

**101 Perfect Answers for
The Most Difficult Job Interview Questions**

The Ultimate Guide to Job Interview Answers

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- ✓ **Feel More Confident and Prepared by Using This Easy 4 Step Formula**
- ✓ **Impress the Interview Panel by Focusing on 3 Definitive Topics**
- ✓ **Discover 3 Amazingly Simple Techniques to Shatter Nervousness**

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The Ultimate Guide to Job Interview Answers

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First published 2012 Written by Bonnie Power

Version v1.01

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Read this First

Dear Friend,

Re: How to Use the Job Interview Answers

Use these Answers to help you mould your own responses.

Read through the questions, and the model answers and get a feeling for the way the answers are structured. Pay attention to the language used to make the candidate appear like the ideal person for the job.

Think about your own experiences in your work. Think about how your employer has benefited from having you serve their customers, improve their processes, make them more profitable and achieve their organisational goals.

Please don't try to memorise any sentences for the job interview, as this will be obvious to the recruiter, and is their number 1 frustration when interviewing candidates.

The questions have been compiled in a random fashion as this is often how you receive them in an interview situation.

So sit back with a notepad and pen, and get ready to find the key distinctions that will help you get shortlisted for your dream job.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate you for taking the extra effort in preparing for a job interview.

You've already demonstrated initiative and self – motivation by going the extra mile in your efforts to secure your ideal job. For this, you deserve to win a job that is going to give you new challenges and open the doors for many more opportunities in the future.

Kind regards

Bonnie Power

PS, So close the door to your home office, grab a notepad and pen, turn your phone off for 40 minutes or so, and immerse yourself in this gold standard resource that will soon be responsible for giving you the edge over 99.9% of all other candidates.





Fact - Most interview questions are designed to help the employer figure out

- a. if you can do the job
- b. why you want the job
- c. if you will fit into the organization

Fact – Most candidates will simply declare that they have the requested skills, knowledge and experience, without thinking they have to prove it.

Fact – Most interviewers are suspicious of the claims that candidates give and ask piercing questions to gain a deeper insight into the extent and scope of skills, knowledge and experience.

Fact – The interview places a strong weighting on the candidate’s ‘people skills’ and the ability to build rapport in a very short period.

Firstly, Congratulations for Getting to the Interview Stage



When you get invited to interview, it means that your resume and job application have done their job.

Your application was considered to be in the top 10% of the thousands of applications sent through, so put your left hand behind your right shoulder and give yourself a pat on the back!



The purpose of this guide is to help you get into the top 1% of candidates.

Interviewing is not simply answering questions that you’ve memorised standard answers to. It is about answering questions that show you to be the ideal candidate for the job. The words you use will account for 7% - 27% of your total interview performance. The rest is assessed on other attributes that we’ll discuss later.

If you find yourself answering with a blunt ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or ever use one worded answer, then you need to realise that you are missing out on an opportunity to sell yourself.



The way you answer a question is one of the keys to a successful interview. An interview is about selling yourself, but the interview process can be flawed with problems that stop the right candidate from getting the job:

Problem # 1 – Some interview questions are vague and could be answered by highlighting a couple of different points.

Problem # 2 – As candidates, we are never really sure what the interviewer is really wanting to hear when they ask questions.

Problem # 3 – The interviewer needs to find someone to fit into their existing team, and we, as candidates, have no idea what the culture of this team is.

Problem # 4 – The interview is only a short period of time that gives you, the candidate, an opportunity to present yourself as the very best person for the job – meanwhile you are battling your own nerves about been put under such scrutiny.

Of course if you get asked a question and you just stare at them with a confused look, this will harm your application. So in addition to preparing model answers to 101 of the most typical and difficult interview questions, I have also given 3 other solutions you can use to blitz the job interview.





Bonus Solutions

Solution # 1 - Find out the Climate of the Current Industry

By discovering the current market situation that both the Company and the Industry is experiencing, you will have a strong foundation of knowledge to build rapport in the first few minutes. You'll be able to use your industry knowledge through the answers you provide.

You've heard it before and the fact is, knowledge is power. The more you know about what the company is facing (or is likely to face in the near future), the more you can link how your skills, knowledge and experience can help the company survive and prosper through the challenges that the current economic situation.



If the company is very large, you can use their PR department or website to find out the particular problems they are facing. The easiest thing to do is, of course, a google search:

Insert the "company name" and then words that will bring up the negative news items and problems such as?

"news"

"customer complaints"

"quality issues"

"poor service",

"disgruntled staff"

"bad reputation"

"financial trouble"

"consumer affairs"



Solution # 2 - Make a call to the Interviewer 3 days before the interview

You can start building rapport before the interview even starts, this is a great idea that no-one else will probably have the courage or inclination to do.



Ask for just a couple of moments of their time, as you have some brief questions you would like to know in order to prepare for the interview:



1. ***How would you describe the person who will be managing me, if I am successful in this role?***

2. ***What is the team culture like, could you describe the personality of some of the key members of the team?***

3. ***Is this a new position, or am I taking over someone else's role? If so, what does the current person do really well and that you would want the next person to do just as well?***

4. ***And on the flip side, what skills or attributes have been perhaps missing? What might you be specifically looking for as a priority, so the person who is successful in this role achieves a higher level of outcomes or success?***

Solution # 3 - Establish a Confident Mindset that you really are the best person for this job.

If you've ever felt in a subservient position in a job interview, you would not be the first, and certainly not the last. Going into the company's impressive offices, sitting in their chair, in their interview room – you could easily feel like you are almost begging for a job with them.

Here's a hidden truth that about the psychology of people involved in a job interview:

If the interviewer feels like the candidate is not confident about themselves, if they feel that the candidate thinks this opportunity is *'too good to be true'* or if the candidate ever suggests that this job opportunity *"will be a wonderful step UP in my career"* – then the interviewer will be turned off.

You can't be too enthusiastic, because the interviewer will think the job is out of your league – that it'd be too high a challenge for you. They will see you as too big a risk. And if the job *is* too difficult and you end up leaving, they will be fearful that everyone will blame them for hiring the wrong person. So to avoid all this pain and disappointment in their own lives, they would really prefer to offer the job to someone who has done most of the job functions all before. They will want proof that you have been successful in fulfilling the job requirements.



I hope you really understood what I meant in the 2 paragraphs above.

Yes, it's good to be keen and be interested, but you have to come across as confident that you have done every job function they ask for in their job advertisement / job description. The fact is, you probably have done only 70 – 80% of what they want, but you feel confident you can learn the new skills on the job, and you probably can, but this is something to keep to yourself unless otherwise identified in the interview.

Imagine you are the lucky owner of a highly prized asset that has the potential to earn 10 or even 100 times its actual value. In terms of the employer, this is what a good employee actually is, and good employees are disguised like everyday candidates, who look the same and act the same as employees that end up been a liability.



If you are like most good employees, you don't fully know how to market yourself or present yourself with the ultimate presentation that you deserve. Remember, you need to be marketed like a first class product, you're resume was like a brochure to the interviewer.

Your job application gave brief details on the 'latest model' that is available and offers great hope in helping them to make their organisation prosper. The interview is similar to giving a formal presentation, it has the purpose of exposing more about your skills, experience and personal attributes.

Confidently And Clearly Sell Yourself as a High Performing and Highly Profitable Asset.



now, forever.

Go and find a hammer and hold onto it. If you don't have one, you can just use your imagination for a minute.



Imagine picking up a heavy sledge hammer and smashing a glass window. This window represents the whole concept that the interviewer and the company have all the power. SMASH – there's broken glass everywhere! It's broken

The Status Quo is that the job interview is a completely equal playing field.

The purpose of the interview is first for the candidate to be questioned so the company can determine the potential value of the candidate, and then it is the candidate's turn to ask questions to find out more about the longer term opportunities available, and to evaluate whether this company will be a good fit to help achieve personal career goals.

Here are the new rules:

- 1. Each side shows respect for what the other one can offer.**
- 2. Each side understands that they need each other to achieve their own goals.**
- 3. Each side has something to offer in return for something perceived of equal value.**

So the very next interview you walk into, you will be coming in as an equal player. You need to be just as confident as they are, otherwise they could lose interest in you immediately.





ACTIVITY: Think Back About Well You've Performed in Your Past Interviews

Think back to your past interviews for a moment and think about how you have performed in the past.



What do you do in a job interview that seems to work really well for your confidence? What do you find works well in getting the best response from the interview panel?

1

2

3

4

5.

What type of behaviours do you think would be best left out of your next interview performance?

For example, I can remember when I was younger, I used to second guess my responses to the questions, and when I think about it now, I can imagine that this would have shown in my facial expressions, as I would have looked a little uncertain about myself.

1

2

3

4

5.



You own You.

You manage your own career. You are the captain of your own ship, so it is your responsibility – and no one else’s – to make sure that you put yourself in a position that is going to make the best use out of the key skills and key strengths you have to offer.

You have to guard yourself against the temptation of just accepting the first job offer. If you are actively applying for jobs, and your resume and job application documents are working well for you, then you will have a plethora of job opportunities that will be presented to you. So you’ve got to make sure that your own personal needs and desires are met.

ACTIVITY: Write Out Your Ideal Job Description



To do this, you’ve first got to make a list of the top 5 things you want most out of your next job. This can be anything from trivial details of what the company image is, to what their incentive scheme actually consists of when they mention it in the interview.

Here are 5 aspects are typically important to people when changing the jobs, completing the answers will give you a summary of your ideal job description.

ACTIVITY: Defining Your Next Job

- 1. My key strengths that I definitely want to use in my next job are:

- 1. My next job will use these other skills and abilities:



2. I would like to ideally work in these industries:

3. I would ideally like to work in a small/ medium / large company (please circle which one) and here are the reasons why:

4. I want to represent a company that offers products and services that help people or businesses to do these things

5. I am prepared to travel up to _____ kilometres , or travel for _____ minutes each way.

6. These are the duties and job functions that I never want to do again (please put them in a priority order, the first one is that you would never compromise on)



Personal Power Statement

In many of the questions asked in interviews, you will be able to answer your question by using a couple of statements that best describe your key strengths and attributes.

Go through the qualities listed line by line in the answers you have written above, and then add in the additional personal qualities that you can bring to the role.

It is always worth using a qualifying phrase such as 'colleagues have said of me...I am a great team builder or problem solver etc.' It sounds better if there is a third party endorsement. It doesn't sound like you are bragging but a colleague is speaking on your behalf.

In addition you will need to have relevant examples which you can offer to expand on. The personal qualities for the role will always be generic attributes that many jobs will appreciate, such as hard-working, motivating, good communication skills, desire to succeed.

When answering the interview questions, you should end your answer with a statement such as 'do you think these qualities are what you are looking for from a successful candidate?'. It plants a seed in the mind of the interviewer that they are.

If they reply that they were expecting other qualities then discuss them and offer examples of how you have these and examples of these in action. You need to leave the interviewer in no doubt you have the skills and can demonstrate this with examples.



How to Give High Quality Responses to Interview Questions

A skilled interviewer will continually ask 'open' questions which by their nature are probing but will allow you to sell your skills and abilities.

Imagine an interview where the replies were all one word answers or short sentences. It would not be very comfortable for either party to sit through and your chances of getting the job would be almost zero.

There are basically 5 key elements that the interviewer is looking for in a candidate. These are.....

1. **Can you do the job?**
2. **Will you do the job?**
3. **What is the problem I am here to solve?**
4. **Will you take direction and conform to the team ethic?**
5. **Will your behaviour represent the department or manager in a professional manner?**

How to Use the STAR Formula to Give Quality Responses

Many large organisations and government bodies will have a set of behavioural questions they ask each and every candidate, before scoring the candidate on their response. These questions will typically start off by "Tell me about a time".

The best way to answer these questions is in 4 parts, namely Situation, Task, Action & Result

Eg. Tell me about a time where you had to resolve a complex problem

Situation – in June last year, I was the manager of the Client Liaisons department when I was working at Acme company, and half of the office was away on a training day, when we received a high volume of customer orders and enquiries.

Task – The problem I had was that we needed to keep our high standard of service up,

Action - So I needed to devise an urgent plan which consisted of

Result – The senior manager complimented me for dealing with the crises in a calm and logical manner, we also kept our high standard of returning calls within a 2 hour period, and received no customer complaints about lack of response.

All your answers should be modelled with this view and this is what the interviewer is looking to hear.

Beware of 'Loaded' Questions

When you enter an interview the interviewer **expects** you to state how brilliant you are and how perfect for the job you will be. That's why they discount these types of statements from the start. They therefore pay much greater attention to those questions which raise negative points. Here are some examples

Q. '... Have you ever disagreed or argued with your current supervisor / manager?'

Q. '....Am I right to assume you want this position because you are fed up with your current job?'

Q. '...You seem to lack experience in area 'x', what are your thoughts on that?'

Pay particular attention to these types of questions. Interviews are won and lost depending on how you answer these types of questions.

They need to be answered with as much positive upside as you can possibly muster. The more you dwell on the negatives of your experience and career the poorer the overall impression of your abilities.

An interviewer will usually assume you are embellishing your real life examples when you illustrate the positive aspects of your skills and experiences, and look much more closely at the potential negatives in your career.

You should not be afraid to discuss the negative aspects of your career. However a series of positive focused answers will put you in a strong position. It clears a lot of uncertainty in the interviewer's mind and importantly reduces their risk in hiring you.

Never commence your answer to a question starting with the word 'No'. There are two reasons for this. Firstly you never want to disagree with the interviewer. Subliminally this will sound like you are disagreeing and to repeat you never want to disagree with the interviewer.

Secondly you want to keep any answers in positive territory. The more negativity that is expressed the less likely you are to secure the job. Conversely if the interview is upbeat and positive you will always perform better.



There are always going to be different ways of phrasing your answers, you would never consider learning answers by memorising a script, so you can simply deliver the same words in every job interview. You WILL look and sound like a Robot, and no one wants to work with robots.



3 Top Tactics to Massively Impress the Interviewer

1. Remember 5 examples that show your key strength

It's best to go in with a list in your mind about how you have added significant value to the organisations you have worked with, and be able to recall responses you would give to questions that are 'loaded' with negativity.

2. Consider what the interviewer is really wanting to hear

If you think about the reason for the interviewer asking each question, and think about what skills, knowledge or experience they are wanting to hear about, then you can concentrate on accentuating the positive and letting your skills and attributes come to the fore.

3. Promote the attributes that the ideal candidate would possess

Each job has an ideal set of skills, knowledge and experience that is required for the job, as well as a particular type of character trait in the employee. If you can picture what the ideal candidate looks like, and then write down every similarity you have to their 'ideal', then you will be setting yourself up for success.



ACTIVITY: List Your Key Strengths and then bullet point 5 examples you can use to demonstrate how you've used these attributes and talents.

1

2

3

4

5

Think about how you can apply the STAR formula

Get your notepad and write a draft of 5 stories that give relevant examples of how you have demonstrated the requested skills and attributes in previous jobs (or whilst at Uni, if you don't have any experience)

By preparing examples which show real benefits of your actions, your interview success will skyrocket. If you learn one thing then its 'SELL the BENEFITS of HIRING YOU'.

Think about what you can bring to the table that the other candidates may not.

Focus on 3 Definitive Areas

You can read through the job description, and do your research on both the company and the industry to know what the type of key skills and knowledge that the interviewer is looking for, however it can be very difficult to know what character and personal attributes to promote.



Figure 1: Every Job Description has a nominated set of Skills, Knowledge and Character Traits that are ideal for the job.

Third Party Endorsements

You can make a greater impact by suggesting what your colleagues and management would have to say about your skills, knowledge, experience and personal attributes.

In many of your answers you can either state that you have the required skills, or you can choose a few likely words that your team or manager would use to describe how you add value to the organisation.

This is one of the easiest ways to help validate what you that you possess all the attributes.



Figure 2 – Create Better Credibility in Your Answers - Suggest what your team and manager would say about you

How to Be Relaxed in the Interview



The telephone call I suggested you place earlier on in this guide will shed some light on the culture of your prospective team and organisation, but ultimately, I would simply be yourself. When you relax in a job interview, you let your personality shine through and they start to get a feeling of who you are. This is the easiest way to deal with this ambiguous area

Stay True to Yourself & Who You Are

You have reached an age where you should be comfortable with who you are, and you are no longer interested in changing too dramatically into someone who you are not.

If you can relax in the interview, they will feel relaxed with you too. So smile, and enjoy the experience, stay consciously aware that you are being assessed, but be confident in who you are and what you have to offer.

If they choose someone else, then so be it, it obviously wasn't the job for you. Trust their decision. They are looking for someone to fit within their existing team – if they don't choose you, then they might be doing you a favour in the long term, as you might not have really enjoyed the environment anyway.



101 Most Difficult Job Interview Questions and their model answers

Q 1 (a). What has attracted you to this job?

This is where you show you have done your research; you may find that you only have a limited amount of information on the role. Your understanding of the role may be limited to what you have read in the job description., and the only things you know about the company have been found on the internet.

However you need to construct your reply using one or a combination of the following five replies:

- **Challenge** - You need a new career challenge
- **Career**: I had reached the likely top and there was no room for advancement until someone else above me left.
- **Travelling**: The commute to work was taking too long or I was constantly being asked to travel with work
- **Security**: The organisation was unstable and my role may have been at risk experience.
- **Money**: You feel you were not being paid what you were worth

Do not mention money if you can at all help it. Trust me it will do you no favours even if it is the real reason for wanting the job. Joining a company for more money will imply you will leave as soon as you find another job offering even more.

Definitely do not say anything negative about your previous employer/boss and wanting to leave. "I just cannot wait to leave my existing employer" will not go down well.

However the question will not just be role related but will include the wider organisation. Additionally describe what you perceive to be the forward thinking elements of the organisation and what advantages they appear to offer in the job description.

Q 1 (b). What do you know about our company and its product range?

This question will be easier to answer after you have done your research on the company. See if you can summarise the purpose of the company's products and services, look for it's mission statement and get a feeling for the types of customers they target.

Q 2. Tell me about yourself

They want a quick 2 minute summary of your job history, and any major issues that have shaped your life, that you believe they would be interested to know about.





I would give them a 30 second career snapshot, and highlight the your proudest moments or achievements in each role. You could tell them what you also really enjoyed by working at some companies, or what skills were developed. This is a good opportunity to briefly state your future career aspirations and link it to the job you are now in the interview applying for.

Q 3. Have you been to many interviews recently?

Answering this question with a 'Yes' will pitch you in a light that you are potentially in high demand, and the company will need to be quick in their decision making process, if they want to offer you another role.

It is important not to give the impression that you have been to a number of interviews and failed. If this is the case then gloss over this. The interviewer will clearly have no knowledge of your interview history unless it is with the same organisation.

Best thing is to avoid the question by replying in more general terms.

"I have been actively seeking new opportunities for three weeks, so have been to a few interviews. I am still waiting to hear back on a couple, but I saw this advertisement and became really interested to know more about the role. I certainly fit the criteria, and it seems as though it would present the right amount of challenge and growth I need to develop my career.."

Q 4. Why should I hire you? What personal qualities or attributes will you bring to the role or job?

This is where you confidently state that you have the requested skills, knowledge and experience to succeed in the role. Add in your key strengths and the personal attributes that you believe you possess that will be particularly useful for this position, and deliver your answer with unwavering confidence and certainty.

Choose to highlight more impressive attributes such as been an effective manager, a lateral thinker, a problem solver, possessing an innovative approach or someone who is driven by results.

This answer can be a little longer than most answers you'll give, because it is essentially a personal pitch of 3 -4 sentences.

In addition, it is always worth using a qualifying phrase such as 'colleagues have said I am a great motivator/team-builder/technician etc.'. It sounds better if there is a third party endorsement. It doesn't sound like you are bragging.

You will add significant impact if you have a relevant example which you can offer to expand on. You should end your answer with a statement such as 'do you think these qualities are what you are looking for from a successful candidate?'

It plants a seed in the mind of the interviewer that they are.



Figure 4 - Why should we hire you?



If they reply that they were expecting other qualities then discuss them and offer examples of how you have these and examples of them in action. You need to leave the interviewer in no doubt you have the skills and can demonstrate this with relevant examples.

A. 'First up, I believe that I can do the job , I feel comfortable ''

Q 5. Why do you want to change jobs and join our organisation?

The interviewer is fishing for anything negative you're likely to say about your past employer and curious about what attracted you to this job opportunity. You simply respond by explaining you want to move forward in your career and that this position is something you would feel very comfortable to do, but would also offer new challenges.

Be prepared to expand on the challenges you would see in front of you, this could be getting to know the clients, learning how to promote their new product, learning their unique systems etc etc.

Q 6. What have you learnt most from your past jobs?

They want to hear about how your experiences have helped to develop your skills, knowledge and expertise. Answering this question could perhaps show them that you learn from your mistakes, and you use each job or project as an opportunity to develop new skills and/or knowledge.

'I have learnt many things as you can imagine. But one point always rings true, every success I have ever had comes down to how my people are managed in the process. By having highly developed interpersonal skills, I've been able to communicate effectively with all stakeholders which has resulted in positive results. Every one needs to be treated with respect, their opinion should be valued and they should be encouraged to contribute to the good of the organisation.'

Q 7. Why should I give you the job over the other candidates?

'I don't know the other candidates or their skills.....my skills and attributes are.....I am sure you'll agree they more than equip me to do the job'

Note:

The interesting thing is that where you are talking about personality traits the interviewer just has to take your word for it. They can only judge you by what they see. This is why first impressions are so important as people make up their mind about people within 30 seconds of meeting them. Also remember people will only hire other people they LIKE. Smile at every opportunity to build quick rapport.

Q 8. Why are you looking to leave your current role? Why did you leave role 'x'?

The purpose of this question is to verify if you are being pushed out or are leaving at your own will.

You need to reply using one or a combination of the following five replies outlined in question 1.

Q 9. I see from your resume that you have never actually been in this role in any of your previous companies. How are you going to manage?

They are expressing doubt that you could do the role, even if it is to test your enthusiasm and/or personal drive). They might want to see how you react to a minor difficult situation, and how you stand up for your self....

You can state that you have considered the main functions of the job, and researched the company to develop an understanding of their culture, mission and organisational goals.

You would then confidently say that you feel like you can do the job, and offer a different set of skills and experience to someone who has only ever done this type of work before.

Importantly, then go on to list examples of similar experiences where you have demonstrated such skills. This should close the issue in the interviewers mind and paint a positive picture.

Q 10. What if I said to you your resume was very poor?

This is the type of question where the interviewer is looking for a quick thinking answer. They will see first hand how you handle criticism and difficult situations....and of course your resume isn't poor otherwise you wouldn't have an interview!

"I have had several colleagues review my resume and they all offered suggestions which I have accepted. I would therefore be surprised to find it was poor but I always welcome constructive feedback whether it is good or bad."

Q 11. '...You seem to lack experience in area 'x'

If this is true, then acknowledge you do lack some experience in area 'x', but then you have so many other skills and experience to offer. Demonstrate how some of your skills are very similar, and then say that you are a faster learner, and take the initiative to conduct research into any new topic or area to get up to speed.



Figure 5 - Why are you looking to leave your current role?

Note: Most interviewers will listen more intently to the negative questions. These are the ones where the interviewee can stumble and reply badly. Learn to turn them around, reply positively and keep them short. Don't waste your valuable interview time on negative questions!

Q 12. What particular skills are you looking to gain from this role?

This will depend on the type of job. If the job is a manual job or skilled profession then you will be looking for practical experience.

If the job is more office based or sales related then the emphasis will be different. Understand what the job description is telling you about the job because there is no point saying you want to learn 'x' if it is not possible in this role.

You could use this as an opportunity to dig deeper into the roles and responsibilities that you need to undertake. The interviewer will of course be delighted that you are interested and it gives you time to form an answer.

Q 13. Where do you see yourself in the next 5 or 10 years?

Answer needs to show ambition but also a commitment to the role on offer. This is a difficult juggling act where a very neutral answer is most appropriate.

This is one of several questions where the interviewer is just gauging how you react. They probably aren't really interested in the specifics of the answer but more the way you answer.

'My first goal is to secure this role and I have the personal drive to succeed in it. I am not really looking beyond this. I suppose if pressed I would be looking for career progression like anyone else but 5-10 years is a long time away and I am sure I have many challenges ahead in the current role.'



Figure 6 Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

Q 14. Where do you see this industry in 5 years time?

This is the type of question that would be asked in mid-management to senior positions. The interviewer is not asking for a prediction but looking to see that you understand the current issues facing the industry and what the future trends may be and that you have taken an interest. By answering with a full and carefully considered reply will distinguish and elevate you above the competition.

Although possible answers are unlimited and will be tailored to each type of business you may find the following suggestions helpful:

- More industry consolidation into larger corporations
- Move away from retail outlets to e-commerce web selling
- More niche players in the market
- Globalisation of the supplier network
- Stronger sales growth in the Asian sector
- Wider diversity in product ranges
- Increased reliance on software to run the business

A more senior managerial position will require you to have an in depth knowledge of the future direction of the industry. This is because your decisions may have a direct impact on the long term direction the company is taking.

Q 15. You seem to be over qualified for this position. Are you going to find the role a bit demeaning?

A good trick is to smile, announce that you believe your additional degree or masters is a strength in your application, as your specialist knowledge will be of high value to the company. If the interviewer seems unsure, ask the interviewer to clarify if they have any concerns. This gives you some time to compose yourself and also to set the interviewers concerns in context.



If the interviewer will probably say you could get bored, you might not be challenged enough and look to move roles quickly if you get a better offer. This is now a concern for you to address.

The way to convince the interviewer is to express your desire to work for the company, and explain that although you have significant theory behind you, you don't yet have the equal balance in practical experience, so this is the perfect level of role for you.

The more you have taken the trouble to understand the company its product ranges and shown enthusiasm for joining them the more convincing you will be.

Figure 7 - Arn't you a little over qualified for this role?

You will want to focus on the challenges the company will offer you and how they will provide a rewarding career for you.

This can mark a changing point in the interview. The interviewer is saying that effectively you are an excellent candidate more than capable of doing the job. Your focus now is on convincing them that you see the company as your next major career step. Not just a stepping stone to better things.

Q 16. You have been working as a contractor/temp for so long, may I ask why this is?

The implication is that you do not fit in or get bored easily. Turn the answer round. Talk about this being a deliberate plan in your career development. Explain how the wide range of experiences you have gained working for different companies has given you a strong foundation of knowledge and experience. Explain that you wanted to trial different industries and different companies to get an overview of the cultures that exist within organisations, so you could make an educated decision on which type of company you would like to settle in with.

Q 17. What would your job references say about you?

Try to make sure that any job references have been sought and written before you go interviewing. This is not always possible but would allow you to repeat their positive comments. If asked and you are able to leave copies of references with the interviewer they are bound to look at them. Of course this will reinforce your candidacy.

Where you do have job references then you can say you have references and they are very complimentary around a number of aspects of your work. Specify the top strengths and skills they are likely to highlight in the telephone call.

Start the sentence in the third party with.....'My references would say....'

Any time you are able to reply in the third party it sounds like someone else is endorsing your candidacy which in effect references do. Everyone will say they will receive good references but if you say this using a third party then you add greater credibility to your statement.



Figure 8 - What would your references say about you?

Q 18. What could you have done better to achieve more results for your past company?

This question is testing your self-esteem and inner confidence. If asked this question, you may find the culture of the company is similar to the nature of this very question.

You need to stay clear of giving a direct answer. If you suggest there were improvements to be made this implies you weren't working at 100%.

"I was very pleased with the level of results I generated. The board and senior management were also delighted with the level of results I achieved especially in this tough economic environment. I exceeded my targets and made a solid contribution to the overall profitability of the company."

Go on to describe your successes and try to avoid answering the question directly.



Figure 9 - What could you have done better in your last job?

Q 19. Yes, but do you think you could you have achieved better results?

If the interviewer persists with further questioning, simply agree that there is always room for some improvement and that is what keeps you motivated to increase your performance year on year. But importantly refer to the need for improvement in everyone. It reduces the impact of any negativity.

'I am sure that everyone has room for improvement – we all continue to learn and develop'
You could also describe how you had plans to increase results through some new initiatives you were working on. These have not had time to be implemented yet. Describe the benefits they would bring.

Q 20. The new role may involve some travelling. Are you prepared to travel?

If this wasn't advertised in the job advertisement, or mentioned in the job description, then I would be suspicious of the company immediately. They may not be that organised, which is likely to have a negative impact on your ability to perform in the role.

If you really do not want to travel for example for family reasons then there may be room for negotiation. It is important to find out the extent of the travel and the exact requirements of the role. There is no point in accepting a job only to find out that it is unsuitable. Both parties would regret this.

Q 21. Do you prefer the regular framework with established processes and procedures of an organisation or do you prefer a less structured work environment?

Whether you know you have a preference to which style of management or not, stay neutral. You do not want to say one thing and find the organisation works in a completely different way.

“Every organisation needs a contextual framework of processes and procedures which everyone can recognise and understand. It allows for a consistent approach.

Although generally speaking these should not be over-ruled there are occasions where a flexible, dynamic and more liberal approach is required in order to achieve targets.

A mixture of the two is probably healthy for any organisation and is the way I have worked in my previous roles.”

Figure 10 - do you prefer a structured environment?





Q 22. How long have you been looking for a new job? Why is there such a gap since you last worked?

Anything longer than 2 – 3 months is considered a long gap and is a serious weakness in your application. The employer may fear that you have lost some of your drive to succeed, you might have become unmotivated in this time, and adapted to a new lifestyle of sleeping in until 10am etc. This questions needs to be handled carefully.

No-one wants to hire someone if they are unwanted by every other employer. If you have been looking for several months then you need to emphasise that you have been looking for the right role. You do not want to rush into the first job that is offered.

“Work is very important to me and I am not going to rush such a decision lightly. That is why I have waited for a role such as this one to become available.”

You could also mention that you have been offered jobs in this time and have turned them down. Effectively this is an endorsement from another employer that you are worth hiring.

If market conditions are tough and there are plenty of candidates in the market place then mention this too.

What you want to avoid is the interviewer thinking that you have been out of work for months have applied everywhere and been turned down far too often for this to be just a coincidence. Prepare your answer carefully.

Q 23. Have you any other job offers pending?

If you get this question then you can start to feel confident because it indicates the interviewer is serious about hiring you and they do not want to lose you. If a competitor has shown interest in hiring you then this is a ringing endorsement of your abilities. Therefore the best way to answer this questions is to say that you have had a series of interviews over the previous week, and you are waiting to hear back on one in particular.

You unfortunately do not want to be specific at this stage. When you have more than one definite job offer then you can start negotiating.

"I do have other options but I am attending this interview because I like the job spec, the company and I believe it is a dynamic organisation where I could truly enhance my career. This is a great opportunity for me."

By creating the feeling that you are desirable will pay dividends in your job hunting and salary negotiations.

Figure 11 - What type of people do you prefer not to work with?

Q 24. What are your short term goals?

Make sure you relate these to the organisation to which you are applying. Do not be unrealistic in your assessment of what you can achieve. It is unlikely anyone will remember what you said the minute you leave the interview room. Make sure that your goals are directly beneficial to the

employer. Something like 'I would like to become a valued member of staff who brings the benefits I have mentioned to the organisation and to make an important contribution quickly'.

Of course your short term goals are probably to secure the job and earn more money but stating that will not help your application!

If you have some interesting goals which are non-work related then mention these as it shows you are a rounded person but primarily concentrate on your work goals and what you can bring.

Q 25. What are your longer term goals?

These can extend beyond the boundaries of the current organisation so be careful. We are probably looking at a 5-10 year time span so pitch the goals in this area. It is OK to say you would like a higher level role such as the one interviewer is holding, especially if they will ultimately be your manager or supervisor, because these timescales do not threaten their job.

However it is probably safer to discuss your long term personal goals as this could avoid any reason for the interviewer finding your reply for work related goals unsuitable.



Figure 12 What are your longer term goals?

Q 26. How many hours do you usually work?

This will depend on the type of job you are going for. For a more managerial role you will answer you have no set finishing time it is whatever it takes to get the job done.

Q 27. (a) Could you please tell me your three greatest strengths?

An obvious open opportunity to sing your own praises. Choosing something unique about the skills, knowledge and experience you possess will set you apart from the competition. Think strategically about how your experience can offer greater value to this role. Perhaps you are able to share specific industry knowledge, and your depth of understanding in how other companies have handled similar problems to what this company might be going through right now, etc.

You need to have a pre-prepared answer but make it sound natural and unrehearsed. Split the answer between your work related skills and your behavioural skills. Eg. Have the skills and attributes to do the job, willing and enthusiastic, bring professional behaviours to the organisation, good communicator are a good start for any answer.

Q 27 (b) What would your manager say your greatest strengths were?

Split your answer between your work related skills and how well you fit in with a team, and how you collaborate with people on meeting organisational goals. Focus on how you are driven by results, whilst working well within the team. Start your reply with 'it has been commented on at appraisals that I am a good at...'



This is of course an obvious open opportunity to sing your own praises. Have a prepared answer but make it sound natural and unrehearsed.

Q 28. What do you consider to be your weaknesses?



You need to be objective and humble but without dwelling on the negative aspects of this question. Any negative question requires an answer that ends up with a positive upside and closure so that further negative probing by the interviewer is discouraged. This answer requires preparation.

Firstly do not say you have no weaknesses. Technology comes to your rescue in this question. With the fast changing IT world you can safely say it is difficult to keep up with the latest technological breakthroughs. You will need to adapt this to your particular industry.

Secondly a weakness could be viewed as a weakness of the company you work for. The company is poor on training and to cover this weakness you are studying at home to bridge the gap. See how this avoids admitting the weakness is your fault and demonstrates a pro-active attitude to fill the gap?

If the role is in an area that you are clearly unfamiliar with then state this. It will be obvious anyway but allows you the chance to tell the interviewer what you are going to do to fill this gap. You are addressing the 'big white elephant in the room', and this will make you more credible.

'Clearly I have limited experience in this role using 'x'. But I have applied because I am sure I can do the role and am keen and able to retrain and learn the role through sheer hard work and dedication. I have faced similar difficulties in previous roles and quickly got up to speed.

Q 29. (a) What salary are you looking for?

Rule number 1 in the art of salary negotiations is never be tempted to start negotiations until they offer you the job. Rule number 2 is not to be the first to talk about specific figures.

The reason for this is that you can be doing fairly much the same job in one company, as in another, but salaries can vary from a \$20K to \$70K difference, so never state any specific figure at this stage, as you don't know if you'd be offering a figure that is lower than what they had in mind for you.

Always let the employer offer a salary first then negotiate upwards.

A. "I'd be looking at somewhere in the range of the current market value. I have researched what the spectrum of salaries are within this industries, as well as the incentives, may I ask what you have budgeted for this role?"

Q 29. (b) From what you were doing in your previous role, I'd be assuming you are taking a pay cut for this role?

Many people will question you if you are taking an obvious step down from your previous position, but it's definitely not an uncommon thing to do for people who are keen on joining a new industry. Your best option is to say that you don't mind taking a pay cut in order to get into this industry or this company, as you know you'll have to prove yourself all over again. Confirm that you have budgeted



for the lower salary in your lifestyle and expenses, and it's definitely something you can do. Explain that you have a huge interest in this industry, and that you see yourself here for the long term.

Q 30. I see you have been involved in a lot of project work in the past, I'm worried there won't be enough variety of you in this role.



Of course the implication is you will become bored easily doing the same task day in and day out. You need to reduce to the risk to the employer of hiring you by ensuring you give a valid reason for wanting to cement a full time role.

'The reason I have had so many project based roles is that I wanted to build on my project management experience, and be exposed to many different working practices for different organisations. I believe that the next career move that I make is vitally important to my long term future and I want to make the correct decision. Your organisation fits my profile of that I am looking for in an organisation and the possibilities for career advancement.

I also need to add that I can provide good references from each of these companies even though I was there for a relatively short period of time''

Q 31. What was your typical day like in your last job?

Another open question with an easy chance to shine....It was always busy, lots of pressure and close deadlines and targets to meet. Often meant long hours and commitment to work endlessly until the job was done etc. Plenty of scope for signing your own praises.

It is worth adding that your line manger always recognised the contribution you made and you received bonuses / awards for your efforts.

Anything where you can paint a picture of an enthusiastic, hard-working, dedicated, talented, team player will do your application no harm.

Q 32. How does this role compare to your current role?

You don't necessarily know what the role involves, but you can explain your current role by listing the activities, responsibility and the targets that you achieved.

You would then ask the interviewer if this is similar to the role on offer. If the 2 roles are not completely similar then get the interviewer to explain the differences. This buys you some valuable thinking time!

If there are differences then you need to address how you have the skills and flexibility to take on the challenges. Do not move the conversation on until all the potential differences in the roles have been addressed in a satisfactory way. If you have not done something then show how you have in the past done a similar role.

Although no two roles will ever be identical the generic characteristics of a role should be closely matched. You need to leave no doubt that you can 'do the job effectively'.

Q 33. Presumably you want this job because you are disillusioned with your current employer?’



They are digging for you to say something negative about your current employer, which would then raise the red flag in your application.

‘Actually, I have really enjoyed working for my current employer. I have been fortunate to have been given a lot of opportunities to learn new skills as my manager has given me plenty of additional tasks in which I have acquired valuable experience. However I now feel it is time to further my career by moving on and learning new skills.’

Notice how you start the sentence with the word ‘actually’ or fortunately this is better than saying an outright ‘NO’. It is important not to start any sentence with ‘No, on the contrary.....’ or words to that effect. It is effectively disagreeing with the interviewer and this is bad diction.

Q 34. What is a typical day for you at your current job?

They are looking to see what your top 4-5 key responsibilities are, what challenges you have to overcome on a daily basis, and your attitude and approach to resolving the issues and generating a positive outcome.

You should also mention that the role is varied, and requires you to manage your time and priorities tasks on an hour to hour basis. Additionally, suggest that you have some of the following traits: hard-working, team player, responsibility, good communicator, efficient and professional attitude.

The interview is your opportunity to shine. If you don’t sell yourself with questions like these someone else will beat you to the job!

Q 35. Describe a recent day when things didn’t go well?

Prepare an example of how you were faced with difficulties which were not of your making. It may have started off as a bad day but you must also include a positive ending. Here is an example.....

“Recently we had a situation where there was an outbreak of flu in the office. 3 of the staff were off sick and we had client deadlines looming. My senior manager got very anxious as there were plenty of last minute requests. To add to our problems the software crashed for 2 hours. It was horrendous. However my team managed to pull together. We worked long hours and I came in at the weekend so that all the deadlines were met. I even got a small bonus as recognition for my efforts.”

Q 36. Why do you want to leave your current job?

The interviewer wants to check that you are not leaving for a reason that will be present in the prospective job opportunity, for example, no career progression or no training and development offered to employees. They are also making sure you will not say something negative about an ex-employer or ex-employee. Resist the temptation and keep the answer upbeat concentrating on the advantages of what the new job would offer. You could mention the increased salary but do not dwell on it, emphasise the other benefits first.



“I enjoy my previous job and as I have demonstrated I make a solid contribution which is appreciated. However I am looking for more experience, a greater challenge / increased responsibility / more dynamic organisation that this role offers.”

Q 37. What do you understand by the term customer service?

Whenever you are in a role where you are dealing with customers the way you handle this relationship is going to be an important selling point in the interview.

Customer service is two fold. Firstly respect the customer for who they are. Secondly make sure they go away satisfied that they have had any issues resolved.

This question will inevitably lead on to further questions around your involvement with the customers.

Q 38. In what way does your previous role prepare you for taking greater levels of responsibility?

Ideally you want to show a scenario where you have been in the position of assuming the greater responsibility. For example you may have been seconded to the role of 2IC for your boss while they were away. Comment on how things went well and how your boss commented on this. Third party endorsements are always good.

In this way you are assimilating your position with what might happen and you have already had a taste of the expected level of responsibility.

Complete your summing up by saying you enjoyed the responsibility even though it was challenging.

Q 39. Would you have liked to have your supervisor's job?

“Yes, I am fortunate that I have a great supervisor where we work well together. She has asked me to be second in charge for her a number of times and I enjoyed the challenge and increased responsibility that came with it.”



Figure 13 Would you have liked to have your supervisor's job?

Q 40. What are the aspects of this role that would motivate you?

Similar question to previous ones. Include career challenges, job satisfaction and the opportunity for advancement. Keep it positive and have some examples ready!

Don't mention the salary! Remember the interviewer is asking themselves 'what is in it for me!' He doesn't really want to know about your salary expectations. They want to hear you are applying for the job because you are keen on the role!

They will never employ someone who is there 'just for the money'.

Q 41. What motivates you in your current role?

Always beating your personal best is a good answer, as it means that you are self motivated. You can state what your long term career goal is, and then explain that you accept as many new tasks and projects as is feasible so you are continually growing your skills base to acquire your long term goals.

You need to tailor your answer so it applies to your particular situation but also applies to the job for which you are applying so the interviewer can visualise you doing the new role.

Doing the job well and efficiently to the best of my ability, Praise from colleagues or suppliers. Teaching and motivating staff and watch them progress. I enjoy the busy full day which keeps me challenged. I enjoy meeting and exceeding the stretched sales targets that have been set.



Figure 14 - What motivates you in your current role?

Q 42. What cost savings did you make in your last role?

Mention how you made some cost savings through improving inefficiencies that you noticed in some of the working practices/processes. Although it wasn't part of your job you took it upon yourself to drive these through, and that it was recognised by senior management because this saved x amount of time and \$\$\$\$ in operating costs (be specific).

You do of course need to back this up with examples.

If your role was to make cost savings then state them explicitly. If they exceeded the targeted savings then state this too. Explain how you made the costs savings and over what period of time these happened. The employer wants to know you have the potential to save them money, because you will be just as conscientious and able to take the initiative. By demonstrating these very tangible achievements you are in a much stronger position.



Figure 15 - How did you minimise expenses in your last role?

Again, you need to have rehearsed this answer and know exactly what to say. If you are not asked this question you need to weave the answer into some part of the interview as it is a great selling point.

Every one wants to hear you can drive down costs.

Q 43. Can you hit the ground running?

They are looking for confirmation that you have the ability to learn new concepts quickly and adapt to a new learning environment. Try to assimilate with other situations where there was change in your working practices.

“There will of course be a learning curve but I have always demonstrated a strong ability to pick up on new procedures within a short time frame. For example when I joined my current role there was a great deal of learning with new software and procedures but I was praised for the effective way I managed the change. Additionally our company merged with company x and the subsequent roles were completely different. So this is not a new situation for me. Being adaptable is one of my key strengths”.

Q 44. Why have you had so many different roles?



You obviously had genuine reasons for leaving each job. If these do not sound very professional or indicate poor traits of commitment then you need to be careful about what you say.

If your career path has had many roles, you will almost certainly be asked this question. Hopefully you can say that some of them were temp roles, while others were contract positions. On one role you could state that the job was not as it was defined when you accepted the job offer. On another, you could say that you moved from the area, but are now firmly settled here in x city. The important thing is to close your answer by convincing the interviewer that this role is not just another stepping stone to somewhere better.

‘Having been through so many roles, I have finally figured out exactly what I want in a job and a career. I have clear direction in where I want to be in 5 years time, and I know that I need to acquire a strong foundation of knowledge and skills in the areas of x y and z. That is why I applied for this position, it meets the criteria for my career development yet also will leverage upon my key strengths within the a b and c job functions. In addition, I want to settle down with a mortgage and start a family some day in the next 3 years. This is exactly the role I have been striving to achieve’

Q 45. What do you do when your manager criticises your work.

The presumption is that there are occasions where your work is criticised, which you can confirm or deny.



‘I have a very strong relationship with my manager, which has been built on trust and open communication over a 3 year period. I am not aware of any occasions where my work has been directly criticised. We constantly discuss departmental issues together and although he may occasionally reject my ideas, I don’t view this as criticism.’

Q 46. How would you describe yourself as a person?

Interviewers ask broad questions like this with curiosity on how you will choose to answer them. There are two parts to this answer, the work related person and the person outside of work. For the work related person this is part of your personal pitch and should closely reflect the ‘elevator pitch’ statement you have created to summarise your key strengths.

Here are some examples which you can use to impress the interviewer. Soft skills such as communication skills, team-work, enthusiasm, professionalism and perseverance will cover all the bases. Additionally add what you are like as a person outside of work. Start the statement with a third party endorsement, as it sounds better even if the question is how you would describe yourself.

I think work colleagues would say I am a hard working, enthusiastic team-player. Someone willing to overcome obstacles and persevere until a job is done well and professionally. They would say I have a solid knowledge base and I am results focused and an ambitious achiever. Outside of work I tend to be more laid back and interested anything that provides relaxation. I love spending quality time



with my 3 children on the tennis court. I rejuvenate my batteries by getting out in the great outdoors and going for long bike rides through the botanical gardens.'

Often it is not what you say but how you say it that counts. When you state the above make sure you smile and say it with enthusiasm and cheeriness. It will reinforce the impression the interviewer sees!

Q 47. How would friends describe you?

They want to see how you react to a curve-ball type question, and at the same time dig for information that shows what you do socially. Highlight the personal attributes that would also benefit the position you are applying for.

My friends would say that I am always up for a challenge, I love to win when playing sports such as golf or tennis. They would say I am very caring and compassionate, and take the time help them deal with the challenges in their life that have generated personal grief or stress.

Q 48. What do you expect your starting salary to be?

A good tactic is to ask back what the interviewer has in mind. Then if they say something , you would reply that that is close to what you were expecting for such a role.

You could use this as an opportunity to confirm all Key Performance Indicators for the role, so you are aware of what would be expected of you. You could also ask the interviewer what they perceive to be the main challenges behind attaining the goals and targets that have been set within the role's job description. Once this has been discussed, you could suggest that upon receiving a job offer, you will be happy to commence discussions on salary, but the figure that they originally mentioned is nearly on par with what you were seeking.

Q 49. Have you ever disagreed or argued with your current immediate supervisor?

Make sure you cease any form of negativity in the conversation and then accentuate the positive by detailing the fact that your supervisor is comfortable with giving you more powers of trust. Explain that you have established very open communication channels, and that arguing has never been an element to effectively make decisions and meet organisational goals.



A. '.....Fortunately, we have always had a good working relationship. Recently he has been giving me greater powers of authority and also I have been trusted to delegate for him and weekly performance meetings.'

Q 50. Have you ever lost your temper at work?



"Never, fortunately I don't recall ever having to lose my temper. I am lucky to have a quick thinking mind and I can effectively communicate in difficult situations without losing emotional control. '



Q 51. What would you do if a customer started swearing?

Depending on the industries you worked within, and the customers you've dealt with, this could be an every day event, but clearly this is not acceptable. You need to demonstrate an example where this occurred and how you handled it.

'We do get customers who come in swearing. We warn them twice and let them know in no uncertain terms that they will not be dealt with until they calm down. Further swearing results in security being called. This is company policy and we rigorously enforce this. I think this creates a good impression for other customers who are watching as we need to take a firm stance in such matters'.

Q 52. What aspects of working with clients / customers do you like?

The interviewer will be judging for your first initial reaction to see if you really do like working with customers. If you explain that you enjoy meeting different people, and get satisfaction from helping them, then this is a great start. You can then explain how you've made a difference to people's lives by sharing your knowledge on a particular subject, to demonstrate you really do love helping people. If you work with customers then you need to have a clearly thought out answer as it will be a key element of your work.

Q 53. This is a significant step up in your career, how will you cope?



This is an important question where the answer will carry a lot of weight. This additional responsibility is a key element of any job. Try to assimilate with other similar circumstances either inside or outside of work.

'This is exactly the type of job that I am looking for. If I were to take a role that was on similar ground to my previous position, I would definitely get bored. I feel I have the necessary skills, knowledge and experience for this next step, as I have done most of the job functions throughout the last 3 years whilst I was taking on additional duties for my manager. I am not one to set myself up for failure, I know I have all the competencies required for this position.'

Q 54. Are you competitive?

If you are applying for a sales based role, then being competitive is almost essential, but you've also got to refer to being connected to a team. If it's true, you can say that you are competitive with your own standards, and are constantly seeking to beat your own performance in many things, from the quality of your work, to the results you bring in your sports. If you feel that you are not competitive, then you could say that you prefer collaborating with a team of people, and don't need to be the winner for ego's sake....

A. 'I would more accurately describe myself as ambitious and enthusiastic to do well in this organisation. However I will not do this at the expense or detriment of other colleagues. I firmly believe that approaching issues and challenges in the correct appropriate manner with a sense of drive and team-work will always be preferable to raw competition. '



Figure 16 Are you competitive?

Q 55. Are you able to motivate yourself?

Being self motivated is an essential attribute that every employee needs to possess, unless you are applying for a factory level role, you need to show that you are enthusiastic and have the inner drive to get the job done. This is a key element that interviewers look for, so it may even be worth backing up your claims with prove by giving an example. It may be worth considering the third party endorsement approach.

'In my performance appraisals my manager has commented on my ability to take the initiative and solve problems before they arise into major dramas. Additionally, I start everyday by writing out a list of jobs and then putting them into priority order, it gives me direction on what needs to be achieved and motivates me to get through the list, so I can tick everything off. My manager would say that I need little supervision, as I work with a sense of urgency and enthusiasm.'

Q 56. We haven't mentioned the salary and benefits package and actually it is a lot less than your current job. Is this going to be an issue?

The best way to deal with this question is to say that you can't really consider it unless you have know the details, you could ask the interviewer if they would like to discuss the salary package now, so you can answer their question.



'I am very interested in the role and would be delighted to be offered it. However as you have pointed out I would need to understand the complete salary and benefits package before I made any decision.'

Q 57. I see you have a masters degree do you feel over qualified and do you think you will fit in?

The implication is that you will become bored and leave quickly when you see something better.

'I applied for this position because I believe it will be a great long-term opportunity for me to gain good experience and I see myself making a strong contribution to the organisation. The fact that I appear to be over qualified will mean I can bring a high level of knowledge and aptitude to apply to the job. I won't get bored and be looking for a better position. I see this role as a good fit for my skills and ambitions.'



Figure 17 - Will Your Masters degree make you overqualified?

Q 58. Why are you deciding to change careers?

There are many reasons why you would want to change career direction. You may have been exposed to an industry that you are immensely interested in, and want to join. The industry that you belong to may be a dying industry and you have identified that you need to get out before it's too late. It is also possible that another industry recognised more of your skills and natural talents than the industry you now belong to. Whatever reason, it boils down to one reason, career advancement.

Changing industries is not necessarily a bad thing but does put you at a disadvantage to other candidates. You need to demonstrate how your skills are going to be transferable. You will need to concentrate on your generic skills such as enthusiasm, managerial, team-building, motivator. Specific job related skills will of course be in short supply.

Q 59. Do you like working in a matrix management style organisation?

This is where a project team is formed with each individual reporting to the manager but having a distinct line manager. 'Yes there are benefits in using a matrix management style team. It would depend on the processes and procedures which the company implemented and how effective the lines of communication were.'

Q 60. Why do you appear to have had very few promotions in your existing role even though you have been there a considerable amount of time?

Another tough question where your strategy is to answer and make sure the matter is not discussed any further. There are no positives to take from this type of question. Keep it short and hope to move on. Do not be tempted to be negative about any ex-employer



I work for a good employer but there is very little room for promotion within our current department. I was hoping that this situation would be resolved with someone leaving but this hasn't happened, and I am now looking to take the next step with another organisation.

Q 61. What did you like and dislike most about your last or current job?

You have two questions here, so start by recalling what you like most, spend 95% of the time on this answer and the remaining 5% on the other one. This first question is a golden opportunity to recall what you liked because you did it well, so you can display your main attributes.

It allowed me to develop my leadership capabilities through my supervisor giving me more and more responsibility within the department. She provided mentoring on how to effectively manage a team and coached me on how to deal with escalated issues. These opportunities certainly stretched my skill level. In these times, I had to prioritise my regular work load with her demanding schedule and there were usually tight and conflicting deadlines to juggle. The role allowed me to develop my organisational and motivational skills within the team.

As you can see the above example allows you to demonstrate and talk about your soft and hard skills. Draw up a list and practice recounting them to make it sound natural.

On the negative side about what you liked least you need to keep it brief but also turn the answer round to make it sound positive. Here is one example....

The management team didn't believe in micromanaging people, but this allowed some team members to slacken off with aspects of the job function that were never measured or inspected. The unfortunate part of this was I ended up having to clean up a lot of work that had been done to a mediocre standard.



Figure 18 What did you like most and least about your last job?

As you can see the above example has a 'positive spin' within the answer. It is important how you say something not just what you say. When you are giving the above answers they must sound natural and they must sound humble in order to trigger the correct emotion in the interviewer. No one like someone who boasts and no one hires someone they do not like.

Q 62. Talk to me about a time when your team work resulted in a more successful conclusion.

You will need to describe a time when you worked in a team and the benefits it derived. Key components are you listen, solicit ideas, persuade, summarise and conclude the discussion. You then act together to produce a successful end result.

Remember there are often no right or wrong answers. Everyone's opinion in a team is valid and worth consideration. Equally if an idea is wrong it is not a criticism. There is open debate in a team environment which will produce the best end result and decision.

Once you have reached a decision you need to act on it as a team and then demonstrate to the interviewer why it was more successful because of the team. The greater success can easily be assimilated to the greater number of ideas generated and the active discussion which generated them.

It is not only the pooling of skills in the thought process but also in the action of those ideas. For example in a multi-job task everyone will have different levels of skills for each are it is easy to demonstrate how this can be successful. For example a new marketing campaign will require creative thinking, artistic thought, operational follow through and presentation skills.



Figure 19 When have you been involved in a team project that delivered great success?



Q 63. Why do you want to change employers and join our organisation and what as an organisation can we offer that is better than your current employer?

The interviewer is curious why you are seeking to move from your current organisation to this one. They are interested to know what you find more appealing about this job or this company. The big think here is that you want to appear like you have made a conscious decision in applying to this company in particular, and that you are not just randomly jumping from one company to another.

A typical answer which deals with such a comparison should read.....

‘My current organisation has been great for my career as I have learned many new skills eg. Project management and supervising geographically dispersed teams across AustraliThere is a great team ethic and I feel I have made a strong contribution to their administration team. However I see your organisation and the role on offer as a new challenge which can leverage my skills and allow me to challenge myself set new goals and further my career in a way that the current organisation perhaps doesn’t offer.’

Of course this answer needs to be tailored to meet your particular circumstances. Start by listing what you like about your current organisation and the experience you have gained. Compare this with the list of skills and benefits you expect to find in the new organisation. Use this list to tailor your answer. Stay clear of talking about money. The sub text of this question and so many others like it is the interviewer is asking ‘What’s in it for me?’

In your reply, you can also outline how you have made a contribution to your current employer. By saying you want to leverage your skills in the new role and show how you can make a strong contribution is precisely what the interviewer wants to hear.

If you say or even imply the reason for the new job is that you are looking for more money or additional benefits, then this does not imply you are making a contribution to the new organisation. You are in fact saying this is “what is in it for me” and does not address the interviewers needs!

Q 64. If you could wave a magic wand, what tasks would you not want to ever do again?

A dangerous question. The interviewer is probing for things that you didn't previously like and then they can ask a follow on question about why you didn't like them. Beware of this trap. One negative question after another sets a negative mood and will seriously harm your interview chances.

Turn the question round and give a 'model answer', which portrays no negativity.'In an ideal world.....I

would like to avoid any bureaucracy or red tape which can delay decisions. Like anyone I am always keen for good progress to be made at all times and everything to run smoothly'.

'I would like to avoid the situation in the last role where we had tight deadlines and 3 of my staff went off on long term sick leave with the winter flu last year. Although we achieved our targets it was only through hard effort, team-work and long hours'.

See how these answers portray you in a good light and turn a negative into a positive. Make sure you have prepared an answer otherwise you could see yourself stumbling!

Another key point is that the length of the answer is sufficient to give the interviewer enough information. If the answer is too brief the interviewer will feel that you have avoided the answer. If the answer is too long then you are spending too long discussing something that is potentially negative. A second important point is that anyone who talks too much in an answer can be perceived as lying. Of course that would only apply to a question where you have something to hide.



Figure 5 What tasks would you wish never to do again?

Q 65. Why should I hire you? What personal qualities or attributes will you bring to the role?

Use your personal pitch of 2 -3 sentences that you have prepared from earlier activities in this guide. Your statement needs to relate to the job description. Go through the qualities listed line by line. Then add in the additional personal qualities that you bring to the role.

It is always worth using a qualifying phrase such as 'colleagues have said of me...I am a great motivator/team builder/technician etc.'. It sounds better if there is a third party endorsement. It doesn't sound like you are bragging but a colleague is speaking on your behalf. In addition you will need to have relevant examples which you can offer to expand on. The personal qualities for the role will be attributes such as hard-working, motivating, good communication skills, desire to succeed.

You should end your answer with a statement such as 'do you think these qualities are what you are looking for from a successful candidate?'. It plants a seed in the mind of the interviewer that they are.

If they reply that they were expecting other qualities then discuss them and offer examples of how you have these and examples of these in action. You need to leave the interviewer in no doubt you have the skills and can demonstrate this with examples.



Figure 20 What personal attributes will you bring to the role?



Q 66. I see from your resume that you have never actually been in this type of role in any of your previous companies. How are you going to manage?"

Employers want a low risk when they are hiring new people, and they are looking for re-assurance that you will adapt to the new environment, so if you've never held this type of role before, this will be seen as an obvious weakness. In saying this, you would not have an interview if the interviewer truly thought you could not do the job.

Relate your previous experience to similar situations where you moved departments and had a new role or were faced with new technology which you had to learn quickly.

Turn this into a positive about:

1. How you are able to adapt to changing circumstances and have a flexible approach.
2. How you pick up new skills quickly.
3. How you enjoy the challenge of the ever changing technology'.

Try to broaden the answer by saying 'we are all faced with a fast moving and changing environment which constantly presents new challenges. I have always been able to rise to these challenges and perform effectively despite limited product knowledge, tight deadlines, little support etc'.

Importantly, then go on to list examples of similar experiences where you have demonstrated such skills. This should close the issue in the interviewers mind and paint a positive picture.

Q 67. You seem over qualified for this position, aren't you going to find the role a bit too easy and get bored?

This could be seen as a compliment, but be wary because they may be fearing you have strong ambition to quickly accelerate into the next level of role, which could be the interviewer's job. They may feel threatened if you have too much experience and a strong skill set, so you need to focus on putting their mind at ease. Explain that you are attracted to this role because it offers significant areas of growth for you, and that although you do have strong skills to offer, you know the skills you also need to develop.

You will want to focus on the challenges the company will offer you and how they will provide a rewarding career for you. This can mark a changing point in the interview. The interviewer is saying that effectively you are an excellent candidate more than capable of doing the job. Your focus now is on convincing them that you see the company as your next major career step.

If you can additionally add that you do have other options for your career and this role is still your first choice then so much the better. It reinforces what you are saying.

Q 68. What aspects of your job do you dislike the most?

Try to find something in the new role that the old role doesn't offer and which makes you dislike it. For example the limited chance to travel. You love travelling and the new role will afford you that chance.



Or you like meeting customers and your present office based role doesn't allow this to happen. See how these answers completely eliminate any negative sentiment and give genuine reasons for wanting the new role.



Q 69. I have A Pen Here – Sell It Me!

This tends to be geared towards selling and marketing positions. The key points to remember are to sell the benefits of the product. The product exists because it has some beneficial value. Physically it is a pen with ink in it and has a hard outer casing.

The benefits are what bring it alive, for example:

1. It feels solid when you grip it and it glides across the paper.
2. It works instantly and requires no refills.
3. It is reliable and never leaks.
4. the ink never smudges on the paper and dries instantly.

Of course you could be asked this question about any number of objects sitting on the interviewer's desk.

The interviewer wants to hear about the benefits of the application. Sell the benefits you bring to the organisation and you are 80% there. Describing how you fulfil the role will only count for less than 20% of the interviewer's assessment of your application. Your resume indicates you can do the job and that is why you have an interview. Sell the additional benefits of your application to be successful.

Q 70. How come you have been with your employer for such a short time?

An obvious weakness question, you need to detract the fact that you simply might have changed your mind about working there, and give them a solid reason, for example:

- ❖ The company is in financial trouble
- ❖ The job was not as it was advertised
- ❖ There are some serious OHS issues that I and the staff were exposed to
- ❖ The culture within the team was extremely negative, no support for new people.
- ❖ The product / service of the company was not how it was advertised, and I don't want to be associated with them, it may impact on my career if I were to stay with them.



The next best thing is to have a genuine reason for wanting to leave. Be careful not to moan or be negative about your employer, just state it like it's a fact.



Figure 21 How would your boss describe you?

Also, be careful not to 'job hop' as a lack of stability in your career path can be a serious drawback.

Q 71. How would your current boss describe you?

Use 3 words that you could guess your boss would use in the reference they would give you in the near future.

My boss would describe me as Reliable, a team player, and an effective problem solver.. My manager gives me plenty of responsibility and delegates important pieces of work to me. he trusts me to perform and get the job done. He talks to me in confidence about a lot of company issues.

Q 72. You have stayed with the same employer for quite some time. Why is this?

Explain that your employer has provided great working conditions, a positive culture and a progressive career path for you. The employer has shown loyalty to you and you have returned this by staying with them. Explain that you have had many different responsibilities within the company and

worked in many projects to learn new skills. You have progressed through the company and had a successful progression within increased responsibility at each stage.

Q 73. What type of employees do you find it difficult to work alongside?

Do not start to mention individuals. Start by describing the type of person you are and so by definition the type of people you like to work with.

"I like to work methodically to get the job done in the most effective manner, I am a positive minded person and so I guess I am attracted to like-minded individuals. So people who try to dodge responsibility or avoid addressing issues are the type of people I find difficult to work with, especially if we are working as a close-knit team. . Fortunately I have been lucky with the great team members I have worked with, and my manager would quickly sort out any lazy behaviour."





Q 74. What qualities do you feel a successful manager should have?

You could think about the best manager you have ever had, and visualised this person as you answer this question. Your answer probably stems down to two aspects, their leadership style and ability to communicate their vision.

'I had a wonderful manager when I was worked at company x. They had a 'firm –but –fair approach' and lead by example which really motivated the team. Her name was Robyn, and she set a high standard in the quality of work we produced. She would always acknowledge when a job was well done, and was quick to pull someone aside if she thought they could have done better. Which was good, because you knew that this would eventually increase your skill level and ability. She would openly communicate her goals for the department and seek input on how we as a team could achieve the vision. She worked collaboratively, and wasn't afraid to get in and work with a hands on approach.'

Behavioural Questions

Use the STAR formula to construct a strong response to behavioural questions.

Q 75. Tell me about a recent success you were involved with at your previous company.

'We recently had a major order for an important client that needed to be complete and shipped by the end of the weekend. We had been let down by our main supplier and were short of materials. I worked long into the Thursday night contacting other suppliers across the state until we found what we required. With time running short I hired a van and went and collected the material myself. I then organised for an extra two shifts to work the weekend so the order would be completed. I supervised the weekend working as well which was two 16 hour days. We all pulled together as a team and shipped the order on time to the client. They were delighted with our commitment as they had been informed of the struggle we had to complete the order. It resulted in further orders and a great deal of goodwill with the client. They remarked that they felt we were a company that went the extra mile to make sure deliveries were completed as per schedule. '

Such an answer has many positive points that the interviewer can pick up on and assimilate with the role you are applying for. Teamwork, commitment, ingenuity, hard work and dedication are all characteristics that can be transferred between roles. Are you a team player and if so demonstrate how this could be beneficial to the organisation.

Here is another example you could use....

"I recently had a project for a client. I was the project manager tasked with delivering the end product. I organised the team and took the project from the requirements stage through the full project life cycle to completion. The project came in on time on budget and to the client

specifications. There were very few errors during the user acceptance testing and I received plenty of praise for a job well done as the client was thrilled. It was a fixed price contract so there was no room for error or cost over runs.

We had a lessons learned phase at the end of the project as we always do. The results were that there were so many positive lessons we could share with other departments.



Figure 22 Tell me about your successes

Q 76. Tell me about a problem you recently had at your job and what you did to resolve it?

This question allows you to demonstrate your creative problem solving skills, how you analysed the problem and how you reached a successful conclusion.

Firstly do not fall into the trap of suggesting the problem was of your own making, the problem would have to have been caused by someone else and you had been given the responsibility of resolving the issues.

The interviewer will also be looking to see how this situation could be assimilated with the current role you are applying for. The answers which will most impress the interviewer are those that carry real-life examples with them. They allow the interviewer to 'picture' the situation actually taking place.

The problem could be caused from IT system failures, a lack of staff, tight deadlines, a lazy member of staff, insufficient transport or changing client expectations.

Your task would revolve around certain action steps you needed to take in order to resolve the problem. You might have needed to recruit temporary staff, or increase productivity to compensate for lack of staff. The lack of transport may mean you need to procure new transport or find more innovative ways of transporting your goods.

Move on to describe the action you took to resolve the task. The explanation needs to be clear and detailed. Ideally it should demonstrate innovative thinking. If you had a lack of transport, saying so we paid to hire another lorry is fairly obvious and will not sound terribly innovative. If you said you set up a reciprocal arrangement with another firm to share transport at peak load times, saving both firms time and money, then this is innovative and could lead to further collaboration.

The result was reduced costs, savings of time and in the long run a closer collaboration between rival firms for a mutually beneficial arrangement.



Figure 23 - Tell me about problem you had and how you resolved it.

Q 77. How do you deal with difficult colleagues?

A common question especially for line managers which relies on you having some concrete answers pre-prepared for the interview. There isn't much point in saying that you didn't have any. Maybe you didn't but it then shows you have no experience in this area. So you need to recall a situation where there was conflict, however trivial. Firstly keep it upbeat.

'Fortunately I didn't have many difficulties we have a great team spirit. However on this one occasion I remember there were 2 employees who just didn't get along on the team. I interviewed them both separately to get to the bottom of the issues. Eventually the reason turned out to be personal. I offered one person the opportunity to be transferred to a different department. HR were kept informed all the way. In the end I mediated between them and they both agreed not to let it interfere with their working relationship.'



Figure 24 Dealing With Difficult Employees

Always finish with a successful resolution to the problem.

Q 78. When have you faced a difficult problem and how did you provide a successful resolution to it?

Any problem that results in the company from making less profit, or decreases the level of customer service is worth mentioning. You will show them that you have the personal drive to see the issue as a potential risk to the company, and demonstrate the actions you took to overcome the problem. To answer this you need to have a pre-prepared answer which fits the STAR model. Situation, Task, Action, Result. For example.

Situation: I had a difficult employee who appeared not to want to work on my team.

Task: confronted employer to find out what the problem was

Action: One to one meeting to find out problem, which was they did not like a work colleague (for whatever reason).

Result: Moved individual to a different team / different desk / pro-actively resolved their differences.

Q 79. If you had another opportunity, what would you have done differently?

Are you going to criticise the handling of the situation? No of course not. However the interviewer is verifying if you believe you handled the situation well. Be humble but do not admit to making any mistakes.

“With hindsight I firmly believe that all situations could be improved upon. In this particular situation there was a satisfactory outcome but there are always lessons to be learned and this is one of the motivations for doing the job.”

Q 80. Without naming names who has been the most difficult employee to work with and what have you learned from it?

Try to stay upbeat to a very negative question. Employ the third party viewpoint role where the conflict was happening elsewhere.

“I have been fortunate with the colleagues I have worked with and who I have supervised. I have never had any serious falling out with any of them I seem to be able to work well with most people.

I have seen situations where there has been conflict and serious disagreement with other colleagues. As a third party outsider it does appear that patience, respect and the understanding of other peoples opinions and values is important to good relations.”

Q 81. Tell me about a time where you were resourceful at work.

The interviewer is looking for people who use their common sense, and think outside the box.. Follow the S.T.A.R. process. S -Situation T – Task A -Action taken R -Results

Here is an example...



‘Recently we had an important sales presentation team coming in but an hour before the meeting was due to start we had a small flood in the meeting room making it unusable. We had no other meeting rooms in the building so I needed to act fast.

I was on good terms with the management of the office complex across the road. I managed to persuade them to lend us one of their meeting rooms for an hour. I transferred all the equipment across the road just in time. There was little inconvenience and the sales presentation went ahead as scheduled and was a success. As a direct result we got one of our biggest orders that year.”

Figure 25 When Where You Resourceful at work?

Q 82. Give me an example of a situation where you had to deal with a difficult customer.

If you've completed the exercises at the beginning of this guide, you would have some strong examples to use for this question.

The key thing is to give an example where you solved the problem of the customer to everybody's satisfaction and they went away happy.

For example "We had a customer who contacted us with, wanting to use our services, wanting a heavy discount, but to also receive the service before the standard time frames permitted. He was insistent and would not compromise. He was wanting a large order which would generate a significant amount of profit for the company, but if we were to drop the other customer orders and deal with his, then other customers would have to be placed aside. I needed to negotiate with him about the timeframes, and I explained that we already had customers who had paid and booked their order, based on the promise of a timely delivery. I explained that I wanted to keep my word to these customers, but I would commence work on his account immediately, and I gave him my word that I would try to complete it within the shortest



Figure 26 - When have you dealt with a very difficult customer?

possible time. He seemed to calm down after that, and we completed it within a 4 day period, which made the customer very happy, knowing we had so much work on. He then later came back to us for more work to be done, as he appreciated the quality service and product we delivered.'

Q 83. Give me an example of when a dissatisfied customer complained and you had been the one to serve them.

Everyone who deals with customers will come across a dissatisfied customer, whether it was through their own actions or mistakes made on behalf of your company, at some point you will need to apologise for the inconvenience caused, and rectify the situation. Try to keep the example in the third party context eg. someone else made the mistake but you had to sort it out. For example:

"Recently had a customer come in to complain that we had over charged him for an item. It turns out the bar code reader was issuing the wrong price. I apologised on behalf of the store and of course refunded him the money. In such circumstances I like to go that bit further and gave the customer a money-off voucher for the next time he visited. He went away happy and I have seen him in the store on numerous occasions since"always finish with a happy ending!

Q 84. What is the most innovative idea you have come up with at work?

You need follow the Situation, Task, Action, Results (STAR) method of describing what you did. Make sure there is a perceived benefit firmly stated at the end.

“On many occasions, I have taken the initial enquiries about our products and services. Throughout the 2 years I had been serving prospective customers, and fulfilling their order, I noticed that many were asking for additional ‘add – on’ services that we did not provide. I spoke to my manager about this, and suggested that what they customer was asking for would be a simply product to produce, and once it had been created, we could sell it over and over again. I explained that there was a significant demand, and that I knew it would be worth investing the time in to create the product. He approved of the idea, and asked me to project manage the production of the new product, according to the



Figure 27 - What has been the most innovative idea you have presented at work?

specifications of what had been requested. Now the product is sold as a package deal for customers, and the company is making significant increased revenue, without having to do too much more.

This is a question that is often asked and can set one candidate ahead of another. Initiative and innovation are key differentiating characteristics which can elevate a candidate’s application.

Q 85. ‘...Describe a situation where your work was criticised’

Firstly do not say that your work has never been criticised, it just sounds too unlikely. The interviewer cannot disagree but will form the opinion that you are arrogant or a liar.

Focus on an idea that was perhaps criticised, not necessarily your work. Ideas are often considered, criticised then dropped with little or no impact on the organisation. Bad work will result in pain for the organisation. A good answer is to refer to a team meeting where you were all asked to contribute ideas and not necessarily in an area with which you were familiar. Say you suggested something but upon discussion it was felt there were some flaws in the idea and a better idea was adopted.



“.....in our workplace all team members are often encouraged to contribute ideas and provide honest criticism on each other’s ideas. No one in the group takes criticism personally as the objective of the exercise is to explore all possibilities, eliminate the poor suggestions and find the best solution.”

Such an answer accepts that you are not perfect but implies the criticism of your idea ended in a positive outcome.

Figure 28 - When was your work criticised?

Q 86. Tell me about a stressful situation at work and what did you do?

Firstly do not deny you get stressed at work. Actually it allows you demonstrate that your current role is demanding and challenging which can lead to stressful situations. Note that you shouldn't admit to being 'stressed' but you do get involved in 'stressful situations'. There is a big difference.

Your answer will be in two parts. Firstly you have learnt to avoid as many stressful situations as possible due to premeditating ideas, being organised, results driven, and able to delegate tasks appropriately.



Figure 29 Tell me about a stressful situation

A good response in a stressful situation is to stay calm and think about your next steps. Do not rush into a decision in a blind panic but think about what you are going to do. Explain how you assimilate any stressful situation with previous occasions where similar incidents have occurred and show how you have learned from these and cope with them in a calm and professional manner.

Stressful situations often revolve around irate customers so use this as an example.....'I had an irate customer on the phone who was not pleased with the service or goods they had received. I listened to their complaint even though they were shouting loudly.

Once they had finished, I replied back in a calm and controlled voice to reduce the tension, and paraphrased back what they had told me. This demonstrated that they knew they had been heard. I then suggested a resolution which met their requirements. I double-checked that the customer was happy before the call was completed and apologised for causing unnecessary distress even though in truth it wasn't our fault. I believe the customer has returned to do further business with us.

Further answers could include.....

"Stress affects everyone in varying degrees from time to time. As a manager for our department, I lead by example in stressful situations, and when I see someone is anxious I coach them through the situation so they feel more in control and confident to handle these types of difficult challenges. You can't necessarily control the outcome but if you control your own response this is a good start. Here is an example you could use as a basis.

Q 87. Show examples of how you engaged with your team to resolve a problem.

“It is a great team culture where I currently work. We all get along well and regularly have team meetings to share ideas and improve the way we work. About a month ago, we held a workshop over Friday night drinks to problem solve issues, the relaxed atmosphere was conducive to creative problem solving and on Monday we had another 30 minute workshop to confirm which solution we would implement to resolve our issues.’

Covered for each other while colleagues absent. Avoided duplication of effort by re-arranging work patterns for the team so everyone as more efficient. Implemented cross training of skills and knowledge transfer within the team.

Q 88. What has been your greatest achievement to date?

Think about your 3 proudest moments in your career. What comes to mind? Now list how the company or the client benefited from your actions. Any activity where you:

- ❖ Saved money or operating costs,
- ❖ Increased sales or customer service satisfaction survey results.
- ❖ Reduced headcount (without affecting turnover),
- ❖ Introduced a more effective process.

Your answer to this question will be made by telling the story with the STAR formula, ie.

S -Situation T -Task A – Action R – Results

S – Costs were running way over budget

T – To reduce costs and still bring the project in on time

A – Re-planned whole project and re-allocated resources

R – Project came in on time and on budget.

S – New software introduced and no one was trained in it

T – To train everyone in short period of time

A – Worked longer hours to train myself. Became super-user and organised training program for all departmental staff with me doing the training

R – All staff trained and no down time in system processing while moving to utilising new software.



Figure 30 - What has been your greatest achievement?

Q 89. Tell me about a time when you have offered an idea or suggestion that has improved processes and saved your employer on operating costs etc.

This question could also include how you saved time by making a procedure more efficient.

Here you need to give quantified examples. Use the STAR method of Situation, Task, Action taken and Results. Here is an example.....

‘I noticed the vehicles used by the sales representatives were costing us a significant amount of money in maintenance costs and were off the road for longer than I thought was reasonable. I spent some time investigating and discovered that one small mechanic had the contract for the whole vehicle fleet. They clearly could not cope with the work and I believe were over charging.

I took the initiative to get several tenders for the work. The result is I have introduced a system where we do not use just one mechanic but several. This keeps the suppliers competitive and the vehicles are returned much quicker, in fact a 20% reduction in times taken to maintain a vehicle. There has also been a cost saving of 15% in the actual maintenance costs.’

Q 90. Tell me about a time when you worked well under pressure?

This is a commonly asked question. The interviewer is not looking for a straight ‘yes’. They are looking for an example to demonstrate it.

‘There have been a couple of occasions recently where we had a strict client deadline to meet which we had no way of planning for. What made it worse was that we had 3 staff off sick, the only way to overcome this was to briefly response to all new enquiries, so we could focus more on resolving the issues the current clients were needing assistance with. There was a little overtime that we all needed to do, and at the end of the week, all current and prospective clients had been responded to, we received no complaints!

“We have a new chief executive and he raised the sales targets by 50%. This is a very aggressive increase but we met the target despite being under pressure.”
You can see how telling the story and putting into a context will allow you to demonstrate this competence. ‘



Figure 31 Do you work well under pressure?

Questions about University

Q 91. What is your greatest memory of your university days?

The interviewer is looking for your personality to shine through, and is curious about your character, they will be observing your facial expressions, and how your eyes light up with enthusiasm when you talk about your university experiences. Of course your academic achievements are important but any other achievements outside of the academic world which you are proud of would be a good reply. 'Probably the strong relationships I developed would be my greatest memory, that, and working on a difficult project in subject x, where we had to achieve this fairly difficult task....'

Q 92. Why are your grades on the low side?

Turn the negative into a positive. If there is an obvious weakness make sure you have a good explanation which can demonstrate a positive trait.

"Yes, my grades are perhaps lower than other candidates, but I had to fund my own education by working 40 hours a week for 3 years while at university. So given the circumstances personally I am proud of the grades I achieved. You know that I will carry that dedication and enthusiasm through into any role."



Figure 32 - Why were your grades low?

Q 93. What is your strongest subject?

Ideally it will be the subjects that match with the job. You can suggest that you received excellent grades in this subject because it was one of the most interesting ones for you, and that is why you are pursuing a career that will use more of this knowledge and skill set.

Q 94. What is your weakest subject?

'I have spent different amounts of time studying for each subject and so there will be variations in grades as some subjects I found easier than others, for example, I am more of an analytically minded person, so the more creative subjects such as x and y, I did not do as well in. That's why I am not looking at getting into anything creative, I guess, I believe I am an ideal candidate for this role, as it is analytically based.'

Q 95. Did you make a contribution back to your university in a voluntary capacity?

Did you help a cause, were you a member of a group or organise something outside of your curricular activities? If you didn't volunteer for anything, explain how your schedule was full to capacity with part time work and study commitments.

Q 96. What did you enjoy most at university?

'I enjoyed my course very much, meeting like minded individuals who all had a desire to succeed. I also enjoyed the social activities I was a member of a few groups such as xy and z, and this gave me a very rounded education and set of experiences'.

Q 97 (a). You chose to study 'x', why did you choose this subject?

Articulate why you were initially interested, and after studying the degree and the subjects, why you are even more interested today.

' By choosing a commerce degree, I knew that I would be eligible for a broad range of roles within the business sector, which is where I knew I wanted to be. Now that I have studying commerce, I am even more intent on a career in accounting because I think these skills are fundamental to any business success.'

Q 97 (b). How do you think your degree will help you in this job?

Give details about the educational aspects of your degree and how you believe they assimilate. You are unlikely to know precisely what role you will be playing in the job so keep your answers broad.



If your degree is in an unrelated subject you need to base your answer on the broader advantages of a good education. Talk about how you maybe had to work to get through university, the sacrifices you made and the determination you demonstrated to achieve your degree. If it was a particularly outstanding grade then highlight this.

An interview is just as much about your personality as your skills and experience. Clearly the interviewer has accepted the degree is in a non-relevant area but is looking for your attributes as a person to shine.

Q 98 (a). Do you have a view of where your career will take you?

It is early days and so you can be a little vague unless you have a specific goal in mind. The interviewer is looking at a 10+ years time span. It is worth re-iterating your desire to be satisfied and challenged in your next job, and to be perhaps rewarded with a progressive career path.

Q98 (b). What career goals do you have?

This is a 5-10 year view of where you see yourself. Split the answer into two parts. What would you like to achieve for yourself and also for the company. Just be honest and give a clear answer of your personal ambitions. You need to be realistic in what you can achieve in terms of promotion, many graduates come out of university thinking they can be a manager within a couple of years, which is not likely, even when they have studied management related subjects.



Figure 33 - What are your career goals?

Q 99. Why have you chosen this particular field of work?

Be honest and show enthusiasm for the subject. Do not be tempted to mention the fact that your primary motivation is money. An interviewer wants to know what skills and attributes you are bringing to the organisation. Your pursuit of money will not impress them one bit, even though it is likely to be true.

Q 100. Why did you apply to this organisation's graduate program?



Use a third party endorsement..... 'I have spoken to a few friends and colleagues who all spoke highly of your organisation and the great career path which you can offer.'

You might want to add something about the cultural side of the organisation, its dynamic environment and commitment to excellence. Make sure you have a good answer prepared for this which again does not mention money.

Figure 34 - Why do you want this graduate program?

Q 101. You've just completed a masters degree, aren't you over qualified for this role?

The implication is that you will become bored and leave quickly when you see something better.

'I applied for this position because I believe it will be a great long-term opportunity for me to gain good experience and I see myself making a strong contribution to the organisation. The fact that I appear to be over qualified will mean I can bring a high level of knowledge and aptitude to apply to the job. I won't get bored and be looking for a better position. I see this role as a good fit for my skills and ambitions.'

Q 102. Have you ever had a conflict with a superior or University staff member?

You need to accept that confrontation happens. The interviewer will not believe you if you deny conflict takes place. Anyway they are looking to see how you deal with this so by saying you don't is unacceptable.

We have discussed this in previous questions but when the question is phrased like this one of the key points to bring out is the fact that you listen to the facts and ascertain the other person's point of view and remain calm.

You need to back up your claims with a suitable example, a successful conclusion and underline the fact that the disagreement was not personal and has not affected your working relationship.



Figure 35 - Aren't you overqualified for this role?



HIGHER LEVEL POSITIONS - Questions About Leadership, Strategy & People Management



Q 103. What are 3 words that would describe your leadership style? Can you please give me examples of when you have demonstrated those 3 attributes within the last 5 years.

Q 104. How would you describe your management style?

Q 105. Have you played a mentor role to a less experienced colleague? If so, please tell me how you helped this person develop.



Q 106. Tell me about a strategy you designed and implemented to improve operations and efficiency levels?

Q 107. Have you created or introduced a product or service that leveraged existing knowledge and systems? If so, please give some brief details, and how the company benefited.

Q 108. How was your performance evaluated in your last role? What challenges did you face in order to deliver upon the expectations?

Q 109. Can you please tell me about the most complex problem you have had to solve, that involved strategy design, planning and implementation.



Q 110. What type of formal presentations have you done over the last 2 years? Can you tell me about the type of audience you presented to, the purpose of the talk, and the outcome of your presentation?

Q 111. What are 3 things you are most proud of in your career to date?

Crazy Questions That Are Still Asked Today

There are some Vague, Dumb – No-Win Questions that are still getting asked by some interviewers today.

Scan through these questions, and if you get asked any of them, we have giving you some suggestions on how to deal with the awkwardness of the moment. Inevitably, these questions will raise the red flag in your mind, and the more of these types of questions that get fired at you, the less likely you are to be interested in the job – as you wouldn't want to be working alongside anyone like the interviewer sitting in front of you.

Sometimes you will experience an interviewer who is new to the job, and they will ask vague questions that could leave you feeling confused about what the relevance is. The best way to deal with these types of questions is to simply state that you are not sure what they are wanting to know.



Figure 36 - Some Questions will be very tricky

Ask them to rephrase the question, or if you think you know what information they are seeking, you could use your initiative and ask them to confirm they want to know about x, y and z.

Be careful how you deal with these difficult questions, as the interviewer might be ignorant in the fact that they have not asked a clear question. They are probably learning on the job.

The other very real possibility is that they are trying to see how you deal with

ambiguity. It could even be a test to see how you deal with difficult situations.

There are some other questions that you simply can't give an accurate answer on, because you can't see into the future, you have as much idea as they would.....

These questions may be testing your resolve, and your strength of character.

Some other interviewers will ask illegal and / or politically incorrect questions. Any interviewer who asked these types of questions is playing power games, and doesn't see the interview as a two way street. In this case, I would sit the interview out, just to get practice, and then write the job opportunity off your list of potential positions you are interested in pursuing..

Q 112. How long would it take for you to start making a real contribution to the organisation?

There is no point in blurting out an answer here because the contribution could be anywhere and you could go off in the wrong direction. Bat the question back to get a more precise idea and allow yourself some time to think.

“In what particular area of my responsibilities did you have in mind?”

“Of course there will be a short learning curve while I get up to speed but in the past I have prided myself on being a quick learner who can make an effective contribution in a short space of time. I see this opportunity as no different although I accept it will be a challenge.”

Prepare an example of how you had a similar situation where you had to learn a new skill quickly.

Q 113. If You Were Starting Out Again In Your Career Are There Any Decisions You Would Make Differently?

Rubbish question but play along. The interviewer is running out of things to talk about! Split the answer between work and non-work related items. Yes there are plenty of things I would do differently. Every day is a learning experience and I have made plenty of mistakes. Fortunately I have learnt from them and they have been character building and put me in the strong position I feel I have now achieved. I am fortunate that the career choices I have made have been the right ones for me so I have no regrets on that score.

This is also true of my personal life. For every disappointment there have been 10 fantastic experiences. I would not be the person I am today without the balance of having a few failures to compensate for the successes.

Q 114. If you got this job how long before you expect to be promoted?

Tricky question to answer honestly. Most of us want to be promoted as soon as possible. But you must not be specific on what timescales you are looking to achieve this in. The danger is that your expectations do not meet those of the employer. Either you are too ambitious or not ambitious

enough. Also your route to promotion may be at the expense of the interviewer who will often be your manager.

Keep the answer generic. I would look to prove my worth to the company in terms of the skills I bring to the role. Being promoted is something I would look to earn and I would get there through hard work and delivering on my role. I would only expect to be promoted if I have earned it.



Figure 37 - What do they want me to say to all these vague questions?



Figure 38 - What if another candidate had better skills than you?

Q 115. If I said for example another candidate had more experience than you how would you react?

A less ridiculous comparison question. However still don't be drawn on making comparisons. It is important to show your application in the best most positive light not discuss other real or fictitious candidates.

'There is little to be gained from me trying to compare myself with other candidates. All I know is that I have these qualities both job related and behavioural (then list them with examples). I am sure I would be able to apply these effectively to the direct benefit of the organization as I have done with my present employer'

Q 116. What do you think of the Union here?

This is again dangerous territory because it is unclear what the interviewer is thinking. Do they like unions?

"I cannot comment specifically on this union but unions in general do serve a useful purpose as long as they are run with accountability and clear rules and regulations"

Q 117. Have you ever refused to do something at work that you were asked to do?

Straight rebuttal. No interviewer wants to hear that you may be a trouble maker or cannot take direction? But remember there is a way of saying things. Do not say 'NO!'.....say 'I can't recall that happening. I have always had a great working relationship with my supervisor and always respected their authority and we treated each other with great respect.' See how it paints a more positive image. A 'No' sounds very harsh and is likely to be followed by a short stony silence.

Of course keep smiling even when the questions are a bit negative. It certainly helps in portraying the correct positive image.

Q 118. Candidate x and y have these skills how do you feel your skills match their performance?

A ridiculous comparison question. Don't be drawn on making comparisons.

However it does raise an important point in the preparation you need to do. Know your strengths but job related and personality related. These should be part of a 3-4 sentence personal summary statement which summarises why you should get the job.

'I cannot comment on the other candidates and their abilities. All I know is that I have these qualities both job related and behavioural (then list them with examples).'



Figure 39 - Candidate x and y have these skills, do you think you can match their performance?

Q 119. What would you most like not to do in this role?

Dangerous question. The interviewer is probing for things that you didn't previously like and then they can ask a follow on question about why you didn't like them. Beware of this trap.

Turn the question round and give a 'model answer'. 'In an ideal world.....I would like to avoid any bureaucracy or red-tape which can delay decisions. Like anyone I am always keen for good progress to be made at all times and everything to run smoothly'.or perhaps you have an example such as this.... 'I would like to avoid the situation in the last role where we had tight deadlines and 3 of my staff went off on long term sick with the winter flu last year. Although we achieved our targets it was only through hard effort, team-work and long hours'.

See how these answers portray you in a good light and turn a negative into a positive. Again they are also 'closed answers' discouraging further probing on the same subject'.

Q 121. Are you best years of work behind you?

Of course they aren't.....errrr but don't say it like that! 'I am very pleased with the past achievement in my career and in particular (list them). However I view every day as a new challenge and in particular this opportunity would allow me to achieve greater heights. I believe my experience stands me in good stead for future challenges''



Figure 40 - Are Your Best Years Behind You?

Q 120. If you were hiring a person for this job, what would you look for?

This is another opportunity to talk about YOUR positive attributes. You need to answer in a way that lets the interviewer know you have these traits. There is no point in listing ten items that a candidate should possess and then the interviewer has to ask whether you have these or not. They want you to tell them that you have these qualities! So tell them! Here are some examples of how to reply.

In my current role I have found that being organised, conscientious and an effective time manager has resulted in me exceeding my targets. Often I find that if you have an organised plan of activities and assign time limits to each I am more focused and an effective manager.

A detailed knowledge of the companies product ranges while not necessarily required has enable me to spot issues in the manufacturing process and also offer valuable suggestions which have resulted in increased productivity gains.



Figure 41 - Are you looking forward to retirement?

Q 122. Are you looking forward to the day you retire?

Similar question 120 except worded more aggressively. Refute any allegations of slacking off and describe the new challenges that you are looking forward to facing.

Q 123. Do you think job references are a waste of time?

Fairly stupid question if asked however keep smiling..... "I think they serve a purpose as they give an independent viewpoint of a persons character and skills."

Q124. Has anyone ever refused to give you a job reference and why?

"No, I cannot recall this ever happening.".....even if they have say No! If you say 'Yes' you can virtually kiss their job goodbye!

Q 125. Do you think you have exceeded your career aims?

"When I started in this career I set myself quite high goals which I achieved. I am pleased with my accomplishments to date but I am also keen to continue improving and I am always looking for new challenges."

Q 126. You seem to be a bit young for this job.

If the interviewer really thought you were too young then they wouldn't be interviewing you. However they may have concerns even though they think you have something to offer.

You will again need to fall back on your personal skills and experience going through them and matching them off against the job description. Explain what you bring to the role.

As for your age, politely disagree with the interviewer that although you are younger than other candidates it does not mean you do not have the necessary skills. After all it is up to them to decide.



Figure 42 - You seem a bit young for this position

Turn the question round and say youth is an advantage as you are open to fresh ideas, probably have more energy and ambition and are likely to be more satisfied in the role.

On most occasions it is the personality traits such as enthusiasm drive, team work and professionalism that will override experience. Of course a good combination of both is ideal! Play on these traits if your experience is lacking.

Q 127. What do you think the organisation will expect from you in terms of responsibilities?

The interviewer is looking for personal skills. Hard work, enthusiasm, professionalism, passion, honesty. Additionally you can express your

enthusiasm for the companies products and services and comment on how you see your responsibilities as adding value or increasing sales/profits/turnover. Of course your answer will need to be tailored to the situation.

Figure 43 - Best to just answer these questions as best I can and then get out of this interview room as quickly as I can



Close your answer by asking the interviewer if that was what they were expecting or asking what they feel the main responsibilities are apart from those listed on the job description.

Q 128. Do you have any reservations about joining this company?

Of course you are not going to say you have any reservations. Then its simply a rerun of the answers above detailing the positive aspects of the role and the new company.

A good additional light-hearted retort is to say you will miss your old colleagues, this implies you have a great team atmosphere where you currently work. Its positive and suggests you are a team player.

Q 129. The new role means you will need to relocate, are you okay with this, will it have an impact on your family commitments?

Yes. You have read the job description and are aware of this. Leave no doubts in the interviewers mind. This is a big commitment and upheaval. Presumably you already knew of the consequences of this.

Q 130. Does money motivate you?



Firstly, You need to answer yes, because otherwise they will offer you a lower salary than they first allocated for. Even if you are not motivated by money you need to say yes because this is what the interviewer is expecting to hear.

Secondly you need to add that money is not the primary motivating factor for this job but in general money is of course a motivating factor. List the factors in the questions above.

Q 131. What as an organisation can we offer that is better than your current employer?

It is asking for a direct comparison between your current employer and your future employer.

An interviewer wants to hear that you are a valued member in your current / previous role. You have worked for an organisation that has trained you to a high level and you have been providing a strong contribution to their skilled workforce. They hope to leverage these skills in their organisation.

A typical answer which deals with such a comparison should

read.....

‘My current organisation has been a great career move for me I have learned many new skills eg. x. There is a great team ethic and I feel I have made a strong contribution to their sales team / office / project team etc.

However I see your organisation and the role on offer as a new challenge which can leverage my skills and allow me to challenge myself set new goals and further my career in a way that the current organisation perhaps doesn’t offer.”

Of course this answer needs to be tailored to meet your particular circumstances. Start by listing what you like about your current organisation and the experience you have gained. Compare this with the list of skills and benefits you expect to find in the new organisation. Use this list to tailor your answer.

Again, stay clear of talking about money. The sub text of this question and so many others like it is the interviewer is asking ‘What’s in it for me?’

You should be replying “I am making a contribution and this is how.....” include examples of how you can make the contribution, which backs up your claims.

By saying you want to leverage your skills in the new role and show how you can make a strong contribution is precisely what the interviewer wants to hear.



Figure 44 - What can we offer you?

If you say or even imply the reason for the new job is that you are looking for more money or additional benefits, then this does not imply you are making a contribution to the new organisation.

You are in fact saying this is “what is in it for me” and does not address the interviewers needs!

Note it is probably fine to ignore the comparison with your old employer in your answer. By just listing the positives of the new employer you will highlight the benefits of the role and appear to be a better candidate. Whenever you make a comparison avoid saying anything negative. Even if it is for a good reason it makes you sound like a whiner.

Q 132. What was your salary in your last job?

Don't be tempted to lie they will find out if need be. Ideally the salary will be 10-20% lower than the role you are going for.

If it is lower than this range then you need to add in the benefits of overtime, car, health insurance etc. and refer to the salary as the package.

If the salary is too low then the interviewer will feel this indicates you are over playing your experience and position.

The positive thing about being asked this question is that it shows the interviewer is serious about considering you for the job.

Q 133. Have you seen our website? What did you think of it?

I hope you have at least looked at the website. Just comment on what you saw. It is difficult to know where this type of question is leading. It is a strange way of finding out if you have shown an interest by asking if you have looked at the website.

Maybe you can enquire whether it was written in house or by an external company just to see where the question leads and to avoid any uncomfortable pauses in the interview.



Figure 45 - Have you seen our new website? What do you think of it?



Q 134. Do you feel your career stagnated in your last job?

This is a tricky, negative question which needs to be avoided. Do not start our answer with the word 'No'. You need to be consistent with all the questions as to why you are thinking of moving jobs. This is just another way of phrasing the same question.

"The position was a very rewarding one which allowed me the freedom, responsibility and challenges which were suitable at the time. However if I stay at the same employer I may find the opportunities for advancement in terms of challenges, salary and career may be limited. Also it may be restrictive in the amount of new experience I may gain from staying in the same role."

Q 135. What do you dislike about your current supervisor?

The interviewer is probing for signs of antipathy. Don't fall for the bait. Remember do not criticise other people. Keep it upbeat with some positive example of trust and responsibility.

"I am fortunate, my supervisor and me have a great working relationship. He trusts me fully to deputise when they are away. We have a great one to one relationship which allows me to air my views freely. One of the things I will miss in a new role is the level of trust that currently exists between us.

Q 136. What did you not like about your last employer?

OK, so the interviewer has asked you to say something negative about your employer. You need to turn this round so that it makes it sound like the negative is in fact a positive!

"I used to get a bit annoyed when I noticed inefficiencies in the processing workflows and controls. A number of times I made suggestions as to improvements that could be made which would have saved money but the ideas were effectively ignored."

"I always tried my utmost to make sure that all customers were treated fairly and honestly but I noticed a malaise creeping in which meant that some staff didn't always try their best to meet the exacting standards required. I feel this reflected badly on everyone."

Q 137. What did you think of your last employer?

Different question to the previous one. No need to say anything bad. Keep it upbeat listing the good point about the organisation and the career path that you took, citing examples of progression and salary increases and how they reward success with merit and look after their staff and the great team environment.

Q 138. What did you think of your last supervisor?

More of a personal question but again take the chance to emphasise the positive aspects of your relationship.

Discuss what you like. For example how your supervisor delegated responsibility to you and recognised your achievements and encouraged you.

Add in examples of how your supervisor noticed these successes to reinforce the image of someone who achieved success.

If you were good friends then say so it all paints a picture of harmony.

Q 139. If you didn't get this job how would you react?

The interviewer is running out of

meaningful questions here. Suggests they

are thinking of offering you the role but are still unsure. Still keep talking positively.

"I would of course be disappointed. This really is a role I am confident I would enjoy for a number of reasons and I would definitely be able to make a strong contribution to the organisation.

However everyone faces disappointments so I would learn from any failure move on and try harder next time. I believe I am someone who is always positive and looks to the future for further opportunities."



Figure 46 - How would you feel if you got offered this job?

Q140. Are you planning on having children?

Illegal question. Treat it as such and don't answer it except with a bland rebuttal.

"My career is important to me and I will be committed to this role if I am offered it. Having children is not something I am currently contemplating."

Q141. What age / religion / sexual orientation are you?

Illegal question again!.....does this interviewer want to face a lawsuit?

You do not have to answer this, however most people would be comfortable answering these questions. If you choose to answer them be honest and be proud of who you are.

Q142. Have you ever come close to losing your temper?

Need to tread a bit more carefully. You would not be human if you didn't get angry inside. Play down the



Figure 47 - Are you planning on having children?

answer. It is bordering on negative territory so try to close the question off.

“There are times when like everyone I have been frustrated and annoyed. But I like to maintain a professional approach to all such situations. Fortunately I have never lost my temper.

Q143. Have you ever lost your temper outside of work?

“Fortunately not recently, but I can get irate like anyone when I see injustice or unfairness.”
Important to keep this line of questioning brief. Also it would be unnatural to deny you have ever lost your temper outside of work. Referring to any recent events side steps having to discuss this further.

Q 144. What would you do differently if you were given your manager’s job?

Looking for green field thinking here which shows you can make the step up if required. Keep the answer as always in positive territory.



Figure 48 - What would you do differently if you had your manager's job?

You specifically need to look at what benefits you could bring to the role. Some suggestions would be improve communication, reduce inefficiencies in processes, offer more delegation, go after greater sales opportunities, improve the customer satisfaction experience or reduce costs.

You do need to of course tailor the answer to your specific situation. However the key component of the answer is the benefits you would bring to the organisation. As mentioned before if you can 'sell the benefits' you bring you will have a much better chance of impressing.

Q 145. Is the customer always right?

“Our business is built on ensuring our customers are satisfied and come back time and again with repeat business. So my focus is always to ensure that the customer is happy and feels they have received a good product and service. That to me is the essence of good business. The customer is not always right but that doesn’t necessarily mean we ignore their wishes.

I have dealt with many situations where the customer has considered themselves to be right when they clearly were not. But I pride myself on the fact that we reached a satisfactory solution which meant they remained a good customer.”

Q 146. What types of things do you dislike?

This could be inside or outside of work. Outside of work makes this a virtually irrelevant question. If you are discussing dislikes inside of work then you need to be careful. Don’t want to list an endless



series of negative statements. List some dislikes that everyone hates and so build empathy with the interviewer.

“There isn’t much I dislike. Although I do get frustrated by waste, inefficiencies and needless bureaucracy.”

You then need to add examples of where you have overcome such things and improved this for the better for everyone.”

“There was once a frustrating series of forms that needed to be filled in to get a process completed. I saw how this could be streamlined, suggested this to my line manager and the end result was time and cost savings for the whole department.”

Q 147. Give me an example of something you are not very proud of?

Another tricky little question which smells of negativity. Learn to turn these types of questions round to your advantage and ideally reference an experience which was a long time ago.

“I worked for company and a few years ago and 2 of the employees in my team were caught stealing credit card details. As we were a small organisation the whole organisation got labelled badly not just my team and it was in the press. We recovered the money and no one lost out financially but it was an uncomfortable time. I had been proposing a tightening of the procedures around cash handling for some time and as soon as this happened they were put into immediate effect. No such instances have come to light since.’

Q 148. Are you a leader or a follower?

Adapt your answer to reflect the role. However it would almost certainly need to be biased towards being a leader. Don’t sound arrogant. Phrases like ‘born leader’ will not fit very well in your answer. Use the third party reference techniques to describe yourself.

“I believe people would describe me as a leader. But also as someone who will listen to the group opinion. For example in a meeting I will make a decisive decision based on all the responses from the team members, that way I have the full benefit of everyone’s knowledge to make an informed decision.”

Maybe add an example outside of work.

“Outside of work in social situations I tend to be the one people look to for a group decision. I am usually comfortable with this role.”

Q 149. How many days sickness did you have last year?

It might be impossible for the interviewer to find out how many days you actually took, because of Australian privacy laws, but if it was a substantial number of sick days you took, you could turn the question round slightly and look at your whole career, if the numbers are better and say that last year was the exception.

Additionally you should add you like your job, your motivated to work and would ideally love nothing better than to have no days sickness if this was possible.

Give examples of when you felt really unwell (not because of a late night drinking session) and you struggled into work because there was an important deadline to meet and the team depended on you.

Q 150. Do you lose your temper?

A categorical denial is the only option. No one wants a hot-head in the workplace.

“Fortunately I have never had occasion to. I firmly believe that working through any issues calmly is much more preferable for everybody. I do n’t see any reason to get so angry as to lose ones temper.”

Q 151. Are you demanding in your style of management?

“I expect high standards of myself and my team. I try to lead by example and expect this level of professionalism from my staff. I have found that this is an effective way of setting a solid benchmark for the high standards I expect.”



Figure 49 – Apart from when you get questions like these, Do you ever lose your temper?

Q 152. Do you require close supervision or micro-managing??

“I pride myself on being very self-motivated and an enthusiastic worker. My ability to work un-supervised are traits that are often mentioned at the reviews I have with my manager.”

Q 153. Would you ever cancel your annual holiday if it was really necessary to complete an important task?

No one would and equally would not be expected to cancel their holiday. You are not a door mat so don’t act like one. “I like to maintain a healthy work and family life balance. I do not envisage such a situation arising. If it did I would still take the holiday but ensure measures were in place to cover my absence so the company was not affected. Part of my job is to ensure there is sufficient cover in place in case of planned or unplanned absences”

Q 154. What do you think you will like least about this job?

Just bat this question back with a simple answer. “There are aspects of every job that people prefer. I suppose there will be administration tasks which can be dull but are a necessary part of the job.”

Q 155. Do you prefer small organisations to larger ones?

There is no right or wrong answer, the interviewer is looking for your reasoning behind the answer. Stay neutral and list the benefits of both. If you have worked in both then say so. Discuss what you liked about both. The lack of politics in a small organisation, the team spirit was better. Large organisation will tend to have better training, a better structured career path and more opportunities for advancement.

Q 156. What Is Your Current Manager's Biggest Weakness?

The old adage about avoiding criticising other people still rings true. Don't get into discussing anything negative as it sounds like whining. Keep the answer neutral and upbeat.

"My boss and I get along great and they have many fine attributes. As for weaknesses I presume they do have some but they are not obvious and I suppose they are no different from anyone else. We all have some limitations."

Q 157. What difficulties do you think you will face in the new job?

If you list a number of difficulties then these are obvious signs of weakness. The follow up question will certainly be how you are going to cope with this. Keep our reply generic in nature as you do not want to discuss areas of weakness.

"I presume my greatest challenge will be the new software/processes/procedure/sales environment/product....But in my career there have been occasions where similar situations have happened and I have adapted easily. For example when I joined my current role there was a completely new product and sales territory. So this is not a new situation for me. Being adaptable is one of my strengths".

Q 158. Have you ever had a period in your career where your performance fell year on year?

Obviously you want to say no here. If the person asking the question does not know whether you met your targets then you can sidestep any failings. Keep the answer general if you have had a rocky period when your performance wasn't as good. Always end your answer on a positive note giving yourself another chance to shine.

"Fortunately throughout my career I have had a continued upward progression in my performance to the point today where I am the top performing employee person in the region with a proud record of x....."



Figure 50 - Have you ever had a period where your performance fell year on year?

Q 159. The advertised salary is x but would you accept less money in order to secure this role?

Need to push back on this.

“I am very interested in the role and would be delighted to be offered it. However any salary negotiations would need to be carefully considered especially if it was less than the amount advertised. Are you saying you are going to offer me a job?”

Q 160. What is your typical working week in hours?

Whatever it takes to get the job done. However be careful not to suggest you work long hours purely because you are inefficient.

“I like to think I am an effective and efficient worker who gets through a full workload each week. However there are times when I need to work late and weekends and this is fine. This is often due to uneven demands on my time. I will put whatever effort it takes to complete my role.”

It is probably worth replying by asking what hours are expected. When the interviewer replies it allows you a second opportunity to agree that this is fine and to reinforce your commitment. They are only asking the question because they have a concern and you need to remove it.

Q 161. What do you think the organisation will expect from you in terms of responsibilities?



Figure 51 - What do you believe the company will expect from you?

The interviewer is looking for personal skills. Hard work, enthusiasm, professionalism, passion, honesty. Additionally you can express your enthusiasm for the companies products and services and comment on how you see your responsibilities as adding value or increasing sales/profits/turnover. Of course your answer will need to be tailored to the situation.

Close your answer by asking the interviewer if that was what they were expecting or asking what they feel the main responsibilities are apart from those listed on the job description.

Q 162. Are you going to be ambitious to succeed in the role?

Over ambition suggests that you will not stay in the role too long before looking to move onwards and upwards. Under ambition suggests you are lacking enthusiasm or drive. A poor reply will cause you to look out of place so reply in a neutral way.

'This is a fantastic opportunity for me. If offered the role I will be ambitious to succeed and look forward to performing to the best of my ability with drive and enthusiasm.'

Q 163. Has your career been a success to date?

Another question that is a bit non-descript. Still the interviewer wants to probe you on how you think and so do not provide a lame answer.

Success can only really be measured by the individual. You may regard success as being content and happy in the workplace. After all the working day is a large part of your life. You may view success through job satisfaction. Someone else may look at the monetary rewards. Keep the answer generic.

Very few people actually think or would admit to their career having been a failure. Say "I personally feel that I have been successful to date and I am more than happy with my

career progression. I have always put emphasis on enjoying the job as well as career progression. My track record of success is something I am proud of".

Q 164. How are you going to manage your child care responsibilities if you are travelling away?

This is probably an illegal question.

"I have considered this and have the necessary support network to help with child care if it is required."

Q 165. What do you dislike about the role being offered?

This is an unusual question but reeks of negativity. Keep the answer neutral by saying there is no elements that appear to be of any concern. Additionally keep the reply short and closed. You do not want to dwell on any negative conversation.

Try to keep the reply upbeat by saying you are thrilled to be considered for such an exciting position which is a great opportunity to advance your career.

Figure 52 - You know what, after all those tricky questions, they actually offered me the job, now I am thinking "do I really want to work for a company like that?"





Shatter Nervousness in 3 Easy Steps



After completing the exercises in this guide, and scanning through the interview answers, you will have an overwhelming feeling that you are ready for the interview.

Preparation is also the key to shattering the nerves, so you walk into that interview room confidently and ready to deal with any question they fire at you.

You know that the key purpose to an interview is:

- a) To verify the details on your resume and job application.
- b) To decide if you have the personal attributes to fit within their existing team.

The interviewer won't be able to see your true personality shine in the interview if you are distracted by your own feelings and thoughts, so its best to leave all your anxiety at home, hold your chin up high and believe that you really have a lot to offer this organisation.

Your confidence will come through, and the interviewer will be very attracted to getting to know more about you when you are your natural, relaxed and easy going self.

Be consciously aware that in the interview, you will be in a 'heightened' state of awareness, your mind is racing as much as your heart might be.

Use every power you have in your mind to slow your thoughts right down so you don't panic.

When water is offered, say yes, as water helps you to calm down. Don't drink caffeinated drinks before or during the interview.

1. Prepare for the Questions and Address your Weak Points.

You need to be honest with yourself and look at what aspects of your application that are potential pitfalls and could cause you to be nervous. So often a candidate will enter the interview room with half a dozen things on their mind which they know are potential weaknesses. They hope that the interviewer will not address these areas. The correct preparation can address these.

These weaknesses generally fall into two categories. Firstly there is the weaknesses in your resume or career history. If you lack experience or have had gaps in your employment then you need to be able to answer these questions. There is no point in entering an interview just hoping that these will not be addressed. You will spend so much energy fretting on this that you will harm your overall performance.

Every weakness that you have in your application can be answered in a way that either reduces the impact or turns a negative situation into a positive aspect of your application.

Your second weakness may be in answering difficult questions, which will be resolved once you've completed the exercises in this guidebook. The key to any successful interview is in the preparation.

Do not assume that the interview will go well and you will avoid all the areas of concern. Make sure you are properly prepared and so you do not have to take the chance.

Every candidate's situation is different so your replies will need to be tailored to highlight your most relevant examples.



Figure 53 - Complete the Activities in this Guide and You will Be Confident

2. Concentrate on Your Breathing & This Relaxation Technique

Before the interview, practice breathing in controlled long deep breaths. This is the most effective way to reduce your racing heartbeat. The body needs oxygen because the heart is pumping, so by controlling your deep breathing, you will reduce your heartbeat which will make you feel more calm and relaxed. Inhale deeply and then exhale slowly.

Do these deep breathing exercises immediately before the interview is going to commence, for at least 3 minutes. Sit on a bench around the corner and just relax.

Combine this with thinking of a peaceful image perhaps a quiet beach or a place in the countryside. Or imagine yourself soaring quietly like a bird. It will take your mind off of the interview. These types of relaxation exercises are very effective for reducing your heartbeat and reducing nerves.



Figure 54 - A calm mind and deep breathing are essential to controlling nerves

3. Practice positive visualisation

Nerves at interviews are universally caused by a negative fear, a fear of something going wrong. This negative image compounds itself and the situation just gets worse. You need to break the cycle and re-program your sub-conscious mind to believe in a successful outcome.

To do this you will need to visualise a successful interview. Pick out a small journey of positive events that you 'can see'. This is practised in the days prior to the interview but can be reinforced moments before the interview starts.

An example of a successful visualisation may take the following path....

Imagine yourself entering the interview room bursting with self-confidence. Not arrogance but deep self-confidence in yourself and your ability. Imagine yourself giving a firm handshake a beaming smile and strong eye contact.

The interviewer is now smiling. Previously they were nervous but you have immediately put them at ease. Now visualise yourself getting a great feeling from answering a question well. Feel the warm glow of satisfaction inside you. Imagine the picture as bright orange. See the large ball of light. Imagine a second question, again the same perfect answer. Picture the interviewer smiling, nodding their head replying 'that is a great answer'. Expand the picture and the bright colour so it fills the whole interview room.

Imagine shaking the interviewers hand to say goodbye at the end of the interview. See them smiling. Imagine yourself exiting the building feeling delighted with your performance. Imagine yourself glowing with pride at a 'job well done'.

Follow this route in your mind. You should feel very positive at the end of this exercise. Make sure that you can really feel the warm orange glow and feel the pride in your performance. These are all positive images or visualisations that you need to program into your subconscious mind.

Then take this journey and exaggerate it further. Increase the size of the smiles. The warm glow the feeling of puffed up pride. Imagine yourself to be the person you would like to be. Someone who is self-assured, talented, answering questions with ease, giving model answers. Ideally these visualisations should be done while you are sitting comfortably with your eyes shut.



Figure 55 - Visualise the perfect interview happening in your mind