

How to Prepare for & Answer TOUGH Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself.

Be thorough, but brief. Talk for no more than two minutes. Be logical. Be positive. Discuss your education and professional achievements and goals. Then briefly describe your qualifications for the job.

Why did you leave your previous position?

This is a critical question. Do not bad mouth previous employers, or sound too opportunistic. It is good to state that after long personal consideration you wanted to expand your knowledge/background. You felt that your chance to make a contribution was very low due to company restructuring.

What do you consider to be your most significant accomplishment?

This can get you the job. Prepare extensively. Tell a brief story, and include details and your professional involvement. Describe a situation that presented a problem, detail what actions you took to resolve it and discuss its results. This should be an accomplishment that was truly worth achieving. Some aspects that you could discuss include: hard work, deadlines, over coming obstacles, important company issues, and relations with coworkers.

Why do you believe you are qualified for this position? Or Why should I hire you?

Pick two or three main factors about the job that are most relevant. Discuss for two minutes, with specific detail. Select a technical skill, a specific management skill (organizing, staffing, planning), and a personal story.

How do you handle pressure? Do you like or dislike these situations?

High achievers tend to perform well in high pressure situations. Conversely, this question could imply that the position is pressure-packed. If you perform well under stress, provide a good example with details, giving an overview of the stressful situation. Try to relay the situation as a challenge rather than focusing on your ability to handle pressure. This will show the interviewer that you can turn a negative situation into a positive one.

Good Employees can take the initiative and get the job done. Can you describe yourself in terms of this statement?

A proactive, result-oriented person does not need constant supervision. Show the interviewer that you can take initiative; describe a situation in which you were self-motivated, and went over and beyond to complete a task without supervision. Discuss at least one example in depth of how you demonstrate a strong work ethic and creativity.

What is the worst or most embarrassing aspect about your career? How would you have done things differently?

This is a question to find out if you are introspective and if you learn from your mistakes. The right answer indicates an open, flexible personality. Do not be afraid to talk about negative results or problem issues, particularly if you have learned from them. Dynamic, high-performance individuals learn from mistakes. End your story on a positive note.

Deadlines, frustration, difficult people, and silly rules can make a job difficult. How do you handle these in the work environment?

If you can't deal with petty frustration, you can be viewed as a problem. You can certainly state your displeasure at the petty side of these issues, but how you overcame them is more important. Diplomacy, perseverance, and common sense can often prevail, even in difficult circumstances. This is an aspect of Corporate America and you must be able to deal with it on a regular basis.

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