

Title:

Acing The Interview: The Positive Approach To Tough Questions

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Summary:

The most commonly-asked interview questions can make or break a job interview in an instant. It is important that job candidates practice these responses until they are able to handle all the questions, along with suggested approaches for answers, effectively.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

As a Career Consultant, I work with clients on all the tools and techniques that are needed to succeed in the job search - including interviewing skills. One thing I have noticed over the years is that candidates often get "trapped" in certain interview questions that are designed to make them say something negative or self-defeating (which generally leads to rejection). Indeed, job-seekers are not even aware of how negative many of their answers sound at interviews! So, I instruct all my clients to "never say anything negative, or anything that could possibly be construed as negative!" Candidates can avoid being disqualified by stating all their answers in positive (or, at least, neutral) terms.

The following are some of the most commonly-asked interview questions, along with suggested approaches for answers. It is important that job candidates practice these responses until they are able to handle all the questions effectively.

Why do you want to work here? How can you help our company? Why should we be interested in you?

Answer is always based on information you've researched in advance about the company and their needs.

If you were choosing someone for this job, what kind of person would you select?

Answer is to generally state your own general qualifications, without being too "obvious." Leave out the details.

If you could have any job which one would you want at this company?

Answer has to do with the most general description of the job - NOT A SPECIFIC TITLE.

What weaknesses do you have for this job?

TRAP QUESTION. Never state anything negative! Answer is to ponder for a while and then state that you can't think of any weaknesses that would compromise your performance at this job; or negatively impact your performance of the job's responsibilities.

What do you expect to get in this job that you haven't gotten in you current/previous job?

TRAP QUESTION. Do not say anything negative. State that your current/previous jobs have met or exceeded your expectations. With the new position you would hope to have broader responsibilities and make greater contributions.

What do you see as your future here?

I would expect to be contributing at higher levels and have increased responsibility over time.

Are you considering other positions at this time?

TRAP QUESTION. Simply say "yes."

How does this opportunity compare?

From what I've heard so far, very favorably ... and I would like to learn more.

What other companies/opportunities are you looking at now?

As I'm sure you can appreciate, I'm not at liberty to say as I am still in discussions with these companies. I need to protect their privacy, as I would for your company under similar circumstances.

What are your short and long term goals?

Short range: To secure an appropriate new position where I can apply my skills and experience to increase the company's productivity and profitability.

Long range: Assume more responsibility and make greater contributions over time for my employer.

What motivates you?

Focus the answer on your core values, and also on the values and priorities of the company you are interviewing with (which you should have identified through your preliminary research).

What have you done to improve yourself during the last year?

Talk about professional development, training programs, educational curricula,

study in your field, on-the-job training, skill-building, relevant books you've read, etc.

How do you spend your spare time?

Say something inoffensive, apolitical and innocuous. (reading, exercise, travel, home projects, gardening, family activities, home projects, etc.)

Tell me about your health.

My health is excellent.

If you could re-live your last 15 years, what changes would you make?

Nothing is perfect, but overall I would say that I'm quite satisfied with the way my life and career have developed - so I wouldn't make any significant changes.

Tell me about your greatest achievement/disappointment in your life.

Give one personal example (like meeting your spouse and getting married; putting yourself through college and graduate school; or saving-up to buy your first house, etc.). Then give your best professional accomplishment story. As for the disappointment, give an answer similar to the one above, implying that "overall, I would say that I'm quite satisfied with the way my life and career have been developing, so I really can't think of any major disappointments."

What did you like best/least about your last job?

TRAP QUESTION. Never state anything negative! Explain what you liked best. Then say that while every job has its challenges, you have been fortunate enough to learn and grow professionally in each of the positions you have held.

In your last position, how much of the work did you do on your own, and how much as part of a team? Which did you enjoy more?

Talk in terms of your flexibility and adaptability - your ability to work in whatever mode seems appropriate to the situation. Make it clear that you have been equally effective in teams or working independently, as each case demanded. You enjoy both; it's more about what will work best for the project and the company at that time.

What are some of the more difficult problems you have encountered in your past jobs? How did you solve them?

Tell two or more pre-prepared accomplishment stories. Keep it POSITIVE!

Did you ever make suggestions to senior management? What happened?

Say "yes." Tell some accomplishment stories and results, in which you positively influenced senior management.

At your previous job(s), what did you think management could have done to make you function more effectively as an employee?

TRAP QUESTION. Never state anything negative! Say that the employer was very good in providing resources and support to your position, and that you have no complaints about this.

What has kept you from progressing faster and farther in your career?

TRAP QUESTION. Never state anything negative! State: "I don't know what could have given you the impression that I am dissatisfied with the progress and pace of my career. I am quite satisfied with where my career is at this point in my life. However, I am ready to take on greater challenges."

What else should we know about you?

Tell one or two more of your best accomplishment stories. You can also repeat how well-suited you think you are for the opportunity, and how interested you are in the job.

Tell me about the best/worst boss you've ever had.

TRAP QUESTION: Never state anything negative! Say that while every boss has been different, you have worked productively with, and learned something from, each one. (Be prepared to give some examples of what you have learned.)

Everybody likes to criticize. What do people criticize about you?

TRAP QUESTION. Never state anything negative! Say that you can't think of any criticisms you have received from colleagues on the job. Of course, there have been areas for development - such as when your supervisors would have given you your "employee review," and they might have made a suggestion for improvement. State that you have always taken these kinds of suggestions seriously and have taken steps to make the improvements that were requested, and that this has made you stronger as a professional. (State at least one example).

Everyone has pet peeves. What are yours?

TRAP QUESTION. Never state anything negative! Turn this question around, by talking about your high professional standards. Your only "pet peeves" are with yourself - pushing yourself hard and not accepting mediocrity, for example - or how you are always striving to reach your full potential on the job, etc.

What is your leadership style?

Talk in terms of your flexibility and adaptability - your ability to lead in whatever mode seems appropriate to the situation. Explain that it's more about what approach will work best for the project and the company at that time. Give an example or two, demonstrating different leadership styles, using your

accomplishment stories.

Are you geographically mobile? (or) Are you willing to put in a lot of extra time?

Ask for clarification - what exactly does the interviewer mean? Then, according to their answer, either say, "that would be no problem at all," or tell them "you'd like to give it some thought and get back to them within 24 hours."

You don't have the experience/background for this position. How could you handle it?

Say you're confused by their comment, that you're quite confident that you DO have the experience and background for this position, and that you're a very strong match for the responsibilities. Ask what specifically concerns them about your background; what's missing in your experience? (Sometimes the interviewer is just testing you.) Re-state your qualifications as needed, tying your accomplishment stories to the employer's requirements.

You're overqualified for this position, aren't you? (even if you are slightly overqualified)

State: No - I see a lot of challenges in this opportunity, and I'm sure that I would find the work extremely interesting. Give some examples of what you mean, and talk about the new dimensions of experience and skill that you would bring to the position, almost as though you would expand the level of contribution in this job, thus making it more than it is at present.

We have all the information we need. We'll be in touch.

Take the initiative. Ask such questions as: "Where do I stand? Am I being considered as a strong candidate? When should I expect to hear from you, or would you prefer that I contact you in a day or two? What is your time-frame for making a final decision? Is there anything else I can provide to facilitate the process?" etc. Then re-state your strong interest in the position and your confidence that your background is an ideal match to the job.

In conclusion, I strongly recommend that you prepare for your interviews by studying and practicing these answers. Get someone to help you, by doing a "role play," in which your friend can be the interviewer and you can play the part of the job candidate. You will reduce your anxiety, boost your confidence and perform much better if you "know your lines" in advance! And remember - never say anything negative in a job interview!

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