to correct it and took steps to minimize the likelihood that it would happen again.

Example: *"When I was working at a printing company, I misquoted the fees for a particular job. I realized the mistake, I went directly to my manager and explained what happened. He said he appreciated my honesty and suggested that we waive the setup fee for the job as an apology to the customer. I spoke to the customer directly and explained what happened and that the quoted price was actually higher than my original estimate, but that we would be happy to waive the setup fee. The customer understood and appreciated the effort to make the situation right. After that happened, I printed our price sheet to have it quickly at hand and implemented a new process for quoting estimates, one in which I double-check the final estimate before sending it."*

51. How Did You Hear About This Position?

Another seemingly innocuous interview question, this is actually a perfect opportunity to stand out and show your passion for and connection to the company. For example, if you found out about the gig through a friend or professional contact, name drop that person, then share why you were so excited about it. If you discovered the company through an event or article, share that. Even if you found the listing through a random job board, share what, specifically, caught your eye about the role.

52. What Is Your Greatest Professional Achievement?

Nothing says “hire me” better than a track record of achieving amazing results in past jobs, so don’t be shy when answering this interview question! A great way to do so is by using the [STAR method](#): situation, task, action, results. Set up the situation and the task that you were required to complete to provide the interviewer with background context (e.g., “In my last job as a junior analyst, it was my role to manage the invoicing process”), then describe what you did (the action) and what you achieved (the result): “In one month, I streamlined the process, which saved my group 10 person-hours each month and reduced errors on invoices by 25%.”

53. Tell me about a time, when you were inundated with several tasks at a time, ahead of an important deadline. How did you manage the situation?

Candidate (using C.A.R. technique): “It was Year End, and all accounts had to be reconciled by the end of the week. We had had more client business that year than any year before (Context).

Whilst I like to balance the accounts myself, I made a very quick decision to allocate 50% of the work to 3 other colleagues, make a time-plan, to avoid missing the deadline. (Action).

We completed one day ahead, and were rewarded extra bonus that quarter for our efforts (Result),”

3 transferable skills used in the Action are:

1. Decisiveness
2. Delegation
3. Time Management

This is an example of the use of the C.A.R technique during interview.

Short, clear, effective!

54. What is your greatest failure, and what did you learn from it?

Bad answer:

I never finished law school – and everything that’s happened since has taught me that giving up, just because the going gets tough, is a huge mistake.”

You don't want to actually highlight a major regret – especially one that exposes an overall dissatisfaction with your life. Instead, focus on a smaller, but significant, mishap, and how it has made you a better professional.

Good answer:

"When I was in college, I took an art class to supplement my curriculum. I didn't take it very seriously, and assumed that, compared to my Engineering classes, it would be a walk in the park. My failing grades at midterm showed me otherwise. I'd even jeopardized my scholarship status. I knew I had to get my act together. I spent the rest of the semester making up for it, ended up getting a decent grade in the class. I learned that no matter what I'm doing, I should strive to do it to the best of my ability. Otherwise, it's not worth doing at all."

55. How do you explain your gap in employment?

Bad answer:

"I was so tired of working, and I needed a break," or "I just can't find a job."

Employment gaps are always tough to explain. You don't want to come across as lazy or unhireable. Find a way to make your extended unemployment seem like a choice you made, based on the right reasons.

Good answer:

"My work is important to me, so I won't be satisfied with any old job. Instead of rushing to accept the first thing that comes my way, I'm taking my time and being selective to make sure my next role is the right one."

56. When were you most satisfied in your job?

Bad answer:

"I was most satisfied when I did well, and got praised for my work."

Don't give vague answers. Instead, think about something you did well – and enjoyed –that will be relevant at this new job. This is an opportunity for you to share your interests, prove that you're a great fit for the job and showcase your enthusiasm.

Good answer:

"I'm a people person. I was always happiest – and most satisfied – when I was interacting with customers, making sure I was able to meet their needs and giving them the best possible customer experience. It was my favorite part of the job, and it showed – I was rated as "Good or Excellent" 95% of the time. Part of the reason I'm interested in this job is that I know I'd have even more interaction with customers, on an even more critical level."

57. What makes an ideal team member in your eyes?

- 1) They Understand Their Role
- 2) They Embrace Collaboration
- 3) They Hold Themselves Accountable
- 4) They Are Committed to Their Team

- 5) They Are Flexible
- 6) They Are Optimistic and Future-Focused
- 7) They Back Up Goals with Action

58. How to Stay Motivated When You're Working on a Never-Ending Project?

- 1. Focus on small, meaningful wins.
- 2. Make a game out of keeping the project aligned with business goals.
- 3. Cross tasks off your list!
- 4. Reassess your goals.
- 5. Give yourself side assignments.
- 6. Keep your team members challenged.
- 7. Learn something new.
- 8. Remember that long projects end.

59. How to deal with impossible deadlines at work?

- 1. Accept that it's got to go
- 2. Stay cool under pressure
- 3. Flag problems early
- 4. Set fake deadlines for others: According to a study published in the Journal of Consumer Research, deadlines set near the present encourage people to get started on their work, while deadlines further down the track lead to procrastination.
- 5. Break a deadline into milestones
- 6. Stay organised
- 7. Work in a bubble: Check email in the morning and before you leave at night, and close it down between these times.
- 8. Set a soft deadline
- 9. Establish a realistic timeline

60. Have You Ever Had Difficulty Working With a Manager?

Sample 1:

No, I am a hard worker, and my managers always seem to appreciate the job I'm doing. I got along well with every manager I've had.

Why It Works: This is another positive response that also points to some of the candidate's qualities as an employee.

Sample 2:

I once had a manager who brought her problems to work with her on a daily basis. She was going through a difficult time in her personal life, and this tended to affect the atmosphere in the office. It didn't impact my work because I was able to sympathize with her circumstances, but the situation was challenging.

Why It Works: Not all managers are good ones. If it's true that you've had a challenging situation, it's best to acknowledge it as this response does. This answer shows that the candidate is able to separate a difficult situation from her work.

61. Give me an example of a goal you met.

STAR Model Answer: Last October, I had to write six articles for the month to keep our blog fresh. I created an action plan for myself, with deadlines as to when each article should be published. I finished that month with six articles written and ahead of schedule.

62. Tell me about a time when you had to placate an unsatisfied client.

STAR Model Answer: As a flight attendant, I had a passenger who seemed to hate his seat next to a wailing infant. I decided to see what I could do to ease his suffering before he complained. With unoccupied seats in business class, I upgraded that passenger, and he was thrilled at his luck while the mother and infant were given more room to spread out.

63. Tell Me About a Time When You Made a Suggestion to Improve the Quality/Quantity of the Work in Your Last

STAR Interview Answer:

In the last organization that I was a part of, the leadership team was always making changes in an effort to improve the quality of the service we provided, but it didn't seem like the changes stuck around for very long. There was no follow up and the employees would just revert back to doing things how they originally were. My suggestion was to implement a change binder to keep track of these plans, which would make it easy to check on which ones worked and which didn't, and help ensure the changes were implemented each week. With the binder, the results were clearer, and the more successful adjustments became standard policy that all employees followed.

64. What are your hobbies or interests outside work?

Think of a hobby that you really care about and one that portrays you in positive light. Your hobby can even do double duty when it provides an opportunity to demonstrate transferable skills or help you to stand out from other candidates.

Example:

"My top hobbies are jogging and cooking.

I enjoy talking long jogs in the evening at least three times a week.

I like breathing in the cool evening air and watching the different color glows as the sun sets.

Jogging calms and relaxes me and gets me ready to face a new day full of energy.

I also enjoy cooking. I especially relish the challenge of learning a new recipe and trying it out.

It usually takes a couple of tries before I perfect a recipe and it is such a gratifying feeling once the meal comes together perfectly.

I can sit back with the satisfaction of knowing that I now have one more recipe up my sleeve."

65. What are you looking for in a job?

Example:

"I like a job where I have the freedom to be creative and perform my work with little or minimum supervision.

I thrive in work environments where teams are highly collaborative and enjoy the brainstorming process to put forth ideas, distill them and refine them further to come up with greater and stronger concepts.

This is why I am attracted to this job and this company because it has a history and strong company values that support employee creativity and collaboration."

66. What additional training have you done to improve yourself?

Example:

"Every year I have attended at least one seminar to improve my skills in Customer Service.

So far I have attended courses on improving my telephone skills, effective and empathetic listening skills and how to deal with angry customers.

In addition, I read at least one book every quarter related to Customer Satisfaction.

Every once in a while I also watch online videos on good communication skills and how to solve customer problems.

These trainings have helped me to be more confident and empathic in handling customer requests.

Furthermore, I have reduced my average length of call time with customers while at the same time achieving higher ratings on customer satisfaction."

67. Which of your former bosses did you like most and why?

Example:

"Out of all my former bosses, my most favorite one was a Principal at a High School.

I used to work as a History teacher and what I liked most about the Principal was her ability to give good directions.

She also had a big vision for both the students and the teachers and was willing to make time to regularly meet all teachers and brainstorm ways to improve learning and achievement in the school.

Her leadership was very inspiring, collaborative and at the same time held everyone accountable for achieving high results."

68. What new ideas would you bring to this position in your first 90 days?

Example:

"During the first 90 days one of the key things I would do is to immediately schedule a meeting with my immediate supervisor to learn their expectations and priorities for this role.

Based on my past experience, the three key ideas that I would bring to this position as a Fundraising Manager are:

- a.) Developing a fundraising plan: to identify strategies and events to reach out to corporate donors, foundations and individuals.
- b.) Instituting quality control checks: I would create a two layer quality control system to ensure that all proposals have been reviewed and vetted by a third party to ensure that high quality, top-notch proposals are submitted to donors.
- c.) Implementing ongoing training for team-members: there are numerous low cost and free training resources on proposal writing that staff members can utilize to keep their skills up to date.”

69. Are you willing to travel?

Example:

“I am willing to travel as part of my role to ensure that I succeed in this position.

I am conversant and very comfortable with traveling.

In my previous position as a Regional Sales Manager, I had an intensive international travel schedule of about 60% of my job.

I regularly traveled to international countries to meet clients and make sales presentations and solicit orders.”

70. What do you know about our company?

Example:

“From researching about your company, I found out that it not only had a regional presence but also was on the verge of venturing into the international market.

I admire the company’s mission of providing xyz to xyz. The staff testimonials also portray this as a fun, collaborative and energetic environment.

I look forward to joining and thriving in this work environment and utilizing my skills, educational background and statistical experience in the Program Analyst position.”

71. Who are our competitors?

Example:

"This company works in the Research Survey industry and you provide customer satisfaction surveys through direct mail, telephone surveys and online.

The direct competition includes Company X, Company Y and Company Z.

Company Y is the largest in this space having been in existence for 70 years.

Company X and Z whilst providing customer satisfaction surveys also provide many other types of surveys such as employee satisfaction and economic surveys.

Your company has carved out a niche by exclusively focusing on customer satisfaction surveys for the hotel industry.

In addition, your company stands out by having a strong record of customer service, a trustworthy brand and it is staffed with a knowledgeable winning team with a history of treating customers like family."

72. What is your typical workday routine?

Example:

"I like to begin my day by preparing a to-do list. I then review the list and identify the priority items that need to be addressed.

I also check my email and voicemail and respond to emails and return calls.

I attend scheduled meetings, collaborate with team members and work on assigned tasks during the day.

I usually meet with my supervisor once a week for a check-in meeting but also keep her regularly updated and copied on important emails.

At the end of the day just before heading off, I look at my to-do list to see the items I completed and any pending items.

I also add new tasks, deadlines and priorities that arose in the course of the day so that I can handle them the following day."

73. How do you handle constructive criticism?

Example:

"I have regular one-on-one weekly meetings with my supervisor where I proactively request for constructive criticisms with an aim of improving my work performance.

I welcome constructive feedback because it helps me to take steps to correct and improve upon areas where I fall short of expectations."

74. How would you describe your working style?

Example:

"My most dominant work style revolves around how I structure and execute my daily tasks, how I interact and collaborate with colleagues and how I support and report back to my boss.

I am a great believer in preparing to-do lists at the end of the day so that I can get a head start when I start work in the morning.

This gives me an advantage because each morning I have a mental picture of what I will be working on.

I can further prioritize my activities based on upcoming deadlines and reorganize my tasks to accommodate emergencies.

I also enjoy contributing to team meetings with my colleagues especially brainstorming sessions where we are working on a new idea or solving a problem.

I have scheduled a recurring 10 am daily check-in meeting with my boss where I brief her on my priorities for the day, report back on completed tasks for the previous day and inquire about my boss' priorities for the day."

75. Do you prefer working alone or as part of a team?

Example:

"I like working both independently and as part of a team.

There are certain tasks that I function much better when working alone such as planning my work, writing reports, conducting research, doing sales calls and creative writing.

I am also able to work well and collaborate with team members in various ways such as getting input from colleagues, getting a second opinion, brainstorming and generally supporting each other in achieving departmental goals."

76. How would your former colleagues describe you?

Example:

“My former colleagues would describe me as reliable, collaborative and committed.

Each time I had an individual or group assignment I ensured that I understood the requirements and sought clarification as needed.

I then got down to work with zeal and sought others’ input as necessary.

I constantly kept my team updated and kept working until the task was done and fed my team with high quality and timely results.

Additionally, I always had a history of sharing credit and successes with colleagues.”

77. What are your salary requirements?

Talking about salary can cause a bit of nervousness.

The first rule of thumb is that your desired salary should not be too high or low from a normal market range for the kind of job you are seeking.

The safest bet is providing a salary range. Where you state your highest amount and the lowest amount that you would consider.

Example:

“Based on the requirements for the Program Coordinator position and based on my skills, experience and qualifications coupled with the value that I would bring to this job, my salary requirements are \$45,000 – \$55,000 per year.

78. How would you describe yourself?

Tip: When an interviewer asks you to talk about yourself, they’re looking for information about how your qualities and characteristics align with the skills they believe are required to succeed in the role. If possible, include quantifiable results to demonstrate how you use your best attributes to drive success.

Example: “I would say that as a security officer, I’m vigilant, proactive and committed to ensuring safe, secure, and orderly environments. In my last incident response rating, I received a 99% against the team average, which has been at around 97%

over the past three years. I like to be thorough, documenting all incidents. I'm also a lifelong learner, always seeking out the latest security equipment and techniques to patrol buildings. I frequently make suggestions to management about security improvements and changes as my motivation comes from making a meaningful contribution."

79. What makes you unique?

Tip: Employers often ask this question to identify why you might be more qualified than other candidates they're interviewing. To answer, focus on why hiring you would benefit the employer. Since you don't know the other applicants, it can be challenging to think about your answer in relation to them. Addressing why your background makes you a good fit will let employers know why your traits and qualifications make you well prepared.

Example: "What makes me unique is my experience of having spent four years in retail. Because I've had first-hand experience fielding shoppers' questions, feedback and complaints, I know what customers want. I know what it takes to create a positive consumer experience because I've had that direct interaction, working directly with consumers in person."

80. Describe a time when your boss was wrong. How did you handle the situation?

Similar interview questions:

Have you ever pointed out a mistake to your manager? Have you ever corrected someone in the presence of others? Have you ever called out your boss on an error?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:

The interviewer is looking for two things: 1) your willingness (or lack thereof) to point out an error made by someone over you; and 2) how you handled the situation. Some interview books say that you should not call out your boss on an error, which

shows a lack of willingness to be under authority and therefore may mark you as a potential problem. However, that is a wrong analysis of the question. Great managers want to be challenged by their team members. And if you are speaking to a manager who does not want to know about their errors (or have them pointed out), you should likely exclude that manager and/or company from your list of potential employers.

The best approach to answering this question:

Use a practical example in your work where you pointed out something wrong to your boss. Yet equally important is that you show how you handled a situation. It should always be a private one-on-one discussion with your boss, rather than in front of others. You are helping and serving your boss by showing him/her the error. The best examples are ones that directly affect you and/or your team in their deliverables by making sure your boss has the most current and accurate data. Avoid examples which might be considered small or petty (such as correcting spelling errors in a memo from your boss).

An example of how to best answer this question:

"Yes, it has happened, although not very often. Recently, we had a very important decision about pending government contracts which would be decided at the executive committee level at our company. When I first my boss' view on taking the contracts, it was in the context of a meeting with several of his peers. I could see that he was working with old and inaccurate information, which could lead others to a wrong end decision. Since I had previously worked for a government contractor, I asked to meet with my boss privately to discuss the most recent data related to the decision and how it might affect our company. There were new government rules and regulations about which he was not yet aware. I spent time before the meeting updating my own recent information with the most current sources and presented it to my boss with all of the backing details. He was surprised to learn of the recent changes in government regulation and thanked me for taking time to bring him up to speed on these changes. Because of this, he influenced his peers in a very different way in the next meeting, even using some of my research data to reinforce his newly updated position."

An example of how you should not answer this question:

"If someone is wrong about something, I call them out on it right away. It doesn't matter where or when it is, I just speak my mind. Many people tell me how refreshing it is to work with someone who speaks his mind. Sometimes, I will take a contrary position just to stir things up, so that they don't just act on their assumptions. I really like playing devil's advocate and I think it makes us all better when I am there in a meeting challenging others, whether it is my boss or my peers. Sometimes I realize that I can be a thorn in their side, but most of the time I end up being right."

Remember to answer each interview question behaviorally, whether it is a behavioral question or not. The easiest way to do this is to use an example from your background and experience. Then use the S-T-A-R approach to make the answer a STAR: talk about a Situation or Task (S-T), the Action you took (A) and the Results achieved (R). This is what makes your interview answer uniquely yours and will make your answer a star!

81. How would you feel about reporting to a person younger than you?

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.

82. What do you want to accomplish in the first 30 days of this job?

An appropriate answer to this question will vary based on your position and experience level. For a manager-level position, an answer should likely include some sort of plan, where an entry-level interviewee can mention the need to gain experience and learn from colleagues.

Good responses to this type of question might include some of the following:

- I'll spend the first month learning as much as possible and getting to know the team I'll be working with.
- I'll work on cultivating positive relationships with co-workers.
- I plan to come in early and stay late in order to expedite my learning.
- I will ask my manager for suggestions of key employees to engage with.
- I'll ask lots of questions about goals and methods.
- I won't share my opinion until I understand what is being done and why it is being done that way.
- I will spend time learning from as many different staff members as possible to avoid being a burden to any one individual.
- I'll introduce myself to key partners in other departments and learn their expectations for someone in my role.
- I will focus my interaction on staff who are positive about the company and work environment.
- I will treat all staff with respect. I have found in the past that support staff, as well as management, have been very helpful as I adjusted to new positions.

Example: "I created a strategic plan for you to take a look at, using one of your biggest clients as an example. This outline shows how I can make an impact as your Head of Marketing in the next 30, 60, and 90 days. First and foremost, my focus would be on getting to know your highest-spending clients by booking face to face meetings with them. It would be a discovery meeting where I would set out to see where we could serve them better, and increase their marketing spend in areas they were lacking."

83. Describe a time you got angry at work.

1. Have you gotten angry at work What happened When the interviewer asks, "When was the last time you were angry? What happened?" he or she wants to know how you might handle stressful situations at work. The real meaning of the word "angry" to an interviewer is loss of control, and it's important to know that you can handle difficult situations while remaining professional.

2. How to Answer This question is similar to the interview question, "What makes you angry?" For both questions, your answer should contain two components. First, describe the particular situation that frustrated you, and then explain how you handled that situation. When describing the situation, avoid heated words like "hate" or even "angry." Instead, use less intense words to describe your anger, like "frustrated" or "disappointed." This will emphasize that you are not one to lose control in a difficult scenario. Also try to select a situation that does not involve a previous

boss or manager, as this will make you appear to be an easily disgruntled employee. Similarly, while it is fine to mention being frustrated by someone's unprofessional behavior or a difficult situation, do not spend too much time blaming or attacking someone else in your answer. Briefly mention the behavior or event that bothered you, and then move on to the solution.

3. • Conclude your answer by explaining how you handled the situation. Make sure you emphasize how you solved the issue in a calm, professional manner. For example, if you were frustrated by an employee's behavior, explain how you met with him or her and provided constructive feedback that led to a positive change in their actions. • Another option for answering this question is to say that you typically do not get angry at work – this will demonstrate that you do not lose control at work, and that you realize that kind of behavior is inappropriate. However, after explaining this, you should still describe a time when you were frustrated or disappointed by something at work, and how you handled it. To deny that you ever become frustrated would make you appear insincere to the interviewer.

4. • **Best Answers** • I try to look at every situation from an analytical perspective, and not let my emotions dictate my actions. I have had employees in the past whose professionalism has been questionable, and who have not met the requirements of the job. In those situations, I have found that the best policy is to be honest about the issues in question, and offer clear strategies for improvement. • I don't think anger is an appropriate workplace emotion. I have dealt with situations that I found frustrating; for example, I had a coworker who was very confrontational in her written and oral communication. I felt like I was constantly being criticized for things beyond my control. I sat down with her and talked about ways that we could improve our communication. After having that calm, productive conversation, our relationship as coworkers improved greatly, and we actually became collaborators on a number of successful projects. • Anger to me means loss of control. I do not lose control. When I get stressed, I step back, take a deep breath, thoughtfully think through the situation and then begin to formulate a plan of action. For instance, when I am given multiple projects to complete in a short amount of time, rather than feeling frustrated, I come up with a strategy for how to complete the work in a steady, methodical manner that will not overwhelm me.

84. Describe a time when you had to give a person difficult feedback

Why this question is being asked: In a management role, or otherwise, you may have to have a discussion with a co-worker or subordinate that is a difficult one. The interviewer wants to understand how you would manage it.

Strategy: Provide a relevant example that explains the situation leading up to the conversation, what was said during the conversation and what was the end result.

Sample answer: It is never easy to provide someone with difficult feedback but in order to work most effectively, you just have to do it sometime. A co-worker and friend seemed like his hygiene habits had dropped off significantly. He went from wearing sharp suits to stained shirts, seemed like he often skipped showers and stopped shaving. I had a private conversation with him and mentioned how others had noticed that his habits had changed and became concerned. He explained that he was overwhelmed with his wife recently having children and it hadn't been on his radar as much as it had in the past. He said that he would take care of it. He did change the way that he dressed and cleaned himself up. I am glad that I told him as it probably would have cost him his job.

85. Would you ever lie for a company?

During a professional interview, you will encounter a slew of behavioral questions that are meant to reveal your personality. You might be asked, "Would you lie for the company?" Initially, this might feel like a trick. Are you supposed to be so loyal that you would mislead others for the sake of the enterprise? No, that is not the case. The hiring manager is trying to gauge your honesty and integrity. The interviewer really wants to know if you are dependable in your truth telling. Don't feel the need to dance around this question. As with any interview question, be confident and succinct in your response.

Points to Emphasize

The hiring manager wants to know about what makes you tick and how you will handle any future situations. Show your commitment to upstanding business practices.

Focus on your personal integrity.

Emphasize your willingness to do business in a legal fashion.

Be positive in your response.

Answer the question confidently.

Keeping a secret can be a desirable quality in some positions, but breaking the law never is. If you encounter this question, treat it as an opportunity to showcase your truthfulness and other good character traits.

Mistakes You Should Avoid

Some companies rely on employees keeping certain information undisclosed during product development. For instance, information about new technologies is not released to the public until the product is nearly ready for distribution.

Avoid giving a direct no or yes, especially if the industry does rely on legal secrecy.

If pressed, avoid compromising your personal integrity.

Do not let the question make you visibly uncomfortable.

Do not agree to outright lying for the company.

Do not be combative in your answer. The interviewer is not implying that you need be willing to lie for the position. Instead, he or she simply wants to know if you would choose to be dishonest on the job.

Sample Answer

Here are examples of good answers to, “Would you lie for the company”

I do not lie to advance personal or business goals. There is always an honorable way to succeed and I will always work towards genuinely earned success.

As long as I am in accordance with company and legal guidelines, I would do what is best for the company and try to effectively resolve any issues that may arise.

Remember, this interview is also a chance for you to learn more about the company. Don't let yourself get involved with dishonest enterprises that might be sued or ruin your career. Answer honestly and keep your integrity intact.

86. What do you really think about your previous boss?

This question may seem like an opportunity to give your opinion about a previous boss, but it really tests your discretion. The old saying “if you can't say something nice don't say anything at all” applies here. If your boss was wonderful, explain that in detail. If your boss was a dud, find some positive quality or lesson you learned from observing the boss. Saying bad things about an old boss doesn't make them look bad, it makes you look like a negative person.

Even if you loved your boss, don't just give that opinion. Use this opportunity to discuss how your relationship with your boss impacted your career.

Great Boss:

“I can't say enough good about my last boss. She ran the department well, and I think she got the maximum performance from the group. One of her greatest strengths was her ability to communicate. That's one thing I took away from that experience – keep in touch, keep it short, don't hesitate to ask questions or share information.”

Horrible Boss:

“My last boss had to be the biggest jerk on the planet. He loved to stand in the middle of the department and yell at people about anything and everything. I'm glad I'm no longer in that environment.”

That's the negative version, here's the positive version of an answer involving the same boss.

Be Nice:

“My last boss taught me that treating people well, in the long run, leads to better overall performance and a happier work environment.”

It doesn't sound like the same boss, but it is. A bad boss can teach something by offering a counter example. There's no reason to tell the interviewer you learned what not to do.

So-So:

“My last boss wasn't the best or worst boss I've had. She was in the middle – a little overbearing, but she knew the job and dragged people to the finish line when projects were due.”

The same so-so boss can be explained in much more positive, and for this question productive, terms.

So-So Better:

“My last boss wasn't the best boss I've had, but she had one quality I admired a lot. She was a great motivator, especially when it was crunch time. Sometime I hear her voice in my head pushing me to greater achievements.”

It's all a matter of perspective, and how you spin the answer. Remember, the goal is to give a positive impression of yourself, not a negative or even positive impression of a former boss. One woman had a great answer due to circumstances. “I liked her so much I hope to follow her here. I look forward to working with her again.”

87. What has been the most rewarding experience of your career thus far?

Showing your best self in that all-important interview doesn't have to be headache inducing. Answering questions like “describe the most rewarding experience of your career thus far” becomes easier when you understand the motive behind the question.

When asking this question, the interviewer isn't necessarily just looking for your latest self-centered triumph. They ask this question to find out more about your work style, what you value in terms of career and your overall personality. This opportunity is a great way to share what's important to you in the workplace and the skills that you had to use to achieve it.

Points to Emphasize

Responding to this question allows you to showcase your talents and abilities while sharing a career experience that was both personal and valuable to you.

- Remember that employers are looking for coworkers who believe in team work when choosing an experience to share.
- Try to impart an experience that relates to the company's core functions and values.
- Make sure your triumph reflects positively on yourself and the company.
- Talk about specific details in relation to how the rewarding event came about.

Overall, sharing something in your career that was extremely satisfying should be done in a confident, open manner. This communicates to the hiring manager that you are assured of yourself and other members of your team.

Mistakes You Should Avoid

The last thing you want to do in an interview is to trip up with common pitfalls that can easily be avoided.

- Don't get wrapped up in a bragging moment and come off as arrogant.
- Don't forget to choose an experience that displays your leadership skills.
- Don't take all of the credit for your rewarding experience; include others who may have had a part.
- Never stretch the truth to be something that it's not; interviewers are usually able to tell and it could cost you the job.

With these customary mistakes being sidestepped, you'll sail right on through your interview to the top of your interviewer's list.

Sample Answer

An excellent example of how this question could be answered would go something like this:

1. This past year at my firm started out as a disappointment with low numbers and even lower morale. I was asked to head up a team of my coworkers and we were able to effectively bring up our sales and boost the spirits of our company turning last year into our biggest year yet! I was humbled to be asked to confidently lead this special team and learned many things about being a great manager.
2. One of my most recent rewarding accomplishments occurred at my last company when I was transferred to a department known for having internal conflict. This one department had more turnover than the entire company. Having a reputation as a "peacemaker" when it came to interpersonal relationships- I was successful in transforming the environment into a more pleasant place to work. During the year I was there- no one transferred out or resigned. I achieved this by incorporating fun into work- celebrating individual and group successes- and granting teammates time off to participate in worthy projects. We even formed a walking club and got in shape during lunch breaks.
3. As I looked over your job listing- I saw that you were seeking candidates with topnotch managerial skills. To be a proficient manager- one needs to know how to solve problems- understand how to effectively delegate tasks- and encourage growth in team members. During my previous job- I saw that employee morale was down and assignments were becoming backlogged. I effectively reorganized how the

assignments were given out- rewarded hard workers- and ended up with the most productive and positive department in the company.

Don't forget that this is another opportunity to showcase your skills.

88. How would you deal with an angry or irate customer?

No matter how good you are at what you do, what business you are in, or where it is located, you will at some point find yourself facing an irate customer, but perhaps no more so than in a call center. Maybe the product was flawed, a delivery was late, or a charge was inaccurate. How you deal with that customer not only will determine how he or she feels about your organization – or your client's organization – but how you feel about yourself.

When you are able to turn an irate customer into a satisfied customer, you will gain confidence in your ability to diffuse a volatile situation and evoke a positive outcome. You'll also gain the respect of your coworkers and attract the attention of your supervisors. Who knows? You might even be promoted.

When most people encounter an irate customer, their first instinct is to turn and run. Dealing with a customer who has a problem and is upset about it can be more than a little daunting. With the proper perspective, however, you will see that the customer's complaint is actually an opportunity for you and your organization to put your best foot forward.

Customers who have complaints are a blessing in disguise. They let you know where you and your organization have flaws – and provide you with the opportunity to correct them. When you do, you will realize increased customer loyalty, revenues, and profits. It's a win/win situation.

You should be more concerned with the customers who don't complain than with those who do. In a recent study of retail banks in the United Kingdom conducted by J.D. Power and Associates, results showed that 25 percent of customers who have experienced a problem in the past twelve months say they definitely or probably will switch institutions in the next year. And 55 percent of customers who have had a problem or complaint were disappointed with the resolution process.

That study also found that, while incentives are important in attracting new customers, customer service is essential to retaining them. Almost 40 percent of customers left their banks because of a poor service experience, and an additional 43 percent cited poor service as a top reason for intending to leave their banks.

Customer service is key to the success of any business no matter if you are a healthcare organization, profit or not for profit. And dealing with irate customers and solving their problems is a critical element of that service. When dealing with an irate customer, take these steps:

Listen carefully and with interest to what the customer is telling you.

Apologize without laying blame, regardless of who is at fault.

Put yourself in the customer's place, and respond in a way that shows you care about his or her concerns. Use phrases such as "I understand that must be upsetting," or "I don't blame you for being upset; I would feel the same way."

Ask pertinent questions in a caring, concerned manner and actively listen to the answers.

Suggest one or more alternatives that would address the customer's concerns.

Solve the problem quickly and efficiently, or find someone who can.

Train people on how to handle angry or irate customers

Using these steps will quickly calm most unhappy or angry customers and allow you to address and solve their problems. Patience and tact are critical. Even if a customer is making outrageous statements and, in essence, throwing a fit, it's important that you remain calm. Do not take those statements personally. Apologize, take the blame, and empathize with the customer, and then solve the problem. Just as important as what you should do, there are some things you should not do:

Don't directly challenge someone who has a complaint and is angry. Even if that customer is wrong, don't attempt to prove it. Your goal is to solve the problem, not to enter into a debate on the merits of the complaint.

Don't let the conversation wander or get off the topic. Solve the crisis at hand without looking for – and finding – additional problems.

Don't participate in faultfinding. Shifting blame doesn't help anyone.

Don't let your personal feelings get in the way. Stay cool, and use courtesy and tact to diffuse the situation.

When you successfully handle irate customers and their complaints, you will be rewarded with a satisfied customer – a customer who will be loyal to you and your organization. That loyalty will have a positive impact on your organization's bottom line – and make you look like a hero.

89. Describe a time when your work was criticized?

During a job interview, a hiring manager may ask you this classic job interview question—"Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?" A question along these lines might sound like an attempt to get you to admit your worst on-the-job mistakes.

While hiring managers might be interested to hear about your work gaffes, what they really want to know is how you respond to stressful situations, and whether you can take suggestions and corrections with the right attitude.

They also want to get a handle on how well you could work under a variety of management styles, and if criticism of any stripe (constructive, or downright negative) makes you defensive, angry or undervalued.

Points to Emphasize

From Fortune 500 CEO to fry guy at McDonald's, everyone—regardless of work background—should be able describe a time when their work was criticized.

You must emphasize your ability to handle criticism in a calm, cool, and collected manner when answering “Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?”

This question offers you an opportunity to showcase your willingness to take the opinions of others into consideration, and to learn from the commentary they're putting to you, and to humbly make improvements on day-to-day work or projects when required. Here are some additional tips to keep in mind:

Explain a situation where you improved your performance after receiving constructive criticism.

Talk about how you listened and made changes when a boss or client critiqued your work.

It can also be insightful to describe a time when your work was unfairly criticized, and how you were able to rebuff the criticism without making anyone look bad.

Mention why you are flexible and professional when working with others with whom you may at times disagree.

Give the impression that you always aim for quality work, which involves welcoming all kinds of honest input from others on the job.

Mistakes You Should Avoid

It may be easy to only describe times when your work was criticized incorrectly or unfairly if you are not thoughtful about the matter, leaving the bad impression that your work is always above reproach. This is why you must prep an answer in advance to the “Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?” interview question.

To make sure you leave a positive rather than a negative impression, watch out for these common blunders:

Do not say that you have never been criticized at work, as this sounds as if you are bragging (or saying you are perfect).

If you feel that you have never been criticized, dig deeper. Nobody's perfect. If you don't have much work experience yet, reach back to school projects, volunteering gigs, or extracurricular group activities.

Whatever you do, do not make up a story when answering “Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?” Hiring managers can sniff out lies and exaggerations.

Do not make the mistake of going into excessive detail about any work slip-ups—instead, focus on your positive reaction to criticism.

Do not talk about whether the person who criticized you was in a position to offer that criticism.

Don’t disparage anyone with your response, including yourself.

Sample Answer

Here’s an example of how to answer “Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?”

“Like everyone, I have received input from my managers that helped me to see how my work could be improved. Once I was asked to revise a project that I had spent a lot of time on, but after listening carefully to the critique, I saw how I could make changes that would strengthen the finished product. I’m always eager to learn from people with different views and experiences, especially when the commentary can help me grow in my career, and strengthen my skillset.”

Always keep in mind that the hiring manager is hoping to find out how you tick with a question like “Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?” Use this question as a way to display your desire for growth and ability to accept constructive criticism.

90. What do you want to accomplish in the first 90 days of this job?

Similar interview questions:

What would be your initial goals you would like to accomplish in this role?

Where would you be looking to first make an impact if you get this job?

Tell me about what you did during the first 30 days of your last job.

How do you decide what is most important to focus on in your new role?

Why the interviewer is asking this question:

This is both a test of your basic understanding of the needs of the role as well as a behavioral reference point to what you did in prior roles. The interviewer wants to know what you deem as the most urgent needs for the role and where you feel you can have an initial impact.

The best approach to answering this question:

You need to know the primary needs of the role to answer this question. Specifically, you need to understand the most urgent needs for the role. If you do not, your options are: 1) answer behaviorally with what you did in your last role and use that as

a launching point for asking about the needs of this role; 2) defer on the specific needs based on initial meetings with managers and coworkers.

An example of how to best answer this question for experienced candidates:

"In my current job, I spent the first 90 days tackling the most urgent needs that had been previously shelved while the role was vacant. My first day on the job was meeting with my manager to assess both the urgency and importance of the open items that needed to be accomplished. I wanted to have an immediate impact in the role and was able to do so. I understand that this role has an urgent need to focus initially on _____, is that correct?"

An example of how to best answer this question for entry level candidates:

"In my recent internship, my first day involved meeting with my mentor and my manager and setting delivery goals for my internship. Since the internship was only 90 days, I had a clear view of what needed to be accomplished. I would want to do the same thing with this role so that I can get off to a fast start in delivering the most urgent and important needs for the team..."

An example of how you should *not* answer this question:

"Well, the first week is typically not very productive with filling out paperwork and getting my computer set up. I like to get all of my music loaded on my computer, so that I don't have to play songs from my phone. Then I typically start hanging around the water cooler to listen to others, to find out what is really happening behind the scenes. I usually try to make friends with a couple people at work so that I can find out the history of what works and what doesn't. I know some people try to avoid the negative attitude people, but I think they often have the most information about the company and how to work the system, how to pull the levers to get things done. And they usually can tell me which people to avoid and work around. It's all about understanding the system and how to work with it and, when necessary, work around it..."

91. Do you think you could have done better in your last job?

This question tries to assess your engagement level in your current job-profile i.e., how well have you evaluated all the aspects involved in your profile. The interviewer(s) seek to know how do you judge your own performance.

This is a tricky question to answer. You need to be diplomatic while answering this.

Following are some alert points embedded in this question:

1. Tell them about how well the job profile suited you and what made you choose that profile in the first place.
2. Speak about your recognition and rewards that you earned while working in that job.

3. Remember that there always is a room for improvement in a job, irrespective of it being a clerical level job or a senior level job. Hence, DON'T let your answer to this question to be a straight 'no'. This will make you sound arrogant and over-confident.

4. There is no harm in accepting your mistakes or shortcomings; what is more required is your urge to correct them and improve. Hence, tell them if you identified any such scope of improvement in your last job. However, support your answer by stating how you wish to incorporate the improvement in yourself.

92. How would you fire someone?

Why this question is being asked: If you are put in the position of manager, this is a likely occurrence at some point.

Strategy: Explain how you would follow company protocols and try to make it as comfortable a situation as possible.

Sample answer: I would check with human resources as to company best practices for managing the situation. I would like to provide the person plenty of time to ask questions and know that he/she is being heard, even if it did not work out in this job. I would explain the things that the person had done right on the job and what things were done poorly and why it would not work out here.