

# LinkedIn Premium

## Interview Preparation

LinkedIn interview preparation tools help you ace the most common interview questions across job positions with exclusive tips and sample answers from industry experts. Here are some samples for assessments of different categories:

- Common Questions
  - 01 - Tell me about yourself.
  - 02 - What is your greatest strength?
  - 03 - What is your greatest weakness?
  - 04 - Why should we hire you?
  - 05 - Why do you want to work here?
  - 06 - Tell me about a time you showed leadership.
  - 07 - Tell me about a time you were successful on a team.
  - 08 - What would your co-workers say about you?
  - 09 - Why do you want to leave your current role?
  - 10 - Describe your most challenging project.
  - 11 - Tell me about something you've accomplished that you are proud of.
  - 12 - Can you explain your employment gap?
  - 13 - What are your salary expectations?
  - 14 - What do you like to do outside of work?
  - 15 - Tell me about a time you had to manage conflicting priorities.
  - 16 - Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
  - 17 - Describe your leadership style.
  - 18 - Tell me about a time you failed or made a mistake.
  - 19 - Tell me about a time you worked with a difficult person.
  - 20 - Tell me about a time you had to persuade someone.
  - 21 - Tell me about a time you disagreed with someone.
  - 22 - Tell me about a time you created a goal and achieved it.
  - 23 - Tell me about a time you surpassed people's expectations.
  - 24 - Tell me about a time you had to handle pressure.
  - 25 - Tell me about a time you had to learn something quickly.
  - 26 - Do you have any questions for me?
- Software Engineer
  - 01 - Why do you want to work for our company?
  - 02 - What kind of tech team dynamic do you excel in?
  - 03 - Let's say there are two kinds of tech workers: the innovators and the executors. Which of these categories do you fit into?
  - 04 - How do you measure success for yourself technically?
  - 05 - Why do you think that technical teams need to be inclusive and represent a variety of backgrounds?
  - 06 - When you join a new technical initiative, what is the first thing you do?
  - 07 - If you had to pick between owning the entire process for one product versus contributing to multiple products at once, how would you decide?
  - 08 - If you were stuck in solving a technical problem, how would you ask for help?
  - 09 - How would you explain concepts like polymorphism and inheritance to a computer science student?
  - 10 - How would you explain a web service infrastructure to a technical audience with a software background but limited system-level knowledge?
  - 11 - What would you do if asked to take on a problem where you did not have the technical skills?
  - 12 - Tell me about the most challenging technical problem you have solved?
  - 13 - Explain how you would design a ride-sharing app.
  - 14 - Explain how you'd design Twitter and the system tradeoffs involved.

- 15 - Give me an example of how you'd secure data so that it cannot be misused or inappropriately accessed.
  - 16 - Tell me about a time you disagreed with a fellow engineer and how that issue was resolved.
  - 17 - Tell me about a time when insights about the industry or customers impacted your technical execution.
  - 18 - Tell me about a time you had to push back on an unreasonable request from an executive or customer.
  - 19 - What do you think an ideal product-engineering relationship should look like?
  - 20 - How would you drive alignment among senior leadership to help accelerate decisions?
  - 21 - How do you measure success in an engineering project?
  - 22 - What is the mix of technical and management qualities you look for in engineering leaders and
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## Tell me about yourself.

### Overview

A lot of jobs require someone who can think on their feet or present ideas with crispness and clarity. This question provides employers with an early preview of your core skills, your personality and your ability to respond to an unstructured question.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

From a very early age I've been a problem solver. I was that kid who would take apart anything so I could see how it worked—and then try to put it back together.

As you can imagine, it drove my parents nuts. But even though I tortured my family at times, the tinkering trait has served me well in my career.

After graduating from Purdue, I was recruited into a field technician job and got paid to take apart broken packaging equipment. It was like living the dream.

That job also made me realize I'm really good with difficult customers, and that's what helped me land my current account manager role.

While I love my job and have been successful in it, it has moved me away from the manufacturing floor. Now, the reason I'm so interested in this position is that it seems to provide a really great blend of one-on-one work with clients and hands-on problem solving.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- He gave a vivid image of his childhood home and told a memorable story about it.
- He picked two prominent required skills from the job description, problem solving and customer service, and built this interesting narrative around it.
- He showed how his career successfully evolved before he was even asked about that.

#### Sample answer 2

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

In my current role as the marketing analyst responsible for a shampoo product line, my core responsibility is to assist the marketing manager to prepare the analytics for monthly sales, as well as a sales prediction model. I also manage the campaign budget, prepare wrap-up reports, and connect with our marketing agencies. All of this requires analytical thinking, attention to detail, and clear communication skills.

My current role has provided me solid execution experience in all the marketing aspects, including campaign planning, campaign management and analysis.

I am looking for a marketing manager role, where I can make a bigger impact as an individual contributor, as well as delve into strategic planning, and potentially grow into a people manager in a few years.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- Passion for the subject matter and clear direction for the future were apparent.
- The answer focused on key skills and experiences relevant to the role (rather than a rambling biography).

**Sample answer 3**

By Product Manager Professional

I would describe myself as highly curious and focused on learning in all parts of life, personal and professional.

In my professional life, I look for the hardest problems to solve and where I can learn and develop the most. I've taken on many different types of projects, including ads, virtual reality, commerce, and messaging. No matter what I'm working on, I'm very invested. I identify anyone I can learn from, as well as problems that I care about and try to optimize every step of the process.

In my personal life, I spend a lot of time reading and usually have a focused area of interest for a longer period of time. For instance, last year, I read and researched public transportation systems and the future of transportation with emerging companies and autonomous vehicles. I found it fascinating, and it actually sparked a desire to change industries — which eventually led me to my last role and even helped prepare me for the switch.

Outside of reading and researching, I also love to travel, cook with friends, and spend a lot of time running and being physically active outdoors.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- Background and type of experience were clearly explained.
- Candidate showcased a self-starter mentality.
- Hobbies were framed to highlight benefits to professional life.

**Sample answer 4**

By Mechanical Engineer Professional

I've been shipping consumer devices for the past two decades. Over the years, I've built an expertise in firmware and bootloader designs.

I've been lucky to have a few great mentors over the course of my career, and find a great deal of personal and professional satisfaction being able to do the same. I currently oversee a team of engineers and have helped grow several team members into managerial roles as well.

Additionally, I like to stay active within the industry community, and recently spoke at DeveloperWeek conference.

I've been happy at my current role, have managed many successful product launches, and really enjoy management. I'd like to use my expertise to deliver more impact on a growing company — to help grow and shape team and culture —and make a significant impact in the market.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer was a well-rounded snapshot of professional interests and strengths.
- It was clear that they're active in the industry, and likely have a strong network.
- An interest in mentorship shows a willingness to invest time in the company, and energy into team members.

## Answer framework

### How to approach this question

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

This is something you'll be asked a lot at the beginning of an interview. Here are three tips that'll help you nail the opener.

**Be succinct, honest and engaging.** I call this the “SHE” formula. Resist the urge to give a detailed account of the last two decades of your career. The interviewer is looking for an answer that shows them you're qualified and can respond to an unstructured question.

**Use the job description to prepare.** Reread what they want and highlight the most required skills that you have. Are they looking for someone who can solve problems or deal with tough customers? Pick a few and brainstorm how you can describe yourself while showcasing your strengths for what they're seeking.

**Tie your story to their needs.** People love a good tale, so weave in some personality. For example, maybe you fell in love with the hospitality industry because your grandparents ran a bed and breakfast. Connect your story back to the job, keep it short, and be truthful.

### Tips

- Prepare for this question in advance and have a compelling story about your past experiences.
  - Pull prominent skills from the job description.
  - Be “SHE” (succinct, honest and engaging).
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## What is your greatest strength?

### Overview

Employers want to see if you can strike the right balance between confidence and humility. Hiring managers also want to get a sense for how self-aware and honest you are and align your strengths to the role at hand.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Gene F., Hiring Manager

What I bring to the team is a strong record in relationship building.

I'm happiest when I'm engaging and strategizing about how we can help one another. I find that in sales, some people can be overly transactional. I think my superpower is in establishing more meaningful connections.

I've gotten strong feedback in the past. One client said I was the best business development person he'd ever met.

These types of connections have turned into big sales wins. For example, last year, I doubled my client base and outperformed my peers by 40%. And it's probably relevant to share that I started in that role without any contacts in the field.

Today, there isn't a Fortune 100 company that doesn't know about the product I sold last.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She was specific and shared real numbers.
- She stayed relevant. The experience and the story all came together and she supported it all with numbers.

## Sample answer 2

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

My greatest strength is strategic thinking. I am often able to quickly spot patterns and issues and create alternatives before my teammates even realize there is an issue.

The way this shows up in my work experience is through risk mitigation. As an example, I was starting a new project with a new team in an industry I had never worked in before. The team seemed to think that the project was very straight-forward and that they didn't even really need a project manager to help them.

We kicked off the project by creating a charter, social contract, and reviewing the risks. We got halfway through the project and realized the requirements were ambiguous and we weren't delivering what the client really wanted. I had picked up on some subtle cues that this was the case and had already taken the initiative to meet with the client to clarify the requirements.

I presented my findings to the team and showed three alternatives to our existing plan to accommodate the updated requirements. From my team's point of view, I was able to bring solutions to the problem conversation and we didn't lose any time with the project timeline. It was a win win!

### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to detect issues and opportunities early.
- The example showed a willingness to take initiative to improve clarity and process.

## Sample answer 3

By Business Portfolio Manager Professional

Over the last several years, I've realized my strength as an analytical thinker who is extremely thorough and organized.

In my current role, I run multiple 360 marketing campaigns and ads across social touchpoints — all at the same time. So it's really important to consolidate all the campaign results together and across different channels to see which platform actually generates the highest ROI.

I've been able to boost the success of past projects by looking at results per week and month to build cumulative results and identify where incremental results lie. This type of modeling requires analytical acuity to read the numbers quickly and make strong, informed marketing investments.

One big project I have been working on for a year is about understanding the marketing budget efficiency. Running ads simultaneously on social media has made it hard to attribute the growth to these channels. I work closely with the sales reps from these companies, and also third-party vendors to understand how these platforms attribute the conversions.

With all the data points consolidated, I was able to calculate the real ROI of these platforms, and thus saved the company 25% cost in marketing spend.

### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate provided very clear examples to illustrate why analytical thinking and organizational skill are strengths.
- The answer included enough details (such as metrics evaluation and optimization) to demonstrate expertise.
- The candidate showed how their strengths had directly benefited their employer

## Sample answer 4

By Data Engineering Analyst Professional

My greatest strength is that I am equally at ease when talking to executives, business users, and engineers.

I come from an engineering background, but I have a very strong understanding of the business. This well-rounded view allows me to connect with colleagues from disparate departments and points of view quickly and authentically.

I also have the ability to see the big, strategic picture, while not losing sight of the nuts and bolts. I can create and execute a strategy at a high level while also understanding the execution difficulties at an engineering level.

Over the course of my career, I have found that many leaders generally do one or the other, and my ability to do both has proven to be advantageous to my projects and teams.

By understanding the challenges from multiple angles, I'm able to connect dots and create solutions. This is evidenced by my track record of building and managing high performance teams.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to understand the big pictures beyond his immediate area of expertise.
- The answer highlighted the candidate's ability to contribute both at higher strategy level and at executive level.

### **Answer framework**

#### **How to approach this question**

By Gene F., Hiring Manager

When responding to this question, you want to sound humble and not like you're arrogant or bragging. Here are some tips to help you give them a great answer.

**Describe a relevant experience.** If you're applying for a sales job, tell a story about a time where you helped a customer solve a problem with your solution.

**Give specific details.** Tell them about a time you closed a deal that helped you hit a percentage of your annual number. When you share those facts with them, it helps them visualise how effective you have been.

**Show them you're a well-rounded person.** For example, share a story of when you used a "soft" skill, like effective communication with a coworker, and then one about you using a technical skill, which could be anything asked for in the job description.

#### **Tips**

- Be authentic - don't make up strengths that you think the employer wants to hear.
- Tell a story about a work experience.
- Be sure the strengths you share are aligned to the role you want.

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## **What is your greatest weakness?**

### **Overview**

The interviewer is assessing whether your weaknesses will get in the way of doing the job. Employers are looking for humility and whether you're committed to learning and growing. This is a place you can showcase what you're doing to improve.

## Candidate answer and feedback

### Sample answer 1

By Gene F., Hiring Manager

I get excited when people on my team brainstorm about big new ideas. I sometimes get so caught up in the moment that I volunteer to do too much. I know this can be a distraction in ways that put me at risk of not getting work done properly or missing deadlines.

I've been reflecting on why this happens. As I've become more conscious of this pattern, I'm working on ways to contain the negative aspects of my eagerness.

One way that I do this is to still go to brainstorming meetings but to be more careful about offering to do the next steps—or limit it to one project that my boss supports.

Fortunately, though, the job we're discussing seems well-suited for people like me, people that bring a lot of enthusiasm to the job and are ready to keep getting better and better at the follow-through.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- He shared a story about how a weakness would negatively impact his work and stress him out.
- He turned his self-awareness into a plan to help him manage that weakness so he would be successful in the future.
- He shared specific details, which made the story feel relatable.

### Sample answer 2

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

In my current role as a product manager, I'm responsible for specific feature building. So, I work with a lot of cross-functional teams like engineers and designers.

I think one thing that I can always improve on is patience, taking time to really see and understand other people's perspectives — especially considering we are always rushing to meet tight deadlines. I always want things to move quickly and precisely, which I've realized can make my partners a bit anxious.

To help with this, I'm working to help build trust. I've been scheduling more frequent check-ins with the teams to make sure that everyone is comfortable with the project timeline. And I've made myself more open so that they can share any missed opportunities that they see as we go. This gives us a chance to get out ahead of things and make sure we're all totally aligned even as we work fast.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The answer was honest and demonstrated an understanding of how this weakness can affect team members.
- A clear improvement strategy was outlined.

### Sample answer 3

By Mechanical Engineer Professional

I have a strong desire to succeed, which generally serves me well. But I've realized that it can also be a blind spot if I'm not being honest with myself about what's possible.

A few years ago, I was working on a remote control, and the schedule was very tight. We were trying to go from concept to mass production in six months, and there was a high amount of pressure.

I made the decision to continue with the factory build, even though my team was concerned that one of the parts we were using would fail. Because we had already spent \$200,000 on the factory process, I pushed ahead. I was afraid to tell the program managers that we wouldn't be able to hit our targets. Eventually, I was forced to — but I had already lost the company money.

What I learned from this is the importance of being honest right up front and being realistic, even if it's not the outcome I want. I've learned that failures can be turned around more easily when addressed quickly.

Now I communicate status with program managers on a weekly basis. I always make them aware of the risks and what the impact might be. In the past four years, we haven't missed a single delivery.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer provided an honest self-review with a clear example that took the interviewer through the decision-making process.
- The candidate took accountability and specific steps to prevent another issue.

**Sample answer 4**

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

I have worked on my inclination to hold back on giving tough feedback.

A few roles ago, I'd just been promoted to management and joined a project that my boss was leading. The work was about 30% baked when I joined, and I knew right away that it wasn't strong. I spoke up, but not strongly enough. The agency was pushing their work hard, and I decided not to rock the boat.

Unfortunately, as the project progressed, I noticed more and more issues. And as I feared, the campaign bombed.

Even though I hadn't kicked off the project, I was a part of the team, and I owned a big piece of the failure for not sticking to my guns. I learned on that day that even if people don't agree with you — even if the boss doesn't agree with you — you owe it to the team and company to vocalize concerns. I've taken that lesson a step further by creating the kind of space on my teams for people to dissent, to push back, and to disagree. I firmly believe that successful teams are built on a foundation of respectful, honest communication.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed a willingness to accept responsibility for failure.
- A clear pivot showed how this weakness was turned into an improvement for teams.

**Answer framework**

**How to approach this question**

By Gene F., Hiring Manager

This can feel like a tricky question, but it's a good opportunity to shine. Here are some tips on how to answer:

**Be humble.** You want to communicate an authentic story that shows you're self-aware. It's okay that you don't come off as perfect, that's authentic, which is important for someone who will have to trust you in the role that they're hiring for.

**Choose a trait that is not too relevant to the job.** For example, if you're applying for a project manager role, choose a weakness that is more related to creativity, which is something that doesn't disqualify you from the description of the things that would make someone successful in that role

**Show how you manage it.** Have a fix-it strategy. For example, if you struggle with remembering product details so you track them in their phone or side notebook, that's okay, share that with them. That shows that you've got commitment to solving that problem and addressing it.

**Tips**

- Employers are looking for self-awareness and personal accountability.
- It's good to be honest about what you're not great at.
- Share what you are doing to actively improve on this weakness.



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## Why should we hire you?

### Overview

This question tests how persuasive you are. Interviewers want to see if you can make a calm, confident case for yourself, even if they're acting skeptical. They're looking for factual and compelling answers.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Joey Zumaya, Hiring Manager

I've got both the experience and target audience rapport that you're looking for.

I've built two corporate training programs from scratch and developed the kind of interactive video programs that you're looking to create.

When employees fill out feedback forms, they speak highly of my professionalism and clarity that they've encountered.

Here's a quick example.

A close friend of mine on your marketing team says that this company is a great cultural fit given my background and values. I have an insatiable level of curiosity and tend to do lots of research on any topic that I'm less than an expert in. And I know your values include constant learning. That really resonates with my passion.

I'm just eager to become part of a fast-growing, mission-oriented organization like yours.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- He spoke about his core strengths in a way that related to the job requirements.
- He used favorable feedback from some of his previous coworkers, and their positive observations were helpful.
- He talked about why he was a good cultural fit for the organization.

#### Sample answer 2

By Marketing Insights Manager Professional

Having worked in strategy and sales roles across different geographies, I believe I am uniquely positioned to add a lot of value to this general managerial position.

What separates me from most is my ability to take a holistic view of the business, set the vision, and translate that into a set of strong strategic solutions. Given my experience across different functions, I also have the ability to connect and influence cross-functional partners to drive business results, which I believe will be critical in this position.

My background studying engineering and business taught me to balance the logic and data with the human side of things, which will be a competitive advantage in this ambiguous and dynamic industry.

I'm motivated and excited to learn your company's unique business model, and from my interactions with the employees here, I can see that we share values like respect, trust, and excellence.

Overall, I believe I bring the right mix of skills, experiences and attitude for the job and think that my varied experience can add a lot of value here.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The answer incorporated specific qualifications that set the candidate apart.
- Strengths were framed through the lens of how they could benefit the company.

### **Sample answer 3**

By Product Marketing Research Professional

As a data scientist, I've demonstrated my ability to answer business questions, as well as advise strategic marketing decisions by providing in-depth data analysis with various technical skills, such as SQL and R.

Part of my role has been to evaluate a \$30M marketing budget and make recommendations. A recent marketing strategy that I proposed eventually drove growth of 10% for the business.

I am also proactive in learning new skills. For example, knowing that effective communication is the key to making findings convincing, I sought out and took training sessions on both data visualization and presentation. These skill sets have been critical in successfully pitching and persuading senior leadership on changes to strategy. As a result, I was quickly promoted to a senior role in just a year.

Given the growth moment that your company is poised to have, I believe that my unique experience will be an asset to your team. I'm excited to expand my expertise within a new industry, and recommend key strategies and opportunities that will support and drive business.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer featured a blend of quantifiable results and personal strengths.
- There was clear awareness of the company's trajectory and enthusiasm for the role.

### **Sample answer 4**

By Marketing & Category Insights Manager Professional

My resume demonstrates that I've been successful with the key responsibilities of this role: managing teams, developing strategic sales plans, and delivering quarterly targets.

I've been managing teams for the last 10 years and to this day, many of my former direct reports still call and ask for career or personal advice.

I've also led the development of strategic plans with the customer for years. I first listen and understand their priorities and objectives, then develop a win-win solution for both parties.

Last year my team received 2 awards. The first was from our internal organization for collaboration and partnership in developing our 3-year plans. The second was the Vendor of The Year Award from the customer for putting together plans that exceeded their growth targets.

I've been in sales for the last 15 years and I know how important it is to hit targets — it's the lifeblood of what we do. That's why I work hard to support and guide my team, as well as work with internal partners to anticipate and remove roadblocks.

I believe I would be a great fit for this role as I already have relevant experience and been successful in my previous roles.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer detailed deep industry knowledge and a record of success across several themes.
- The focus on teams painted a picture of an invested leader who sees success as collective.

## **Answer framework**

### **How to approach this question**

By Joey Zumaya, Hiring Manager

This is a nerve-racking question, so make sure you're set up for success. Here are some tips that can help you do well in answering it:

**Ask yourself why you think you're qualified.** Prepare for the interview by picking three or four qualifications and experiences that help them understand why you're a fit for this job.

**Tell them how you'd fit in.** Paint a picture of what you'd accomplish that gives you a leg up on the competition. Also, show them why you are a great match for this company by letting them see that you know about their mission, their vision, how they operate—and how you would fit into that really well.

**Speak authentically.** How you say something is as important as what you say. So when you're sharing your successes and you're answering these questions, speak like the best version of yourself and make sure that you're doing it in a way that allows the interviewers to connect to you.

## Tips

- Start with the three or four best reasons you've got.
  - Cite results, credentials, and other people's praise so you don't seem self-absorbed.
  - Be concise, and invite follow-up questions at the end.
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# Why do you want to work here?

## Overview

Interviewers want to understand what prompted you to apply for this job. They don't want candidates who are indifferent to where they work. Instead, they want someone who offers very specific reasons for why they want this job.

## Candidate answer and feedback

### Sample answer 1

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

The first thing that prompted me to apply is your commitment to service. I've been a customer for five years since I first bought a house. We had a big storm that damaged my roof last year, and I was impressed by how caring and prompt your customer service representatives were as I worked through it.

I'm also excited about your upcoming merger. I can see how this is going to set you apart in the insurance industry. I'd love to help you through the process of integrating the two companies. Having supported a merger three years ago, I know what an intricate and stressful process that can be. I have a few specific ideas on how I might ease the transition.

Lastly, I applied because I see this as an opportunity for me to broaden my financial services experience. This seems to be a natural fit based on my understanding of regulated industries.

### Why this answer worked well:

- He has done his homework and sees an opportunity to help this company through a challenging and exciting transition.
- He made it about them first and then wove in some of his own personal career goals.

### Sample answer 2

By Brand Marketing Manager Professional

I grew up in a household that only used your products. Even when we faced tremendous financial difficulty, my mother would always buy razors manufactured by your company – that’s when you realize the role you play in the lives of your consumer is much more than cleaning. You make life a little bit easier, allowing people the time, space and energy to live life at its fullest.

When my father immigrated to the U.S from India, I was 6 years old. I don’t remember much – all I remember is that my dad packed 2 suitcases, a box of his mother’s favorite sweets and your company’s personal care products. That’s how important the product is to him and it’s the only razor he has ever used and it’s the only razor I have ever used. I want to work for a brand like that – and I want to bring my father to this office and see the factory where his product is made, first-hand.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer showed that the candidate is deeply invested in the brand, creating an emotional connection to the company’s vision.
- The personal story showed a real connection to the brand, and genuine enthusiasm for the job.

**Sample answer 3**

By Pricing Strategy Manager Professional

I have spoken to people who worked here previously and I was always highly impressed on how highly they spoke about the company and how well they developed themselves.

I admire your mentor program and have always believed that mentorship is key to a company’s success and an individual’s personal and professional growth. I see this opportunity as a way to contribute to an exciting fast growth company with such a potential with my skills well-suited to add value to the company’s growth.

Within the last three years, for example, I set the goal of growing and evolving my team. I was able to coach and promote three different partnership employees into new roles. I was also able to optimize pricing and promotions, which saved the company money and resources and exceeded revenue projections three years in a row.

My track record of outperforming expectations and ability lead will help accelerate the fascinating growth you are seeing.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer highlighted a deep knowledge of the company.
- An interest in mentorship shows that the candidate wants to invest both time with the company, and energy in team members.
- Leadership success was easily quantified through the promotions of direct reports.

**Sample answer 4**

By Data Engineering Analyst Professional

I understand that you’re looking for a leader who can implement and scale your data analytics platform.

Over the course of my career, I have implemented data analytics platforms for 3 companies. Each had its own unique challenges and required me to learn, grow, and expand my skill set. I’m energized by new and complex challenges, and have the background, experience, and successful track record required to implement this system within your organization.

The space in which your company operates is also of personal interest to me and I would love to contribute to it and help the company grow. When I started at my current company, I had a team of 4 people which I scaled to 28 people. I led the team in designing and building a big data platform for this big global company. Ultimately, we expanded the user base from 100 to 1,200.

I’m looking forward to the next chapter and challenge, and believe I can bring real value to this organization.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer detailed experience in helping growing organizations scale.
- It was clear that the candidate had personal interest in the company.

## Answer framework

### How to approach this question

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

You would be amazed by how few people get this question right. So you've got a big opportunity to shine.

**Make it all about them.** Your best answer will be about what they need. It'll show that you've done your research and have thought through what you can contribute to that team.

**Show them how you can help.** Weave your story into the context of what you can contribute. If you have strong accounting skills and are interviewing for a finance role at a humane society, you could suggest that this job would allow you to blend your professional skills with your passion for animals.

**Speak from the heart.** Telling a genuine story can make a big difference. For example, I once worked with a client who was applying for a zoo event manager job and she had grown up next door to that zoo and had great memories of the peacocks flying over the fence and sitting on her dad's car. So her answer was that she wanted people to have fun memories of that zoo just like she did. Try to top that.

### Tips

- Make it about them first.
- Show you've done your research.
- Use this as a key opportunity to outshine the competition.
- Speak from the heart.

## Tell me about a time you showed leadership.

### Overview

Employers want to understand your capacity to step up and handle tough situations that undoubtedly arise in the workplace. They want to know when you've seen an opening to lean in and lead with good judgment.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Recently there was a situation where my manager needed to take medical leave and was unable to come into work for a few weeks. This coincided with a major deadline that he was leading. I knew that if this project wasn't completed on time, we were at risk of losing a major client.

I looked to my right and my left, and there wasn't anyone else who could own the project, so I jumped in with both feet and took the initiative.

I went through the files and developed a schedule detailing what needed to be completed, and I worked with my coworkers to ensure they were on board too.

In the end, we were able to complete the project by the deadline. The client was pleased and stayed on as a loyal customer to the company. When my boss came back, he gave me an end-of-quarter bonus because he was impressed I was able to rally everyone to complete the project.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- She shared details that make it easy to visualize what was happening.
- She described how she got her coworkers onboard and met the deadline to keep her loyal client.

### **Sample answer 2**

By Hardware Engineer Professional

I was working on a high visibility project and during production, two members on my cross-functional team had different approaches to a problem that we were facing. They both wanted credit for being right, and we were at a stalemate. To move forward, I needed to help align the team.

I wasn't their reporting manager but I was the project lead, so I asked them to explain the pros and cons of their approach. I encouraged them to fairly assess their solutions and moderated the discussion so that it stayed productive and respectful.

As they laid out their plans, it became clear that a hybrid approach would be best for the company. I encouraged them to see this as a team win towards a common goal that would reflect positively on everyone.

Using the hybrid approach, we not only delivered a superior solution, but completed the project 2 weeks ahead of schedule because the team was so motivated.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer highlighted both communication and moderation skills.
- Beyond the success of achieving consensus, the candidate improved the project timeline.

### **Sample answer 3**

By Product Marketing Research Professional

During a recent project, I was responsible for helping to improve the margins of an existing product line used by multiple customer segments. The product had multiple elements of design, manufacturing, and software support. Leadership had been eyeing cost-cutting efforts for some time.

My first step was to clearly understand the situation and how the product had become less profitable. So, I sat down with the design, sales, marketing, and operations teams to document all perspectives.

In parallel, I met with the finance team to clearly understand areas of potential savings. In the end, I identified 3 clear steps: streamline processes around assembly and testing, make small design tweaks to remove unnecessary features, and simplify the product overall.

Making this proposal required talking to each team individually, armed with financial data that could convince them that this effort was worthwhile. The data had to make sense and projections needed to be realistic. I also needed to leverage my technical background to understand nuances in the design and assembly.

Ultimately, the effort saved the company more than \$5M over the next two years, and helped set the precedent for efficient and lean product development.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer set the stage and detailed each action step.
- The candidate's approach showed a holistic view of the challenge and deep understanding of the business.
- Leadership skills were proven by significant, quantifiable results.

### **Sample answer 4**

By Data Engineering Analyst Professional

A few years ago, I took over the Web Operations team of a major company. This was a new area for me and when I stepped into the role, I immediately identified a clear need to completely rebuild 35 worldwide websites across eight different languages.

I created a plan for the rebuild which included hiring additional technical writers, securing media agencies, acquiring new software, and more.

This plan was meant to be enacted over 18 months but after I presented my plan to executive management, the CEO requested that we complete the project before the end of the year.

This gave us just 12 months, which meant we had to rethink our project plan. The readjustment required the addition of even more resources and distributing the translation work to different teams — all while managing risk carefully. I am happy to say that after 12 months, the project was completed successfully, and team morale remained high throughout the process.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated their ability to identify opportunity areas.
- The solution required a blend of soft and technical skills and the ability to lead cross-functional teams.
- The example also highlighted the ability to adjust a plan to meet aggressive deadlines.

### **Answer framework**

#### **How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

**Get into the action.** Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don’t go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like “I implemented” or “I persuaded”.

**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

#### **Tips**

- Describe a situation where there was a lack of leadership.
  - Use the word “lead” to help describe the actions you took.
  - Give credit to your ‘leadership skills’ when explaining the positive results.
- 

### **Tell me about a time you were successful on a team.**

#### **Overview**

If you can show that you’ve helped a team move through a challenge, you probably have strong communication and interpersonal skills. These kinds of “soft” skills are in high demand and make people successful in their jobs.

#### **Candidate answer and feedback**

##### **Sample answer 1**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

I was asked to work on a high-profile project that included collaborating with a new team and tons of people across a larger organization.

We were spread out across the globe, which meant timezones were tricky and we could never meet face-to-face. Communication was starting to get confusing, and people were losing important details.

It became apparent that this project was going to fail if we didn't have a new strategy, so I met with various team members and engaged them in a process where we designed and implemented a communication system that would work a lot better.

We then did weekly check-ins; designed a protocol to share relevant updates so we'd stay on track; developed a detailed outline of goals and milestones; and led the meetings.

In the end, the team made massive progress. We completed the project on time, and it was praised extensively by the client. The team thanked me for helping to course-correct. We also continue to use these tools, and they are what make our team so much more efficient at what we do.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- She started off discussing a specific situation and the issues involved with having to work on a global team.
- She talked about the specific action steps she took like implementing a new work process.
- She described the positive results and teamwork skills she demonstrated along the way.

**Sample answer 2**

By Program Manager Professional

While working for a major airline, I was on a team that was tasked to jointly determine the growth plans for a joint venture we operated in partnership with two other airlines. Naturally, the team was made up of individuals based around the world, each with very different views on the economic and competitive landscape. At first, our plans clashed significantly.

One challenge we were trying to solve in our term sheet was how to adjust our plans during times of economic uncertainty. Each team had a different idea for what actions to take, and when. To help reach alignment I proposed that we look at real historic examples of economic downturns, bankruptcies, volcanic eruptions, and similar events — and use them as case examples to set a range of appropriate reactions. Then, we'd tie these reactions to indicators, such as global passenger volume, GDP growth, and stock market indicators — all universally understood and applicable.

Once we established this framework for using hard data to guide acceptable strategic actions, the team was able to collaborate with more trust and a common language. Our analysis was unified and based on the same inputs, and this allowed us to quickly and successfully align on a term sheet for the joint venture.

Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate showcased their ability to align stakeholders with very divergent points of view.
- The answer included strategic thinking skills and personal initiative.

**Sample answer 3**

By Product Manager Professional

I joined a team 6 months after the MVP launch which was moderately successful, but short of management expectations. Without a real roadmap, the team was just running small experiments to drive incremental gains.

I quickly realized that we'd need to do more than that to realize the long-term vision of the product. To gain the trust of my new team, I focused on what could be improved in the immediate future. I helped rationalize the short-term experiment roadmap, organized execution, removed roadblocks, and helped ship few of the high potential experiments.



Concurrently, I spent time with the executive team to understand their expectations. After observing users and analyzing our logs, I partnered with team leads across Engineering, Design, and Research to develop an updated mission statement and a set of defined success metrics.

Within 3 months, we were charging full-speed ahead with an updated roadmap, improvement operational metrics, and significant boost on a platform satisfaction survey. Two years later, the product had been used by hundreds of millions of people every month — 40 times the amount we started with.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated their ability to identify areas of opportunity, backed up by quantifiable results.
- The answer included important soft skills like collaboration and team-building.

**Sample answer 4**

By Enterprise Program Manager Professional

As part of the developing a product roadmap for a CRM product line, I'm proud to have uncovered an unmet need during a user empathy session. One of the pain points that kept coming up was around the end customers spending too much time and effort in creating nested workflows for their activity-based marketing campaigns.

I Identified a way to do a rapid prototype of a 'workflow' module using natural language that can be invoked based on voice commands and keywords to create complex workflows. I demonstrated the idea and prototype to leadership to obtain support, then met with one of the key engineering leads to develop a timetable to develop this concept without risking the other features on the roadmap.

In 2016, we filed a new patent in natural language processing. This capability can be a 'plug-in' module to several first party and third party software products that are focused on business process automation and workflows — which has generated a steady stream of licensing revenue to date.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate highlighted their ability to discover opportunities and innovate new solutions.
- The success of the patent was a win for both customers and the company.

**Answer framework**

**How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

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**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

**Tips**

- Describe a problem that arose with a team.

- Outline your key actions with the team.
  - Explain the positive result based on the work you did.
  - Give credit to your teamwork skills.
- 

## What would your co-workers say about you?

### Overview

Interviewers want to know if you'll fit in with the team. This question can also help you highlight your strengths without feeling like you're bragging.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

I think my coworkers would tell you that I'm the one you turn to when it's time to make sure everyone stays motivated and on track to pull off big, high-profile projects.

In one of my LinkedIn recommendations, my supervisor refers to me as the "Human Glue", which is something I'm proud of. She gave me that nickname after we went through a complex ERP implementation. It was one of those stressful time-critical projects that required the team to come together and make things happen in a short amount of time.

I kept the crew going, sometimes through long evening and weekend hours, and inspired them to bring their absolute best to the project everyday.

I think that they also appreciated the pizza and donuts I brought in too.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- He shared something specifically related to the job.
- He pointed the interviewer to a supervisor's favorable LinkedIn recommendation.
- He shared a bit of humor.

#### Sample answer 2

By Product Manager Professional

I would expect that most coworkers would describe me as driven. When I join teams or start on projects, I spend a lot of time understanding what's most important about the work, which is a huge motivating factor for me.

Once I lock in on what matters most, I share it with the team so we're all invested with a common purpose. Being driven allows me to share what some have called my "infectious enthusiasm" with others and rally the team, and also means that I spend a lot of time with my work to make sure it's done well. My teams have solid track records of hitting if not exceeding their goals because of this focus and ability to motivate.

A good example was when I was working with quite a large group, and our project was given to us top-down. This didn't feel empowering for the team, but I worked with leadership and our user research team to help the engineers and designers recognize the value of what we were working on.

It was slated to be a multiyear project, but because the team was motivated and we focused on creating specifications for the product, we were able to deliver a prototype in just a few months.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The answer painted a picture of a strong, motivating team member.

- The candidate detailed how their strength directly benefited their employer.

### Sample answer 3

By Hardware Engineer Professional

My coworkers have told me that I am a technical leader who sets ambitious goals, reliably delivers work on time, and shows empathy to each team member.

In a recent peer review, I received great feedback for being a team player. One of my coworkers needed to take some time off to address some pressing personal issues. He wasn't comfortable asking, as we were working on a very tight timeline and everyone had limited bandwidth — especially me. But knowing that he would be stronger in his role and that the team would be healthier if he was given space to handle outside concerns, I offered to take up his responsibilities for 3 weeks.

It was a stretch, but I knew it was temporary. I emphasized time management and prioritization to ensure that no deadlines were missed. When he returned, he was able to focus and our team was even more productive.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate utilized a blend of soft and technical skills, and the success was supported by peer review.
- The example suggests that the candidate would be a strong team player and good culture fit.

### Sample answer 4

By Marketing & Category Insights Manager Professional

Years ago, I read a book called *Seeing Yourself as Others Do*. The book posits that while we are young in our careers, we can get away with being aggressive in our work style and stepping on toes to get things done.

However, as we progress, we're inevitably tasked with more responsibilities than we could ever handle alone. At this point, it becomes imperative to have the support of those around us — whether or not they are direct reports.

I have taken this message seriously and built relationships with people all over the organization. I regularly meet with people from other departments who I don't normally work with. Because of this strong foundation, I am comfortable picking up the phone and asking for help from a large network of colleagues. And it isn't just one way! I regularly get calls requesting help and advice on a wide array of projects.

As such, I would expect that my coworkers would say that I'm personable, supportive, hard-working, and thoughtful. We spend more time with our co-workers than we do our own families, so it's important to keep professional relationships strong for team morale and success.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The answer highlighted an interest in career growth and meaningful investment of time.
- Relationship-based examples indicate strong collaborative skills.

## Answer framework

### How to approach this question

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

This question gives you an opportunity to share how amazing you are—without feeling like you're showboating. Here are three quick tips on how to answer it:

**Find features that fit.** Re-read the job description and look for answers that go well with it. For example, if they need a strong problem solver, maybe you can share that your office nickname is “The Fixer” because you're so good at solving tough challenges.

**Share some of your reviews.** Before the interview, go through your LinkedIn recommendations and performance reviews and see if there are some gold nuggets you might want to show them. And if it's on LinkedIn, mention it to the interviewers so they can read the whole recommendation if they want more detail.

**Back it up with evidence.** If you think your colleagues would say that you're super creative, resist the urge to say "People like that I can think outside of the box". Instead, share a tangible example of your creativity that ties to the job description.

## Tips

- Share something that relates to the job description and back it with an example.
  - Look to your recommendations and reviews for ideas.
  - Be confident and succinct. It's OK to shine!.
- 

# Why do you want to leave your current role?

## Overview

Employers say they want to hire people who are running "to" a role as opposed to running "away." However, they are also interested in your honesty when things haven't worked out and will give people second chances when they demonstrate hunger.

## Candidate answer and feedback

### Sample answer 1

By Brian Rumao, Hiring Manager

I'm eager to find a new opportunity and grow.

As you can see, I've been doing the same kind of work for two and a half years, and I'm starting to stagnate. My company doesn't have a role open for the next step up, unfortunately. So, I'm excited about the opportunity of becoming a sales manager at your company.

The new role will let me use the skills I've developed in my current role like making cold calls; hooking in new clients with pithy-but-inspiring opening lines; following up with carefully crafted emails; listening to their pain points; and then offering up solutions that can solve their problems.

I'm eager to make a fresh start, and I want to use my cold calling and listening skills to help craft an even better solution with the product I'd be working on in this new role.

### Why this answer worked well:

- She was positive and talked about her excitement about the new role. She did say she started to stagnate in her current role though, so she should tweak that language a bit to make it more favorable to them.
- She talked about using her current skills to gain new skills and experiences as a sales manager.
- She framed this in the context of the new role and the new job she's applying for. She should make it even more about how excited she is about the products—and selling them—for the company she's applying to.

### Sample answer 2

By Marketing Insights Manager Professional

I believe that the key to long-term professional growth is gathering critical, foundational experiences.

In my case, my aspiration is to lead a large multinational business in a general managerial capacity. To get there, I have identified a set of enabling experiences, and have been very intentional in choosing my roles and assignments so far. While I have learned an immense amount in my current role as a strategic insights marketing manager, I believe that it's the right time to expand my learning with a new challenge.

Over the last 4 years, I have worked across a variety of marketing, strategy, and sales assignments across different global regions. I've built a strong understanding of how to sustainably grow brands & businesses through consumer-centric strategies.

In the next stage of my career, I'd like to lead a mid-sized business team by setting the long-term vision and translating that into short-term tactics. It's also important to me to create an environment where my team can deliver great work while feeling empowered and energized.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate was able to distill key learnings from their current employment and identify additional growth areas.
- The answer outlined clear career goals and a progress plan.

**Sample answer 3**

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

I've enjoyed my time with my current employer, and have grown a lot in my role. In the past 2 years, I've successfully shipped several products that turned out to be very successful.

I believe that the next big trend for product development will be centered heavily around mobile shopping. My current company is looking at a possible move in this direction within a number of years, rather than months.

I'm interested in joining your team because the products you're developing are in the exact area I'd like to explore and grow. This role would give me an opportunity to build a solid understanding of complex problems and how to navigate through ambiguity, preparing me to adapt to new challenges quickly.

I would also hone my data analytics skills, as I am already familiar with analyzing trends and insights in different customer segments and cohorts. And finally, I would strengthen my communication and leadership skills. As a product leader, it is super important to understand the resources, challenges, and priorities across the organization, and to drive synergy across teams.

I love that your team is lean and fast-moving, and I believe that my product management skills, drive, and enthusiasm would make me a great fit for the organization.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed an ability to recognize industry trends and opportunities.
- The answer outlined a strong career vision.
- Skills were tied directly to the job description.

**Sample answer 4**

By Data Engineering Analyst Professional

I enjoy my current role and am not actually actively pursuing a change. I am, however, very open to intellectually stimulating and challenging opportunities that will allow me to provide value.

I'm interested in a role where I am responsible to deliver and actively contribute towards company success. I am also seeking continued development and improvement, both personally and professionally.

Based on the job description and our discussions, this role does seem like a good match. I've long admired this company and am passionate about both the mission and the products. I believe that my record of success, unique experience, and background would make me an asset to the team.

### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate showed interest in further development and connected that ambition to the role.
- The answer included an openness to new challenges and passion for the company.

## Answer framework

### How to approach this question

By Brian Rumao, Hiring Manager

Hiring managers will often ask this question, and it's a test. Are you running away from something, or are you running towards something? The advice when you get this question is simple:

**Stay positive.** Employers want to see that you have a good attitude in general. Resist the temptation to say bad things about your current job, employer, or boss.

**Focus on where you'd like to go.** You should come off as someone who is looking forward, not backward. Portray your interests more in the light of what you want to get out of your next role.

**Bring it back to them.** Show them that you've done your homework about their company, and relate what you tell them back to the specific job you're interviewing for.

### Tips

- Don't talk negatively about past roles or former bosses - employers don't want to work with people who complain.
  - Be gracious when things haven't worked out in the past.
  - Share some of the ways you're working on improving.
- 

## Describe your most challenging project.

### Overview

Employers want to get a sense of what 'challenging' means to you. They also want to know how you handled the situation in a calm way. They're looking for a storyline to prove that you can turn a bad story into a good story.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

In my current role, I was in charge of leading a major marketing campaign for a new product launching nationwide.

The project was challenging both because of how large it was and because it involved constant communication with at least seven teams inside my company. Even though I tried to share the same information with everyone, it was clear that not everyone was on the same page.

Partway through, I discovered that some of the teams were not on schedule with their assigned tasks. The implications were significant, and a delay to the campaign would negatively impact our revenue goals.

I identified the root causes of the delays and set up a plan of action to address them. I planned in-depth one-on-one meetings with the team leaders to help re-inspire them. We talked about the goals and set ambitious targets for getting these last items across the finish line. I then organized and led status-update calls for the larger team and implemented a public dashboard to keep everyone accountable.

In the end, we did meet the marketing campaign deadlines and the product launch was a hit. The company hit their revenue goals and everyone on the sales team received a well-deserved bonus.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- She told us about the potential for serious negative consequences.
- She described concrete action steps she took to overcome this challenge.
- She shared the positive results of her actions.

**Sample answer 2**

By Hardware Engineer Professional

I was brought into a project right before the ramp, when the existing team ran into a blocker issue. They were severely constrained in both resources and time, and didn't have the bandwidth to address it.

Obviously, there was a lot at stake. The expectation was that I would quickly solve the issue, but I was coming in completely cold and the team was stressed and resistant to stop what they were doing to bring me up to speed.

Success required two things. First, I needed to clearly explain exactly what I needed from each team member — and why. Second, I needed to gather this information and context as quickly and efficiently as possible. Once the team realized that there was a process in place, they were very responsive.

With all the appropriate inputs, I was able to create a plan to solve the issue within just one week. The team just needed a point person to align everyone. Once I did that, we were able to get things back on track and deliver the project on time.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate was able to clearly articulate the challenges, requirements for success, and the use of soft and technical skills to solve a problem.
- The answer indicated a willingness to be adaptable, and the ability to meet aggressive deadlines.

**Sample answer 3**

By Program Manager Professional

While working for a major airline, I needed to adjust a financial model that shared revenue between all the airlines in our partnership.

The model used a common industry metric, RASM, to calculate unit revenue — based on the number of seats in an aircraft. But without a universal standard for airplane design, this metric favored some partners over others.

To fix this issue, I had to establish a standard without unwanted bias. The new system also needed to be set by an unbiased party. I reached out to contacts I had at our OEMs asking for support. Only a few firms build the majority of all aircraft, and each offered to have their engineering teams create a standard for my purposes.

The challenge came from several obstacles: the incredible depth of detail down to every last square foot of each aircraft in our fleet, close communication with partners and suppliers, clear direction for both business leaders and technical engineers, and the need to rally all partners to a cause that would benefit the collective.

Overall, clear communication and persistent attention to detail powered the successful completion of this project.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The level of detail demonstrated deep subject matter expertise.
- The candidate showed the ability to break down problems into smaller manageable pieces, creating a clear path forward that takes pros and cons into consideration.

## Sample answer 4

By Data Engineering Analyst Professional

I was tasked with implementing a uniform data platform for a large, multinational company with tens of thousands of employees. It had to be done in such a way that it could be used by teams spread out all over the world.

There were several challenges associated with implementing a platform of this size and importance. We had to make sure the platform would be well-adopted, add value, and be approved by the executive team.

Besides the technical complexities of building such a platform, this project was also challenging because we had to influence global teams. To accomplish this, I created a high-level strategy. Then, I asked Senior VPs to nominate reports to form one global team that could represent the entire organization.

Ultimately, we succeeded in building a platform that was adopted globally, thanks to a strategic plan executed by a collaborative task force that incorporated both global needs and local aspirations.

### Why this answer worked well:

- Leading a project of global scale demonstrates the ability to provide high-level strategy while being capable of localizing the executions.
- The candidate detailed the complications of the project and the action steps taken.

## Answer framework

### How to approach past experience questions

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

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**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

### Tips

- Have a clear story with a specific challenge.
- Describe the negative impact if you hadn’t resolved the issue.
- Discuss action steps you took and talk about the positive impact.

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## Tell me about something you’ve accomplished that you are proud of.

### Overview

This question assesses how you define a professional success. If the story resonates, the employer will want you to do similar things at his or her company. You should focus on the impact and outcomes.



## Candidate answer and feedback

### Sample answer 1

When I first joined the company, I noticed that the existing monthly budgeting process was quite time-consuming and inefficient because it was highly manual.

There were errors and inaccuracies, and I took the initiative to implement a new budgeting template to automate the process and make it simpler.

I developed automated calculations using Excel and fill-in-the-blank lines for departments to submit their numbers. Then I designed and led a training for all relevant staff. The new system made it easier for the departments to provide their budgets in an error-free way.

Overall, we had 25% fewer errors in the next cycle of budgets and my team became 30% more efficient. My manager gave me a very strong review for the quarter and noted that she appreciated my initiative to automate and make the process a lot less cumbersome.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She started off by discussing the situation she inherited when she joined the company.
- She described the action steps she took to improve the situation.
- She quantified the positive results and relayed how impactful this was for her and her team.

### Sample answer 2

By Marketing Insights Manager Professional

In my role on the innovation strategy team, I helped create a long-term innovation pipeline which led to multiple product launches for a critical business unit. While the company was a market leader in the space, we had been rapidly losing market share over the last few years.

My first action was to identify the root cause of our declines. Through a detailed analysis, I identified that our product lineup didn't fully satisfy evolving consumer needs. I also examined our past product launches and found that they'd lacked differentiated utility.

I got approval from leadership to take an end-to-end approach using design thinking. We started with consumer immersions to understand how our products are used and which barriers we'd need to overcome. From there, we created new product concepts.

We tested the concepts with consumers and created a long-term innovation pipeline. Finally, we partnered with cross-functional teams to charter and launch 3 products in just 2 years. This increased market share for the first time in 5 years, and we have seen sustained sales growth ever since.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to think critically, develop a strategy, and execute a plan.
- The answer showed how those efforts led to a positive business result.

### Sample answer 3

By Product Manager Professional

Only a few months into my role, I was asked to lead another product area because the team hadn't been successful after several attempts.

I realized that the org itself posed a challenge. We were essentially operating as 3 separate teams on 3 different sites, in 3 different time zones. So, my first step was to visit each site to build trust and learn more about their priorities, since we would need buy-in from each team.

Next, I collaborated with the horizontal metrics team to determine a metric that would capture the value of the project, as well as each individual team's success.

We assembled a team that consisted of engineers from each site and kicked off the project together. We set up a regular travel schedule to support this new team dynamic. When we hit technical issues, we were able to iterate quickly.

I'm really proud of the final product for a number of reasons: It was a hot potato that had failed multiple times. And the result is awesome. Not only by our numbers, but I personally know tons of people who really love using it. Finally, I was able to build meaningful relationships with multiple senior stakeholders.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate's involvement was directly connected to the success of the project.
- The answer clearly outlined the problem solving steps, and showed dedication, and subject matter expertise.

**Sample answer 4**

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

In the last year, I led the launch of an entirely new e-commerce business channel within my company. Data showed us that users have a tendency to impulse buy on social media — and I saw an opportunity to embed a shopping feature in our social media app.

With just a lean team of two analysts, I led a 6 month research project in which we interviewed 100 people on how they use social media, exploring their interest and intent when they saw a product image.

I also had in-depth conversations with leaders of engineering, user research, and data scientists to understand what would be required to build this feature. Finally, we developed a cost analysis that detailed the resources and manpower we'd need to create a new division.

The preparation and research provided a strong enough case to be approved at the highest levels of leadership. The company implemented this new business channel and revenue stream, and I'm really proud to have played a key role in a huge growth moment.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated abilities to distill insights, identify key opportunity areas, and create actionable recommendations that led to new revenue streams.
- The answer included the detailed steps taken to execute a strategy.

**Answer framework**

**How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

**Get into the action.** Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like “I implemented” or “I persuaded”.

**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

## Tips

- Describe the problem that existed before you took action.
  - Talk about how you took initiative to solve the problem.
  - Explain why you are proud of the outcome and what would have happened if you hadn't stepped in.
- 

## Can you explain your employment gap?

### Overview

This question isn't designed to rule you out - it's a good sign if you get the interview. Interviewers want to get more context about the gap and whether you're still going to be a great fit for the role, despite the gap.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

Yes, so a few years ago I was working in Seattle as a global finance manager. I loved my job and got to travel all over the world.

My dad, who lives in Michigan, was diagnosed with dementia that same year, and my mom was having a hard time giving him the level of care he needed. I decided to put my career on pause and go help them.

I not only got to spend quality time with my parents and sister, but I was able to get their finances in order so that when it was time for him to enter a care home, they were in a great spot to afford it.

He's doing really well at the facility, so now I can refocus on my career.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- He told the truth; he left work to care for a family member.
- He delivered it with confidence and was unapologetic about the gap.
- He showcased the positive by explaining his action plan to keep his finance skills sharp.

#### Sample answer 2

By Marketing Insights Manager Professional

Looking at my resume, you'll notice I have an employment gap of 5 months. I was relocating internationally and had to go through the administrative process of procuring my travel visa and work authorization permits. During this time, I couldn't legally be employed abroad.

The time off was a blessing. It allowed me to recharge my batteries and use the time to stay current with industry and consumer trends. I took the opportunity to evaluate my career journey and make sure I was working towards my long-term goal of being a multinational general manager. Without the day-to-day hustle, I was able to be introspective and distill the lessons I'd taken away in previous roles, and start planning my intentions for the next.

I also used the time to read up on the latest developments in design thinking and innovation, and even took a couple online courses in these spaces. What initially seemed like a frustrating forced break ended up being a very positive period of time for me, and I was able to start my next chapter feeling inspired and refreshed.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The answer painted a picture of an ambitious self-starter.
- The candidate showed interest to learn and grow beyond his current role, which is valuable for cross-team collaboration in the future.

### Sample answer 3

By Product Manager Professional

The 2-month gap on my resume was intentional. I wanted to leave space to prepare for a big international move and take the opportunity to travel. I'd been heads-down for much of my career, and this seemed like an ideal time to unplug.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, I didn't end up moving or traveling, and the new job fell through. I've used the time to brush up on my Spanish through online tutoring, practice some new recipes, and make my way through a reading list that's relevant for my next role.

I have also spent time thinking deeply about the contributions I'd like to make in the next chapter of my career and develop some concrete goals. Finally, I've been volunteering remotely with a London-based organization that I'm really excited about.

The unexpected time off has given me a chance to reevaluate some priorities and goals, find inspiration, and recharge for my next move.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate showed the ability to be productive during an unstructured time.
- The answer detailed skills and learnings that may be beneficial to an employer.

### Sample answer 4

By Regional Sales Manager Professional

After experiencing a layoff, I created a list of things I wanted to accomplish with the time.

I had always wished for more time for creative pursuits like fiction writing, so I spent time developing a TV pilot and framework for a 10 episode arc. Letting my creative juices flow was very rewarding. I found the routine to be therapeutic, and the experience of creation to be invigorating.

I also researched companies I was interested in and kept a running list of job requirements that mirrored my own qualifications. I created a document that I could forward to a hiring manager that complimented my resume, highlighting specific skills and real-life experience. This exercise prompted me to evaluate my goals and skills, and to hone in on my next move.

The time was well spent. I harnessed my creative side, found inspiration, and created a tailored plan that truly captured my career ambitions.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate demonstrated a self-starter mindset by creating structure.
- The time was used to reflect and accomplish goals.

## Answer framework

### How to approach this question

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

Most people are nervous about how a gap will be perceived—even if there's a good explanation, But if they've invited you in for an interview, then the gap hasn't ruled you out. Here are some tips on how to discuss it:

**Be honest.** The truth will set you free. Try to put the situation into the best light and don't lie; it's bound to come back and haunt you. So if your job was eliminated through a merger, just say so.

**Speak with confidence.** For example, if you had taken some time away from working, avoid acting like you're embarrassed, apologetic or ashamed. The interviewer is going to pick up on that. Instead, pause and you see how they respond. The more calm, succinct and confident you are, the more at ease the interviewer will be with your answer—and with you.

**Show the benefits of your time off.** Bring up the good that came out of that time whether you were laid off, stepped away to be with family, or even got fired. It's a great way to reframe the situation and an opportunity to showcase some useful skills that you gained during that time.

## Tips

- Expect that they will ask about the gap - prepare for it.
  - Answer honestly and strategically.
  - Be confident and succinct.
  - Shine a light on the good that came out of that time.
- 

## What are your salary expectations?

### Overview

If this question arises early, odds are that the interviewer is really asking: "Can we afford you?" If it arises much later, the interviewer may be hoping that your salary requirements are aligned to what they have budgeted for this role.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Mike Derezin, Hiring Manager

I've been doing some research on the market for the role of Sales Analyst.

What I found from LinkedIn's salary tool is that here in Chicago, base pay for these jobs tends to run between \$61,000 and \$71,000. Half the companies pay bonuses as well.

Given the global impact of your company, and the fact that candidates with Master's degrees, like me, are being recruited most heavily, I think we should be looking toward the top end of that range.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She started off by giving a salary range instead of a specific number.
- She brought neutral research to the table, which establishes her as someone who's trustworthy, bold and grounded.
- She did a credible job of showing why she should be at that higher range, which made her come across as confident and steady.

#### Sample answer 2

By Product Marketing Research Professional

Based on my current compensation and market research from resources like Glassdoor and levels.fyi, I am seeking a base salary within the range of \$[dollar amount] to \$[dollar amount]. I've seen similar roles that are offering \$[dollar amount].

My specific experience and years in the field are closely aligned with this position, making me a strong candidate to be able to jump in and quickly add value.

That said, I understand that this base salary range might be on the higher end of the spectrum for a growing company, and I'm willing to consider a lesser base paired with a signing bonus or increase in restricted stock units. My intention is to grow with the company and invest myself in its success.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The answer was well-researched and demonstrated the value that the candidate could add to the company.
- The candidate provided a base salary range, as well as alternative forms of compensation.

### Sample answer 3

By Business Portfolio Manager Professional

After researching market ranges from multiple sources online and taking into account my education, experience, and location, I'm targeting roles with base salaries in the range of [dollar amount].

Of course, I'm also taking into account opportunities for long-term growth with an emphasis on purpose-driven work as I evaluate and weigh options — and my values are closely aligned with your organization's mission.

For this reason, I would be willing to negotiate base salary in exchange for a generous time-off policy. I intend to be a high performing asset to your company, and value time to recharge when appropriate.

Why this answer worked well:

- The answer showed enthusiasm for the company and its mission.
- The candidate was prepared with a suggestion that would compensate for a lower base salary.

### Sample answer 4

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

It's important to me any new role is positive from a work standpoint. I want the work that I'd be doing to be impactful, and I want to know that I can contribute meaningfully to the organization. That's why I'm most interested in this role: My personal values and ambitions are aligned with the company's mission.

As far as annual compensation, I'm open to how it is paid out, whether through base salary or a bonus structure. For a move to make sense to me, I would need the total compensation to be between [desired salary range].

Additionally, in future conversations, I'd also like to discuss how we might leverage the signing bonus to compensate for some of the long term Incentives like stock options that I'd be walking away from in my current role.

Why this answer worked well:

- The answer offered a range instead of an exact figure, and suggested several ways that compensation could be structured.
- The candidate explained the value they'd like to offer the company, and expressed genuine interest in the role.

## Answer framework

### How to approach this question

By Mike Derezin, Hiring Manager

This is a question you'll get all too often, so here are a few tips to help you master the answer:

**Give them a salary range.** Let them know there's room to negotiate (instead of starting with a specific number). Avoid going too low though, because that's going to work against your interests. And don't go too high either, or you may freeze yourself out of the opportunity.

**Do some neutral research.** Give them a reasonable place to start from. You can use a resource like the LinkedIn Salary Tool to find out what other companies are paying people in this role and share with them what you learned about this salary range. Then they'll have to base their compensation at least on those numbers because you've let them know what other similar organizations are giving to employees who do that job.

**Bring up signing bonuses.** Doing this can create a win-win situation for both parties. At the end of a negotiation, asking for extra money up top is often a way to bridge the gap between what you want and what you're being offered.

## Tips

- Know the industry norms for similar jobs.
  - Talk about ranges, rather than exact numbers.
  - Make the case that you offer premium value.
- 

## What do you like to do outside of work?

### Overview

Interviewers want to know you're going to be enjoyable to have around and not just that you have the hard skills for the job. Use this question to set yourself up as interesting, fun, curious, or a go-getter.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

A lot of my spare time lately has been dedicated to teaching myself how to shoot and edit instructional videos.

I've been a garage-sale shopper for several years, and I sell my finds on eBay to pay down my student loan debt. So far I've raised \$11,000. People who find out that I do this often have a lot of questions about how to get started, how to find the best stuff, and how to market items on eBay.

So I've decided to put a few tutorials up on YouTube. That way people can learn through the videos—and I gain a new creative skill.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- He came off as resourceful, financially responsible, and willing to share his talents with others.
- He focused on how his interest helps with self-improvement.
- He made sure all his comments were appropriate.

#### Sample answer 2

By Product Manager Professional

I really love backpacking in different countries, especially with different cultures than the one I grew up in. I find that it allows me to disconnect and recharge from everyday life, while growing and learning something new. To date, I've backpacked either alone or with friends in over 20 countries, across Asia, South and Central America.

For our honeymoon, my wife and I travelled northern India for 6 weeks. It's a very diverse region, home to Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists, and we really enjoyed spending time in a few different states.

We did a diverse set of activities like hiking the Himalayas and Ladakh, finding cool hot springs, and Vipassana meditation. Vipassana is a 10 days of silence meditation. I've really connected with the technique and have found it to be a powerful way to focus my attention and reset myself.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate showed interest in learning from people with different backgrounds.

- The answer included hobbies centered around health and self-improvement.

### Sample answer 3

By Procurement Manager Professional

Outside of work, I enjoy fitness training, perfecting my golf swing, writing and recording music, and taking care of my dogs.

This year I will be releasing my 4th album, which is all-instrumental, featuring classical guitar. I play every instrument and record tracks at my home office. Currently, two are streaming on iTunes and Amazon Music. I'm working towards a completion goal of late July.

I find that music is a wonderful creative outlet and stress-reliever, as well as a perfect balance for my demanding career. It allows me to set personal goals and achieve them, which is also true of physical fitness. I've found that keeping my mind and body sharp improve every single facet of my life.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate shows self awareness and self discipline.
- Hobbies are centered around wellness and creativity, both of which positively impact professional life.

### Sample answer 4

By Marketing & Category Insights Manager Professional

My wife and 5 children are my top priority. As a family, we stay very active and enjoy outdoor activities like camping and waterskiing.

I played collegiate soccer and when 3 of my children joined teams, I took up coaching. I became so involved that the city requested my help in building out their recreational soccer training program.

I also volunteer with a youth group through our church. I act as a mentor, helping young men set and achieve their own goals. For example, if they want to learn how to do an oil change, I empower them to learn. I'll help them track down a car, guide them in the research, then oversee the process.

As a father and community member, these activities have been enormously rewarding. It's nice to feel like I'm making a difference in people's lives.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate's commitment to family, community, and volunteerism shows follow-through.
- The answer paints a picture of a productive and dependable team player.

## Answer framework

### How to approach this question

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

With this question, employers are looking to get a feel for your likability and cultural fit. So what should you say—and not say? Here are a few tips.

**Pick one of your favorites.** Go ahead and share something about your hobbies, volunteer work, or the places you enjoy traveling to. Maybe you're taking classes to help you accelerate your skills. In general, you just want to tell them something that's true and will paint you as an interesting, healthy, or good human being.

**Keep it short.** For example, if you're a bird watcher in your free time, skip the 22-minute account of every species you've ever documented. Share enthusiastically so your passion shines through, but don't ramble on endlessly. Doing so might give the people to whom you're trying to make a good impression the feeling that you're nervous or that brevity just isn't your strong suit.



**Stick to appropriate topics.** Avoid anything that might be pulverizing or offends somebody who's not a part of a particular group like politics or religion. Choose something uncontroversial or beneficial, and take advantage of the opportunity to show them that you're the complete package.

## Tips

- Share something that paints a favorable picture.
  - Keep it short and sweet.
  - Don't bore them with long stories.
  - Steer clear of the inappropriate zone.
- 

## Tell me about a time you had to manage conflicting priorities.

### Overview

Employers want to see how you handle competing priorities, understand the implications of missing deadlines, and can stay cool under pressure.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

I was asked at the last minute to help with a major project. The deadline was just a few days away and the project had gotten derailed.

As I was working on this first urgent project, I was approached by two different clients with pressing requests as well. These conflicting priorities overwhelmed me at first.

Then I came up with a plan to prioritize the tasks I was given based on their level of importance. I determined which clients were the most critical to our business and who needed deliverables with the quickest turnaround.

I ranked the assignments and figured out how long it would take me to finish them. Then I checked in with my coworkers, clients, and manager to see if the timeline made sense to them. We added an additional team member, stayed in the office late for a few nights, and aligned with the clients on the new timeline.

In the end, I was able to complete everything on time. Each client, manager and co-worker was satisfied with my work and were happy that I communicated my revised timeline so there weren't any surprises at the end of the project.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She explained the many conflicts happening in this particular week at work.
- She described how she tackled the process and showed what steps she took to get everyone on board with the new timeline.
- She ranked the assignments based on who the clients were and what they expected. The outcome was positive and the clients were happy.

#### Sample answer 2

By Business Development Manager Professional

As part of my role in Business Development, I managed multiple programs. Due to changes in business needs, I had to update the training for the sales team for one program, while working on launching a new capability within the other. Both were high priority and time sensitive, and required major time and effort on my end.

To ensure that deadlines were met, I met with the respective internal and external partners to set expectations and key milestones. I also identified which teams would be responsible for the various aspects of each deliverable.

Once we established parameters, I stayed in regular communication with all stakeholders. Every time we hit or missed a milestone, we went back to the plan to adjust and realign. The constant open communication kept us all on the same page and working towards the collective goal.

We were able to successfully deploy the new capability for one of the programs, which was a big success. Due to factors beyond our control, we missed the deadline for the other program — but our transparent and communicative working model eased conversations with partners and leadership, and allowed us to pivot quickly.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to manage expectations across stakeholders while ensuring alignment throughout multiple projects.
- The answer highlighted strong communication and project management skills, and the ability to ease challenging conversations.

**Sample answer 3**

By Procurement Manager Professional

During my role as Manager of Transportation Procurement, I was tasked with creating reports for procurement and presenting them to our Business Intelligence department. I was selected for the project because of my engineering experience.

After creating the reports, the BI team told me that they were backlogged for at least 6 months — which was an unacceptable timeline for my manager. I was hesitant to break protocol, but explained that I could actually design and implement the entire project myself within 6 weeks.

To get it done, I logged extra hours each day of the week. I created a power template with all the SQL connection, necessary queries and joins, as well as all the DAX calculations needed. I replicated the template for each report needed and built a dashboard as a web interface for users to access the reports.

When I shared this with my boss, I was asked to present it in an upcoming meeting. To my surprise, both the President and VP of the division attended. My hard work was very well received. The next week, I was given a promotion and assigned full responsibility for Business Intelligence.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed a willingness to take on additional responsibilities to accommodate an aggressive timeline.
- The process and tools used to complete the project reflect deep experience and expertise.
- The candidate's promotion provided proof of success and the ability to win the trust of leadership.

**Sample answer 4**

By Regional Sales Manager Professional

When I worked for a technology company in the 3D printing space, their org had me reporting directly to a VP of North American Sales, as well the global VP of Sales based in Tel Aviv. This dotted line structure led to inherent priority conflict, as I was taking direction from 2 different department heads with very different expectations.

I was not able to perform my role effectively with multiple managers, and it caused much undue stress. I approached my direct manager of our North American operation and asked that he contact the VP of our corporate location in Israel to request a change in reporting structure. Fortunately, I had already established myself as a valuable, contributing team member. This allowed me to approach this escalation with confidence, as my manager knew I was committed to excellence in my role.

It turned out that this was a much larger, company-wide issue, and by bringing my situation to the attention of leadership, a larger conversation about reporting structure began. Ultimately, the company made the decision to phase out the dotted line reporting matrix globally.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer clearly explained the situation and source of conflict.
- The candidate had established themselves as a valuable contributor and felt comfortable addressing the issue directly.
- The resolution had positive implications for the entire company.

### **Answer framework**

#### **How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

**Get into the action.** Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don’t go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like “I implemented” or “I persuaded”.

**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

#### **Tips**

- Talk about the most important priority and then share additional priorities and how they conflicted.
  - Describe the steps you took to get the top priority done.
  - Discuss the impact this had on the company or team.
- 

## **Where do you see yourself in 5 years?**

### **Overview**

Employers want to determine how serious you are about your career and whether your goals match the goals for this job. Employers don’t expect you to offer up a specific title you want. Instead, they want to know what you hope to accomplish.

### **Candidate answer and feedback**

#### **Sample answer 1**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

In the first two or three years, I plan to immerse myself in the position by leveraging my strong Excel knowledge to develop automated reports and processes. The goal would be to improve efficiencies and reduce time spent on manual tasks.

Within two to three years after that I see myself using that experience to help other departments develop similar efficiencies.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- She broke it down into two-to-three year chunks.
- She explained what she could give in relation to her Excel skills rather than what she planned to get from the company.
- She avoided mentioning any job titles she hoped for in the future.

**Sample answer 2**

By Business Development Manager Professional

My professional experience has provided a strong foundation and invaluable insight into my strengths, interests, and areas of opportunity. In the next 5 years, my aim is to continue to build strong relationships and trust by establishing myself as an expert in my field. This will require dedicated investment both in and outside of my role, gathering new perspectives from partners, colleagues, and mentors.

I plan to spend the next 2-3 years honing my leadership skills. I'm a fast learner and enthusiastic student of the industry. In each role, I have sought mentorship, and would like to provide this kind of support to others in the future. I have enjoyed owning projects and leading collaborators, and believe that management is the next right path for me.

That's just one reason why I'm drawn to your company. I've heard incredible things about your management training programs, and I am looking for an organization I can grow with. I believe that I have both the drive and the soft skills to be a real asset to your team for years to come.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate has a clear vision for their career and outlined how their goals can be an asset to the company.
- An interest in mentorship shows willingness to take guidance, as well as invest energy in others.

**Sample answer 3**

By Regional Sales Manager Professional

I really enjoy my current position and have been happy to contribute to the success of the company. Within the next 5 years, I see myself taking on greater responsibility through a senior leadership role. I feel that my experience, communication skills, and creative strengths would well position me to lead a nationwide or global sales team.

At this point in my career, I have already broadened my role by transitioning from a field rep to a regional manager. Under my guidance, the team has grown the regional revenue by 32% in just 15 months. We have also established a continued growth trajectory that projects 15% more growth within the next two quarters.

My professional accomplishments are a testament to my ability to perform at the highest level, and I look forward to the challenge of guiding a team to use a proven sales process to maximize revenue and margins.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate detailed the clear trajectory of their career path, and outlined a vision for the next phase.
- The answer quantified professional contributions and growth.

**Sample answer 4**

By Brand Marketing Manager Professional

In 5 years time, I see myself advancing to an executive level role leading the broader marketing function or leading the company's effort to be a digital-first brand.

That being said, I've always seen myself as a business-leader first, marketer second. In order to be a well rounded business leader, and given the global nature of the company, I would like to do an international

assignment within the next 2-3 years, ideally in Asia. My experience and expertise to date has been North America-centric and I would like to garner the experience of working in a different culture with different consumers and unique business challenges.

China and India have different go-to market business models, higher price sensitivity, smaller pack sizes, all of which requires a different approach and I would like to learn, grow and add value to this important region. This will give me invaluable experience on the different facets of the business and make me a better marketing leader for the company.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate has done their homework on the company, and has a plan to achieve their goals in ways that will help the company grow.
- The answer showed that the candidate is not just looking for a job. They're looking for a career with this company, with ambition to succeed beyond the current scope of the role.

### **Answer framework**

#### **How to approach this question**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

The key to answering this question is to focus on what you can give to the employers or the role. Here are three tips:

**Break the time into chunks.** Let them know what you might do in each two-to-three year period. This helps the interviewer to visualize and see what you're describing. Take them through what you plan to do in the first few years and how you plan to take it up a notch in the years after that.

**Talk about how your goals will help them.** Paint a vivid picture about the value that you plan to deliver within each of those two-to-three year chunks that you described.

**Avoid talking about job titles.** Resist the urge to tell them about what you want your position to be in two, three, or five years because that can come off as overly presumptuous.

#### **Tips**

- Break the answer down in two to three year chunks.
- Focus on what you can give, rather than what you can get.
- Don't bring up a specific job title that you want to move into one day.
- Make it specific to this particular company and position.

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## **Describe your leadership style.**

### **Overview**

Good leaders can explain their values and priorities in a few words. This is a test to see if you can explain yourself. It also helps to determine whether your approach meshes with the company's own culture.

### **Candidate answer and feedback**

#### **Sample answer 1**

By Mike Derezin, Hiring Manager

For me, good leadership is about finding the best analytical approach while still caring about the people on the team.

Last year, I took charge of a digital marketing campaign that wasn't getting any traction. I realized our team members didn't know what was expected.

We worked together to build new metrics. I gave more responsibilities to our most engaged team member and helped another one find a different job where he could be more effective.

Within three months, we were hitting our numbers and morale was vastly better. When we were ready to expand, five internal candidates asked if they could join our team.

I love building productive, successful teams, and it sounds as if there would be great opportunities to do that in the job we're talking about.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- She talked about what her overall philosophy was and how she was an effective leader.
- She shared an example of something that was a challenge, what she did to solve it, how she brought the team along, and the results that she captured from it.
- She wrapped it up with how it connected back to the organization.

**Sample answer 2**

By Marketing Insights Manager Professional

I subscribe to McGregor's Theory Y of management, which emphasizes the importance of "participation." This theory suggests that people take pride in their work and act responsibly for the most part. I firmly believe that everyone wants to do their level best, and will do so when they have a clear vision, the right tools, and a sense of ownership.

This informs the way I lead and inspires my goal of creating a positive, inclusive, and enabling work environment for everyone involved. In my experience, this approach has kept collaborators highly motivated and delivering work in a way that is sustainable for everyone involved.

While working on a small sales team, my focus was to set clear and collective targets to ensure ownership, and offer regular training sessions on selling process and technology use. This was more efficient than having a weekly check-in and feedback cadence. It was a refreshing change for the team who appreciated the autonomy.

This approach was successful, as our team consistently delivered above plan revenue while achieving savings on trade allowances. I also received the CEO award for sales excellence and received the highest performance grading.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer includes their philosophy and a real-life example of how it has been successfully applied.
- The candidate's story shows a genuine interest in teams and in building leadership skills.

**Sample answer 3**

By Business Development Manager Professional

In a word, supportive. I think it is important to understand the unique strengths and blind spots of my team members and direct reports. Knowing how to work with a range of experience, skills, and working styles plays a big role in the success of a team.

We recently hired a new analyst who had limited experience in the industry and required hand-holding up front, but who we believed would learn fast. To effectively lead, I had to know when to step in and course correct, and when to let them make their own mistakes and learn by experience for maximum growth.

Conversely, a contractor I managed in a prior role had significantly more subject matter expertise than I did. I recognized this and positioned myself as a support structure — I helped clear the path for her to achieve her goals.

I believe that good leaders pay attention, listen actively, and play to the strengths of each partner and colleague.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed the ability to assess all skill sets on the team to fully optimize projects.
- The answer detailed the balance of giving direct input versus letting the team explore.

**Sample answer 4**

By Brand Marketing Manager Professional

There are many aspects to my leadership philosophy, but the foundation is psychological safety. Right or wrong, I want to give the people around me, reporting to me, and partnering with me the ability to truly and honestly express their opinions without fearing any retribution or impact.

That includes people overtly disagreeing with me, pushing back, or expressing an emotion. I may not always agree with them, but they will always be heard. I have found that this builds a powerful trust on teams because it's a natural way to engage. When people feel locked in by dogma, they don't raise their voice, and valuable insights may be lost. By giving everyone I work with psychological safety, they feel respected, understood, and free to contribute authentically.

I also believe in decisiveness — in streamlined decision-making that empowers forward movement. We get the data we need, the input required, we have the safe and healthy debates, and make the call. This helps to minimize exhaustion across the board, and let team members put their stamp on real progress.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed the ability to lead teams with divergent points of view, and a willingness to be challenged by new ideas.
- The candidate demonstrated an understanding of the importance of minimizing exhaustion for the sake of productivity and morale.

**Answer framework**

**How to approach this question**

By Mike Derezin, Hiring Manager

This is a question you'll hear a lot and answering with authenticity is key. Here are three tips I have to help you get started:

**Be clear about your leadership style.** Don't be vague or ambivalent. If you're a team builder, say so. If you're tough, but fair, own it. Be very concise and clear on how you define your leadership so that they know very well what you're all about.

**Give a detailed example that highlights it.** Talk about a situation, a problem or an obstacle, and then walk through what did you do and what was the result. What did it mean to your organization, company, and the customer? And be sure to include how you brought your team along, because this isn't all about you.

**Show situations where you've adapted.** Life's not going to be simple. People want to see how you've grown and changed given the situation. Just like you look for that in the people you're going to hire, the same thing with the hiring manager who's looking to hire you.

**Tips**

- Start by framing your basic style in a few words.
- Give an example of your leadership style in action.
- Show that you can adapt well to unexpected situations.

# **Tell me about a time you failed or made a mistake.**

## **Overview**

Being able to admit to a mistake shows maturity and personal accountability. Employers want to know you're self-aware and that you learn from past experiences. Errors are inevitable in any job - it's how you handle them that matters.

## **Candidate answer and feedback**

### **Sample answer 1**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

In my first job, my manager asked me to develop several forms of tracking projects. I said “yes” because I wanted to do everything my manager asked me to do.

But as I started working on the project, I realized I didn't understand the overall goal. And the project ended up creating templates that didn't meet my manager's expectations.

My manager was disappointed in me. She told me that if I had asked some clarifying questions, I would've gotten to a better work product. I admitted to my manager that I had made a mistake and learned that it doesn't make you look stupid if you ask clarifying questions.

I learned that it's better to speak up quickly. That's how I've handled those situations ever since.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- She owned her mistake, going straight to the point and describing a situation with the right level of detail.
- She reflected on what she did wrong—not asking clarifying questions—and how that negatively impacted her work.
- She talked about what she learned from the experience.

### **Sample answer 2**

By Program Manager Professional

During my first few months in network planning, I worked to launch a new international route for a major airline. Months of work and detailed analysis goes into every new route as many candidates are narrowed down to a few worthy of a multi-million dollar investment. Regardless, this work needs to be done at a rapid pace and with a high level of confidentiality.

My team moved quickly, and my work was shared with only a few key decision makers in the company to gain approval. Unfortunately, throughout the rapid pace of work, a few key stakeholders were left out of communications and felt unprepared. They were later left to scramble and quickly adapt when they heard about my project in the media.

Learning from my mistake, I developed a robust checklist of each communication that would be required prior to all subsequent launches. I also adapted it for other teams to help my peers avoid a similar oversight.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate addressed the question honestly, and described actions taken to avoid repeating the mistake.
- Adapting the solution for peers shows the candidate's dedication to the company, and indicates a team player mentality.

### **Sample answer 3**

By Regional Sales Manager Professional



While working in channel sales for a technology company that sold storage area network solutions, I made the mistake of announcing a new break/fix service that was not approved or rolled out internally yet.

I had jumped the gun in assuming it was ready to go. As a result, over 50 global channel partners received the new program and some of them had already initiated quotes for end users.

Once I realized my mistake, I sent out communication to the channel partners and owned up to it fully. Many reached out to me directly and were understandably confused and frustrated, but appreciated the transparency.

I offered to speak to their customers and help with any quotes that may have been stuck. Ultimately, we were able to roll out the product fairly shortly thereafter, and there were no serious consequences. But I had learned my lesson.

Since then, I've made more regular and effective communication a top priority. I make myself available and accessible to internal and external partners to keep a steady stream of information and updates flowing to avoid preventable errors.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed that they are willing to hold themselves accountable and take direct action to solve problems.
- The answer outlined steps taken to avoid similar mistakes in the future, demonstrating a learning mentality.

**Sample answer 4**

By Digital Analytics Manager Professional

As a second year digital executive at a leading snacks brand, I had an opportunity to either renew past sponsorships or seek new opportunities to associate our brand with top sports and entertainment properties.

When I extended our contracts in fantasy football, I had my doubts of the effectiveness of the partnership and the overall lack of novelty after so many years.

Compared to the actual NFL, fantasy football has a limited number of extremely dedicated fans and users. We had a true tradeoff of reach versus frequency. I worked with our agency partners to slash costs and develop numerous versions of compelling sweepstakes.

We refreshed the creative constantly and monitored performance aggressively to avoid a negative ROI.

But, despite all efforts, we struggled to get fans to engage. I wish I had trusted the numbers and my own intuition to consider other programs that would have been a much bigger success.

It's not easy to quickly acclimate at a top CPG company, but that experience taught me to bet on myself, seek mentors who can help guide me in a new culture, and never forget the importance of thanking teammates and partners for their hard work.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate took initiative to keep the work on track, but also owned the underperformance.
- The answer set up the challenge and detailed the range of strategies that were attempted.

**Answer framework**

**How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

**Get into the action.** Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

## Tips

- Use an honest example that's believable.
  - Explain why it was a mistake.
  - Talk about what you've learned and any steps you've taken to show that you're "working on it".
- 

## Tell me about a time you worked with a difficult person.

### Overview

Employers know that difficult people are everywhere and situations come up frequently. Explaining how you've been able to handle a challenging person in a mature way demonstrates your ability to manage difficult moments successfully.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

My boss assigned me to a big project that entailed working across multiple teams. I had to collect and analyze data that would help her make an informed decision about a new service we were introducing to our customers.

One of these individuals I needed to collect data from had a bit of a difficult personality. He was late to provide the data, and when he did provide it, it was incomplete or inaccurate.

Without getting the right information from him I knew I wouldn't be able to complete my assignment. After I asked a few times, he agreed to have coffee with me so we could talk about the situation and I could get a better sense of what his challenges were.

I asked what I could do to help make the request easier for him. He shared that he was overwhelmed, as he had multiple competing deadlines, and that there were errors and delays with all the data.

We brainstormed ways that I could break down my request into more bite-size chunks so he could squeeze in the request in between bigger projects.

I then customized each of my requests in a way that would work with his schedule. He appreciated how much I was able to tailor my request to meet his needs. And ultimately, he helped me complete my assignments on time.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She described a tough situation and the difficulties that she experienced with this person.
- She explained the action steps she took and its positive outcome.

- She took the time to understand this individual's issues, which is a crucial skill you need when working with others.

### **Sample answer 2**

By Product Manager Professional

My company had kicked off a highly controversial cross-functional initiative. I was the project lead with a team of three Product Managers, though I was not their direct manager.

One of the Product Managers was many years my senior and a level above me in the organization. Throughout the process, I found that he was working around me, looping me out, and stalling the process by surfacing problems without recommending solutions.

I set aside time for us to chat directly. I shared some of the challenges and pressure I was facing, making myself vulnerable to create space for him to be receptive. I explained the tension I was feeling with regards to our working relationship and asked what I could do to help improve the situation.

This allowed us to clear the air, identify issues, brainstorm solutions, and commit to a healthier form of partnership moving forward.

It was a powerful reminder of the value of communication and the importance of transparency and honesty on teams. Seeing one another in a humanizing light allowed us to build a stronger team.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated strong leadership with the ability to “manage up” when team members have seniority.
- The answer outlined important soft skills like problem solving, communication, and emotional intelligence.

### **Sample answer 3**

By Business Portfolio Manager Professional

As a Business Analyst, my job was to create requirements documents or pitches for new projects to present to a board of directors for approval. One of the board members was notorious for poking holes and asked us to gather more information, causing significant delays. This made stakeholders very unhappy.

I reached out to this board member to better understand his concerns and identify ways to streamline the process.

I looked back at the proposals and identified three themes of concern that kept coming up. We ran proposed changes by the board, and then modified the template accordingly. We also implemented a new practice to share the proposals with the board before meetings to stay ahead of questions.

Our approval rates tripled! In the end, uncovering the root of a difficult relationship was beneficial to our process and all parties involved.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer shows that the candidate has a proactive problem-solving mentality and is capable of turning challenges into opportunities.
- Resolving this difficulty prevented delays for future projects and improved collaboration with board members and stakeholders.

### **Sample answer 4**

By Marketing & Brand Manager Professional

I don't really believe that there are inherently difficult people. In my experience, different backgrounds and levels of information can make it difficult to understand another's point of view.

As a product manager, I really wanted to push for a shopping feature within our app. I saw a great opportunity to open a new potential revenue stream, but one of our key stakeholders — an engineering team lead — was concerned that we'd need to staff up in a significant way, and that the investment wouldn't pay off.

I did a little digging and spoke to his team members to understand his concerns better. I realized that I would need a quantitative analysis, rather than just a business plan. So I mapped out potential revenue to prove that this endeavor would not only be profitable in the short term, but over the next 5 years.

He was impressed that I had run the same analytics as his engineering team would, which helped him move from a blocker to a strong advocate of the project.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed a willingness to work through a difficult relationship by understanding another point of view.
- The approach was a blend of soft and technical skills, and the result was a clear win for the company.

## **Answer framework**

### **How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

**Get into the action.** Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like “I implemented” or “I persuaded”.

**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

### **Tips**

- Describe how the person was ‘difficult’.
- Explain the negative potential impact this could have caused.
- Talk about how you approached the situation.
- Be sure to highlight the positive result your efforts created.

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## **Tell me about a time you had to persuade someone.**

### **Overview**

This question is all about sizing up your emotional intelligence. Interviewers are looking for problem solvers, not shouters. Strong answers showcase your listening skills and your ability to guide people to better choices.

## Candidate answer and feedback

### Sample answer 1

By Caroline Gaffney, Hiring Manager

The day before a major management review, I was told we only had ten minutes to present our project. We had originally been promised fifteen.

Most of our team members agreed to shorten their remarks. One person refused to make changes. I suggested that we sit down over coffee and talk about it. I started by listening, letting him explain how hard he'd worked.

I realized the issue wasn't about the length of his speech but more about him being recognized for doing a thorough job and getting his presentation together. He was proud of his work.

So, we talked about another way of recognizing his efforts by acknowledging him in our team newsletter. When we wrapped up that part of the conversation, he volunteered to shorten his part of his speech.

By treating his contributions with respect, I guided him to a better outcome.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- He created an alternate path that supported this coworker's goal without wrecking the entire project.
- He summed it up well at the end showing how he can be persuasive without dominating the conversation.

### Sample answer 2

By Product Manager Professional

At a key moment in my previous role, my team was trying to balance the growth of our user base and safety of users. We were exploring many solutions for this problem, and my role was to align the team.

Our engineering manager had a strong perspective on a solution that was technically straightforward, but did not fully address both needs. Our designer wanted to implement a more complicated, but comprehensive solution. I believed that the latter seemed like the appropriate course of action, but it needed an additional layer of depth to fully address concerns from all parties.

First, I partnered with the designer to outline the solution and create a framework that detailed key benefits and potential downsides. Next, I brought in an engineering counterpart to break down the costs and timing implications of building a comprehensive solution.

These inputs enabled a strong case for the more complicated, but ultimately more meaningful solution. Enthusiastic team alignment made timely leadership buy-in possible.

While I had to invest more detail work upfront, we were able to shave off a few weeks by broadening our technical brainstorming throughout the early stages — which allowed us to complete the project ahead of schedule.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to identify project gaps and build a strong case towards the more optimal solution.
- The answer clearly outlined the approaches and strategies behind each action, which ultimately led to improved efficiency and timely delivery.

### Sample answer 3

By Business Portfolio Manager Professional

I had just started leading special projects for the CEO of our wholesale division. He was very particular about data models and gave line-item feedback, which caused extra work for the team.

I felt strongly that there was a better way to complete the work. My boss and I pitched a new model, but it was shot down. I realized that he needed to see it in action.

During the next review, I showed the old model and the CEO listed his changes. I then pulled out my new model and showed him all of the options he was able to clarify. He was surprised that I could modify variables so quickly to give him immediate feedback.

He wasn't an unreasonable person, he just had a system that worked for him. We made a successful, time-saving update because I took the time to understand his motivations, learn how to speak his language, and find a solution to his pain points.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed strategic thinking and perseverance in taking the time to convince leadership to adopt a new approach.
- The solution demonstrates the candidate's ability to identify valuable process improvements.

**Sample answer 4**

By Brand Marketing Manager Professional

As a software engineer, I had to persuade my marketing and sales teams that deploying a new version of the software was the right thing for our consumers and clients because the existing version was vulnerable to cyber attacks.

The teams were against a new version because they believed it would cause client dissatisfaction. Additionally, these security enhancements came with a 23% cost increase.

To reframe the value equation, I took three steps. First, I enrolled leading cyber attack experts to educate everyone on the impending risks from foreign entities. This reinforced the urgent business imperative of investing in secured systems.

Next, I partnered with my finance team and determined that the cost of "fixing" systems after an attack amounted to a 77% increase in spend — to say nothing of intangibles like reputational damage.

Finally, I hired a market research group to bring a group of "non-techy" folks to conduct a live, in-person demo of our new interface. The group demonstrated the new software with ease.

Marketing and sales were so convinced that they asked me to join them in key client meetings to lead the sales pitch myself. Clients not only loved the new system, but revenues increased by 32% with the development of a premium version.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer clearly laid out the scenario, challenges, and steps.
- The candidate's actions were a blend of strategic, cross-functional, and technical skills, resulting in quantifiable success.

**Answer framework**

**How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the "SAR" framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

**Get into the action.** Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don't go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like "I implemented" or "I persuaded".

**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

## Tips

- Pick an issue where your agenda is in the broader interest.
  - Show how your careful listening helped you reframe the controversy.
  - Explain how the other person's change of heart led to a better outcome for all.
- 

## Tell me about a time you disagreed with someone.

### Overview

Occasional conflicts are a fact of life. Interviewers want to see if you can work through those tensions in a respectful way. If you helped steer things toward a good compromise, that's a big plus. Signs of anger or bitterness will count against you.

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

My team was given a new goal: to sell our product to a new customer segment that we hadn't served in the past.

The group had strong opinions about the approach we should take. In spite of their voices, I had concerns about their strategy; I thought it may fail as it didn't align with the client's core needs. But I was in the minority and when I spoke up I wasn't heard. I needed to find another way to make the case to my teammates.

I set up a focus group with a potential client so my team could understand the challenges and priorities of the people we aimed to serve. The great news was they saw that our planned product wouldn't meet these needs, but if we made some slight adjustments to the service, we could deliver something of real value. The team rallied behind this and got on board.

We were ultimately successful in bringing this client onboard—and ten more!

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She shared a succinct example of a time when her opinion was in the minority.
- She came up with a creative way to change her team's perspective.
- She used this new strategy and described how well it worked.

#### Sample answer 2

By Marketing Insights Manager Professional

During my time on the growth strategy team, I partnered with various brand and finance teams to create a promotion and events calendar to maximize portfolio performance. This was especially challenging because each brand team was only responsible for their brand's performance, while my job was to help ensure that the entire portfolio succeeds. This created an inherent discord in the exercise.

In the past, teams would look back at the previous year's events with the goal of essentially replicating them. It occurred to me that this may not be the most efficient way to plan the calendar, since the process didn't involve any real evaluation of success.

My partners were reluctant to let go of the existing process. To get buy-in, I prepared two scenarios. One used the old approach. The other used my new suggested approach with event evaluation criteria — showing both the monthly and total year sales estimate for each brand, as well as the entire portfolio. To make sure my case was airtight, I'd pre-worked with other cross-functional teams to ensure that the new projections were compatible with monthly product supply numbers and trade allowances.

I was able to get buy-in and implement the new process, which has allowed us to factor in accurate estimates, measure success, and increase the efficiency of event planning.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer demonstrated the candidate's ability to evaluate and optimize an existing process, using data and key performance metrics.
- The candidate showed flexibility in his approach through scenario planning, seeking a win-win solution for all partners.
- The outcome was a more strategic process and a net positive for the company.

**Sample answer 3**

By Procurement Manager Professional

A few years ago, I was asked to give a presentation on best practices in procuring transportation. One of my suggestions was to change the lane hierarchy for which we procure rates as well as changing the hierarchy we used to build routing guides in our transportation management system. The Director of Transportation did not agree, which created some tension.

I explained to the leadership team how the change would allow us to capture all the operational requirements and help carriers to know exactly where they are sending trucks. I quickly realized that the director was concerned that the change would require more personnel and thus more budget. So, I created a presentation to detail how the new plan could save up to 5%, which would help cover more than 2 additional temporary employees. That convinced the team.

Ultimately, my plan did even better than expected, with a savings of 7% — approximately 34 million dollars. As a result, I was given more latitude on future procurement-related decisions, in which I employed target pricing and multi-year deals that saved the company even more.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer laid out the challenge clearly and quantified success.
- The candidate demonstrated the ability to dive into stakeholders' concerns and create consensus.
- The answer highlighted both soft and technical skills utilized to solve a conflict and improve the company's bottom line.

**Sample answer 4**

By Marketing & Category Insights Manager Professional

My organization had prioritized the growth of a certain part of the business, and we were all in a room discussing the best way to drive it. The cross-functional group had starkly different opinions. One senior level team member suggested that we "force" the customers to make necessary changes by threatening to pull funding.

This set off warning sirens in my mind because my team would be responsible for carrying this out. I responded by acknowledging his idea as a novel approach. Then I mentioned that in the past I'd found it effective to offer incentives — rather than threats — to solve a problem or close a gap. I suggested that we



offer the customer promotions in Q4 if they were able to execute our new strategy by Q3. I wanted to shift the conversation in a more positive direction and discuss ideas that would be mutually beneficial.

It worked, and the group began to brainstorm which customer pain points we could help solve, and how we could inspire their cooperation.

We ended up giving them additional incremental promotions, as well as participating in one of their corporate events. Not only did we solve their Q4 gap, but we grew our business by 2.3% that year.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to manage a potentially confrontational project by successfully aligning all stakeholders and guiding them towards an alternate solution.
- The solution offered was customer-centric, and still managed to increase the company's bottom line.

## **Answer framework**

### **How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

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**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

## **Tips**

- Pick an example involving business practices - avoid personal quarrels.
  - Calmly explain both sides' point of view.
  - Show how a compromise or a fuller understanding led to a good outcome.
- 

## **Tell me about a time you created a goal and achieved it.**

### **Overview**

Strong answers reassure interviewers about your ambition and your determination to press ahead. Pick a trivial goal, and you're at risk of being tagged as a slacker.

### **Candidate answer and feedback**

#### **Sample answer 1**

By Caroline Gaffney, Hiring Manager

In my line of work, most top performers have MBAs.

I couldn't afford to step out of the workforce for two years to earn one. But I promised myself to do everything possible to earn an MBA within three years while working full-time.

I found a top-rated online program and started setting my alarm clock for 5:30 a.m. I set goals of two hours of study time in the morning and evening, and made detailed to-do lists to manage both my study schedule and my other work responsibilities. It was incredibly hard, but I persisted and managed every minute of my day—and achieved my goal.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- He chose a goal that's clear, ambitious, and relevant to his career.
- He described specific actions he took to achieve his objectives.
- He made it clear that he accomplished his goal.

**Sample answer 2**

By Business Portfolio Manager Professional

I was two weeks into my first role with a new company when the leader of our business unit requested to showcase all the technology my team was working on, plus two brand new demos in the grand opening of our New York City office — in just six weeks.

My manager tagged me to lead the charge. Most of our projects weren't client-ready, which would mean lots of coding and testing to do in a short period of time. I don't think anyone thought we'd have it 100% ready in time.

I gathered the team and explained to them that we had a really cool opportunity, and asked for their ideas. I didn't sugarcoat how hard it would be, but promised to do everything I could to clear the path.

In the next few weeks, I quickly re-prioritized our Jira backlog to put other non-critical projects on pause and communicated to those stakeholders. I then implemented weekly sprints and daily standups to reduce meeting overhead and increase the time available for them to code and test in pairs.

And to keep up morale, I requested funds from leadership to sponsor dinners for the team when they worked late, and even secured travel funds so that our developers could attend the opening.

Through careful re-prioritization, open communication and keeping the morale high, we were able to successfully deliver the demo as the result.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate was realistic about the challenge, but created a clear plan to meet the timeline.
- The candidate demonstrated leadership by encouraging morale and securing a team reward.

**Sample answer 3**

By Digital Analytics Manager Professional

While working as a digital analyst for a top snack brand, sales growth had been slowing for our company. After discovering that our key customers - people between 16-24 year-olds - were heavily over-indexing on mobile, I persuaded the team to execute a massive pivot: shifting 25% of our digital spending towards top mobile channels.

We began to liaise with leading sports platforms and leveraged their flagship app. Envisioning true integrations, not just tiny banners that go unnoticed, we began to gain stakeholder buy-in through casual pop-ins with senior leadership — so that by the time we had a solid plan, approval was already implied.

We inked multi-year deals as their top sponsor to block out competitors in this emerging space. We received so many mobile impressions that I personally rolled up my sleeves and flew to Kansas City to meet with our digital creative agency to brainstorm a content roadmap tailored to top markets, leveraging our existing sports relationships and assets in each geography.

This program was a strong performer, delivering tons of value, reaching a coveted audience, and gaining industry awards that boosted the profiles of marketing leadership. It also helped me reinforce that new

channels can be great opportunities if you just remember the basics: It's all about reaching the right customer at the right time.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate met a difficult challenge with a bold and innovative approach.
- The candidate demonstrated the ability to provide high-level strategy while being mindful of executional details.
- The willingness to see projects through personally showed dedication.

#### **Sample answer 4**

By Brand Marketing Manager Professional

As a marketing executive in the beer industry, we faced a tough challenge when data showed that our top male consumer group started drinking less beer and more spirits.

Historically, the beer industry has never catered to women, which created a market share gap of over 30 points between male and female drinkers. I set a goal to reduce this gap by at least 10 points and create a \$2 million opportunity for the business.

This required an all new marketing approach. First, I made the case to senior management by highlighting the existential threat facing the company.

Second, I chartered a small, multi-functional team of marketing, sales, finance, and supply chain to develop a holistic plan across packaging, design, and in-store merchandising.

Third, I hired a female-led ad agency to create a campaign that would inspire women without alienating men. Authenticity was key, and our existing agency was not the right partner for this work.

Lots of these actions were controversial at the time, but timely engagement, continuous learning, iterations, and a high degree of accountability won out. The results were huge: A 15 point reduction in market share gap which exceeded our goal, an innovative platform that lets us target other user groups, and 5 Cannes Lions awards.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed the ability to identify opportunity areas and create innovative solutions.
- The answer included challenges, clear steps, and results that surpassed expectations.

### **Answer framework**

#### **How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

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**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

## Tips

- Pick an ambitious goal that's part of a bigger life journey.
  - Highlight obstacles and show how you overcame them.
  - Finish with an insight about the way your accomplishment has paid off.
- 

## Tell me about a time you surpassed people's expectations.

### Overview

Employers want to know they are hiring high quality people. If you have a story about surpassing an expectation, you've probably gone above and beyond the call of duty and that's a great thing!

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Joey Zumaya, Hiring Manager

As a young professional, I was given a small event to manage for my company's senior executives.

We originally expected about 50 attendees, but then the CEO decided to participate too. Suddenly, the event became much bigger with 400 people attending. We had to organize buses, food, scripted content, speeches and the program itself.

I stepped up and designed carefully crafted messaging documents for each stakeholder; had weekly check-ins with each group; and ran volunteer training sessions to be sure that all the logistics ran smoothly.

I learned the importance of careful planning and constant practice; two habits that paid off on many projects since then. The event is now considered the most successful of our division. My boss praised my work for going far beyond what she expected when the project was first assigned.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She painted a picture of how she approached a new problem.
- She explained how she adjusted throughout to meet challenges as they arose.
- She described the successful outcome and its implications for her job.

#### Sample answer 2

By Business Development Manager Professional

In my role as Business Analyst, I was responsible for analyzing and implementing strategies for key products. Due to a combination of an organizational restructuring and employee attrition, my team of four shrunk down to a team of two: my new leader and me.

At this stage, I combined some key skill sets. I used my technical expertise to create and automate new models that would capture potential opportunities, and my ability to communicate complicated results in simple language to support our sales team's efforts.

The automation led to greater efficiency, and my communication and relationship-building skills helped the sales team create client-specific onboarding strategies. This enabled us to continue to keep the business going with minimal impact.

I was recognized by senior leadership for being able to pivot quickly in unpredictable circumstances and make the most of a difficult situation.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate used both soft and technical skill sets to maintain output with reduced headcount.

- The answer demonstrated a growth mindset by showing adaptability, innovation, and the willingness to rethink how their role can be done.

### **Sample answer 3**

By Digital Analytics Manager Professional

I had only been in my new role at a leading professional services firm for a few months when I got the call: “Can you make it to Atlanta tomorrow morning for a pitch meeting with a leading telecom company? We need all hands on deck!”

It turned out that the senior management closest to this client couldn’t make the meeting, so I led an 8-figure pitch. I leaned on my public speaking and presentation skills to carry the meeting and make a strong impression. I painted a picture of how we were uniquely qualified as the best partner for this piece of business, and peppered in some humility to make the firm look more “human.”

On our way back to the airport, a senior leader from our firm who had come along for optics told me that people at my level were not nearly this polished, and that he would welcome me to future pitches to all of his clients. It felt great to have exceeded the expectations of this very senior leader and this incident set me on a path to success at the firm.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to quickly and reliably take ownership when needed.
- The answer highlighted strong presentation skills, a positive attitude, and willingness to be flexible.

### **Sample answer 4**

By Marketing & Category Insights Manager Professional

I had been in my new role within the organization for just one week. My predecessor had left the relationship with our customer in a questionable place and as a result, they informed us that they’d be working with our top competitor instead. We’d found the work to be very impactful and needed a plan to win the customer back.

I worked with my team to identify the customer’s pain points, then we began re-engagement efforts. At the beginning, the engagements were only by email, but soon I began getting phone calls from senior leaders asking if we could help them to solve these problems.

After 7 months, the customer asked if we still had the headcount to support them. We came to discover that many of the presentations we’d shared had circulated through other parts of their organization.

A few months later, the customer’s senior leadership asked me to expand my team so that we could increase our scope and do more of this work in other categories where we sold products. We did, and our sales have continued to grow in double digits for the last 2 years. Needless to say, the relationship with the customer is stronger than ever.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer details how the candidate walked into a challenging situation, created a plan, and increased business as a result.
- The solution utilized a blend of customer relations, project management, and communication skills, which helped establish the candidate’s breadth of knowledge and professional competence.

## **Answer framework**

### **How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

**Get into the action.** Speak about the key milestones that you went through. Tell them what you did to turn the situation around. Don’t go into too much detail though. It should only be about two to three sentences, and try to use active verbs, things like “I implemented” or “I persuaded”.

**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

## Tips

- Describe a situation where you thought you weren’t going to be successful.
  - Talk about what you did to compensate for a bad situation.
  - Talk about the outcomes of your successful efforts.
- 

## Tell me about a time you had to handle pressure.

### Overview

Some jobs are high-stress and interviewers will test you to see if you can handle the heat. You’ll get partial credit for talking about your heroic efforts to get everything done, but you’ll get more points if you’ve enlisted allies

### Candidate answer and feedback

#### Sample answer 1

By Caroline Gaffney, Hiring Manager

I was working on my company’s big quarterly project update when two team members left unexpectedly and we were short-handed with three weeks to go.

I convened an urgent strategy session where we identified all the projects they were involved in and mapped out our action plan. We shared the most important tasks within the team and got them all done in time.

We canceled two optional features that could wait a quarter, and we reached out to a former intern who was able to deliver 15 hours of remote work in the last weekend sprint before the deadline.

We were able to complete the project without a delay and delivered on all the essential deliverables by being creative, strategic, and very focused.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- She described herself as a friendly leader who got to work addressing the challenge for the entire team.
- She took us through a strategy where she focused on the most important elements and deprioritized the rest.
- She was creative and resourceful by finding an unexpected ally to help her through this challenge.

#### Sample answer 2

By Program Manager Professional

During my time as an analyst for a major airline, I was pulled into a special project where we were asked to look at a potential merger scenario with another carrier. Due to the confidentiality of the project, I was unable to work with peers or use my normal channels for support, and was required to meet a demanding work schedule in order to complete our evaluation in the allotted time.

While this project leveraged some of my existing skills, there was still a lot I needed to learn about our acquisition target to complete the work. I made my family aware that I'd need to temporarily shift my evening hours to work. This proactive communication prevented me from facing compounding pressure.

I also made sure to communicate daily with my VP. He knew the unique challenge I was facing and could provide guidance, but only if he knew where to help. So I set up daily check-ins with him to show him my progress and receive feedback in a 1:1 setting outside of our normal working group. This added communication helped me avoid any surprises, eased stress, and allowed me to successfully manage and complete an unfamiliar project.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated flexibility by being willing to deviate from a normal workflow.
- The candidate demonstrated the ability to learn new skills and processes quickly.

**Sample answer 3**

By Procurement Manager Professional

When I was working as a Systems Integration Manager, I was responsible for onboarding a client to our TMS (transportation management solution) on a tight timeline. This was challenging because the client managed their own transportation independently. None of their data or invoicing for freight was centralized, and I was missing a lot of information.

We needed to hit our target go-live date because my company had already hired employees for the account and needed the revenue. I knew that I needed to get the info by the end of the week to ensure that I could validate assumptions used for RFP, margin, resource leveling, and so on.

I set up a call with the client and they explained that they were short on manpower and would need more time. I offered to visit the sites, conduct the interviews, complete the site and freight profiles, and take all necessary photos. Once I gathered the information, my team keyed in the data and we hit our go-live date without a moment to spare.

The project was a success. We hit our revenue numbers as planned, no money was lost, and all parties were very pleased. Thanks to the extra effort, our relationship with that client is stronger than ever.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate showed leadership by going the extra mile to accomplish a goal for both the company and the client.
- Success was framed in a way that captured both the short-term impact to the project (meeting sales goals) and the long-term benefit to company growth (strengthening a business relationship).

**Sample answer 4**

By Enterprise Program Manager Professional

I led a rapid, three month-long company-wide initiative to help customers reduce their carbon footprint.

To accomplish this goal within an aggressive timeline, I led a team of five subject matter experts to design a new service offering targeting the manufacturing, mining, chemical, and electronics industries. We assessed their current carbon and environmental waste output, and identified areas and opportunities for reduction in a phased approach.

We conducted interviews and focus groups with customers, academics, and government officials who had vested interest in sustainability. We then synthesized the findings from the interviews by identifying user

profiles and personas across each customer segment, as well as any gaps in key segment profiles and service offering competencies.

Finally, we kicked off work around third-party partnerships to assess skills and competencies that complement each other, taking cultural alignment and vision into account.

Once the service offering was designed, we conducted a pilot program and defined the SKUs, pricing structure, and legal contracts in collaboration with internal stakeholders.

It was a high pressure project, due to the scale of the effort and aggressiveness of the timeline, but results were impressive — generating \$10M in attach run rate annually.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The example showed the candidate's expertise and ability to lead complex initiatives.
- The candidate's contribution was directly tied to a significant increase in annual revenue.

## **Answer framework**

### **How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

**Describe the situation.** Talk about the initial events that occurred. What were the problems that you were experiencing? What needed to be solved and what resources did you have—or not have? This is a really key part of the story, so it should be about three to four sentences long.

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**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

### **Tips**

- Be clear about the project goal.
- Establish that you're a strong person who doesn't get flustered easily.
- Show your ingenious side, too, especially if your path to success involved redefining the task or enlisting colleagues.

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## **Tell me about a time you had to learn something quickly.**

### **Overview**

Interviewers want more than a one-time success; they're looking for signs of a well-tested strategy that helps you gather information and put it to use. They also want to know if you feel comfortable with rapid learning.

### **Candidate answer and feedback**

#### **Sample answer 1**

When I started in my role, I thought I was quite good at Excel. I had told my employer that I knew how to calculate complex formulas, but I quickly discovered that my experience was well behind that of my peers.



I didn't want my boss to know that I was trailing in my capabilities just as I stepped into the new role, so I came up with a plan to teach myself everything I was missing.

Every day after work, I watched at least an hour of Khan Academy videos. I also found practice worksheets online that allowed me to test myself and be sure I was mastering the content.

Within three weeks, I was nearly as fast and fluent as my colleagues at work, and my boss never knew I had come in behind.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- She showed initiative by going above and beyond after work to catch up to her peers.
- She was specific in what she didn't know and then told a clear and concise story about what she needed to do to change the situation.
- She described how with focus and hard work she was able to catch up rather quickly.

**Sample answer 2**

By Business Development Manager Professional

In my role as a new manager, I was given a new tele-acquisition channel to manage with little guidance. The channel was brand new to me and my team leader, so we had to get up to speed quickly. I had to learn the channel's end-to-end process, how it functions, and its various nuances to prevent any negative impact to the business during the ramp up process.

I set up time with our internal and external partners to get an understanding of their scope and expectations, and started to build relationships. I took the time to review previous years' results and understand team pain points.

Then, I coalesced all this information and created a process map to clearly lay out our goals and action steps required to smoothly transition — as well as establish myself as the point of contact and project owner for accountability purposes.

Due to these efforts, we were able to not only maintain the high standards the channel was running at before we took over, but we also made key process improvements resulting in higher client satisfaction.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated the ability to quickly assess situations, solve problems, and activate individuals across different disciplines with little direction.
- Creating a process that held the team accountable for success showed leadership skills.

**Sample answer 3**

By Enterprise Program Manager Professional

Due to change in senior leadership, we had to aggressively rethink our approach on the next evolution of cloud technology. I led a company-wide effort to define and execute a strategy to move towards a subscription-based cloud solution.

First, I worked with my team to define our areas of focus, starting from understanding how our products should work in the future based on the needs, behaviors, desires, and emotions of the customers.

We then examined our capabilities as well as current gaps within supply chain, engineering, design, marketing, and sales. We looked at how customers interact with our products. We also obtained third party market research to identify opportunities.

From there, I developed a strategy map to lay out ways in which the organization needed to evolve to succeed, and built both business and product roadmaps based on this strategy.

Within 8 months, we were able to get full alignment within the team and executed the strategy. We were able to migrate the original solutions to on-prem, hybrid, and private clouds and rolled out offerings to over 100 countries.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate demonstrated a comfort level with high visibility, high stakes projects.
- The example showed the candidate’s ability to strategize and execute a plan within an aggressive timeline.

**Sample answer 4**

By Brand Marketing Manager Professional

As a supply chain executive, I’ve always wanted to do an assignment abroad, especially in Mexico where the manufacturing scene is exploding with the creation of new factories driven by government tax credits. My current company has a policy that basic fluency in Spanish is required to be eligible for those roles, so I needed to learn enough to conduct foundational communication with vendor partners.

Since my busy schedule didn’t allow for formal language lessons from a private tutor, I enrolled in an online course. I committed to a daily routine at 4:30am while my wife and child were still sleeping so my goal didn’t cut into family time. I also downloaded Duolingo so I could use my commute to practice. Finally, I asked my Spanish-speaking friends to communicate with me only in Spanish to help refine my conversational skills.

Within 4 months, I was fluent enough to land my dream job as a factory leader in Mexico City on an 18 month expat assignment.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The answer highlights the candidate’s ambition and enthusiasm for the role.
- The candidate demonstrated self-discipline and time management skills.

**Answer framework**

**How to approach past experience questions**

By Linda Raynier CPA, CA, Career Strategist

Respond to this kind of question with a compelling story that uses the “SAR” framework: situation, action, and results.

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**Show the results.** Let them know how well things turned out, how the problems were solved and what you may have learned along the way. Try to include a clincher at the end, like dollars saved or improved profitability. It drives home that you did a great thing.

**Tips**

- Pick a vivid example and show why it was challenging.
- Break down your learning and mastery into three or four distinct steps(“First, I . . .”).
- Share a tangible result and speak about it with pride.

# Do you have any questions for me?

## Overview

This question isn't just designed to make sure you leave with all of your questions answered; it's intended to see if you're prepared and to assess how curious and thoughtful you are.

## Candidate answer and feedback

### Sample answer 1

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

I do have a few questions. Thanks for asking.

We talked a bit about your plans to invest in training opportunities for your current employees, especially those who will be managing the company's transition to a centralized billing system.

I think that this is a great plan, and I'd love to support the curriculum development.

Now, will most of the training modules be designed by this team? And will they be delivered in person, via webinar, or a video format? Or will you be using a hybrid approach?

### Why this answer worked well:

- She showed that she had been paying attention to the conversation.
- She wanted to delve a bit further into a topic that they've just discussed.
- She conveyed a lot of enthusiasm about supporting what sounds like a priority project for that organization.

### Sample answer 2

By Product Manager Professional

Earlier in our conversation, you mentioned that there were some tensions between these two teams. Can you share more about where that comes from, and how you think this will impact me in my role?

I'm very excited to hear that you're also passionate about making sure that gig economy workers are paid a fair living wage. What are some of the biggest challenges in preventing our team from delivering on this promise?

Recently, I saw that the company had to deal with a sensitive subject on the news. How was this perceived and discussed internally?

### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate referenced earlier parts of the conversation, showing that they were interested and engaged.
- The questions show that an awareness of and interest in how the company is perceived.

### Sample answer 3

By Digital Analytics Manager Professional

How do you think I should approach the first 30 days in the role to best position myself for success in a new culture?

I know that your company has won numerous awards for workplace and community culture, and I have always prided myself in helping colleagues get active in the community. What do opportunities look like within your organization to get involved?

### Why this answer worked well:

- The answer shows that the candidate has done their homework, and has a genuine interest in getting involved across different aspects of the company culture and activities.
- The candidate showed their desire to be successful in the role by already thinking about the onboarding process.

#### Sample answer 4

By Regional Sales Manager Professional

What do you see as the most critical component of your business today that will contribute to your long-term success?

What challenges does your organization face today that you are working to overcome?

Regarding my role, what would you consider to be the most important factor to ensuring success?

#### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate asked insightful questions that show their willingness to be successful and ask for guidance.
- The answer showed interest in the future of the company.

### Answer framework

#### How to approach this question

By Jenny Foss, Career Strategist at linkedin-corp

The way you respond to this question shows employers if you're engaged, intelligent and interested. Here are some tips on how to answer:

**Show them you're paying attention.** It's important to let them know you've been listening. You may want to take notes as the interview unfolds and then loop back to something you'd like to delve further into like an aspect of the job, the team, or the challenges that lie ahead.

**Let them know you're excited.** While being qualified for the job is essential, showing passion for their products, brand or industry takes it to the next level. So maybe you can ask a question about one of your favorite products they make or see how they're responding to an industry trend.

**Get them talking about their careers.** People love talking about themselves and appreciate when you notice the interesting things they're doing. For example, you can ask them how they got from Job X to Job Y, or how their work as a musician helped them in their current career. People hire people that they like and who seem genuinely interested in the role.

#### Tips

- Come prepared with 3-5 thoughtful questions.
- Ask questions that show you're engaged, intelligent and interested.
- Avoid no-brainer questions or ones related to salary / benefits.

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## Why do you want to work for our company?

### Overview

Interviewers ask this question because they want to understand why you are interested in this role at their company and how your goals can solve their needs. When these things align, it's usually a good match for both parties.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I have been building cloud-based SaaS products for a long time and I have a lot of experience, having learned important lessons as the field has matured.

It is exciting to see a company such as yours, with its rich pedigree in the enterprise on-prem space, venture into the cloud SaaS area.

I have led products that have gone on to serve multiple purposes. For example, when I worked for a company that focused on athletics, I led the design and implementation of a product that helped folks track their runs. It created a heatmap so people could track where they ran.

Placing their runs in context of a physical terrain made our product different, as did the emphasis on fitness where we tracked how many calories they burned. I added features where people could invite their friends for runs, which created community.

As you can see, I have a proven record in being inventive in design and iterative in innovation.

My experience, coupled with your market presence, makes for a winning combination. I can add value right away helping your platform scale. And, your products are exciting for me to try out my ideas to scale for a cross-section of customers.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It provided a crisp career backstory.
- It explained what's appealing about the company and the role.
- It detailed how a partnership could be mutually beneficial.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Create a career narrative.** Explain how the employer and role fit into the larger story of your career, including how you've evolved and where you're headed. If you're just starting out, connect your goals to the job description.

**Show interest in the company.** Demonstrate that you're aware of and want to know more about the work they're doing and will do. Use data points like the company's product roadmap, potential customers, and response to market trends.

**Tie your future to theirs.** Connect your skills and long-term interests to the company's direction to show that your interest in them is well-considered and informed. Describe how your skills position you to help them achieve their goals.

## Tips

- Make sure you have a theory that explains career goals. Rather than a sequence of roles and jobs, work backwards from a life landmark and explain how the challenges you seek help you get there.
- Be sure to research the company and its roadmap and culture.
- Give specific examples that show how your skills map to the company's goals.

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## What kind of tech team dynamic do you excel in?

### Overview

Interviewers ask this question to evaluate culture fit. Some companies have a top-down culture where leadership prescribes and employees execute. Others have a more democratized, bottom-up culture. This

question is one way to determine whether you're a match.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I am coming into this interview process as a very experienced candidate. I started out my career at a company that was very methodical and top-down, and over my career I have seen innovation occur in a very decentralized bottom-up approach. Managers, in this later context, are mentors and colleagues as much as they are bosses.

I have tried to shape and gravitate towards team dynamics where senior leadership sets clear parameters for conduct and goals to achieve—without micromanaging all the execution details. In effect, I aim for the best of both worlds.

The overall dynamic should be geared towards innovating, hopefully in a fail-fast incremental basis that enables us to delight our customers and allows us to learn from their feedback. This makes work exciting and meaningful and would keep our offering fresh.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It showed two contrasting choices with clear tradeoffs.
- It used the question to demonstrate experience.
- It made the case that you don't need to choose between the two options and that both can co-exist and help teams succeed.
- It closed with a focus on tangible outcomes dedicated to the customer, which is a great touch—especially with an approach geared towards learning.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Show that you've done your homework.** Let them know that you've researched the company. Use tools like LinkedIn, Glassdoor and other networking platforms to find out how the company operates, makes decisions, and shapes its work.

**Demonstrate self-awareness.** Companies care that you know what you want, the conditions in which you excel, and how you will show flexibility to adapt to varying styles. A lot of behavioral situations have no right or wrong answer but are a window into your self-awareness and preference given the impact of engineering teams and products.

Self-aware candidates know what they want, know which working conditions help them thrive, and know their comfort level with adapting to varying working styles.

**Indicate a preference.** Varying team dynamics affect people differently. So, it would be great for you to stake out what has and hasn't worked before. Then express how you intend to have those experiences shape your future choices and methods.

## Tips

- Don't automatically customize your answer for the company. This is your chance to show what matters to you.
  - Be sure to research the company and how its culture plays out day to day.
  - Explain how your working style will shape your operations if you were to get the job and accept it.
-

# Let's say there are two kinds of tech workers: the innovators and the executors. Which of these categories do you fit into?

## Overview

Interviewers ask this question to evaluate your career goals and match them to what they feel the ideal candidate needs to be. More than culture fit, this could be a way to gauge fit for this role or other roles that may be open.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I believe that engineers need to have a sense of the larger product vision. Additionally, they also need to understand what it takes to execute and get an idea from 0 to 1.

At present, I still want to stay close to the execution since I enjoy the thrill of iterating on a product, getting smaller features out, receiving feedback, and finally getting an MVP out the door to push growth and revenue.

Eventually, I want to lead a suite of products that will help our strategic vision of creating a connected workforce and establish a track record of delivering products that will set me up for success. I feel like I can help your company accomplish its product roadmap and boost my own career in the process.

Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate co-opted both approaches and still made an explicit choice.
- It explained why one approach was chosen over the other.
- The candidate framed the choice as part of a larger career journey rather than a random choice.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Feel free to ask questions.** You should ask if the company feels engineers can be either innovators or executors—but not both. Another follow-up question could be whether the company believes that an engineer can alternate between those roles.

**Frame the choice in terms of culture and role.** It is easiest to work backwards from what makes the role successful. Anchor the answer in the success metrics, use the company culture as a foundation, and describe your own working style as the guide.

**Make a case for what you want.** The answer to this question depends on your current level of experience and what you're seeing for yourself in your next role. Whether you are a strategic thinker who prefers cross-functional alignment, or conversely if you prefer brass tacks executions, use this opportunity to share your thoughts.

## Tips

- Pause for a few moments and understand what the choices presented mean to you.
  - Explain how the choices will impact the role.
  - Explain how your approach will set you and the company up for success.
-

# How do you measure success for yourself technically?

## Overview

Companies will give you feedback using different methods like annual reviews, ongoing areas of growth, etc. However, in an increasingly self-directed workplace, companies want engineers to set measurable goals for success. This question aims to assess how self-directed you can be.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I think an example will explain both how I focus on the customers and how helping them defines my success.

In my roles as a professional services engineer, I have to make our products more configurable so that customers can create settings that meet their needs. Since our products are inherently very flexible, it makes no sense that all customers are forced to use the same settings. I have built tools that allow customers to easily toggle options and make the tools work the way they want.

I measure my success in flawlessly deploying these features in a timely fashion and ensuring that a diverse set of customers adopt our tools, which leads to customer loyalty and growth in revenue.

### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate was customer-centric, which is an increasingly desired quality in tech candidates.
- The candidate explained product capability and how the work made more of it possible for the end users.
- The success criteria were measurable.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Define the problem.** You can't define or measure success unless you understand what objectives you or your team were set out to accomplish. Feel free to use past examples to show how you have handled this before.

**Identify the stakeholders and customers.** Define the problem through the lens of how it affects someone or something, and then explain how your approach will address that gap in a measurable way.

**Explain how you'll approach and evaluate its effectiveness.** Having defined the problem and how it affects users or stakeholders, explain your approach and desired end result. Then describe how you will verify that your approach produced the outcome you wanted.

## Tips

- Don't immediately jump into the metrics. Come up with a mental structure to frame your answer.
  - Define success by way of a status quo; how you seek to improve it and how you will measure that improvement.
  - Make sure your success criteria have an objective and subjective component to them.
-



# Why do you think that technical teams need to be inclusive and represent a variety of backgrounds?

## Overview

Hiring managers increasingly realize that teams that include diverse perspectives are both fairer and more successful. This question will test your awareness of this issue as well as how you could contribute to it.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Inclusivity is about ensuring your team and its products reflect the world we live in and the improvements we wish to make.

In my previous role, I led a team of engineers to build chat features so customer service divisions could easily type messages in English. We had a new team member join whose spoken language was not English. Using her insights, we were able to build a new feature that auto-completed messages for non-native English speakers so the tool becomes more accessible for them.

This is what inclusivity means to me: inclusive teams make more inclusive products, which means happier customers and more growth and revenue.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It defined the term clearly right away.
- It showed how using inclusivity in a team as a bridge to products and customers makes an example more relatable.
- It married the definition of inclusivity with measurable outcomes, which is a great way to close out the answer.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Define the term.** Inclusivity can mean different things depending on personal experience, so be sure to clarify what “inclusivity” means to you.

**Outline the opportunity.** Demonstrate a situation where tech teams struggle to bring everyone along and how you can help make that better.

**Carve out a solution.** Make a strong case for inclusivity as the right thing to do and as a tool to help achieve your mission and serve your customers.

## Tips

- Define terms early or ask for clarification.
  - Remember to incorporate the definition into the questions’s premise, which is focused on the team.
  - Explain how inclusivity pays off in the long run.
-

# When you join a new technical initiative, what is the first thing you do?

## Overview

The first few weeks for a new employee are critical. They are an opportunity to learn and build relationships. This question will help assess how the candidate sizes up the challenge ahead of them were they to get the job.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Based on my research, I have found that your company prefers for incoming engineers to get their hands dirty right away. They learn by joining existing initiatives, shadowing engineering leads and completing tasks that enable them to learn the stack and forge relationships.

I will find an area that is short of help, and I am optimistic that such needs exist given your company's four key growth areas. Having done that, I'll also help debug and scale existing capabilities. That will give me a sense of the core and tech landscape while adding value as well.

Upon demonstrating my capabilities, I will start setting goals to own specific functionality that I can take from 0 to 1, with the trust of the team that I will have earned in my early days.

Why this answer worked well:

- It was based in the company culture, which showed prior effort to gain knowledge and research.
- It demonstrated an onboarding strategy crafted to produce near and long-term wins.
- It ended on an aspirational note about ownership.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Articulate what “early period” means.** Hiring managers love to hear how you see yourself starting out in a company, but keep in mind that what constitutes “early period” can mean different things to different companies. For example, in some companies, new employees are expected to contribute right away while in others there is a longer period of onboarding. Show that you can tailor your vision to the company.

**Set out a game plan.** Lay out how you would spend your first few weeks in some detail.

**Explain how you will transition.** The early “honeymoon” period is intended to set you and your team up for future success. Explain how you will make that happen.

## Tips

- Tie your plans to the company culture.
  - Ensure your plans set you and the company up for success.
  - Shown awareness of areas you can help with right away and areas you can own later on.
-

# If you had to pick between owning the entire process for one product versus contributing to multiple products at once, how would you decide?

## Overview

This question deals with both culture fit and how you approach choices. There is no right or wrong answer as such, but you do need to show that you make choices thoughtfully and deliberately.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Contributing to multiple projects at once had given me a great perspective on the business as a whole and offered me the chance to develop relationships across functions and share responsibility with others on my team.

On the other hand, I do see how owning a project puts you in a leadership role, and while the broad visibility may vary depending on the project, it is a chance to build domain expertise.

Because I have done a lot of my work so far in the former model, I now feel prepared to own something and lead it to fruition. Based on shared learnings and the diversity of projects I have worked on, I can pour all of that into something I can build from the ground up.

I know that the company has recently acquired several subsidiaries, so having someone come in and own the technical integration work is important, and I look forward to that challenge.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It shaped the choices in terms of impact and contributions rather than focusing on the candidate's own needs.
- It explained previous work and how the new challenge represents a break as well as a continuation of the candidate's career goals.
- Ending on a note about how the candidate's choice helps the company mission was a smart approach.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Explain choices and tradeoffs.** Co-owning multiple projects versus singularly owning multiple projects is a choice between breadth and depth as well as between cross-functional visibility and demonstrable impact.

**Spell out what your current situation is.** This is where you explain which of the two situations you're currently working in or have experience with.

**Explain your decision-making.** Based on the trade-offs and your status quo, you'll want to explain what you are aiming for and how that helps the company.

## Tips

- Show that you understand the choices and how they differ.
- Make sure you explain why your choice matters to your career.
- Remember to explain how this helps the company, not just you.

# If you were stuck in solving a technical problem, how would you ask for help?

## Overview

This question will help assess how you will relate to other technical experts. The interviewer is looking for technical judgment combined with relationship-building skills.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Engineering work can be very context-sensitive but still have a high impact. That is, I may have a unique understanding of something I am building, like a system architecture or code. Still, it could impact others if I am stuck or get things wrong.

In that event, if I am stuck, who and when I ask for help depends on how time-sensitive the task is, where I am in the project life-cycle, and whether I have exhausted all the tools available to me.

Let's assume that I am stuck in system architecture. I'd make sure I have a well-thought-out diagram and come prepared with options and specific questions. If it is code, then it gets trickier since it is hard to debug someone else's code. In that case, I'd want to isolate the specific area that is incorrect, present the expected and demonstrated behaviors, and seek out debugging tips.

Once I am unblocked, I would document my decisions and outcomes so as to create a living resource for anyone else who has the same issues down the line.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It showed how to manage working with diverse technical issues as well as the impact of not asking for help.
- It talked about what to do before seeking help and tailored it to the task at hand.
- It showed that paying it forward, in case someone else needs help, is professional courtesy and will help the team scale as well.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Explain choices and tradeoffs.** There are no fixed answers here; asking for help too soon may make you seem technically inadequate, while waiting for too long could lead to wasted work and delays. Explain that you will also account for the type of work you are doing when asking for help..

**Talk about your decision-criteria.** When you ask for help and who you ask depends on the urgency of the situation and what resources are available to you. This context will help explain that you are not choosing blindly.

**Spell out your approach.** Explain what you will do to get yourself unblocked first. Then call out exactly what help you will seek and explain how you will drive the work to closure.

## Tips

- Don't cut to the chase and state what you'd ask. Set context.
- Show that you understand the different ways in which an engineer can be unblocked.
- Be granular if needed; technical implementation can get tricky so using detail in your examples could help.

# How would you explain concepts like polymorphism and inheritance to a computer science student?

## Overview

Interviewers ask this question to assess your ability to explain technical concepts.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I'm going to assume I'm explaining these concepts to someone with working knowledge of them, so I'll use an example to drive home how they can be applied.

Inheritance lets us inherit attributes and methods from another class. Polymorphism uses those methods to perform different tasks. This allows us to perform a single action in different ways.

For example, think of a superclass called Season that has a method called areDaysHot() which prints out "It depends on the day". Subclasses of Season could be Summer, Winter, Fall - And they also have their own implementation of areDaysHot() (to reflect that summers have hot days, winters have cold days and fall days are a mix.)

Now, we need to use the Season class and create objects for the sorts of days we see depending on the season. As an example, we can create a Summer object and call the areDaysHot() method which prints out "The Days are hot".

```
Season mySeason = new Season();  
Season midJune = new Summer();
```

This is polymorphism in action. The same method - areDaysHot(), in this case - produces different output depending on which object is used to call it. So, mySeason uses the parent class version of areDaysHot(), while midJune uses the inherited version and therefore produces different output. The output will be as follows:

mySeason.areDaysHot() produces "It depends on the day", while midJune.areDaysHot() produces "The days are hot".

Additionally, I mentioned earlier about Fall. Since the days are often a mix of hot and cold, you could just define a class Fall extends Season without a areDaysHot() function, in which case an object defined for the Fall class will invoke the parent class function.

So, as you can see, we have reused a core capability and repurposed to a different, more derivative use case. This is a great way to keep your code manageable and more intelligent.

Does that help explain these concepts or would you like me to elaborate on anything specific?

### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate explicitly called out what the intended audience was.
- The candidate shared a relatable example to demonstrate understanding of the concepts.
- The candidate asked if the interviewer had any questions, which is always a good thing since it allows them to course correct.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Ask questions.** Whether you are explaining this to someone starting out (a student, for example) or a senior collaborator (where you are focused on implementation rather than conceptual detail) will make a big difference in how you approach this. Ask questions so that you can provide an informed answer. In the absence of clear information, feel free to make assumptions and call them out clearly.

**Use examples.** Illuminate the concept by applying it to a specific example.

**Ask for feedback.** It is often easy to get engrossed in technical concepts and lose sight of the needs of the other person who depends on you. Keep your eyes on the customer.

## Tips

- For coding interviews, depending on the level, you need to make sure you understand the concepts clearly enough to be able to explain and implement them.
  - You need to align with your interviewer before you start answering on whether they need hands-on coding or a high-level workflow diagram.
  - Think out loud so that your interviewer knows how you are progressing and building your solution.
- 

# How would you explain a web service infrastructure to a technical audience with a software background but limited system-level knowledge?

## Overview

This question will help assess how you will relate to individuals with a diverse range of technical depth. The interviewer is looking for technical judgment mixed with human relationship-building skills.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

The web service architecture consists of several key components, and we will incrementally demystify it by way of several concepts that will serve as building blocks.

A web server is a piece of hardware that responds to a user request with data. It could be as simple as loading static files from a computer.

A database—known in technical lingo as the “persistence layer”—is a resource for the web server to persist, or store, data. Even though these two technologies work together, they sit on separate computers so as to not compete for resources.

- From an instrumentation standpoint, you will want to make changes to the database by inserting data into it and reading data from it. This is where you’d use SQL. SQL covers the gamut from data transfer to creating databases to setting permissions. You can use SQL in MySQL, SQL Server, etc.
- From an operational standpoint, the front-end, which could be a browser, makes a request for information to the back-end, which is the web server. For example: This is a simplistic version of what happens when you search for “cat food” from Amazon and a bunch of options show up.

Since so much of our web architecture depends on data storage, it helps to understand your options vis-à-vis databases.

- If you plan on using data arranged in neat categories —think key-value pairs or tables —then you want to use relational databases (RDBMS) like MS SQL Server, IBM DB2, Oracle, MySQL, and Microsoft Access. The data in RDBMS is stored in database objects called tables. A table is a collection of related data entries and it consists of columns and rows.
- Databases like Cassandra and MongoDB are great for unstructured data in which case performance would be a predominant concern. It’s especially great when the data structure is going to evolve over time, as its schema-less operations allow you to update the data on the fly.

The backend, which is the web server, then calls the database to get data, and possibly run some logic on that data and return the output to the user.

- Some context here: since we are discussing data transfers, I'll provide a quick overview of HTTP. HTTP is a protocol which allows the fetching of information, such as HTML documents. It enables data exchange on the Web and it's a client-server protocol, which, as I indicated, means requests are initiated by the recipient, usually the Web browser.
- Clients and servers communicate by exchanging individual messages. The messages sent by the client are called requests and the messages sent by the server as an answer are called responses.

So, to summarize, a web service architecture involves the client (i.e. the user seeking the information) and the server (which has the information), and the server consists of the webserver and database.

#### Why this answer worked well:

- It set context for how the web service architecture will be described.
- It explained how concepts like web servers and databases connected together as part of the larger web service architecture.
- It associated these concepts with a real world example.
- It tied the whole idea together as a narrative in the end.

### Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Set context and terminology.** The question already establishes that your target listener does not have a system architecture background. Starting out with gradual conceptual explanations will help them understand it better.

**Create a journey.** Rather than throwing around technical jargon, explain these concepts from the point of view of how they deliver functionality. This will help solidify the concepts.

**Tie it all together.** In the end, summarize what you've learned to make sure that all the concepts come together.

### Tips

- You need to know how the client-server model works for system architecture questions.
- You need to be able to explain trade-offs on how to design the backend.

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## What would you do if asked to take on a problem where you did not have the technical skills?

### Overview

This question will help assess how you will handle the “skill gap” engineers are often confronted with.

### Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Unless there is an explicit set of constraints, I will assume that the task at hand is to implement a web-based capability. And the skill gap in question is that of language—more specifically, the language used in the company being one I am not terribly conversant in.

Does this assumption work as a starting point before I dive in?

I would examine the difference in the two languages; the scope of the project; the timelines; how much old code I could build on; and whether the work rests solely on me or whether I can tag-team with others.

Based on all my findings, I would create a technical spec and system design that would contain assumptions and call out technical decisions. I would have a peer or senior leader validate my assumptions just in case my technical gaps have led me astray.

As I move forward, I'd check in every week or two to make sure I am executing as expected and then become more independent. I'd be sure to align with experts in the new language so as to build my knowledge and expertise in the context of the intended outcome.

Throughout the process, I would focus on the end result and what skills would take me—and the work itself—toward that end goal. That way, I will grow my skills in a way that maximises my impact as well as collective success. That will enable me to leverage available resources in the team as well to close my gap.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- It pointed out an assumption and paused to allow the interviewer to interject and provide further guidance.
- It called out all the variables that will drive decisions.
- It anchored the strategy on the needs to stick to the outcome rather than just building expertise.

### **Answer framework**

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Ask questions and call out assumptions.** The ideal way to start an answer would be to either ask clarifying questions around the nature of the task or to make assumptions and call them out.

**Explain trade offs.** When confronted with a skill gap, there is a tradeoff to making different choices. You will want to call these out so that you can present your decisions as being thoughtful.

**Validate your approach.** Build inflection points into your answer as well as a closing. Then you can see if your decision is working, which can ensure the success of your team.

### **Tips**

- Keep examples handy of where there was a skill gap and how you handled it.
  - Be ready for follow-up questions where the interviewer challenges your assumptions or conclusions.
  - Be prepared for questions on how you would have reacted if your approach had failed.
- 

## **Tell me about the most challenging technical problem you have solved?**

### **Overview**

This question will help assess how you judge difficulty/complexity, your approach to it, and how you improvise and execute.

### **Candidate answer and feedback**

By Software Engineer Professional

A challenging problem arose when I was one of the leaders of a cross-functional team. We had to migrate our infrastructure from on-premise to AWS cloud.

There were several reasons why this initiative was important for our company's success.

First, our front-end and back-end setup made it increasingly difficult for us to develop and deploy at scale with the costs of onsite IT - and with limited redundancy to boot.



We also used data centers with a hardware-based load balancer and LINUX hosts running a standard configuration of Apache reverse proxy and Tomcat, and with one application called JavaStore.

JavaStore contained all the code that anyone would ever interact with as an internal stakeholder or external customer. It was connected directly to an Oracle DB using JDBC and to other Oracle databases with links. Then, to make the challenge even more complex, we had two single-point-of-failure vulnerabilities.

The first was that, since everyone was contributing to the monolithic JavaStore code base, it was very hard to make changes to it. And rather than CI/CD, even minor UI changes required weeks of iteration.

The second was that since debugging was equally time-intensive, and tracking down simple memory leaks required several teams to abandon their work and firefight. Similarly, the database was also monolithic, and when this went down everything went down, so we had to vertically scale each time we hit a peak.

With the vulnerabilities in mind, our solution had three parts.

The first was moving to a cloud-based microservice infrastructure. I set expectations that microservices were not automatically horizontally-scaling abstractions but would depend on scalable persistence.

Our initial offering was the classic microservice infrastructure - an elastic load balancer that supported a proxy layer, which then handled dynamic routing to the gateway API. The gateway API, as the name suggested, called targeted microservices. Since we had pushback from IT around persistence, I decided to replace the monolithic DB discussed above first.

The new architecture, which was heavily influenced by Netflix's then-groundbreaking model, involved building Java-based client libraries for data access. That meant a cache client so as to take a load off the service and DB. As a result, hits to the application were first supported by the cache which, upon failing, hit the service. The service, as expected, then called the DB and backfilled the cache.

This prevented the DB from going down when the next series of requests arrived, often only a few milliseconds later. Also, it helped us address the monolithic DB issue since we did not need to throw more hardware to prevent crashes. The C-Suite that was initially skeptical started coming around. They were tired of cutting checks to throw good hardware after bad system design.

The second part was fixing the front end, which involved several advances and retreats. Since our previous service was monolithic, we initially underestimated that calls from one service to another added vulnerabilities to our process. We had to account for network latency and the possibility that not every service was bug-free just because it was smaller. This often led to a cascading failure when a critical service failed, and we ended up with all the downsides of a monolithic architecture. We addressed this by using fault-tolerance testing for critical services.. Because of this, we had near 100% uptime for our core service that customers used to place orders. This fix helped address the single-point-of-failure issue.

The third part was to convince our leadership that we did not need to be consistent in our back-end data across all our data stores. They underestimated the time/effort involved in replicating content across availability zones. As a result, even if not all writes were read back immediately, even if one write failed, we would count it as a failure. After multiple evidence-backed demos of fail-cases, my engineering counterpart and I convinced them to support availability as a success metric over consistency.

This also aligned with the business goal of ensuring that the core retail business was always online, even if not all the merchandise was consistent across all services. In our implementation, we used Cassandra to write to one node, which then orchestrated other writes across other nodes.

You can now pull these pieces together, and I can dive into those details if you wish. But as you can see, overall we were able to meet this complex challenge and deliver a solution that kept our company moving forward.

### **Why this answer worked well:**

- It explained the challenge's complexities, the evolution of the solution, and how it was an improvement on the status quo.
- It called out the skeptics, ranging from the C-Suite to IT.

- It closed by pointing out the work is not quite done and laying out a solution path.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Start with some reflection.** Think through these questions: Why was the project complex? Why was it necessary? Why did you choose to do it?

**Carve out the characters.** Every major initiative has supporters and skeptics. Engineering is about changing hearts as much as it is about changing code. Explain how, in order to lead, you mixed authority and influence.

**Tell a story in parts.** If a problem is complex, it is unlikely to have a linear path. Narrate the retreats and advances, and how you measured success and validated outcomes.

**Validate and verify.** Point out any data or verifiable examples of how you knew the project was on the right path.

## Tips

- Take your time with the explanation but don't linger on needless detail.
- Feel free to pause and ask the interviewers if they have any questions before diving deeper into the solutions.
- Challenge yourself to work on pathbreaking projects to gain experience.
- Be aware of what counts as innovative since different companies have varying levels of innovation.

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## Explain how you would design a ride-sharing app.

### Overview

This question will help assess your knowledge of web infrastructures and the ability to implement a widely-used functionality.

### Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

A ridesharing service enables you to request a car to come and pick you up, so you need some ability to have real-time data move back and forth so the driver can find you and vice versa.

Right off the bat, let's set some API design guardrails on the functionality:

- The overall architecture must have high availability and low latency.
- We must also account for the fact that the system could be read-heavy; as a driver and a rider, you spend more time looking at the app to do things like tracking your ride and getting directions rather than adding content such as requesting, accepting rides or making payments.

For this timeboxed session, I will focus on 3 aspects:

- Finding and matching drivers and riders, and matching them to each other; this is the core business.
- Maps and location, so riders and drivers can see each other on a map, determine their ETAs, and establish their trip trajectories.
- Storage, where they can persist details like trips so riders can retrieve them if needed and drivers can get paid.

I wanted to start from the third point regarding storage, since the ability to store data is the foundation to business operations as well as data analysis for future strategic investments.

Since the trip data has to be as current as possible, I'd retain it in data centers as close to the trip location as possible. This will also help with data localization and physical safety. I'd also have backups for the inevitable disaster situation. We can sync the trips eventually since we want availability over consistency.

In order to ensure we can retrieve the data quickly - remember, what we said around system guardrails at the outset - I'd go for a low latency DB like Cassandra.

On the other hand, for data analysis, you need several permutations of data against which you could run expensive queries. Latency is not as big an issue here; completeness is. This is where, for example, a Hadoop warehouse would come in.

But given the pressure on the service, I'd want to implement caching intelligently so as to use resources more prudently.

Any questions before I jump in?

I'd warm up the caches and refresh them any time there was a miss. I'd spray my writes across availability zones for redundancy but would read locally.

In terms of caching, it would mainly be static data, like street landmarks, but would avoid caching driver locations because those refreshes would be too frequent and expensive. This is where something like REDIS would enter the picture.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- It immediately defined how the service would work, the existing problem, and the parts that would be solved.
- It showed awareness of how choices would impact product usage (like data localization), and it included an explanation of trade-offs, (like availability vs. consistency).
- It explained how decisions were being made and sought feedback to make sure the interviewer was clear.

### **Answer framework**

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Explain the problem parameters.** Call out what you are and aren't solving, how the user journey will work, and how you'll optimize features unique to the service.

**Build your solution.** Break down the functionality into smaller parts and build out a solution piece by piece.

**Describe outcomes and tradeoffs.** In deep-dive interviews, it is key to tie your implementation decisions back to the capabilities you are seeking to build. Make sure you do that often and explain the technical tradeoffs.

### **Tips**

- Scope early and explain why.
- Lay out your choices and then justify your decisions.
- Be conversant with platforms, storage techniques and how they affect user capabilities.

# Explain how you'd design Twitter and the system tradeoffs involved.

## Overview

This question will help assess your knowledge of web infrastructures and the ability to implement a widely-used functionality.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Twitter has a lot of features and activity. For the purpose of this exercise, I will focus on designing and architecting the timeline, which is the feature you use by default when you first open Twitter, where tweets from everyone you follow show up.

Let's construct what a backend for the Twitter timeline could be like.

Every user on Twitter would have three tables.

- First, the user's own Twitter home page. You could think of my Twitter timeline as a table with IDs of users who I follow and their tweets. For now, let's not worry about how the tweets are ordered or which users are prioritized. We can call this the "Timeline Table."
- Second, every tweet I have ever sent would be in a table of its own. We can call it the "Tweets table."
- Third, I'd have a table of all the other Twitter users I follow. We will call it the "Follow table."

With this context in mind, let's populate the Timeline table. We can start by running a SELECT query that joins my Follow table with the Tweets table of every user I follow. This would be a very expensive query.

When you account for the fact that people are following or unfollowing others in real time and sending out tweets, this gets even more complicated. Also, when you account for the number of users on Twitter, there is no way something like this would scale.

So, in my preferred design, I will optimize for availability over consistency. Here is how I'd build the architecture:

- Once I type my Tweet and hit SEND, my tweet would hit a gateway API, via a PUT or POST call. Then, you'd have an ELB, which would route your call to a server that can support you.
- As we keep developing our solution, let's assume we can use the "fan out" architecture, whereby the tweet lands in an in-memory database. This would replace the Timeline table in our structured database above.
- In order to build redundancy, we'd have multiple REDIS clusters for several copies of each timeline. Just so we don't have to keep scaling vertically and horizontally, we will only want to keep these copies for highly engaged users.
- Take edge cases into considerations. For example, if someone with millions of followers were to send a tweet, that would lead to a re-computation of those millions of followers. This would be neither scalable nor practical.

In order to address the edge cases, we need to borrow from both approaches we have looked at so far. We could leverage the REDIS approach while also inserting tweets from any applicable highly-followed users at run-time.

So, at this point we have a sound architecture that allows for availability and factors in various kinds of timeline use cases. I'm happy to dig in further if there is any specific aspect you'd like me to elaborate.

## Why this answer worked well:

- It clearly defined "how" the service works from the start without jumping into solution-mode too quickly.
- It defined the problem early on and identified the solution parameters.

- It picked and ruled out solutions and explained why, but it also showed how possible solutions would or would not work in the real world.
- It explained how specific solutions would need to be improved and suggested how to make those changes.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Set up the parameters.** While Twitter is well-known, it would be impossible to fully architect such a complex system in an interview. It is recommended that you pick one of Twitter's key capabilities to articulate its technical considerations and implementation/ design details.

**Build your solution and explain.** Break down the functionality into smaller parts and build out a solution gradually. As you rule out or rule in possible solutions, explain why you are doing so.

**Describe outcomes and tradeoffs.** As with other deep-dive interviews, it is important to tie your implementation decisions back to the capabilities you are seeking to build. Do this often and explain the technical tradeoffs.

## Tips

- Scope early and explain why.
- Lay out your choices and then justify your decisions.
- Be conversant with platforms, storage techniques and how they affect user capabilities.

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## Give me an example of how you'd secure data so that it cannot be misused or inappropriately accessed.

### Overview

This question will help assess your understanding of how data can be protected using a proven security technique.

### Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Given how much data breaches are in the news, I wanted to set some context. Assuming that there is always a chance that someone will get a hold of data that they are not supposed to, I'd like to render the data useless to bad actors. I have been studying encryption because this technique allows you to protect data that you store as well as data you transport.

My strategy would include:

- A good encryption algorithm, properly applied;
- Protection of the secret key;
- Symmetric keys that are never to be reused;
- Public keys to be distributed in a certificate to prevent interception attacks;
- Ways to protect metadata

One consideration before we begin - just because the data-sharing channel is cryptographically protected, we shouldn't assume that the data can be shared carelessly. Cryptography intercepting proxies do exist and can be used to mine data. It is exactly for this reason that Encryption keys must be rotated on a regular basis. Cryptographic algorithms are continually being analyzed and vulnerabilities can be found.

Now, let's execute our strategy. Since key management is important, let's dig in there.

Symmetric keys must be carefully protected and good key rotation practices must be followed. Private keys must be carefully protected. Public keys must be accessible to anyone and the emphasis is on access, so no protection is needed. Still, they must be embedded in a certificate.

Now let's look at the data itself.

Data at rest ideally requires envelope encryption, which means a key hierarchy is established. Never encrypt all data in a database with the same key.

Data in motion requires the use of HTTPS/TLS. Very sensitive data must still be encrypted—even over an encrypted connection.

Data being shared with other parties needs to be processed with asymmetric encryption so that only the intended recipient can read it.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- It tied the need for the solution to real-world events. Engineering is a means to an end, and that context matters.
- It laid out the key aspects of the solution at the get go, which is critical.
- It looked at the solution through the lens of several aspects. Starting with keys and then moving to data was a smart call.

#### **Answer framework**

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Explain the problem.** Even though the question assumes that data needs to be protected, you'll want to define what the problem is in more detail.

**Develop the solution.** You should build the solution gradually by starting with definitions then moving to things like concepts and best practices..

**Make it engaging.** As with other specialized concepts, cryptography can get detailed and dry. Find a way to make the solution interesting for the user.

#### **Tips**

- Scope early and explain why.
- Explain the concepts in terms of how you would use them to solve the problem.
- Be conversant with the concepts, but do not assume that everyone understands them the same way. Introduce ideas gradually.

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## **Tell me about a time you disagreed with a fellow engineer and how that issue was resolved.**

#### **Overview**

This question will help assess what it is like to work with you, especially in the context of difficult situations.

#### **Candidate answer and feedback**

By Software Engineer Professional

This happened a year ago. I disagreed around the scope of a major system redesign with a new engineer, who was junior to me.

Every few years, our company would redesign our customer-facing login experience. This was a chance to add new features, make it compatible with new devices and broaden our reach.

I was the project lead, and having paid my dues fixing smaller components of previous designs, this was my chance to own the end-to-end architecture of the system as a whole.

My partner was a brand new engineer. He had graduated from Carnegie Mellon just months before. I had taken him under my wing since I admired his intelligence and pluck as well as the fact that he had succeeded in an area where I had not.

I helped him ramp up, and we then started tackling the system design. We immediately had a different strategic view.

I wanted to fix as many bugs as possible and then add new features. Jake, on the other hand, did market research that showed that we could entice new customers and juice up revenue by adding new features. In his mind, the bugs were benign and, by now in the minds of our customers, had settled in as quirks, so there was no need to chase after them as our competitors lapped us.

During one scoping session, he made a remark that engineers like me are often too tied to the old system they built. I countered that people who have never built a system often underestimate the tradeoffs around maintenance and innovation.

We needed to improve the app, but what would be better was to see what the best mix was. What features could we add that could fix the maximum bugs, and what bugs could we fix that would bring new features along with them?

So, we went back and did our homework. Jake took the first task, while I took the second.

Our combined research led to a clearly defined MVP that improved the product stability as well as added key new capabilities.

Our new product design won rave reviews, and both Jake and I developed a new respect for each other.

#### **Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate thoroughly explained the situation, the problem and the relationship between the two players.
- The candidate called out the contrast between the two choices.
- The candidate used language to indicate that a key juncture in the conversation was coming, which allowed the interviewer to process the information.
- The candidate explained growing as an individual and as a leader—from being the idealistic engineer to someone responsible for progress, and from being a mentor to treating Jake as a stakeholder.

### **Answer framework**

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Set context.** Introduce the problem objectively despite the temptation to start with your own point of view. You want the interviewer to understand the issue and then work your way forward.

**Explain how it began and evolved.** Having set the stage, explain the disagreement and how it started and developed into a clear contrast.

**Describe how it ended.** It is vital to bring closure on the issue and explain your part in the resolution.

### **Tips**

- Explain the issue clearly before jumping into the details.
- Think of these answers as episodic: what was needed, what were the choices, why was there a disagreement, and how was it resolved. Having a clear structure helps the interviewer keep track.
- Explain what you learned from this episode and how it helped you and the team.

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## Tell me about a time when insights about the industry or customers impacted your technical execution.

### Overview

This question will help assess your ability to listen, solicit feedback and improvise based on new information.

### Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I worked for a company that built GPS systems for farmers. They used our systems to chart out their field maps and spray fertilizer on their fields from small planes. This allowed them to mix the fertilizer with other chemicals that would improve soil health and protect plants from insects.

During our periodic redesign, I was of the opinion that we could add more options to our menu. That way, our tools would be more differentiated and frankly, I'd look like a leader with fresh ideas.

One of our reps suggested bringing an engineer along on a sales trip in case the customers had any questions. I figured it would be a great chance to learn how our product gets used in real life, so I tagged along.

The trip to the Midwest was illuminating. I was able to interact with people outside of the typical West Coast tech crowd and product engineers.

During the customer interaction, I showed the farmers all the amazing features and the environmentally friendly LED.

They seemed unimpressed.

The farmers told us that it was unhelpful to have new features overcomplicate the display. Using so many buttons while flying a plane was very difficult since it took their eyes off the field and put them at risk.

I felt like all my hard work had gone to waste. And just then, from the back, someone said that it would be nice if these features were available without having to press a button.

They would prefer if we used voice-recognition.

And just like that, we figured out a way to make our product even more marketable. We could design two different SKUs: one with buttons and the other with voice commands. By giving customers different choices, we could capture a wider market.

This product improvement would not have been possible had I not listened to the customer and incorporated their feedback.

That insight has stayed with me to this day. Now that I'm more senior, I am striving harder to engineer products that are more accessible and inclusive.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It started with a humanizing touch, which showed sincerity.
- It explained the product in terms of customer needs.
- It showed empathy by recognizing that customers may have different perspectives that need to be considered.
- It closed with an eye towards inclusivity and using this experience as a lesson to show maturity and humanity.



## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Set context.** Introduce the status quo and your role in it. You'll need to set this context to explain why listening to customer feedback was so important.

**Describe the feedback.** The external feedback would have to be important enough to merit consideration, so you should explain that part clearly.

**Tell them how it ended.** How you handled the feedback, processed it and incorporated it into meaningful next steps is the meat of the answer. You should also discuss how you then acted on it.

## Tips

- Set context - explain the problem and what your initial approach was.
  - Come up with an example where you can demonstrate how the insights you got from the experience were different from what you had expected.
  - Call out clearly what you did that would not have been possible were it not for the feedback.
- 

## Tell me about a time you had to push back on an unreasonable request from an executive or customer.

### Overview

This question will help assess your ability to process feedback and hold your ground as needed.

### Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I was the tech lead at a digital tech firm and we would design interactive experiences for bigger companies.

One such project involved creating an activity dashboard for the users of a retail company by leveraging their Facebook data with permission. The dashboard would contain information such as their top friends or their most visible social posts. It was a great way to drive social engagement and make the brand hip in the eyes of the tech-savvy younger demo.

We learned how to use the Facebook APIs - and this was during the early days of Facebook when documentation was sparse. We figured out how to get the data from Facebook by understanding how their API rate-limiting worked and how the data schemas were set up.

After weeks of coding, testing and working with the design team, we had a prototype ready.

And then, the customer asked us to do the exact same thing with Twitter.

At the time, Twitter was too new and did not have diverse enough data to justify the effort. This would require significant changes to our backend data processing that we could not implement without delays and going over-budget. I was almost certain that all the API calls would slow down the experience and we'd lose the impatient younger clientele our customer was hoping to entice.

I felt that if we allied with the client's IT team, we may have success making the case for delaying this additional request for v2. This additional request probably came from someone who did not have the technical background, and if the client heard it from an insider, they may be more likely to come around.

Sure enough, when the client heard this assessment as a team effort from both engineering teams, they understood and accepted that the new request would need to come in as a phase 2 effort.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It set the stage by explaining the problem, the stakeholders and the context of the work - which otherwise would not be intuitive for the interviewers.
- It cleverly highlighted how the work was innovative.
- It told a story about pushing back, building alliances, and ultimately resolving the problem.

### Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Set context.** Introduce the situation, the status quo and what your role was in it.

**Get into specific detail.** It is critical to explain what the request was and why it was problematic. The danger for candidates is that they know these details so intimately that they may skip over them and fail to bring the interviewer along.

**Describe how it ended.** How you handled the feedback, processed it and incorporated it into meaningful next steps is the meat of the answer. You should also discuss how you then acted on it.

### Tips

- Set context; explain the problem and what your initial approach was.
  - Come up with an example where you can demonstrate a request that, while understandable, was not practical.
  - Make sure you can justify why pushing back was essential based on facts rather than gut feeling.
- 

## What do you think an ideal product-engineering relationship should look like?

### Overview

This question will help assess your ability to work with a key engineering partner.

### Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Product management and engineering are like pieces of a puzzle; incomplete without each other. But often it takes a bit of an effort to see how they best fit together.

Product management sets the parameters of the innovation: what we are building, why we are building it, who we are building it for, and how we would measure its success.

Engineering has to provide the “how”: the instrumentation, the personification of the design, the logistics around the building, and the iterations in which smaller chunks can validate the progress towards the whole.

Ideally, you want a relationship where product management is in close contact with the end-users and brings that perspective to the engineer—with enough technical judgment to understand what is doable.

Engineering should be technically sound enough to execute as well as provide product management choices and feedback based on technical tools available.

On an ongoing basis, the two arms of the team should work together to validate progress, rule things in or out and measure outcomes against goals and the larger product vision.

### Why this answer worked well:

- The candidate used an analogy to bring the ideas to life, demonstrating the ability to explain complex concepts in a simple manner.
- The candidate explained the optimum scenario where the two roles make each other successful.
- The candidate provided an operating template by calling out how the two roles can interact on an ongoing basis.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Set context.** Explain your understanding of the product management role.

**Offer strategic insight.** Set out a “big picture” explanation on how these roles ought to fill the canvas of innovation.

**Provide tactical suggestions.** This is where you explain how the two disciplines work together on a more tactical basis.

## Tips

- Call out clearly how various roles in tech differ.
  - In your career, venture out of your silo to understand how different teams operate.
  - Look for opportunities to shadow other teams so you can empathize with their work and be able to articulate it in an interview.
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# How would you drive alignment among senior leadership to help accelerate decisions?

## Overview

This question will help assess your ability to influence leaders so as to drive impact for the technical work you wish to do.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Software development has changed significantly in the last 10 years or so. We have had products grow incrementally in sprints so that companies can innovate continually, fail quickly, adapt rapidly and surprise customers constantly.

What this has meant is that engineering teams have become bottom-up and more siloed. While this has helped create amazing products, senior leadership has become more removed from the details, and then when it comes time to make decisions, things slow down for lack of shared context.

Here are some techniques I'd use to help accelerate decision-making:

- Ongoing demos on how the product is iterating and growing
- Metrics on product success like adoption numbers, cost of data storage, and new feature usage.
- Delivery timelines and changes based on tool choices.

I'd use biweekly lunch-and-learn sessions and one-pager memos to ensure that I am building a critical mass of shared knowledge so that come decision-time, we all have common context to reference.

As critical decisions come up, I will identify key players, their concerns and needs so as to craft an alignment strategy that speaks to those needs. Since our products keep evolving, so must our methodology to help drive decision-making.

### Why this answer worked well:

- It set the stage for how modern tech work has changed including its pluses and minuses for strategic decision-making.
- It provided examples of how decisions would be made and also why those approaches would help.
- It closed by making the point that the work to produce tech products has to evolve to help drive the products themselves.

### Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Set context.** Explain who your leadership would be and why it may be hard, yet crucial, to drive alignment.

**Provide examples.** Offer specific ways you would help the leaders see the world as you see it - such as showing facts, choices, timelines, and risks. This helps them better understand why you need certain resources as they make decisions.

**Show impact.** Use metrics and evidence to show the effectiveness of your arguments and strategy.

### Tips

- Make sure you operate cross-functionally rather than just in a silo so as to be seen as a leader.
  - Develop the muscle to explain your tech work to a diverse set of stakeholders. Otherwise you may get typecast and pigeonholed.
  - Develop ongoing communication strategies to explain why your work is critical and needs to be resourced.
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## How do you measure success in an engineering project?

### Overview

This question will help assess your ability to work towards outcomes and adhere to missions and goals.

### Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

Measuring success for tech products is complex - not because it is impossible, but because there are so many different approaches tailored to different scenarios and audiences. The key is to choose a mission, and let that mission drive the product's strategic and tactical success metrics.

Let's assume that we are talking about a product like LinkedIn groups.

LinkedIn's mission can be thought of as driving engagement between and among employers and workers to ensure as many matches as possible, which leads to a growing and dynamic economy and workplace.

To that end, the success of LinkedIn groups can be strategically measured in terms of:

- The number of groups and their growth rate
- Quality of engagement, which are things like how long people stay in groups and how often they return.

More tactically, I'd look at things such as:

- The number of members per group and their growth rate
- The number of posts on things like jobs, shares, and invites

And finally, I'd also look for things like if people who get jobs through the Groups feature are coming back to post jobs, and if they are referring their friends to those groups.

The purpose of these groups is to grow engagement and employment and then have that growth flow back to the groups themselves.

As I build technical features, I would look to see how my architectures and features drive such numbers and innovate accordingly.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate sets the stage for why measuring success can be challenging, and then makes the case that success is driven by the mission and data.
- The differentiation between strategic and tactical metrics was a good touch as were the examples.
- It smartly tied in future engineering decisions to specific growth metrics, showing a customer orientation that is critical.

## Answer framework

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Pick a product and tie it to a mission.** Just as you need to design a system before coding it, you will want to identify your goals before defining success.

**Define success.** Explain what a good outcome looks like and how it may vary on a case-by-case basis.

**Demonstrate metrics and/or evidence.** Show how you will validate and evolve your success measurements with time.

## Tips

- Make sure you build products to achieve a goal rather than just as a technical exercise.
- Measure on an ongoing basis because routine measurements and continual improvements are key to innovation.
- Demonstrate how you would make different technical decisions when data dictates it. This proves that these measurements make a difference.

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# What is the mix of technical and management qualities you look for in engineering leaders and managers?

## Overview

This question will help assess your ability to work with different types of leaders who have some degree of authority over you.

## Candidate answer and feedback

By Software Engineer Professional

I think of a manager as a multi-dimensional leader. A manager would be part coach part mentor.

As a mentor, a manager would help guide me and build my skills. As a coach, their responsibility would be to extract the best out of me while also holding me accountable. So, I'd expect a combination of both incarnations.

This relationship would vary depending on the company, the work culture, how thinly spread the manager is, the stage of the project, and the uniqueness of a specific situation.. This is where honest and transparent communication, which is the foundation of a trust-based relationship, comes into the picture.

To that end, it is my own responsibility to ask for help early, set clear expectations, communicate crisply and make sure I keep my manager in the loop at all times. This is critical since I may have more brass-tacks awareness than my manager, but my manager may be more organizationally connected than I could be.

That way, the relationship is mutually beneficial.

**Why this answer worked well:**

- The candidate used a relatable analogy to explain the manager's role.
- The candidate emphasized the need for communication so as to avoid characterizing the relationship as a one-way dependency.
- The candidate smartly explained how someone and their manager could use each other as force multipliers.

## **Answer framework**

Here are some tips on answering this question:

**Describe how you see the role.** Different engineers have a variety of expectations from their managers. There is no one-size-fits-all answer here, so provide some context based on your experience.

**Define how the relationship may vary.** Managers may need to offer different kinds of support depending on the circumstances, so calling that out is helpful as well.

**Explain your own responsibility.** Authority is not a one-way street. You should also explain how you can empower managers to support you and the team's mission.

## **Tips**

- For questions such as these, think about all your managers and their strengths and weaknesses as you define an ideal relationship.
  - Do NOT use this question to gripe about bad managers. Think about vision, goals and the sort of relationship with your manager that helps you achieve those.
  - Show empathy but also express clear preferences. Your interviewer is looking at you through the prism of how you judge others.
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