

DEBORAH THOMAS OFFERS SOME INSIGHT INTO THE QUESTIONS ASKED IN INTERVIEWS AND EXAMINES SOME OF THE BEST TECHNIQUES CANDIDATES CAN USE TO ANSWER THEM.

Questions and answers

When being interviewed there are questions you will be asked that you should be prepared for before you sit down face-to-face with a potential employer.

Although an interview is about your capability to do a job, at a more senior level the interviewer will also want to gauge how you will fit in with the company, the way it operates and the relationships you will build with its FD/CFO.

Being asked to give examples is an extremely useful way for clients and candidates to get a real understanding of ability and thought processes in decision making and interaction.

When answering these questions keep your answers relevant, brief and to the point. If you are faced with a difficult question stay calm, do not get defensive and take time to think about your answer.

The responses to the questions below are only suggestions. Try to personalise your response as much as possible.

Q. What have your achievements/disappointments been to date?

A. Select the most recent, work-related achievements and identify the skills you used and how they benefited the company. For example: "I carried out a major refinancing exercise in difficult market conditions which allowed the company to reduce its cost of

capital." Do not dwell on any disappointments, instead explain how you learned from them.

Q. What do you think of your career to date?

A. This question is about self-esteem, confidence and career aspirations. Also, a lack of career progression is often one of the main reasons why people are looking to make a career change. If your career has hit a plateau, you must explain why.

Q. What is the most difficult situation you have faced and how did you tackle it?

A. The interviewer will want your definition of a difficult situation and your approach to problem solving. Explain how you defined a problem and what options you used to solve the problem. Always end on a positive note because your approach to this situation can really influence outcomes.

Q. What are your strengths?

A. Concentrate on your main strengths. List several proficiencies, for example, your ability to learn quickly, your determination, or your ability to relate to people, and be prepared to give examples of these.

Q. What is your greatest weakness?

A. You have two options – use a professed weakness such as a lack of experience in an area that is not vital for the job. The second is to describe a personal or professional weakness that could also be considered a strength – or one that you are aware of and the steps you have taken to combat it. An example would be: "At times my team say I am too demanding and I tend to drive them pretty hard but I am getting better at using the carrot and not the stick."

Q. Why are you leaving your current job?

A. State how you are looking for a new challenge, more responsibility, experience and a change of environment. Do not cite any negative reasons for leaving and do not cite salary as your primary motivator.

Q. Why have you applied for this job?

A. The employer is looking for evidence that the

Other questions that you may be asked

- Can you provide examples of working under pressure?
- What kinds of people do you enjoy working with?
- Has your work ever been criticised?
- When have you felt anger at work and how did you cope?
- What kinds of people do you find difficult to work with?
- Have you had to face a conflict of interest at work?
- Tell me about the last time you disagreed with your boss.
- Give me an example of when you haven't got on with others.
- Do you prefer to work alone or in a group? Why?
- How do you measure your performance?
- What kind of pressures have you encountered at work?
- What changes in the workplace have caused you difficulty and why?
- What have you failed to achieve to date?
- What can you bring to this organisation?

job suits you, fits in with your general aptitudes, coincides with your long-term goals and involves doing things you enjoy. Make sure that you have a good understanding of the role, the organisation and describe the attributes of the company that you find most interesting. An employer will always be on the lookout for well-prepared individuals who have really thought through why the role and company make the right career move for them.

YOUR QUESTIONS. The interview is also your chance to find out as much about the company, the role and people you work with and should assist you in deciding whether this is the right job for you – do not waste the opportunity.

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