



## Skills 360 – Interview Tips 2: Questions and Answers

### Discussion Questions

1. What professional accomplishments are you most proud of?
2. What is a recent work situation where you demonstrated many good professional qualities?
3. Do you think you are good at dealing with conflict? Why or why not?

### Vocabulary

**To home in:** to go straight to the most important topic or part of a situation; "We don't have much time today, so I'd like to home in on the staffing issue right away."

**Pertains to:** is directly related to; "Hi Dave, this is Tanis from Ermine Inc. with some questions pertaining to your recent proposal."

**To boast:** to proudly tell people about your accomplishments; "I know Chad is a good salesperson, but I hate it when he boasts about his awards every time we go out."

**To oversee:** to manage or watching over something to make sure it happens as intended or planned; "As the Regional Manager, you will oversee all the teams in the region and answer to the National Director."

**To link:** to connect; "If you want finance to give you money for your idea, trying linking it to one of the company's four strategic priorities."

**To give credit where credit is due:** to acknowledge someone's work or contribution, especially when someone else is getting the praise; "Sure Quinn managed the project well, but let's give credit where credit is due: to the programmers and developers who worked so hard."

**Gratitude:** thankfulness; "The company gave me a gold watch as a token of gratitude when I retired."

**Team player:** someone who can work well with other people; "Marty, you can't just go off and do your own thing all the time. We need you to be more of a team player."

**Stellar:** excellent; "You thought the first quarter was pretty good in terms of revenue, right? Well the second quarter is going to be stellar!"

**Quality:** a feature of a person's character; "Brian is pretty good at his job, except he lacks one important quality: likability."

**Imaginable:** possible or conceivable; "I've cut every imaginable extra cost, and I still can't get this budget down under \$50,000."

**To come into play:** to be a factor in a situation; "We were doing really well, until increased competition came into play and revenue growth started dropping."

**Demanding:** difficult or requiring a lot of effort; "Travelling back and forth from Asia to the U.S. just got too demanding, so I had to find a different job."

**To flex:** to adapt or be flexible; "I'm worried about the price of materials on this. Could you call the client and see if they can flex on the budget?"

**To modify:** to change or alter; "Our timeline has changed, so could you go back and modify your proposal based on these new dates?"

**Versatile:** able to be used in many different ways; "In a small company, workers have to be much more versatile, and willing to step into different roles as needed."

**Jerk:** a person who is unlikable, unkind, or obnoxious; "Ron is such a jerk, I had to ask for a transfer to the London office to get away from him."

**To throw someone under the bus:** to sacrifice someone to get what you want; "I thought our manager was a good leader until he threw us all under the bus and told the CEO we were to blame for the problems."

**Bitter:** feeling angry, upset, or resentful about something that has happened that you think is unfair; "After losing my job, I felt bitter for about three months, then finally got the motivation to look for another job."

**Formula:** a specific, repeatable plan for dealing with something; "If you need to write a press release, there's a pretty simple formula you can use to make it easier and effective."

**Spin:** to present news or information in a way that makes it seem better than it is; "Are you really trying to spin these job cuts as an opportunity for people to learn from difficulty?"

**Behind someone's back:** without someone knowing; "I thought Dawn supported my idea, but she's been talking behind my back about doing something different."

**To feel threatened:** to feel that someone or something will harm you; "It's common to feel threatened when a young, smart, good-looking salesperson joins the team and starts succeeding."

**To allay:** to reduce negative emotions like fear or worries; "I think the CEO needs to put out a positive statement to allay everyone's anxiety about the economy."

## Transcript

Hello and welcome back to the Skills 360 podcast. I'm your host, Tim Simmons, and today I want to continue our look at tips for succeeding in a job interview in English.

In our last lesson, we talked about preparation for introducing yourself and questions about strengths and weaknesses. That's all about you as a person, or your *character*. In this lesson, I'd like to **home in** on what you've *done*, or your actions and behavior.

The first big question you'll get about what you *have* done **pertains to** achievements. As in: "what achievements are you most proud of?" Or "tell us about a recent achievement?"

Now, when you think back on your accomplishments, what should you choose to discuss? Well, rather than **boasting** about purely individual accomplishments, think of something that connects to the bigger picture. Or state why your accomplishment helped the *company*.

So, don't just say "I **oversaw** an expansion of our department from four to nine people." **Link** that to overall company goals, or say *why* that is an achievement. So you could add something like: "That helped support the company in its overall growth goals."

Another important point when talking about accomplishments: **give credit where credit is due**, and demonstrate **gratitude** for others' efforts. Yes, it's a question about you. But most positions require teamwork, and so most companies are looking for **team players**. That's why it's a good idea to throw in something like "of course, none of it would have been possible without a **stellar** team of salespeople."

Besides questions about your achievements, you're likely to face questions about past behavior. Especially common is the question "tell us about a time when you demonstrated *a particular quality*?" For example, leadership, or problem-solving, or creativity. In this case, the interviewers want some evidence, or proof, of your abilities.

It's a good idea to have some situations in mind *before* your interview. And you don't have to think up different situations for every **imaginable** quality or characteristic. Instead, think of a few situations that you could use for different qualities. I mean, maybe there's a particular time when your leadership, problem-solving, *and* creativity all **came into play**. You can bring that situation up in response to a variety of questions.

And when you discuss what you did, keep it to three simple parts: the situation, what you did, and the result. Here's an example of this approach to a question about problem-solving: "Well, just last month we had a big project with a **demanding** client, and three developers got sick. There was no way we could finish on time without help. So I managed to **flex** some other projects and transfer some staff. In the end, we had good outcomes and happy clients."

That was a response to a question about problem-solving. But notice that I could easily **modify** the answer to fit a question about leadership, or handling clients, or project management. That's what I mean about keeping a few **versatile** situations in mind, especially if you're not so confident in your interview English skills.

Okay, so there's one more issue I want to address: questions about *conflict*. As in "tell us about a time you had to deal with conflict with a co-worker?" Or "tell me about a time you had a major disagreement with your boss?"

With questions about conflict, interviewers want to see that you can communicate, that you care about relationships, and – ultimately – that you're not a **jerk**. For that last reason, the worst thing you can do is **to throw someone under the bus** or even just to sound **bitter**. So follow the same **formula** of: situation, what you did, and the result. And **spin** the conflict as a constructive experience.

For example, you might say something like: "well, a co-worker was talking about me **behind my back**. After a few tough weeks, I took her for coffee, and I asked her **point blank** what was going on. Turns out she felt **threatened** by my success. I managed to **allay** her fears, and now we get along great." Does that make sense? Situation, action, and result, with a positive and constructive focus.

All right, so today we've focused on English interview tips for answering questions about your experience and behavior. That includes accomplishments, which should be connected to the big picture and shown to include others. We've also talked about how to answer behavioral questions using a situation, action, result response. And remember to think about some positive and negative situations beforehand, so you're ready.

That's all for today. If you'd like to test yourself on what we've just covered, have a look at the BusinessEnglishPod.com website. There you'll find a quiz about today's show as well as a PDF transcript.

So long. And see you again soon.

## Review

1. When discussing your accomplishments, it is a good idea to... [Choose 2]
  - A ... say why your accomplishment was good for the company.
  - B ... talk about purely individual accomplishments.
  - C ... connect your accomplishment to the bigger picture.
  - D ... also mention future plans.
2. Why should you make sure to show thanks for other people's efforts when discussing your accomplishments?
  - A Because it shows you're modest.
  - B Because most companies are looking for team players.
  - C Because it helps to hide a lack of accomplishments.
  - D Because it makes you appear skilled.
3. Which of the following are qualities that an interviewer is likely to ask you about? [Select all that apply:]
  - A Pride
  - B Leadership
  - C Creativity
  - D Honesty
  - E Health
  - F Happiness
  - G Problem-solving
4. When you think of situations that you could describe when answering a question about past behavior, it's best to choose situations that...
  - A Happened very recently.
  - B Can be used as examples of different qualities.
  - C Show project management skills.
  - D Involve conflict.
5. Which of the following is a useful formula for talking about past behavior?
  - A The problem – your assessment – your suggestion
  - B The context – the people involved – the course of action
  - C What you perceived – what you decided – how you felt
  - D The situation – what you did – the result
6. Which of the following should you NOT do when discussing how you've dealt with conflict in the past? [Select all that apply:]
  - A Show how the conflict was actually a constructive experience.
  - B Explain why you feel bitter.
  - C Follow the same formula as any past behavior response.
  - D Talk about why it was someone else's fault.

## Review Answers

1. When discussing your accomplishments, it is a good idea to... [Select all that apply]  
**A ... say why your accomplishment was good for the company.**  
**C ... connect your accomplishment to the bigger picture.**
2. Why should you make sure to show thanks for other people's efforts when discussing your accomplishments?  
**B Because most companies are looking for team players.**
3. Which of the following are qualities that an interviewer is likely to ask you about? [Select all that apply]  
**B Leadership**  
**C Creativity**  
**G Problem-solving**
4. When you think of situations that you could describe when answering a question about past behavior, it's best to choose situations that...  
**B Can be used as examples of different qualities.**
5. Which of the following is a useful formula for talking about past behavior?  
**D The situation – what you did – the result**
6. Which of the following should you NOT do when discussing how you've dealt with conflict in the past? [Select all that apply]  
**B Explain why you feel bitter.**  
**D Talk about why it was someone else's fault.**