Ace Your

JOB

INTERVIEW

Master the Best Answers to the
14 Most Effective Job Interview Questions

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Introduction

How you say what you say is just as important as what you say.

As you read this eBook, I hope you take note I did not title it the "The Most Common Job Interview Questions" or "The Best Responses to Interview Questions." There are many good books and websites that identify common interview questions and acceptable responses. There are, in fact, as many good (and bad) answers to every interviewing question as there are people in the workforce. I am not, however, a fan of providing overly scripted responses. I think that is akin to a doctor giving me ibuprofen to treat a serious ailment.

The main goal of this eBook is to educate you on how to perform well in any interview, irrespective of the questions posed. The insight within should transcend interview questions, interviewer styles, or job sought. In that spirit, it is my intent to stimulate ideas for your responses by creating awareness of the interviewer's intent along with critical areas she wants to evaluate. If you understand these underlying principles and recognize the interviewer's intention with each question, you will put yourself in a much better position to provide effective responses and perform well.

One way to illustrate this is by using interview questions as examples, but also identifying the area, trait, or skill the interviewer is attempting to evaluate. Since we are going to use these interview questions as a vehicle to discuss this, I thought it would be beneficial to cover what I consider the most effective interview questions. Let's call it my version of the "interviewer's silver bullet list" because I think these questions elicit the maximum amount of information in the least number of questions. Keep in mind, this list is intended to cover all professions and omits any industry, role, or domain-specific experience that might be relevant for your particular job. Those questions would be supplemental. Lastly, to lend most credibility to the sample responses, I generally leaned toward the technology sector because it is the industry with which I am most familiar. I think, however, that you will find the overall structure general enough to apply to your profession.

These fourteen questions and their variations, if executed correctly, will provide the interviewer with an accurate picture of you. I refer to the first four as "Pillar Questions." Every interviewer, at some point in the session, will be interested in this information regardless of whether she asks these four questions directly. The best interviewers typically ask them in this order, right at the beginning of the interview.

I hope you enjoy this material. We have much more like it that is accessible on the milewalk website (www.milewalk.com) as well as the milewalk blog (http://milewalk.com/mwblog/).

Why would you leave your current employer?

Alternate Versions

- **Why did you leave your current employer?**
- **Take me through your job transitions throughout your career.**

Employer is Evaluating

- **What are the candidate's current pain points?**
- **Is the candidate a malcontent?**
- **How plausible is it the candidate will leave current employer?**
- **Can the company provide the candidate a better opportunity?**

In my opinion, this is one of the best openers because it provides the interviewer with loads of information regarding you. It highlights how you feel about your current employer, role, and situation, as well as surfaces your pain points. The interviewer can begin to evaluate early on whether her company can actually address that pain and truly offer you a better situation. It also helps her identify whether you will be realistic or practical in your needs.

Regardless of whether you are actively or passively seeking a new job, it is paramount you provide insight that shows you would leave for the right opportunity. At the same time, it is crucial you avoid portraying yourself as a malcontent; do not badmouth your current employer. While this might seem obvious, many of us become unaware of the undercurrent in our tones or comments when speaking about something as important and emotional.

The easiest and most effective way to balance the plausibility and malcontent components is to speak only about issues that you do not hold your employer responsible for nor can alter through your own actions. The interviewer will consider you tactful and professional if you avoid sounding disgruntled, but it is also important not to complain about something you could actually change. This, in fact, is one of the greatest mistakes a candidate can make early in the interview. Here is a neutral but ineffective example:

CANDIDATE: "I would be open to leaving my current employer for a position with more challenging career development opportunities."

While this sounds neutral, the interviewer could infer that you are not performing well enough for your employer to challenge you with more rewarding opportunities or that you are not taking responsibility for proactively growing yourself professionally. Furthermore, what would prevent you from leaving them for another company that provided you a better opportunity? (An effective interviewer would likely follow your response with a question asking you how you are addressing this issue currently.) During the interview, it is irrelevant if neither of those thoughts are true. The only point that matters is what she thinks. Sadly, in many cases, there is often a communication gap between what you said and what she heard. Remember, your goal is not only to sell yourself and your value, but also do it in a manner that leaves no room for misinterpretation. Whenever you encounter an interviewer continually asking additional questions about your original point, you can be fairly certain she is unclear of your intentions (not necessarily your response) or there is a communication gap.

An alternate, more effective way to handle this particular reason might highlight certifications you have recently achieved or areas of interest. For example:

CANDIDATE: "I would be open to leaving my current employer because we are not in a position to secure opportunities for me to work in an area that greatly interests me. Recently, I attained [insert certification here] certification with the hope of working in that area, but my organization has decided to hold off providing that service to our customers. It is an area of great interest to me, and I'm hoping to leverage my learning from that certification process. The primary reason I'm interviewing with your company is because that area is one of your core services and appears to be a large part of the job responsibilities."

In the latter example, the candidate remained neutral regarding her employer (i.e., the company made a conscious decision regarding which services to provide its customers), and she took action to further her career development. You have also provided the interviewer a preview into the next question she will likely ask.

Why do you want to join our company?

Alternate Versions

- **What do you know about us?**
- **What do you know about the role?**
- **What have you heard about our organization?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **How passionate is the candidate about the opportunity?**
- **Has the candidate performed extensive research?**
- **What does the candidate know about the organization?**
- **Can the company provide the candidate a better opportunity?**

This question and several others like it are aimed at evaluating two key areas. First, the employer is gauging your level of research. This shows how interested you are in their organization and job opportunity. Second, they are assessing whether they can actually provide you with a better opportunity than your current employer.

Your most effective response will show you have done your homework and know specific areas the employer does well. Hopefully, you can also highlight how these areas match your interests. The ultimate answer will illustrate how the potential employer can satisfy interests your current company cannot.

This response could be lengthy, based on how many areas you want to address. Here is an example that would include specific information and provide the interviewer with a sense of your range of research.

CANDIDATE: "My research shows you are the leader in your space because you've developed a product and service that [insert detail here]. It is extremely important for me to work in an organization that prides itself on being a leader and is willing to invest in developing unique products and services. I read in Forbes magazine that your company invested $100 million in research and development to ensure the product contained next-generation features that no other company's included. Another aspect that intrigues me is that your organization is multinational. I read in Hoovers that 30 percent of your revenue comes from outside the United States. My organization focuses exclusively in the United States, so my current responsibilities are exclusively national. One of my criteria for professional growth in my next position is to gain international experience. I noticed from the job description that international travel is part of the job. I also reviewed the backgrounds of your employees [name an employee here for specificity] and noticed your people have incredibly strong backgrounds. It is important for me to work with smart, accomplished professionals because I feel that will help me grow as well. I also noticed the testimonials they provided highlighted how much they enjoy working here. I drew the conclusion from those videos that the organization truly supports its workers."

What value do you offer?

Alternate Versions

- **Why would we hire you instead of someone else?**
- **What makes you unique?**
- **What special skills do you have?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **Can the candidate sell herself?**
- **Does the candidate have unique skills?**
- **Does the candidate have an understanding of the company and job responsibilities?**

I love this question because it helps the interviewer understand what you think your strengths are. Of course, simply because you say you have the skills does not necessarily mean you actually have them, but you are putting the interviewer in a good position to probe in those areas. You can also provide evidence that you have the skills to preempt a series of questions.

There is a shortcoming with this question. For the interviewer to elicit the most substantive information, the candidate must understand the job responsibilities. In the event this

question comes at the beginning of the interview, I would recommend that you gain clarification before responding. If you simply start answering her question, you risk highlighting unique skills that are irrelevant for that position. (I consider this a poor tactic on the interviewer's part because without clarification upfront, you will likely waste precious interview minutes providing insight that is not as valuable.) Instead, use one of the most effective sales techniques—sell the customer what she wants.

If the interviewer asks this

question, simply respond, "I would be happy to discuss the value I can bring as well as unique skills I possess. First, can you let me know which specific areas of the job responsibilities are most important to you so I can focus on my skills as they relate to those responsibilities?" This will put you in a position to highlight areas the employer feels are the most important.

When responding, it is important to not only indicate your unique skills but also provide evidence of where you attained them. For example:

CANDIDATE: "I have a unique ability to sell services within a complex sale. Last year, I was able to secure nine new clients for the company, which generated $10.7 million in consulting services. In five of those cases, we were invited to respond to a Request for a Proposal and won. In the other four situations, I showed the prospects business issues that were present but latent. Because these issues were yet unknown to the management teams, I was able to work with them without our competitors present. I showed them how my organization could solve the issues as well as the potential return on investment. I had become a trusted advisor so those prospects did not feel the need to seek competitive bids. As a result, we were able to secure those clients and have now expanded throughout the organizations, providing other services we offer."

How will you benefit from joining our company?

Alternate Versions

- **How will you improve yourself within this job?**
- **What can we offer you that another company cannot?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **Can we actually provide the candidate a better opportunity?**
- **Does the candidate already see how we provide a better opportunity?**

This question is aimed at determining whether it would be a smart career move for you to join their organization. It also reinforces the likelihood that you would join if they provided you an employment offer. As with the previous question, it is important that you are detailed in your response. I have recycled a portion of the example I used for the response to "Why do you want to join our company?" because of its applicability.

CANDIDATE: "One of the key reasons is that I would gain multinational experience. I read in Hoovers that 30 percent of your revenue comes from outside the United States. My organization focuses exclusively in the United States, so my current responsibilities are exclusively national. One of my criteria for professional growth in my next position is to gain international experience. I noticed from the job description that international travel is part of the job."

What is the first act you'll perform when you start?

Alternate Versions

- **How do you envision your first thirty (or sixty, and ninety) days on the job?**
- **What do you know about the position?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **Does the candidate have a good understanding of the position?**
- **Will the candidate get up to speed quickly?**
- **Will the candidate be able to make contributions quickly?**

This question is designed to evaluate how much you know about the company and position as well as simulate how you would approach your initial days working for the company. Does the candidate have a good understanding of the position? Do I need to share more information with her? Is she organized in her thinking and approach? How effective are her organizational skills?

An effective response to this question will include a confirmation of your understanding of the position followed by a list of your assumptions and completed with a thoughtful, organized approach, including specific details regarding what you will do. Below is an abbreviated example for a sales position.

CANDIDATE: "I'd like to confirm my understanding that this sales position primarily focuses on securing new accounts from a provided list of targeted customers (as opposed to determining who I need to target or growing accounts from an existing customer base). If that is the case, I would forego any market research, at least upfront, required to determine which customers to target because I will focus on the list you provide.

"During my initial week, I assume I will either undergo training the company provides or educate myself on the products, services, and the company's approach to selling them. Once I've completed the orientation process, I'll align my network and relationships to the targeted list of customers to determine the overlap. I should be able to complete that assessment by the end of the second week I'm on the job. After that exercise, I will prepare a detailed thirty-, sixty-, and ninety-day schedule based on the jumpstart my relationships will provide. That will allow me to either create suitable metrics including number of phone calls, meetings, proposals, and so forth or help me determine my work pace based on any expectations and metrics you have in place."

Obviously, there will be a significant content difference depending on the position for which you are interviewing, but the important points to note are that the candidate is providing a response that shows the interviewer a number of positive things. First, the candidate immediately introduces opportunities for the interviewer to clarify any incorrect assumptions. Second, the candidate is demonstrating that she knows how to execute sound sales processes, is metrics-driven, and has an organized, planned approach to how she will operate her day. Even if some of her assumptions are incorrect, the interviewer is able to gather the essentials she needs to make an accurate assessment of the candidate's longer term potential.

If you were still working here three years from now, what do you think your most significant contribution would be?

Alternate Versions

- **Where do you see yourself in five years?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **What is important to the candidate?**
- **Does the candidate have a realistic view of what she can accomplish?**
- **Is the candidate a creative thinker?**
- **Does the candidate have practical work experience that can help her formulate ideas and execute them?**
- **Can the candidate set and execute on goals?**

As much as I love this question, I want interviewers to avoid questions like "Where do you see yourself in five years." I understand they want to gain insight into your ambitions and desires for the future, but most people can't see past tomorrow, let alone five years from now. Furthermore, today's job market changes so quickly that new opportunities are created on a daily basis, and career paths are changed in an instant. If someone would have told me in 2003 that I'd be opening a recruiting firm the following year, I would have bet my entire bank account against it. I honestly wish someone could dis-invent that question or somehow permanently remove it from every interviewer's repertoire of questions.

This question is designed to evaluate whether you are goal-oriented, a planner, and an executer.

The best response will be similar to how Harry reads a book in the movie When Harry Met Sally. When he starts a new book, he actually reads the last page of the book in the event he dies before he finishes it—so at least he knows how it ended. A little morbid, I know, but effective during this type of question. You want to tell the interviewer the result and follow it up with how you would accomplish it. For example:

CANDIDATE: "Three years from now I would expect that I helped build for you a successful video practice with approximately $3 million in consulting revenue. During the first ninety days, I would begin identifying, developing, and packaging the solution offerings. Based on my current experience with these products, I already have strong ideas that I would want to obviously discuss and confirm with your management team to ensure they align with your corporate direction and strategy. Once we agreed and built the offerings, we would start developing the marketing campaigns, educating and supporting the sales teams, and identifying the appropriate product development and professional services resources to support the implementations for our customers. Based on our first year's results, we would plan the targets for year two. I already have completed market research for the demand for these solutions so I have a good idea of the potential customer base. That would help prepare realistic targets …"

You can see the candidate first provided a direct response. Most importantly, she followed up with a mixture of evidence that shows how her experience and exposure to the market has placed her in a good position to make immediate contributions as well as ensure the company can set and meet its goals by executing a well-thought-out plan.

Describe a situation when you and a coworker (superior, peer, or subordinate) **disagreed.** Take me through the disagreement and how you discussed your viewpoint.

Alternate Versions

- Tell me about a time when you needed to influence a coworker.
- Describe a situation where you needed to plead your case to a coworker.

Employer is Evaluating

- Does the candidate have strong interpersonal flexibility skills?
- Will the candidate get along with team members?
- Is the candidate influential?
- Is the candidate accommodating?
- Can she comprise when appropriate?

I have a news flash for you. The best influencers in the world are not salespeople, slick-talking politicians, public speakers, or anyone else of that ilk. The best accommodators are not the spineless types or the best team players. People that can get along with others and have strong leadership and influencing skills all have two things in common—they are the greatest listeners and they are inquisitive.

Here's Why: The fastest way to influence someone or come to a compromise is to accommodate their need in a manner they think is best for them. The only way you're able to do this is if you understand what their need is or where their viewpoint comes from. Impressing your viewpoints upon them will accomplish nothing if they are not receptive to other options or do not see the benefit for themselves.

I always tell people during discussions like this, "It matters more to me why you think what you think than what you think. Whether you are correct or not isn't as relevant to me when I'm trying to help you. I need to understand why that's important to you or why you think that or where you got your information."

For anyone in the workforce, you will become a lot more influential if you learn the following lesson quickly. In business, it makes no difference what is correct. It matters far more what is practical and has the greater return on investment. Whenever you are evaluating, discussing, brainstorming, or whatever exercise you're in the midst of, remember there exist political, social, economical, government regulatory, competitive (product features, price matching, etc.), and a host of other factors that ultimately influence the best solution. This holds true whether you work in a restaurant or a skyscraper.

When responding to these types of questions during an interview, you would be best served to explain to the interviewer that you have a particular philosophy whenever you disagree with someone. That philosophy should be to seek first to understand the other party's viewpoint and why she thinks that, including many of the internal or external influences. (If this is not your normal inclination, I suggest you think back to situations when you were more apt to do this and cite that example in your response.) Once you are able to do that, you can focus on compromising or providing additional viewpoints, knowing much more information regarding why it is important to them.

Describe an ambiguous situation that you organized, resolved, or executed.

Alternate Versions

- Describe a situation where you solved or implemented something you considered complex.
- Describe a situation when you took initiative on a project.
- Describe a situation where you implemented something without being asked.

Employer is Evaluating

- Does the candidate have strong organizational skills?
- Is the candidate a self-starter in assembling the components necessary to bring order?

This is a relatively straightforward question regarding what the employer ultimately seeks. The interviewer wants to understand whether you can operate independently in an organized fashion. The most important element in responding to the question is to ensure you can find a rich example where you identified the necessary components or activities that needed to be executed in order to complete the product, project, or group of activities.

When responding, be sure to include how you started, how you executed, and how you ended. It will be easier for the interviewer to follow along and remember your story if it is figuratively outlined for her—start, execute, and finish. Alternatively, you can think in terms of architecting, implementing, and operating (or whatever else might be appropriate for your field). You can handle the critical success factor of "making them believe you" by iterating details within each of the sections of your response. For example, below is a marketing executive who is attempting to identify the best approach for a marketing campaign:

CANDIDATE: We needed to execute a marketing campaign and wanted to isolate it to one of our customer segments because we didn't have the budget to cover accommodations for all three (top, mid, and low) levels of customers. We also didn't have enough data to determine which customer level would be most effective to target. [*She identified the problem and highlighted the ambiguity.*] To be successful, I knew I first needed to gather the analytics to determine which group to target. Second, once I had that information, I determined what the campaign should be based on the customer level. I then built the material and distributed it. After the campaign was executed, I monitored the activity using our sales force tracking tool to assess the level of performance of the campaign based on the number of responses and leads we incurred."

The candidate can then revert back to the beginning to highlight the details of each phase to show the interviewer her logic behind the approach, the thoroughness of the execution, and how she captured and monitored the results. The interviewer won't necessarily remember any of the details, but she will remember the candidate had a logical approach and a detailed understanding of the process.

Describe a situation where something went wrong.

Alternate Versions

- **Describe a situation where you faced a conflict.**
- **Describe a situation where you failed.**

Employer is Evaluating

- **Does the candidate respond well to adversity?**
- **Is the candidate composed in stressful situations?**

This question is designed to determine whether you can rise above conflict and how you address adversity. A key ingredient to your response is to describe how you remained calm when you initially discovered the unfortunate turn of events. Reinforce how you recognize that mistakes, failures, and other unfortunate situations are part of growing as a company and an employee.

Once you lay the foundation with those thoughts, you can articulate the entire situation. The ultimate responses will also include how you prepared for these types of situations in advance by identifying potential risks, mitigating plans, and contingency plans in the event something goes wrong.

Below is a rather simple example for a candidate who was providing a sales presentation to a prospect:

CANDIDATE: "I went to a prospect to deliver our final sales presentation for a sizable deal we were pursuing. The prospect indicated they would provide the necessary audio and visual equipment for the presentation, including a video machine to project the presentation onto their boardroom screen. I arrived a bit early to set up. When I got to the boardroom, the receptionist shared with me that the video projector bulbs had burned out that morning and they didn't have an alternate machine. I wasn't overly concerned because the previous day I spent a few minutes considering and planning for all the meeting requirements that were out of my control. The equipment was just one of them, so I anticipated something like this could occur. Before I left the office, I made hardcopies of the presentation just in case. The prospect was very appreciative and one of the individuals indicated it was a plus that I had a contingency plan. Interestingly, that unfortunate situation presented an opportunity for me to score additional points that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to if something didn't go wrong."

How do you educate yourself?

Alternate Versions

- How do you further your career development?
- Tell me about the last time you took initiative to learn something that was not part of your job description.

Employer is Evaluating

- Is the candidate resourceful?
- Is the candidate a self-starter?
- Is the candidate interested in continually growing professionally?

This question is designed to reveal whether the candidate has the desire to grow professionally. I think this speaks to an individual's level of motivation, but it also focuses on the candidate's resourcefulness and creativity in how to learn.

The best responses to this type of question will highlight the numerous, specific sources you would seek for the information. While you can rely on teammates to help educate and cross-train you, employers are usually more interested in the sources you would deploy on your own. Typical references would include the Internet (be specific as to the sites or genres), books, trade magazines, workshops, additional schooling, training classes, and so forth. The more specific your references, the more they will like your response.

It is also effective to lay out the sequence in which you'd review this material. That is, you won't examine all the information from all sources simultaneously, so review which source you would approach first (because it is likely to have the richest and most relevant information), second, and third. Below is an example:

CANDIDATE: "I have encountered numerous situations where I needed to educate myself because I didn't yet have the requisite experience. I usually put together a short workplan for myself, highlighting what I consider to be the most robust sources of information and sequencing them based on quantity of information I'll be able to extract. To ensure I'm starting in the right location, I usually review the plan with my boss or the appropriate individual. While I don't like to consume too much of his or her time educating me, having them review the plan for a few minutes often times saves a lot of time for me. Then I start with ..."

How would your coworkers describe you?

Alternate Versions

- **What would your coworkers (or others) say about you?**
- **What would your boss, coworker, or subordinates consider your greatest strengths/weaknesses?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **How does the candidate view herself?**
- **What does the candidate consider her strengths and opportunities for improvement?**

This question is designed to reveal how you view yourself. It is often asked in place of the one related to your greatest strengths and weaknesses. I recommend that you provide only positive remarks regarding how your coworkers would describe you. That is a completely fair response on your part. I'm smiling as I write this because, let's face it, if the interviewer wants you to discuss your weaknesses, make her ask for them specifically!

The best responses to this type of question will cover your greatest strengths. It is certainly all right to provide only these. In my opinion, the question itself is a bit unfair because it is asking you to speculate. I'm not in the speculating business. I'm in the success business, and you are too.

What motivates you?

Alternate Versions

- **What motivates you outside the workplace?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **Is the candidate self-motivated?**
- **Are the candidate's interests in alignment with our offerings and needs?**

This question usually stands alone, but employers have also been known to explore outside your work-related motivations. For example, the interviewer might ask, "What motivates you outside the workplace?" to gain an understanding of your hobbies or interests.

   This question is designed to determine whether you are a motivated individual in general as well as whether your interests are in alignment with the company's needs. Obviously, it is not an effective match if you are interested in areas you would not have an opportunity to work in or that the company could not provide. This leaves two things to consider before responding. First, determine whether you have a good understanding of the position, and then highlight your motivations as they relate to the role (and potential future roles if you know those career options also exist). If the interviewer asks this question before you have strong understanding of the role, simply ask a clarifying question to ensure you can calibrate your answer. For example:

CANDIDATE: "I have many motivations and interests related to my work life. Would it be most beneficial to highlight the ones most closely aligned to the role? [If she indicates no, then go directly with your motivations in general and use your best assessment of the role to match them. If she indicates yes, then continue with the following question.] Then can you share a little bit more about the main responsibilities so I can provide you an accurate picture?"

You might be hesitant to answer a question with a question. I don't consider this evasive unless you continually follow up with question after question. If you can show the interviewer that you are trying to help her get the most relevant information in the shortest amount of time, she will appreciate that. Using pointed follow-up questions such as the one cited in the example will help you acknowledge that you want to answer the question directly. It will also ensure you are providing the most pertinent information to help the interviewer assess you.

Do you prefer working on a team or by yourself?

Alternate Versions

- **Tell about a time when you sacrificed meeting your deadline in favor of helping a team member.**
- **Describe how you are a team player.**

Employer is Evaluating

- **Is the candidate a team player?**
- **Can the candidate work independently?**

This question is designed to determine whether you are a team player and whether you can operate autonomously. When an interviewer asks this question, she is usually trying to assess whether you play nice with others. This is often a critical success factor in most environments, but not in every one. You can determine what is appropriate based on the position you are seeking.

If you are pursuing a position that requires significant team interaction, there are several qualities that you might want to highlight in your response. Typically, the most effective team players listen well and are helpful, are open to others' ideas, are mentors, are nonjudgmental, and are willing to sacrifice their own well-being or praise for the good of the group. There are a number of appropriate ways to communicate this. The most important factor in an effective response is that you must show how you possess that quality. Simply saying you listen well or are open to others' ideas will not convince the interviewer. Below is an example:

CANDIDATE: "I was working on a team and our project was due in two weeks. While my components were going well, there was an individual on the team who was falling behind because she had less experience and wasn't as knowledgeable about our software product. I know how that feels. We all have to be beginners at some point. Recognizing this, I decided to stop working on my components and help her exclusively until she was able to complete her work. I was aware this would require me to work a significant amount of overtime during the weekend, but I was willing to make that sacrifice because the product would not function properly without her piece of the software, and we would not otherwise achieve our release date."

Describe your ideal boss.

Alternate Versions

- **What did you love about your favorite boss?**
- **What do you not like about your current boss?**

Employer is Evaluating

- **Does the candidate fit well with her potential boss?**
- **What type of people does the candidate get along with?**
- **Will the candidate require or want extensive supervision?**

I think this is a fantastic question because a significant percentage of job quitters leave due to a poor relationship with their boss. If that's the case, why wouldn't an employer ask you this question? I'm actually quite baffled when they don't.

(The same goes for the candidate when given the opportunity to ask questions.) Second, it will provide the interviewer insight as to whether you want (or don't want) or need (or don't need) a micromanager.

Before we review what to do, let's review what not to do. Do not, unless expressly asked, comment on what you don't like about your current or former bosses. You might think it sounds silly that I consciously pointed this out. The reason it is important for you not to fall into this trap is because quite often it is easier to describe what you want by sharing what you don't want. When I interview candidates and ask them to cite their needs, an estimated 40 percent want to brainstorm based on what they don't want. (I always attribute this to the fact that negative—and recent—emotions carry more memory and weight.) For

example, "I don't want a micromanager" or "I don't want to be locked in an office for forty hours every week" and so on. Remember, speaking about the positive qualities and what you actually want not only will present a more accurate picture, it will actually elicit a more positive response from the interviewer.

Stay focused on all the good qualities you want in a boss (or people, for that matter). Some of the greatest bosses and leaders are individuals who provide support, trust, mentorship, coaching, autonomy, freedom, and other means to allow the employee to grow. Here is one of my favorite quotes from Timothy Ferriss, writer of many books, including The 4-Hour Workweek: "It's amazing how someone's IQ seems to double as soon as you give them responsibility and indicate that you trust them." Some people might want to be motivated out of fear, but most prefer nurturing and support. Whichever qualities you seek in a boss, highlight the positive traits and leave negative ones alone.