

Strong Answers to Top 10 Interview Questions:

The sooner a candidate can work their way into a regular conversation versus a question and answer period, the more likely they are to land the job.

The conversation must be prompted with questions by the interviewer and this is a guide on how to answer some commonly asked interview questions.

1. Tell me about yourself.

What the hiring manager really wants is a quick, two- to three-minute snapshot of who you are and how your experience has led you to this point of pursuing this opportunity.

As you answer this question, talk about what you've done to prepare yourself to be the very best candidate for the position. Quickly run through your education and experience (quickly is key)

2. What is your greatest strength?

Try one of these:

- a. **Appetite for Learning:** Know-hows improve with exposure to diverse situations. I have an eagerness for new challenges which is essential. Leaders who seek out new experiences and learn from them will build their know-hows faster than those who don't.
- b. **Ambition:** A desire to achieve something visible and noteworthy propels individual leaders and their companies to strive to reach their potential. Leaders need a healthy dose of it to push themselves and others.
- c. **Confidence:** You have to be able to listen to your own inner voice and endure the lonely moments when an important decision falls on your shoulders. You have to be able to speak your mind and act decisively, knowing that you can withstand the consequences. It's not a matter of acting tough. It's having a tough inner core to do what is needed, when it's needed.

3. Do you work better alone or on a team?

Say you excel in either situation. You can produce well without any help or supervision but you also achieve well in a collaborative setting. You need to provide behavioral examples to back up your answer. Emphasize teamwork behavioral examples and focus on your openness to diversity of backgrounds. Talk about the strength of the team above the individual. And note that this question may be used as a lead in to questions around how you handle conflict within a team, so be prepared.

4. What is your long-range objective?

The key is to focus on your achievable objectives and what you are doing to reach those objectives.

For example: Within five years, I would like to become the very best accountant your company has on staff. I want to work toward becoming the expert that others rely upon. And

in doing so, I believe I'll be fully prepared to take on greater responsibilities which might be presented in the long term. For example, here is what I'm presently doing to prepare myself.... Online courses, market research, networking, following current events and industry trends.

Then go on to show by your examples what you are doing to reach your goals and objectives.

5. How has your experience prepared you for this position?

This is a broad question and you need to focus on the behavioral examples in your background which specifically match to the duties of the job you are interviewing for. For example, if you know the main duty of the job is to make phone calls all day, then talk about how you made phone calls all day in your previous job and then explain how you got really good at it.

Quick example: Well, my experience has provided a solid foundation of the fundamentals, but also the practical application of that knowledge in various situations I have been through. For example, I lead a project where my team had to gather and analyze industry data. The important part wasn't gathering the data, it was analyzing it correctly. I carry that experience with me today and bring it with me into this position.

When you finish, feel free to ask if they would like more information or another supporting example.

6. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How was it resolved?

Yes, we all have. The key is not to start blabbing about uncontrollably and certainly not to badmouth anyone. The interviewer wants to see how you react and hear you explain a simple situation in a relaxed, and straightforward manner: The key is how you behaviorally reacted to conflict and what you did to resolve it.

For example: Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I've found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other persons perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, then I seek to work out a collaborative solution. For example, one time I chose to present information on a report in a certain order but my colleague disagreed with the order I had chosen. To solve the problem we both shared our points of view and we both had some good reasons. Ultimately, I was responsible for the way the report appeared so I did incorporate 1 or 2 of their suggestions before I submitted it. In the end, my boss thought it was so well put together that she decided every report should be made that way so my colleague got a little piece of the credit too and that settled things pretty well.

Focus your answer on the behavioral process for resolving the conflict and working collaboratively.

7. What is your greatest weakness?

Most career books tell you to select a strength and present it as a weakness. Such as: I work too much. I just work and work and work. Wrong! First of all, using strength and presenting it as a weakness is deceiving. Second, it misses the point of the question.

You need to select a true weakness that you have been actively working to overcome. For example: I have had trouble in the past with planning and prioritization. However, I've taken

great steps to correct this and today Outlook calendar is such a useful reminder tool for me. I also write things down on a little notepad, prioritize the list, then cross things off as they are completed.

Then, you can even show them your planner and how you are using it. Talk about a true weakness and show what you have done / are doing to overcome it.

8. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?

Focus on two words: leadership and vision.

Here is a sample of how to respond: The key quality in a successful manager should be leadership--the ability to be the visionary for the people who are working under them.

The person who can set the course and direction for subordinates. They need to have a big picture perspective on things and create small, achievable tasks for their reports to complete.

Most importantly though, a successful manager needs to be motivating. This comes directly with a positive, can-do attitude. The highest calling of a true leader is inspiring others to reach the highest of their abilities. A leader should try to connect with each report on an individual basis. Those are my thoughts on that.

Then, perhaps share an example of someone who has touched your life and how their impact has helped in your personal development.

9. Why should I hire you?

Say because you are the best person for the job then describe your top qualities and experience that makes you the best person for the job. Don't be afraid to say so. Back it up with what specifically differentiates you.

For example: You should hire me because I'm the best person for the job. I realize that there are likely other candidates who also have the ability to do this job. Yet I bring an additional quality that makes me the best person for the job-- my passion for excellence. I am committed to producing my best quality work at all times which is a strong leadership quality that inspires those around me to do the same. Secondly, when others see how committed I am to performing at my best, it rubs off on them which is good for the company. For example...

Are you the best person for the job? Show it by your passionate examples.

10. Why do you want this position with our company?

This question is similar to why should I hire you but it requires a bit more of an insightful answer. The hiring manager wants to know what your motivation is and what you know about the company itself. This is where you express personal motivations like, "I see this as a good next step in my career and professional development" and "this is a perfect match for background and I believe this challenging position will take my skills to the next level". The hiring manager also wants to hear a company related answer like "I have a good impression of the company culture, the professionalism, and how you value your employees and treat them as the most important asset of the company" or "the company is well established and I like to stable business relationships it has with its counterparts. I want to be a contributive asset and I know I will make a strong impact in this particular role."