

# Job Interview Success



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## SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Some surveys have shown that there are more than 90 questions that could be asked during a job interview. These in particular are asked most frequently during an extended interview (more than 20 minutes) for a regular work-a-day job.

Always remember that in a job interview, it is not just what you say, but how you say it that really counts. Your choice of words is powerful, and can move job interviewers to a more positive impression by how you say what you say.

Here, in no particular order, are the answers to the most frequently asked questions during a job interview:

### 1) Which position are you most interested in?

When you are responding to an advertisement, the company will likely know the position for which you have applied. Many times companies key their advertisements so, when they are advertising for more than one position, they can identify the position for which you have applied. Most public service organizations will have a specific job number with the job announcement. However, no matter what position for which you may have applied, many companies have more than one position to offer, and the interviewer is probably going to consider you for any position available based on your submitted resume and interview performance. Key to answering this question is to realize that different companies and organizations may call essentially the same positions by different job titles; therefore, it is best if you answer the kind of function you are interested in performing rather than a specific job title. Hence, say "I am interested in accounting," or "I am good at accounting," rather than "I am interested in the Junior Accountant position."

### 2) Are you looking for full-time or part-time work?

When you are dealing with a large business or public service corporation, chances are the position is full-time, and you should be prepared to accept full-time employment. However, when you are trying to get your foot in the door, it is well to remember that many companies hire full-time employees from their part-time and temporary help. This makes sense from a business standpoint in that they are then hiring a person they have had an opportunity to observe on the job. When you are considering a public service position (working for the federal, state or local governmental entities, for example), it generally makes sense to accept any position as long as two factors are present: 1) That it is a full-time permanent position, and 2) You are entitled to all the normal benefits.

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Most public service positions offer opportunities for advancement within the organization, and some even allow you to apply, take tests and interview for positions during your normal working hours. You can, in some cases, look for a better job and get paid for looking during your normal working hours. This is indeed a good deal for the employee; most private businesses would not tolerate this action and, quite frankly, some would find a "legitimate reason" to fire you if they thought you were looking.

### 3) Are you willing to travel or relocate (go where the company sends you)?

Decide which is more important to you: where you live, or whether you want the position, and answer accordingly. You may be willing to travel (this could be anything from commuting to another city to work to being out of town two weeks every month), but not willing to relocate. When you are married and earn a secondary income for your family, relocating is not always practical.

### 4) How much money do you want to earn?

Rather than trying to figure out what they are willing to pay, or revealing what you are willing to settle for (both very risky at best), say this: "What is your salary range for this position?" This tells them nothing, puts the ball back in their court, and you remain a class act. Another possible answer: "While the salary I would receive is certainly a consideration, I am far more interested in a position that uses performance to determine promotion and compensation. I am interested in being rewarded for my production for the company, thereby proving my value to the company." Do ask about benefits if the interviewer does not detail the company benefit package, as the benefit package can add substantially to your salary base. In some cases the benefit package can add 30% to your salary.

### 5) When can you start work?

The answer is immediately when you are not working, or two weeks-or whatever the notice of termination time is-when you are working. When you are employed and can begin work immediately, your potential employer might wonder if you would quit on them without notice.

### 6) How long do you expect to work?

Use "As long as it is mutually beneficial for both of us." When you are the spouse of a career military person, the interviewer may want to know how long you will be around (that is, your spouse's rotation date). That is why it is best to use the suggested answer. After all, you can not predict everything that might happen. Many military families have found this out when a war or military action started.

### 7) Do you have references?

It is not a good idea to give references at the resume stage. References are far more appropriate at the interview stage, and even then, do not give references unless they ask for them. When and if they ask, always have them available at the interview. The reason you do not want to be giving references at the resume stage is that, if they can read your resume and check your references and-on that basis-make a decision not to interview or hire you, you have done yourself a real disservice. You want to get in front of people (secure interviews). Give them the resume, but not the references unless they ask for them.

Most prospects give names, addresses and phone numbers for references when asked. It is better not to do this. It inconveniences the interviewer in that they have to call to get the reference. And while you think you know what someone may say about you, the fact is, you do not. The references being called may not be available, or may be on vacation. They may have left the firm, been fired or laid off since you last checked their availability. Therefore, it is best to use written references only. Have the person put the written reference about you on the company's or organization's letterhead so it looks official, and have them sign it. If the person giving the reference will not put it on company letterhead because it is against company policy, then have them use a plain sheet of paper .

They can still use their name, company position, and company name at the bottom of the letter . Usually, written references are taken at face value. Often, with a written reference, a call is made only to verify employment. Many candidates think that written references have to come from the big boss, or their immediate supervisor. You have other options if your boss or supervisor will not do it for you, or if you would not want them to do it for you.

When you have little work experience and have volunteered at your church, have your priest or pastor write a reference attesting to your character , ambition, dependability and productivity. When you have worked with key employees, supervisors or managers of other companies, ask them to write you a reference attesting to your professionalism and ability to work with people. When you have worked closely with vendors, suppliers, or their sales representatives, ask them to write you a letter of reference. You could even have another person holding the same position at another company, who you have worked with, write you a reference.

Ask a lot of people to write references because many of them will agree to do it and be happy to do it, but, unfortunately, you are not on the top of their priority list. You can be forgotten despite their good intentions to help you. Ask a lot of people and realize that for every 10 people you ask who are willing to do it and happy to do it, you will be doing very well to get 1 or 2 to actually do it. And, when all else fails, remember that any written job evaluations you have can also be used as references until you can secure written references.

You do not need a lot of references. Two or three are adequate, and they can be personal (about you) as well as professional (about the job you do).

### 8) Do you have any questions?

It is very important that you have questions at the interview. Any question you ask shows an indicated interest, or genuine concern on your part. When any of the basic questions about the job have not been covered in the interview, this is a good time to ask about salary, benefits, what is expected, how you will be evaluated, and the opportunities for advancement.

Other good questions include: "Is your company or organization growing?" (Growing organizations create jobs and promotions.) "What happened to the last person who held the position?" (Maybe they were not fired or incompetent. Maybe the company offered no advancement or salary increases, encouraged lousy working conditions, or refused to get rid of an incompetent boss.) "How committed are you to research and development?" (Companies that invest in their future plan to be successful, profitable, and on the cutting edge of what is happening in their industry.) "How fast can people who perform be promoted?" (You want to know that, when you produce, you will be compensated for your effort rather than draw the same salary as another employee who produces far less by comparison.)

"Is this company family owned and operated?" (When it is, you can forget getting anywhere very fast; all of the relatives will get the positions, and this will happen in many cases whether the relatives are competent or not.) "Is there any possibility of an equity interest in the future?" (Buying in, even on a little scale, can be lucrative. More than one employee has become a millionaire by taking advantage of stock options. Look at the fortunes people made when they hooked up with Microsoft, when the software giant grew so rapidly.)

### 9) What would you do if . . . ?

This question about imagined situations is usually posed to evaluate your reaction and judgment about decision-making matters involving the position. The answer here is to remember that the quality of your solution is not nearly as important as your attitude and approach toward the solution. Your first answer should be that the situation is probably not new, and your first move would be consult your superior who has more knowledge and experience in dealing with the problem, or you would ask others who have likely encountered the situation how they resolved the problem.

Then, be sure to qualify your answer, whatever it may be. Say "I might consider . . .," rather than "I would . . ." Always strive to be calm and rational in your approach, and certainly be open to receiving more information upon which to base a decision, or take an action. Remember, too, that some problems will resolve themselves if you do not rush to judgment too quickly. Sometimes responding quickly actually adds to the problem or challenge. Even consultants often suggest the right answer to the wrong problem. Consultants can be quick to tell you the answer to your problem when they have not even identified the actual problem, but thought they did. The bottom line here is to know that the more information you have, and the better it is, the more likely you are to make an intelligent decision.

# Conclusion

What do employers really want when hiring? The answer may surprise you. Most potential employees are told that employers are looking for someone with a degree and hands-on skills. While this is true in many cases, you should know that employers are also looking for someone who can do the job. This is why they are not necessarily looking for someone with only education, experience and knowledge, as important as these three attributes may be. Some employers will not hold it against you if you do not have education, experience, knowledge or obvious ability going for you.

For some prospects, the ego is so well developed that an employer cannot teach them anything because they already know everything. The ego, in this case, becomes a barrier to learning. It is really helpful to be an open, willing spirit without all the answers; and this applies whether you have education, experience, knowledge and ability, or you do not. While employers may not hold it against you if you do not have education, experience and knowledge, they will hold it very much against you if you have a poor personality and cannot get along (work) with people. Remember that attitude drives personality. A person with a good attitude generally has a good personality. A person with a bad attitude generally has a bad personality.

Some clients feel people skills are an option. They are not an option; they are mandatory if you expect to get ahead in this world. When you greet customers or fellow employees, the last thing a business or organization can afford is for you to cost them customers, or the support of other employees because you are a negative person who cannot get along or work with other people. Believe it or not, the two most important qualities you have going for you are 1) Your personality, which is driven by your attitude, and 2) Your ability to deal with people effectively.

Therefore, it makes all kinds of sense to sell yourself first in an interview before you sell your education, experience, knowledge or special abilities. It is vital in an interview to establish a high likeability factor, without it, you may not get an offer, no matter what qualifications you are bringing to the position. If you do no more than learn how to smile, be enthusiastic, and act interested in people, it may well take you farther than the knowledge gained by an expensive college education combined with a bad attitude.

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