



The Job Interview

A Cochise County Workforce Development Career Center Workshop

Special recognition goes to Maricopa Workforce Development
for the creation of this workshop

Cochise County Workforce Development locations

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Hours are from 8am – 5 pm Monday through Friday

THE JOB INTERVIEW

Great Expectations

Or

***“What the Dickens do Employers
Want?”***

- ◆ Learn the Anatomy of an Interview
- ◆ Checklist of what to take with you
- ◆ Body image and body language
- ◆ What employers want
- ◆ Secrets of being hired
- ◆ Tough interview questions
- ◆ Fears of the employer
- ◆ How an interview is evaluated
- ◆ Power opening and Power closing
- ◆ The interview follow-up

ANATOMY OF AN INTERVIEW

Remember: Every employer is looking for
The Most Cost-Effective Employee

I. Entrance

- ◆ Appearance/Packaging
- ◆ Eye Contact
- ◆ Smile
- ◆ Handshake
- ◆ Use of interviewer's name
- ◆ Power Opening
- ◆ Checklist:

Resumes	Driver's License	Black Pen(s)
Social Security Card	Reference list:	Note Paper
Letters of Recommendation	Names, Job Titles , Addresses and phone numbers	

II. Questions Asked of You

- ◆ Practice or role-play questions prior to actual interview.
- ◆ Arm yourself with lists of the strengths, talents, and attributes that you possess.

III. Questions You Ask

Plus any additional information that makes you look good

- ◆ Omit questions related to money, benefits, time off, until after you receive a job offer.
- ◆ Last Question: When will you be making your decision?
How will I be notified? (May I call you?)

IV. Closing

- ◆ Use employer's name.
- ◆ Thank him/her for their time.
- ◆ Assure them that you would be an asset and/or want very much to work there.

Post Interview

- ◆ Thank you note: hand signed and mailed or personally delivered (either computer generated or hand written)
- ◆ Any follow-up phone calls that are necessary

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Checklist

1. Resumes (Copies for any and all interviewers—plus one for you)
2. Two (2) pens with black ink
3. Note paper
4. Traveling directions (or even better --- take a dry run the day before)
5. Driver's License
6. Social Security Card
7. Letters of Recommendation
8. Reference list with Names, Job titles, Addresses, Phone numbers, and E-mails
9. Samples of your work, portfolios or relevant documentation

A. Last minute tips

1. Arrive ten (10) minutes early. (Ten minutes early is on time; on time is late)
2. Leave your troubles at home. (Do not unload your problems on the employer)
3. Go to the interview alone. (The employer is interested in hiring you – not your friends or relatives)
4. Learn the interviewer's name. Use it in your interview.
5. Know what the company does. (Research the company)
6. Think before answering.

B. After the interview, ask yourself

1. How did the interview go?
2. Did I present my qualifications well?
3. Did I talk too much or too little? (Never more than two minutes per answer)
4. Was I too aggressive, too passive, or was I properly assertive?
5. What improvements can I make in my next interview?
6. Send a thank you letter.
7. Did I pat myself on the back for being courageous?

Good Luck!!

Employer Expectations

Do You Look Like the Right Person?

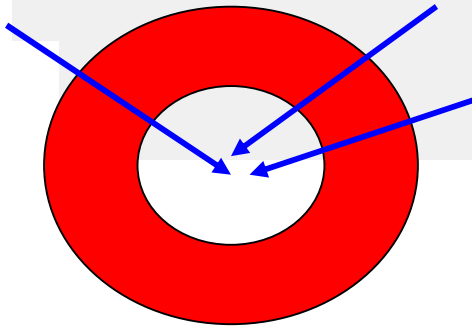
- Personal Appearance
- Paperwork
- Behavior
- Verbal

Can You be Counted On?

- Reliability
- Punctuality
- Dependability
- Attendance

What can you Do?

- Skills
- Experience
- Training
- Volunteer Work
- Life Experience
- Abilities
- Education
- Interests
- Hobbies
- Successes



BULLSEYE!!

Qualities Employers Look for in Order of Importance:

1. Dependability
2. Team Player
3. Responsible
4. Initiative
5. Self-Starter
6. Efficient
7. Enthusiastic

Characteristics That Eliminate:

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| ▪ Poor Work Record | ▪ History of Absenteeism |
| ▪ Poor Communicator | ▪ Lack of Job Skills |
| ▪ Lack of Job Skills | ▪ Lack of Enthusiasm |
| ▪ Poorly Groomed | |

Body Image and Body Language

The first seven seconds of the initial meeting set the tone.

You must project vitality, confidence, and attention to detail in the way you dress, your grooming, and your posture.

POSTURE PROJECTS SELF-IMAGE

Gather your body together:

Lift your chest

Straighten your spine

Relax your shoulders

Keep your head up

Stride when you walk

PROJECT ENERGY!!

BODY LANGUAGE

- ◆ Eye contact – Look people in the eye. (If not, they may think you are shy, shifty, distrusting)
- ◆ Fingers under the chin – Appears skeptical or superior.
- ◆ Arms folded in front – Appears closed minded or unreceptive.
- ◆ Fiddling with anything – You seem nervous and unsure
- ◆ Nail Biting – You seem nervous and panicky
- ◆ Swinging or Tapping feet – You seem hurried or disinterested
- ◆ SMILE – You seem open, warm and friendly

HANDSHAKES

These are the handshakes you should avoid:

Dead Mackerel: Suggests a weak personality

Bone Crusher: Too aggressive

Sandwich: Too personal for business

Grabber: Too personal for a first meeting

Bottom line: The person who **exudes confidence**, **walks tall**, **appears relaxed**, and **keeps body movement to a minimum** is often the most trusted and accepted, and usually gets the **JOB!!**

LOOKING LIKE A WINNER

Appearance creates a critical first impression, so go to the interview looking like a winner. Your appearance says more about you than anything else. It is the entire way you present yourself – your style, manner, dress – everything that combines to say:

“I am the right person for the job.”

Dress to Impress

Consider the following factors when preparing for your interview:

1. Dress for the position for which you are interviewing. (Some companies have unwritten dress codes. Investigate what other employees wear, and dress one step above usual attire.)
2. Wear something comfortable.
3. Dress conservatively with coordinating patterns and colors.
4. Consider the effect your choice of colors will have (Avoid “bright” or loud colors).
5. Clothes should be fresh, clean, neat, and pressed.
6. Shoes should be shined and not scuffed.
7. Jewelry should be sparse.
8. Avoid perfume or cologne/ (Allergies and/or objections).
9. Avoid dressing sensually unless sex is part of the job, as in the entertainment field.
10. Makeup should be conservative.
11. Fingernails should be clean and neatly trimmed.
12. Hair should be neat and combed. Women with long hair (past shoulder level) should wear it back away from the face.
13. Teeth and breath should be clean and fresh.
14. Check out your appearance in a mirror before entering the interview.

WOMEN'S DRESS – CORPORATE AMERICA

Things to Avoid

Pants or slacks

Trendy clothing (mini-skirts)

Sheer blouses

Low-cut, revealing blouses/dresses

Double-knit clothing

Bare legs

Boots

Spots, stains, missing buttons, loose hems

Things that are Safe

Traditional matched suit; no red, no black, no bright or loud colors

Silk shirtwaist dresses with coordinating jacket

Blazer with coordinates

Well-cut knit skirt and jacket

Plain pumps in a basic color

Hose in a neutral color

NOTE: For women's dress for physical labor jobs, please refer to the following page. Appropriate dress for these positions would be the unisex apparel described in "Men's Dress".

MEN'S DRESS

Mid to upper level jobs in Corporate America

- A basic suit – dark color
- Light colored long-sleeved dress shirt
- Conservative tie- muted color
- Little to no jewelry
- Black dress shoes- make sure they are polished
- Dark Socks

Lower to Mid level jobs in Corporate America

- Dress pants in a neutral color
- Light colored long-sleeved dress shirt
- Conservative tie- stay away from character or novelty ties
- Black dress shoes- make sure they are polished
- Dark socks
- Little to no jewelry

Physical labor jobs

- Khaki pants, Dockers, Chino's (cotton pants)
- A cotton, collared, short-sleeved shirt in a neutral color
- Sturdy boots or shoes
- Little to no jewelry

THINGS TO AVOID:

Jeans

Shorts

Tennis Shoes

Wearing a lot of Jewelry- No piercing's

Spots and stains on clothes

Wrinkled clothes

Character or novelty ties

INTERVIEWING REMINDERS

Set your own agenda for the interview format:

1. Be sure that you go in with the proper attitude.
2. Be prepared. Have information about the company and the job.
3. Practice.
4. Keep the meeting flowing. Ask questions.
5. Follow-up.

Five Secrets of the Hire

What the majority of companies are looking for during an interview:

1. **Ability and Sustainability**
Be able to prove, with examples, your ability to perform the given job.
2. **Willingness**
Be able to demonstrate your readiness to pitch in on any task.
3. **Manageability and Teamwork**
Don't voice your most strongly held convictions if they involve race, religion, or politics. Employers do not necessarily have discrimination in mind, but may be concerned about your ability to tolerate the views of other employees and keep the harmony.
4. **Professional Behavior**
Give examples for the traits you know are needed.
5. **Everyone Hires for the Same Reason**
Remember that all positions are available because there is a problem to be solved. How can hiring you solve this prospective employer's problem?

Here is a technique to help you develop examples of your problem solving skills:

- 1 **State the problem.** What was the situation? Was it typical of your job, or had something gone wrong? (Do not cite situations where placing blame on someone else comes to mind)
- 2 **Isolate relevant background information.** What special knowledge or education were you armed with to tackle this dilemma?
- 3 **List your key qualities.** What professional skills and personal behavior traits did you bring into play to solve the problem?
- 4 **Recall the solution.** How did things turn out in the end? (If the problem did not have a successful resolution, do not use it as an example).
- 5 **Determine what the solution was worth.** Quantify the solution in terms of money earned, money saved, or time saved. Specify your role as a team member or as lone gun, as the facts demand.

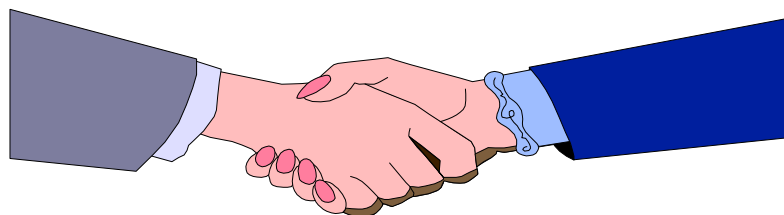
POWER OPENING AND CLOSING

OPEN:

**Use the employer's name
Shake hands
Introduce yourself
Tell the position you are seeking
Offer resume**

CLOSE:

**Use employer's name
Thank the employer
Shake hands
Assure them that you are right for the job.
"I really believe I would be an asset to your
organization."**



SOME EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Employer's Questions	Employer's Fear Behind Question	The Point You Try to Get Across	Phrases You Might Use to Get This Across
"Tell me about yourself."	The employer is afraid he/she is not going to conduct a very good interview by failing to ask the right questions. Or is afraid there is something wrong with you, and is hoping you will blurt it out.	You are a good employee, as you have proven in the past at your jobs. (Give brief history about yourself, such as interests, hobbies, strengths, and kind of work you have enjoyed the most to date.) Keep it to 2 minutes Max!!	In describing your past work history, use any honest phrases you can that are self-complimentary: "Hard worker", "Came in early, left late", "Always did more than what was expected of me." Etc.
"What kind of work are you looking for?"	The employer is afraid that you are looking for a different job than that which the employer is trying to fill. I.e., He/she wants a secretary, but you want to be an office manager, etc.	Your are looking for precisely the kind of work the employer is offering, (but do not say it if it is not true!) Repeat back to the employer, in your own words, what he/she has said about the job, and emphasize the skills you have to do it.	If the employer hasn't described the job at all, say, "I would be happy to answer that, but first I need to understand exactly what kind of work this job involves." Then answer, as at left.
"Have you ever done this kind of work before?"	The employer is afraid you do not possess the necessary skills and experience to do this job.	You have skills that are transferable from whatever you used to do; and you did it well.	"I pick up information and skills very quickly." "I have quickly mastered any job I have ever done."
"Why did you leave your last job?" ..or "How did you get along with your former boss and co-workers?"	He/she is afraid you don't get along well with people, especially bosses, and is just waiting for you to 'bad-mouth' your previous boss or co-workers, as proof of that.	Say any positive things you can about your boss and co-workers. Don't lie! Emphasize that you usually get along with people-and then let your gracious attitude toward your previous boss(es) and co-workers prove it, right before this employer's eyes/ears.	If you left voluntarily: "My boss and I both felt I would be happier and more effective in a job where <i>(here describe your strong points, such as)</i> "I would use my initiative and creativity." If you were fired: "I usually get along well with everyone, but in this case the boss and I just did not get along with each other. Hard to say why." Or my job was terminated.
"How might your	The employer is afraid you	You will not be absent. If	If you were not absent a lot

<p>health affect your ability to do this job?" or "How much were you absent from work during your last job?"</p>	<p>will be absent from work a lot, if they hire you.</p>	<p>you have a health problem, you want to emphasize that it is one which will not keep you from being at work daily. Your productivity, compared to other worker's is excellent.</p>	<p>at your last job: "I believe it is an employee's job to show up every work day. Period." If you were absent a lot, say why, and stress that it was due to a difficulty that is now past.</p>
<p>"Can you explain why you have been out of work so long?" or "Can you tell me why there are these gaps in your work history?"</p>	<p>The employer is afraid that you are the kind of person who quits a job the minute he/she does not like something about it; in other words, that you have no 'stick-to-it-iveness."</p>	<p>You love to work, and you regard times when things are not going well as challenges, which you enjoy learning how to conquer.</p>	<p>"During the gaps in my work record, I was studying/doing volunteer work/doing some hard thinking about my mission in life/finding redirection." (choose one)</p>
<p>"Wouldn't this job represent a step down for you?" or "I think this job would be way beneath your talents and experience." Or "I think you are over-qualified for this position."</p>	<p>The employer is afraid you could command a bigger salary somewhere else, and will therefore leave him/her as soon as something better turns up.</p>	<p>You will stick with this job as long as you and the employer agree this is where you should be.</p>	<p>This job is not a step down for me. "It is a step up – from welfare." "We have mutual fears: every employer is afraid a good employee will leave too soon, and every employee is afraid the employer might fire him/her for no good reason." "I like to work, and I give my best to every job I have ever had."</p>
<p>"Tell me what is your greatest weakness?"</p>	<p>The employer is afraid you have some character flaw, and hopes you will now rashly blurt it out, or confess it.</p>	<p>You have limitations just like everyone else but you work constantly to improve yourself and be a more and more effective worker.</p>	<p>Mention something you are working on improving or that has a positive aspect. I.e., "I do not like to be over-supervised, because I have a great deal of initiative, and I like to anticipate problems before they even arise."</p>

<p>“Why do you want to work for this company?...in this line of work?”</p>	<p>The employer is afraid you will take the job until a better opportunity comes along, or that you are just looking for a job—any job.</p>	<p>You need to demonstrate that you researched the company and chose to apply for good reasons. Be sure you know about the company and the position.</p>	<p>This should not be that this is a large company or safe job. It should relate to your career future, something that you have wanted to get into. Show interest in the job, that you are impressed with the company’s credentials.</p>
<p>“Do you mind if I ask, are you a smoker?”</p>	<p>This is a very serious question—from two viewpoints: Health factor – will you insist on smoking against everyone else’s wishes. Cost factor – He/she is not too impressed with the person who leaves their desk five or ten times a day for a smoke.</p>	<p>You will not create problems for the employer or with your co-workers. You are a considerate, easy-to-get-along-with employee -- and a healthy employee!</p>	<p>“I tolerate smoking, but I appreciate a smoke-free environment.”</p>
<p>“How do you work under pressure?” “Why do you think you will be a valuable employee?” How long do you think you will stay with the company?”</p>	<p>Employer doubts his/her ability to select the best candidate for the position. He/she is looking for assurances – reasons to hire you/or not hire you. He/she has been burned before, and it is a very expensive situation.</p>	<p>Yes, you work well under pressure and meet deadlines successfully. Name your skills and experience. Show you are a quick learner. The employer is looking for longevity.</p>	

QUESTIONS EMPLOYERS CAN AND CANNOT ASK

Below are sample interview and job application questions that are legal and illegal.

<u>LEGAL / Employers CAN Ask</u>	<u>ILLEGAL / Employers CANNOT Ask</u>
1. Have you ever been convicted of a crime?	1. Have you ever been arrested?
2. Are you legally authorized to work in the United States?	2. Where were you born? Your parents?
3. What type of academic or vocational training did you receive?	3. Did you attend a religious affiliated school?
4. Are you between the ages of 18 and 65?	4. How old are you? When did you graduate from high school?
5. What is your name?	5. What is your sex? Race? Religion? Age?
6. Will you require reasonable accommodations to perform any of the essential functions of this job?	6. Do you have any health problems? Have you ever filed for Worker's Compensation?
7. Do you have dependable transportation?	7. Do you have a car?
8. Please give the name, relationship and address of a person to be notified in case of emergency. (This inquiry may be asked after a person has been hired)	8. What is your spouse's name? What are your parent's names? Do you have any children? Are you divorced, widowed, Separated? Are you a single parent? Do you have plans to have children?

FIVE COMMON TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Informational – seeks to determine your knowledge of an area or asks for information:

- ◆ “To what does the Fair Labor Act Standards pertain?”
- ◆ “Tell us how you prepared for this position.”
- ◆ Tell us about your computer experience.”

Point of View – seeks your opinion about something:

- ◆ “Do you agree with the adage, “The customer is always right?”
- ◆ “Why or why not?”
- ◆ “Describe the best supervisor you have ever worked for or observed.”

Situational – presents a hypothetical situation:

“You are working outside alone on a small job filling potholes on a county road. A nearby resident comes to you with a concern about county policy relating to road repairs and your work. He is angry and claims he saw you at the same location last week spilling asphalt all over his driveway and not caring to clean it up. What would you do?”

Behavioral – asks what you actually did in a past life situation:

“Tell us about a time when you had a good idea at work and you presented it to your supervisor or your co-workers. What was the idea? How did you present it to them? Was it implemented? Why or why not?”

Simulation – puts you in a role-playing situation:

“Pretend you have been hired and are working as a nursing assistant. I am a mother visiting my son in the hospital and I refuse to leave when you tell me that visiting hours are over. But it is your job to make sure visitors are gone at the appointed time. I will begin the role play – “

“You are to pretend that the scenes you are about to see on the videotape are happening right now in front of you. You are involved in these scenes, and you are to respond to them when the monitor prompts you---“



Before every interview you must ask yourself:

**“WHAT TRAITS, SKILLS, CHARACTERISTICS
DO I POSSESS THAT WILL MAKE ME AN
OUTSTANDING (COST-EFFECTIVE) CANDIDATE FOR THIS POSITION?”**

Remember: All the applicants will have the required job specific skills. What do you have to offer in terms of personal traits, transferable skills and additional experience that will make you stand out?

STRENGTH ADJECTIVES

These may help you define and expand your perceptions about the strengths you possess. The adjectives listed here describe qualities, which are sought and valued in various working situations. Circle those you feel apply to you.

Academic	Efficient	Kind	Robust
Accurate	Emotional	Knowledgeable	Scholarly
Active	Energetic	Literate	Seeks change
Adaptive	Enterprising	Logical	Self-effacing
Affectionate	Experimental	Masculine	Sensible
Aggressive	Expressive	Materialistic	Sensitive
Ambitious	Factual	Methodical	Serious
Amiable	Farsighted	Meticulous	Sharp-witted
Analytical	Feminine	Moderate	Shrewd
Argues well	Firm	Modest	Sincere
Artistic	Flexible	Natural	Sociable
Assertive	Formal	Obedient	Skillful
Bold	Frank	Obliging	Spontaneous
Broad-minded	Friendly	Open-minded	Stable
Businesslike	Generous	Opportunistic	Steadfast
Calculating	Gentle	Optimistic	Steady
Charming	Genuine	Orderly	Strong
Cheerful	Good-natured	Organized	Strong-minded
Clever	Helpful	Original	Stylish
Competitive	Honest	Outgoing	Sympathetic
Complex	Humorous	Peaceable	Tactful
Conservative	Idealistic	Performs well	Talkative
Controlling	Imaginative	Persuasive	Thoughtful
Creative	Intellectual	Practical	Tough
Critical	Individualistic	Pleasant	Thrifty
Curious	Industrious	Precise	Unassuming
Cynical	Informal	Progressive	Understanding
Daring	Ingenious	Purposeful	Unexcitable
Deliberate	Inquisitive	Quick to act	Uninhibited
Democratic	Insightful	Quiet	Verbal
Dependable	Inspiring	Rational	Versatile
Detail oriented	Intelligent	Realistic	Vigorous
Determined	Introspective	Receptive	Warm
Discreet	Intuitive	Reserved	Witty
Dominate	Inventive	Resourceful	Zealous
Eager	Economical	Just	Risk-taker

Typical Interview Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Have you ever done this type of work before?
3. Why do you want to work here?
4. Why did you leave your last job?
5. What kind of salary do you need?
6. We have many applicants. Why should we hire you?
7. How much were you absent from work in your last job?
8. When are you available for work?
9. What are your greatest strengths?
10. Tell me about the biggest mistakes you have made on the job and how you rectified those mistakes.
11. What five words describe you best?
12. What are your long-range goals?
13. What kind of machines/equipment can you operate?
14. Can you work under pressure?
15. How do you define success?
16. You are receptionist. The telephone rings as an important client is walking through the door. As the client reaches your desk two other lines "light up". What do you do?
17. You are the secretary for three department heads. In addition to your every day chores, each "boss" has assigned you to work on special projects. All three projects are very important and should have been "done yesterday". What do you do?
18. What is your dream job?
19. Describe a conflict you had with a customer/co-worker/supervisor.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?

THE INTERVIEW QUESTION:

FIRST LET'S TALK ABOUT FEAR—not your fear, but the fear the employer brings to the interview. They run the gamut. For openers, the employer has the following fears when YOU, the job hunter, are face-to-face with him/her.

- (a) That you won't be able to do the job
- (b) That if hired, you won't put in a full days work
- (c) That if hired, you will only stay for a few months
- (d) That you won't get along with the other employees

Now back to the question:

“Tell me what is your greatest weakness?”

The fear behind the question:

The employer is afraid that you have some work flaw – and is hopeful you will confess to it now!

The point you have to get across, to answer this fear:

You have limitations just like any other person, but you work constantly to improve them and make yourself into a more effective worker.

Ideas or phrases you might use:

Mention some weakness of yours that has a positive aspect.

- I used to be an ‘I would rather do it myself type’, now I know how to work with others
- I do not handle idle time well – I like to keep busy.
- I used to have unrealistic expectations of myself, but now I have learned to set realistic goals.
- I used to expect too much of myself, now I have learned to pace myself and I have become much more productive.
- I used to think everything was black and white – now I recognize there are differences, and there are shades of gray.
- I used to be very critical of myself – now I have learned to recognize my strengths.

Summary:

If you listen hard to an employer's interview questions and ask yourself what the fear is behind the question, you will realize all questions are questions about the future. and - realizing that – you will know how to answer them.

Sample Questions for Behavioral Interviews

1. Please give me examples of things you have done on previous jobs that demonstrate your ability to pay attention to detail. Tell me what you did and what resulted from your actions.	11. Please give me some examples of how you have demonstrated the ability to control costs and still achieve organizational objectives.
2. Please give me an example of where you have made any team that you were a member of more effective. Tell me what you did and how the team and the organization benefited from your actions.	12. Please give me examples of where you took extraordinary efforts to achieve a deadline. What did you do and what resulted from it?
3. Give examples of things you have done which demonstrate the quality of the work you do. What did you do and how did your organization benefit from your actions?	13. Please give examples of things you have done which demonstrate your ability to handle multiple priorities. What did you do and what resulted from your actions?
4. Tell me about a time when you applied your education to a work situation or assignment.	14. Describe a recent project you were in charge of. Describe how you organized that project and how your organization impacted the outcome of the project.
5. Please give me an example of where you failed (or received some negative feedback) in an area of your job performance. What did you do to try to correct this failure and what resulted from your corrections?	15. When you have held previous jobs, how did you determine what were the appropriate things to do? Give examples.
6. Please give me an example of where you had a conflict with a customer. What was the conflict over and how did you handle it? What was the result from it? Would you handle it in a different manner now? Why?	16. Please give me examples of things you have done which demonstrate your ability to manage a budget effectively and would demonstrate your ability to perform this job.
7. Describe your most creative sale. How did you create that sale and describe how you might be creative in selling our products?	17. Please give me your most recent example of something you did to improve your job performance. What did you do, how did you do it, and what resulted from it?
8. Describe your most difficult client? What did you do to maintain this client?	18. Describe a major sale that you lost. Why do you think you lost it and what would you do differently as a result of that experience?
9. Give me examples of where you have been able to anticipate customer complaints/problems and correct them before they became an issue. What did you do and what resulted from your actions?	19. Please give me an example of where you may have found an error in some aspect of work that others have overlooked. What was the error, how did you find it, and what resulted from your actions?
10. Have you ever had a difficult subordinate? If yes, tell me how you dealt with him/her and what resulted from your actions.	20. Please give me specific examples of things you have done to obtain maximum performance from your subordinates. What did you do and what resulted from your actions?



ANSWERS TO TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

You may think that the tension at the job interview is all yours. Not true. Interviewers know they must choose people who will do well on the job, or their superiors will label them incompetent. If the interviewer is also the boss, she must choose the proper applicant or later struggle with an unsatisfactory employee.

Interviewers tend to use certain questions to relieve their anxieties about whether you will do the job competently and whether you have the necessary temperament-stability, flexibility, dependability, etc. – to fit into the work team.

When you relieve the interviewer of these worries, he/she relaxes. At last, here is someone she can safely choose for the job! “Most jobs are filled by people who meet only some of the job’s specifications,” says employment specialist Richard K. Irish, author of Go Hire Yourself an Employer, Anchor Press/Doubleday. But that successful candidate has made the interviewer safe. “Yes, this person can handle the job well.”

While many questions are generally asked in an interview, experts have compiled the following list of those questions most frequently heard in almost all interview sessions. Some suggested answers are given as a guide, but practice framing answers in your own words so your replies will be specifically your own and will project competence.

1. **TELL ME SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF** – This request is generally followed by a shocked silence as you race your mental motor thinking of something to say. The question is really asking – “Are you well adjusted, able to work well with others?” “Would you be an asset to us, a cost effective employee?” So don’t pour out your whole biography – just give enough information to reassure the interviewer that you will fit well and the reasons that you believe your skills, characteristics, and background would make you the ideal candidate.
2. **WHAT ARE YOUR IDEAS ON SALARY?** – There are three ways you can talk about salary. You can ask for over what they want to pay, under what they want to pay, or be in the ballpark for the salary they are considering. Most people are not prepared to deal well in speaking of their salary needs. The clue here is to understand that if the salary is not already openly quoted, the company still has an approximate salary range in mind. One good approach is to ask, “Will you discuss the salary you had in mind?” or “What would you pay someone with my skills and education?” Using this method, you are asking the interviewer to give you a way to relate to what you can possibly expect. This information will allow you to compare the salary quoted to what you think your time is worth. **Note: The internet e.g. www.salary.com can give the current salary median in your geographical area.** Go to the interview with the hardcopy from this website. If pressed, you can discuss the “results of your research” by quoting the median.

- 3. WHY DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD LIKE TO WORK FOR OUR COMPANY?** – This question is almost equivalent to the personal question: “Honey do you love me?” Everyone wants to feel cared about or chosen, and the employer is no exception. The usual answer to the question is: “I am looking for a job,” which is saying that your only interest in the company is that the company has something that you want – a job opportunity – but it does not make them feel as though you care about them. The truth is that when most individuals look for a job, they are more interested in getting a job than being particular about where they work. They only want to be hired “some place.” One of the most important things to do before you go to an interview, or ask for one, is to find out all you can about the company. This information is available in the business section of your library, on the Internet, or through the Chamber of Commerce. Remember: **Research the company.**
- 4. ARE YOU WILLING TO GO WHERE THE COMPANY SENDS YOU?** – Most people who live in our Valley have chosen to live here and do not want to leave. Remember, though, that it is difficult to predict what you will be doing on a job in advance. A company that needs flexibility in its staff may not consider someone who cannot or will not move. You have to make the decision here as to whether the job or your city is more important to you. If the move is not imminent, and a future possibility is being discussed, a good answer might be, “I would certainly be willing to consider it at the time a firm offer is made.”
- 5. WHAT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF WORKING AT IN THREE TO FIVE YEARS?** - This really means: “If I hire you, are you likely to stay for a while?” You can crowd considerable reassurance for the interviewer into your answer. Although questions about marriage, babies, childcare are illegal, if you have completed your family or have good childcare arrangements lined up, strengthen your appeal by volunteering information. You reply that you know you will stay and grow with the job because . . . Most career experts warn against naming a specific future job you hope to hold, lest it mark you as too narrow or inflexible. Indicate that you are mature and realistic in your thinking by discussing areas within this company where you can grow based on your expertise and contributions. If you dream of becoming a state assemblywoman or of opening your own business, don’t mention it here. This question also involves showing that you are motivated, and have goals and aspirations for continuing to learn, increased productivity, and future behavior that will benefit the company.
- 6. WHAT ARE YOUR MAJOR STRENGTHS?** - This really means: “Tell me how your abilities fit what is needed for this job.” Remember employers hire people, not just typists or technicians. Here is where you state, convincingly, the qualities and characteristics you have learned you possess. Give at least three. Perhaps you are quick to learn - handle responsibility well – and have good common sense. Moreover, here is another opportunity to mention your maturity as the asset it is. Give an example of what you mean by maturity. Your experience in weighing the pros and cons in making decisions? Your ability to find a fresh approach in problem solving? Your awareness of yourself as the cost-effective employee who would fill the employer’s needs? If you know the job you are applying for requires using initiative, and you know you have plenty, tell the interviewer and give an example.

7. **WE HAVE MANY QUALIFIED APPLICANTS. WHY DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD HIRE YOU FOR THIS JOB?** - This is tough because almost everybody says the same thing: "Because I think I can do the job." The words being accompanied by a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach. One of the best approaches here is to convey that you are not in a position to evaluate the other candidates, so you cannot give answers to their qualifications. However, on your own behalf, you can say that you believe that your background, experience, and interest in the job equip you to handle the work well. It is important to say, "I believe.." because the truth is you won't actually know until you do the job how well you can do it. Remember that they can argue facts, but they will not argue with your beliefs. If you say you believe you can do the work, you are being believably honest.
8. **HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WORKING FOR A YOUNGER (OR OLDER) SUPERVISOR?** - Isn't it amazing that supervisors are people too? Your concern, of course, is that you do the best possible job for the company. The supervisor is there to help, and age is not a criteria of ability to do this. Remember, any bias you may express relating to age, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc., does not belong in the workplace, and will surely count you out as a candidate for the job.
9. **WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...?** – This deals with an imagined situation that tests your knowledge of the job, or your judgment. Remember that the quality of the solution is not nearly as important as the attitude used to deal with the question. A calm approach is the best bet – no push statements with answers like: "Well, I would do this..." It is far better to cushion your statements with answers like: "One of the things I might consider would be...", and then give your answer. If you commit yourself to a process of what you would do, and it is not the one they would like to consider, you are in an awkward position. A still safer response would be to consider for a moment, and then ask: "What is your policy?"
10. **WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR LAST JOB?** - If there are problems or real concerns about your last employment, deal with this even before the interview. When the question is actually asked it is important that, whatever the situation is, the answer does not reflect badly about your last company. The interviewer's feelings are that if you speak badly about your last company, you will speak badly about the next one that hires you. One of the best methods here is to be sure that your reply is always given in a calm, comfortable way, and in a voice without tension. Having practiced this situation in a mock interview setting, you will be able to respond in a poised manner. Keep in mind that your last employer is required only to give your dates of employment and answer whether you would be considered for re-hire.

Do your homework, so that you will have work to come home from!

“Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?”

By *Bob Rosner*
Special to ABCNEWS.com

QUESTION: There is one question that I dread in a job interview — “Why did you leave your last job?” I never know how to respond.

ANSWER: Leave it to the French to come up with a novel way to deal with the smell from piles of garbage rotting in the hot sun. In Marseille they sprayed the streets with lemon grass perfume to cover up the garbage stench.

Sometimes it's important to spray a little perfume on the facts that caused you to leave your last job: The less said about bad bosses, broken promises and being taken advantage of, the better.

I've listed below things that you can say about why you changed jobs that shouldn't send up any red flags. In fact, it might even help your cause. For more job interview strategies, check out *95 Mistakes Job Seekers Make* by Richard Few (Impact, 2003).

Selling Yourself

I'm looking for a position with more opportunities for advancement. Showing a little drive seldom hurts in a job interview. Just be careful that you show them that you don't believe that advancement is an entitlement, but rather something you're willing to work hard to achieve. There will always be companies that are threatened or turned off by this. But ask yourself; is a corporation with few or no opportunities for you to advance the kind of place that you really want to work?

I'm looking for better pay. There is a saying in the law that you shouldn't ever ask a question in court that you don't already know the answer to. It's no different in a job interview; be sure that they can afford you before you ask them to show you the money. If the job announcement doesn't list a pay range, try calling HR to see if you can get someone to tell you the pay range for the position you're applying for. That said, looking for a better compensation is a perfectly legitimate reason to leave your last job.

I'm looking for more challenging job assignments. This is a nice way of saying that you weren't exactly challenged at your last job. Whenever possible you want to turn the problems with your last job into a positive statement about what you are looking for in your next one.

I'm looking for an organization that supports its people. Chances are good that they'll ask for an example. So be sure to have a response planned, for example, “All of the incentives were individually based, I think that it's more important to reward the entire team for its contributions.”

My career goals have changed. If you are going into a new industry or occupation this is a great thing to say. However companies want people who can step into a job immediately, so be prepared to show how your experiences in past jobs have prepared you to do the job you're interviewing for.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOB

The specific questions you ask will depend on the nature of the interview, the specific position, and your personal concerns. But in general, you need to make sure that you understand all of the daily tasks and responsibilities associated with the position. You also should know what short- and long-term goals you will be expected to meet and under what conditions you will have to meet them. In addition, you should find out how the position falls in the management structure and how your performance will be evaluated.

To discover this information, you can ask such questions as:

- ❖ What tasks will occupy the majority of my time?
- ❖ Can you describe a typical day on the job?
- ❖ Is there a job description for this position?
- ❖ Does the company promote from within?
- ❖ Is there an orientation program for new employees?
- ❖ Will I be working on most projects by myself or in a group?
- ❖ What are the three top goals you have set for this position for the coming year?
- ❖ Is this a newly created position, or am I replacing someone? Did the person who had the job before fail or succeed, and why?
- ❖ What are the biggest challenges I will face in this position?
- ❖ To whom will I be reporting?
- ❖ Is there a training period?
- ❖ How will my performance be evaluated?
- ❖ How does this position fit in with the company's long-term plans?
- ❖ What is the typical career path for someone in this job?
- ❖ **When will you be making your decision?** (Your final question)

If the position is a management job, you will also want to ask such questions as:

- ❖ How many people will I be supervising?
- ❖ What is the experience level of the staff I will be managing?
- ❖ Will I have authority to assign duties, reward performance and discipline the staff, or will my supervisors handle these issues?
- ❖ What is the preferred management style here?
- ❖ What are the growth and expansion plans for the company?
- ❖ What or who is the main competitor of this firm?

PRACTICE INTERVIEW EVALUATION

Did the Applicant. . .	Needs to improve	Good	Great
❖ Smile			
❖ Introduce self			
❖ Shake hands			
❖ Use employer's name			
❖ Have good eye contact			
❖ Appear neat and clean			
❖ Respond well to questions			
❖ Exhibit enthusiasm about working			
❖ Appear to have a positive attitude			
Overall Comments:			

PRACTICE INTERVIEW EVALUATION

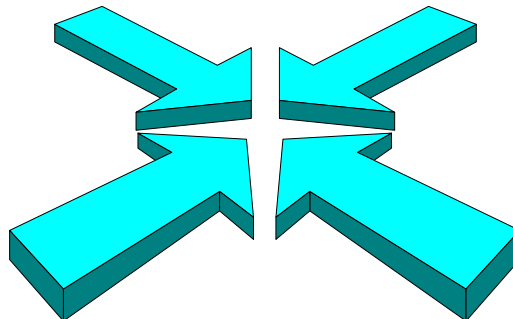
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❖ Have good eye contact			
❖ Appear neat and clean			
❖ Respond well to questions			
❖ Exhibit enthusiasm about working			
❖ Appear to have a positive attitude			
Overall Comments:			

INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

1. **A thank you note is a necessary follow-up after an interview.**

A thank you note should be mailed within twenty-four hours of the interview. If the decision will be made in the next two days, use e-mail if possible.

2. **The following items should be included in your follow-up note:**
 - a) **Identify the interviewer by name**
 - b) **Include your name and the position for which you interviewed**
 - c) **Discuss briefly how the interview confirmed that you are a good candidate**
 - d) **Communicate your interest in the position**
 - e) **Express your thanks to the interviewer for his/her consideration**
 - f) **State that you look forward to hearing from them on or before the date they specified when they answered your last question**



All corners point to getting the job – when you are well prepared for your interview



THANK YOU FOR THE INTERVIEW: SAMPLE LETTER

110 Greenvale Rd
Kensington, CA 94708
(510) 555-5555
December 12, 2000

Mr. Donald J. Brown
Administrative Coordinator
Business and Technical Personnel
Consolidated Engineering, Inc.
900 East Fourth Street
Sunnyvale, CA 95078

Dear Mr. Brown:

Thank you for the opportunity to interview with you for the position of Technical Crew Coordinator last Thursday.

The information you gave me about the position was valuable and led me to believe that the position would be a good fit for my skills and abilities. The discussion we had was of particular interest to me. I found the tour of your plant and the informal discussion with your engineering staff to be quite beneficial. I was impressed with the effective manner in which Consolidated Engineering has adapted the management-by-objective system to their technical operations. This philosophy suits my interests and training.

The entire experience has confirmed my interest in Consolidated Engineering. I look forward to hearing from you on or before December 23rd, as you stated in our meeting.

Sincerely,

John M Milhouse

30 REASONS RECRUITERS SAY NO!!

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Overbearing, over aggressive, conceited with a superior or “know it all” attitude
3. Inability to express self clearly: poor voice, diction, grammar
4. Lack of planning for career; no purpose and goals
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm; passive and indifferent
6. Over-emphasis on money; Interested only in best dollar offer
7. Lack of confidence and poise
8. Unwilling to start at the bottom; expects too much too soon
9. Makes excuses, evasive; hedges on unfavorable factors in record
10. Lack of tact
11. Lack of courtesy; ill mannered
12. Lack of maturity
13. Lack of vitality
14. Condemnation of past employer
15. Failure to look at interviewer when conversing (Eye contact)
16. Indecision
17. Vague and sloppy application
18. Merely shopping around
19. Wants job only for a short time
20. No interest in company or in industry
21. Cynical
22. Lazy
23. Intolerant
24. Narrow interests
25. Inability to take criticism
26. Late for interview
27. Failure to express appreciation for interviewer’s time
28. Asked NO questions about the job
29. High pressure type
30. Indefinite response to questions

HOW APPLICANTS ARE RATED

Appearance and Manner.....by	Well groomed, considerate, polite
Personality.....by	Attentive, warm/friendly, enthusiastic
Intelligence.....by	Mental organization, judgment, alertness
Attitude.....by	Tactful, cooperative, reasonable
Self expression.....by	Convincing, pleasant voice, focused
Desire to Work.....by	Volunteer work, part-time employment
Ambition.....by	Future career plans
Communication.....by	Interview
Reliability.....by	Attendance in class and workshops

Preparation	Yes	No
Did I know the interviewer's name?		
Did I research the company?		
Was I on time?		
Did I provide an additional resume, reference sheet, letter of recommendation?		
Did I bring my completed application to use as a model?		
Was my handshake comfortable		
Did I help the greeting/did it feel comfortable?		
Did the conversation flow easily?		
Did I respond confidently to questions?		
Did I listen well?		
Did I Ask questions?		
Did I keep consistent eye contact?		
Did the interviewer seem interested in me?		
Did the exchange feel enthusiastic?		
Did I remain alert during the interview?		
Have I considered the commute?		
Did I close the interview by summarizing my interest?		
Did I ask for the job or for the next step?		
Did I send a follow-up letter?		

Have a Wonderful Interview – Go get your job!!

INTERVIEW PREP SHEET

I. Company Facts

II. Job Description

(Required skill sets, experience, education and attributes)

Your Match

(List your skill sets, experience, education and attributes)

III. List 5 strengths/example

List 5 areas for improvement/example

IV. List 5 questions that you hope the interviewer won't ask you. Practice your response.

V. Closing Summary: List 3 reasons why you are unique and an excellent candidate for this job.

VI. List at least 5 questions to ask the interviewer

Sample Questions

Performance Measurement/Expectations

1. How do you measure successful performance on this job? How often?
2. Can you please describe the typically goals for performance associated with this position?
3. Who will I report to on this job? Is the manager local or remote?
4. In your view, what would be the most challenging aspect of accepting this position?

Company Culture or Fit

5. How would you describe the company culture? Employee morale?
6. What would the current employees list as 3 things they like about working here? The top 3 least favorite things about working here?
7. How long have you worked here? What do you like and dislike about your job and/or the company?
8. How would you describe your management style?

Retention/Employee Relations

9. Why is this position vacant?
10. What retention strategies does this company deploy to reduce attrition?
11. What does this company offer to help promote professional and career development?
12. How would you describe the employee morale here?

Company Future

13. What changes do you anticipate in this company over the next 5 years?
14. How would competitors describe this company? How would the clients describe this company?