

## **INTERVIEW PREPARATION**

### **40 QUESTIONS RECRUITERS ASK**

The purpose of an interview is for the interviewer to find out about you, the prospective employee. The employer wants to know about you in order to make a decision about hiring and you want the employer to know about you so that the decision will be favorable. Through reviewing various interviewing literature, we have compiled the following list of 40 interview questions frequently asked of college students and graduates. Read the questions and formulate your answers. Good answers are ones that are specific and exemplify your strengths. Remember that an interview often determines whether or not you get hired. Preparation is the key.

#### **Questions About Yourself**

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. Why did you choose your major? What courses were your favorite? Least favorite? Why?
3. What are your long and short range goals? How are you preparing to achieve them?
4. What motivates you?
5. How do you work under pressure? (example)
6. Who is your hero? Why?
7. What are three of your strengths and weaknesses?
8. What failures have you experienced? What have you learned from your mistakes?
9. Are you a team player or an individualist? Give an example.
10. What do you think makes a good manager?
11. Why did you leave your past jobs?
12. How did you become interested in this field/industry?
13. Why did you select the University of Delaware?
14. If you could do it all over again, how would you plan your academic studies differently?
15. Assuming that you could do anything you wanted, what would you really like to do in life?
16. How do you determine or evaluate success?
17. What is your favorite book?
18. What do you do in your free time?
19. Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
20. What was the best and worst thing about college?
21. Tell me about a recent problem and how to solve it.
22. What, if any, extracurricular activities have you participated in? What did you learn from them?
23. What haven't I asked you that I should have asked?
24. Tell me about any leadership responsibilities you've had.

#### **Interest in Organization**

25. What criteria are you using to evaluate the organizations for which you hope to work?
26. What do you know about our organization?
27. Do you have a geographic preference? Why?
28. What do you see as the biggest challenge currently facing organizations such as ours?
29. What are the most important rewards you expect from your career?
30. Why did you decide to seek a position with us?
31. What two or three things are important to you in your job?
32. What other fields/organizations are you interviewing with?
33. Describe the ideal job for you following graduation.

## Why Should I Hire You?

34. How have your education and other experiences prepared you for this position?
35. Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement? Why isn't your GPA higher?
36. Why do you feel we should hire someone with your background?
37. What two accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
38. Why should I hire you?
39. What makes you better than the other people I'm seeing today?
40. Describe a contribution you made to the University of Delaware or in your last job.

## BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING

Consist of questions that ask you to describe how you exhibited a particular “behavior” in a recent situation

### Advantages:

- the point of the question is clear
- researching the job and company can help
- your recent behavior is the focus

### Disadvantages:

1. missing or inappropriate behaviors are more apparent
2. work history and accomplishments may be easier for you to describe than behaviors
3. traditional interviews are more spontaneous; in behavioral interviews you have less influence on the agenda

### Behavioral Questions:

*Tip: Refer to examples – try to use examples from more than one source*

1. Give me an example of how you exercised leadership in a recent situation.
2. Tell me about a time when you were held accountable for a problem that you hadn't caused.
3. Think about the changes you have seen and tell me how you handle change.
4. Tell me about a decision you made recently and how you reached it.
5. Tell me about a time when you were criticized. What was the issue involved, who made the criticism, and how did you handle it?
6. Tell me how you use your communication skills, written and oral.
7. Think about a recent project you were assigned. How did you go about managing your time and organizing the project?
8. Please tell me about a recent team you worked on.
9. Tell me about how you persuade people to accept your point-of-view.
10. Tell me about a time when you were under a great deal of pressure. What was the source of the pressure and what did you do?

## APPROPRIATE QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES TO ASK IN THE JOB INTERVIEW

Ask questions that will give you additional information on the organization, the position you are interviewing for, or the services or products that the organization supplies.

### Do ask:

1. What would a typical first assignment be?
2. What type of orientation would I have?
3. What type of training programs do you have?
4. What can I expect in terms of job progression in your organization?
5. How often would my performance be reviewed?
6. Are there any new offices or sites being planned?
7. Are there any plans for new goods or services?
8. What percentage of supervisory positions are filled from within the organization?
9. How much travel is normally expected?
10. How do you (the interviewer) like working here?

### Don't ask:

1. About salary or benefits
2. About job pressures, overtime or morale.
3. Questions that are answered in the company literature.

### In preparing for your interview you should:

- Read the organization's recruiting literature.
- Talk with people employed by the organization or familiar with it, before the interview, if at all possible.
- Prepare some questions before going to the interview, but be spontaneous enough to ask other questions as they occur to you in the interview.
- Think what would be helpful for you to know about the position or the employer if you were offered a position there.

## INAPPROPRIATE QUESTIONS

According to the criteria established by the U. S. Equal Employment Opportunity Act, there are guidelines that employers need to follow in conducting job interviews:

1. Questions should not be asked to which answers will have a disparate effect in screening out any minorities and/or members of one sex (disqualify a significantly larger percentage of members of a particular group than others).
2. Questions must be job-related; that is, necessary to judge an applicant's competence for the job in question.

In order to comply with these criteria, employers should not ask questions concerning:

- \* Marital and Family Status
- \* Ancestry, National Origin, Race or Color
- \* Religious or Political Affiliation
- \* Sex
- \* Age (except to establish that they meet minimum age requirements by law)

### How to Handle Inappropriate Questions

Most individuals, if they are interviewing with large organizations, will not encounter these inappropriate questions. These personnel offices and their interviewers are well versed in the laws. However, in the event that you are asked a question which seems inappropriate to you, there are several ways to handle the situation:

- 1st -You need not answer such questions. Sometimes it is better to be silent, at least long enough to think of a reasonable reply, or simply ignore the question and state why you are a good candidate for the job.

- 2nd - You can give an honest, assertive, but not antagonistic reply. Example:
  - Interviewer: "Does your spouse mind if you travel?"
  - Applicant: "We are completely supportive of each other's career ambitions."
- 3rd - You can give an antagonistic reply such as "None of your business." This, however, will usually end their consideration of you for the position.
- 4th - Your best protection against inappropriate questions is to be prepared to deal with them in advance. Think of how you want to reply or not reply to these questions and practice the responses with a friend, counselor, or a Career Services Center staff member.
- 5<sup>th</sup> - Consider very carefully whether or not you want to work for such an organization. This interview may be a preview of discrimination you may encounter on the job.
- 6<sup>th</sup> - If you feel your legal rights have been violated, discuss the situation with a Career Services Center staff member. We can refer you to the appropriate government agency.

## **FOLLOW UP**

It is important that after an interview you write a thank you letter to the interviewer to acknowledge the meeting and to remind him/her of you after you have gone. This letter also shows your organization and professionalism. There are several guidelines that you should follow in writing a follow-up letter:

- Type or handwrite the letter. E-mail is not as personal, therefore it should be used in conjunction with a personal letter. If you absolutely cannot write a letter, an e-mail is better than not following up at all.

The letter should be brief and include the following:

1. Thank the interviewer for his/her time.
2. State the position for which you are applying.
3. Mention something from your interview to remind the interviewer who you are.
4. Describe in one or two sentences why you are the best applicant.

- Mention the names of the people you met at the interview.
- Send a letter to appropriate individuals you interviewed with (always send to the main interviewer).
- Keep the letter short, less than one page.
- Mail the letter within 24 hours of the interview.
- Thank the interviewer for his/her time.
- Send a thank you letter for every interview you go on.

## **Negative Factors and Comments Evaluated During Employment Interviews, Frequently Leading to Rejection**

According to recruiters at the University of Delaware and research conducted by Frank S. Endicott at Northwestern University.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Poor personal appearance.  | 10. Lack of maturity.                                       |
| 2. Overbearing-overaggressive-conceited.                            | 11. Lack of courtesy.                                       |
| 3. Inability to express self clearly - poor voice diction, grammar. | 12. No interest in company or industry.                     |
| 4. Lack of planning for career, no purpose and goals.               | 13. Emphasis on whom individual knows.                      |
| 5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm.                                 | 14. Intolerant strong prejudices.                           |
| 6. Lack of confidence and poise, nervousness.                       | 15. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.        |
| 7. Overemphasis on money.   | 16. Late to interview without good reason.                  |
| 8. Unwilling to start at the bottom, expects too much too soon.     | 17. Never heard of company.                                 |
| 9. Makes excuses, is evasive, harps on trouble areas.               | 18. Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time. |
|   | 19. Asks no questions about the job.                        |

**Sources:**

5 Steps to Professional Presence, Susan Bixler and Lisa Dugan

Knock'em Dead, Martin Yate

The Job Hunting Guide, Ron and Caryl Krannich

Key Words to Nail Your Job Interview, Wendy Enelow

Behavior-Based Interviewing, Terry Fitzwater

"Pre-Employment Inquiries an Equal Employment Opportunity Law", EEOC.

"Affirmative Action Guidelines", The University of Delaware

Job Hunting for the Utterly Confused, Jason R. Rich

Savvy Interviewing, Ron and Caryl Krannich

Interview for Success, Ron and Caryl Krannich

The Complete Job Search Handbook, Howard Figler