

Ace that Interview

How to Answer The Top Ten Most Asked Questions

Sarah Simpson



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Sarah Simpson

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How to Answer The Top Ten Most Asked Questions

Ace that Interview: How to Answer The Top Ten Most Asked Questions

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1 Introduction

Estimates suggest that there are 85–160 applicants per job. Therefore, it is vital that when you get shortlisted your interview is phenomenal and you become the obvious choice for the role.

The following information and activities look at the top ten interview questions and how you can ‘ace’ everyone.

We will look at:

- what each question is designed to achieve
- view each question from the point of view of the interviewer(s) and company
- look at poor and skilful answers
- undertake an activity to practice what you have learned

We will also look at the key sources of information that you need to examine prior to interview and how they can help you give a polished, concise, focused and positive performance.

This will ensure you stand out from the crowd and ensure you are remembered for all the right reasons!

2 Q1 – Tell me about yourself

This question is often the first one an employer will ask – about 80% of interviews start with this seemingly innocent question. It is known as a ‘stress question’ which can either induce silence or a long ill considered ramble. If you are prepared this can be a ‘dream question’. Answered well you can ‘set the scene’ for a great interview. A poor answer would include a lot of unnecessary information about hobbies, home life, ancient work history or personal matters

A poor answer would be:

"I'm 38 years old, married, have 3 children which take up a lot of my time and I love reading and knitting..."

You should also steer away from cliché answers such as:

*"I am a team player"
"I have excellent communication skills"*

You must have examples to back up your statements.

A skilful answer would be:

"I am a self starter. At 'xyz company' we had a problem with over ordering and waste, so I designed a new system which reduced costs and wastage by 30%, saving us \$200,00."

It is obviously easy to talk about yourself but, you need to consider what the employer really wants to know from a candidate which is usually:

- an overview of your related experience
- logical education and professional progression
- how well do you match what they want?

Let's expand on this last point – how do you match what they need. In a nut shell **you must sell what the employer wants to buy**. Therefore, it is essential to uncover their greatest; wants, needs, problems, or goals.

In order to do this there are steps you need to take:

- research the companies strategic plan – this usually runs for 3–5 years and will give you a road map for where they are going and the key stages in how they will get there
- prior to the interview research the specific role – not the general industry or organisation
- read the detailed job description including essential and desirable skills
- find out if there is anything in the outside environment which is likely to impact (either positively or negatively) on them. For example; government policy or legislation, technology changes, funding, shortages in materials, changes in consumer power or spending

Consider this a question a fantastic opportunity to:

- market yourself*
- present your qualifications
- give a focused purposeful response
- give a ‘potted’ professional background history
- tell them why you are interested in working for them (specifically as opposed to any organisation)

*What do we mean by market yourself?:

- what are your strengths – self confidence, reliability, enthusiasm, leadership
- what personal characteristics and skills translate into career strengths
- use real life examples to illustrate your points
- match your skills and experience to the companies; wants, needs, problems or goals

All this should be done ideally in no more than 60 seconds and certainly no longer than 2 minutes, as you can expand on points as necessary and if required.

The trick is to stop in the place at which you would like to be asked more about. For example:

“I recently designed a new __product which was really interesting, challenging and increased our sales by 15%”

(stop here and wait to be asked to expand)

Things to include in a ‘tell me about yourself’ question would be:

- why you made the decision to go into your particular field (if you are just starting out)
- where you are now in your career
- what qualifications make you the perfect candidate for the job in question – how you have positively impacted on your current / last employer
- what strengths do you have that match this jobs requirements and how can you quickly and concisely summarise them
- why do you want to work for this company?

Don't include:

- a re-read of your CV verbatim – known as the CV rehash
- politics
- controversy
- religion
- personal unrelated information

This personal sales pitch should flow effortlessly and be spontaneous and convincing, not staged and rehearsed.

Poor answers would be:

"I'm the best salesperson...ever!"

"my family moved to London 6 years ago and my mum thought I would be good at sales and marketing because I'm always talking and then after Uni my dads friend had a company so I got a job there and now I want to move on because I have heard there got be redundancies"

Skilful answers would be:

"I am an English major with 5 years experience in online broadcasting. For my current employer I developed an online news bulletin which has a worldwide audience of over 100,000 although it is continuing to grow. I see you have plans for growing your online media presence and I would very much like to be part of that journey and expansion"

"I am a computer science major at the University of Cambridge. Last summer, I interned for a startup in Canary Wharf, London. Here I worked as part of a team of five that developed software that identifies students at risk of leaving based on course performance. Six schools in the Greater London area currently use the software, and demand is rapidly growing. For the first step in my full-time career, I would like to work for a larger software developer with more resources so I can continue to drive growth and impact a greater number of people"

"I gained a 1st degree in marketing from Oxford and have worked for company xyz for the last 5 years. I have led a 20 strong sales team for the last 3 years and during that time we have increased sales year on year and date have brought in £2million of new business. It is this experience that I would like to bring to your organisation"

2.1 Activity:

Write a 'tell me about yourself' answer.

Write a 'personal commercial' about yourself that lasts no more than 60 seconds. To guide you think of it as a **past – present – future formulae**

Remember to match your skills and experience to their wants, needs, problems or goals

You can use this template, if you wish.

| past experience or University / college qualifications | present what do you currently do | what is your evidence of this? | future where do you want to be? | how would this experience & evidence help your potential new employer? |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Adding these three elements together will give you a focused, concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

let me tell you about myself...

3 Q2 – What are your weaknesses

If “tell me about yourself” is a stress question then “what are your weaknesses” could be classed as a **‘negative or behavioural question’**. It is designed to uncover problems or un-nerve candidates. The key is to give the interviewer(s) a positive spin.

This question can be asked in two ways:

- a) what are your weaknesses or
- b) what is / was your greatest failure

2a) Let’s take “what are your weaknesses” first.

This is not the place to be painfully honest and lay all your shortcomings out for all to see, or act like a comedian. Neither is it the time, as many candidates do, to turn a positive into a negative.

Poor answers would be:

*“I am a workaholic”
“I work too hard”
“I am a perfectionist”
“I am too motivated and driven and don’t know when to stop”
chocolate cake”
“I haven’t got any”
“I haven’t got any...have you?”*

A better way of tackling this is to use a weakness that you have already overcome. This shows your commitment to self development and how you can act on critical reflection.

Skilful answers would be:

“I was never confident with public speaking – which as you know, can be a hindrance in the workplace. when I realised this was a problem, I asked my employer if I could enrol in a presentation and speech workshop. As a result I was able to overcome my fear and since then, I’ve given lots of presentations to audiences of over a 100 high level executives – I still find it challenging but enjoyable”

The other method is to state that one skill is more developed than another:

“I think my analytical skills are more developed than my presentation skills”

However, remember not to offer up weaknesses that may directly affect your selection, but neither say that you don’t have any.

2b) “What is / was your greatest failure”

The 2 usual ways candidates answer this is by:

- saying they have never failed before, or
- by giving an example of a minor mistake in order to lessen its impact

What you need to do is think about this from the employers point of view. Ask yourself why would they pose this question. By doing so you can see its true reason, namely that it tells them about your ability to:

- take risks
- face challenges
- critically reflect on what went well and what didn't go so well
- how this experience has changed the way you now approach things

If you choose not to answer, or answer weakly the employer may think:

- you don't / can't set goals which means you have nothing to fail at
- you are being dishonest
- you are hiding something
- you don't have self-awareness
- you don't take responsibility for your actions
- you may / do blame others if something goes wrong

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Action plan for answer:

- reflect on your key milestones or decisions
- what problems or challenges did this pose
- evaluate and reflect honestly on whether you made the right choices
- would you make the same choices if you were faced the the same problem again
- what positive things have you learned
- how did this help you as a professional
- how could this experience and knowledge positively impact on them as a potential employer – remember your answers should be based around their; wants, needs, problems or goals

A template you may want to use is ‘STAR’. This keeps you focused and concise and ensures you cover everything without rambling or revealing things you don’t want to.

| element | description |
|-----------------------|---|
| S T= Situation / Task | describe briefly your situation. This could include the background story |
| A = Approach | what happened and why? |
| R = Results | what happened? what positive outcomes came later as a result of reflecting, learning lessons or thinking differently |

An example of a STAR format ‘greatest failure’ would be”

| element | description |
|-----------------------|--|
| S T= Situation / Task | “the project should have been ours, but we took our eye off the ball” |
| A = Approach | “the issue was we took it for granted that the project was ‘in the bag’ as we had a good relationship with the client” |
| R = Results | “the lesson are learned was to never take a client for granted and settle for an “it will do” pitch. I can honestly say that since then my client relationships and presentations have been outstanding and this has led to a record client growth of 25% in the last year |

3.1 Activity:

Write a what are your weaknesses / greatest failure answer.

You can use the STAR template if you wish.

This is a reminder of the example we looked at earlier, should you wish to refer to it.

| element | description |
|-----------------------|--|
| S T= Situation / Task | “the project should have been our, but we took our eye off the ball” |
| A = Approach | “the issue was we took it for granted that the project was ‘in the bag’ as we had a good relationship with the client” |
| R = Results | “the lesson are learned was to never take a client for granted and settle for an “it will do” pitch. I can honestly say that since then my client relationships and presentations have been outstanding and this has led to a record client growth of 25% in the last year |

Remember to steer away from things which directly impact on the job you are going for and please finish on a positive note. It is even more beneficial if the positive element addresses one of the employers; wants, needs, problems or goals.

| element | description |
|---|-------------|
| S T= Situation / Task describe briefly your situation. This could include the background story | |
| A = Approach what happen & why? | |
| R = Results what happened? what positive outcomes came later as a result of reflecting, learning lessons or thinking differently? | |

Adding these three elements together will give you a focused, concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

my weaknesses / greatest failure is / are...

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4 Q3 – What are your strengths

You don't have a huge amount of time in an interview to answer this so pick a couple of key points and don't be arrogant or too humble.

Did you help your organisation save money, save time, bring in new clients, develop new products or become more efficient in any way? Explain how.

Be aware that most accomplishments are achieved as part of a team or department, so please don't make it sound as though you single-handedly turned a situation around or executed a triumph by yourself unless you actually did. Interviewers usually can detect someone who takes credit for others' work a mile away and this will not go down well.

As a general rule the 10 most desirable traits are:

- a proven track record as an achiever – especially if these match up with the employer's greatest wants, needs, problems or goals
- intelligence and management "savvy".
- honesty and integrity
- good fit with corporate culture. Would the company feel comfortable with you and could you quickly become a member of the team or department
- likability and a positive attitude
- good communication skills
- dedication – a willingness to go the extra mile to achieve excellence
- clear purpose and goals
- enthusiasm and a high level of motivation
- confident, assured leader

Give one or two strengths and make sure you provide details and examples that prove you have them. For example:

A poor answer would be:

"I am good at motivating people"

A skilful answer would be:

"I am good at motivating people. In the last year I have developed a training, skills sharing and recognition program. The result has been a 15% increase in employee retention, which has saved an estimated \$30,000 and a increase in employee satisfaction rates on our annual survey"

4.1 Activity:

Write a ‘strengths’ pitch which lasts no more than 2 minutes.

As a guide remember you are looking to pick up on one or two key skills which you must back up with examples. I have left space for more examples than this so you can tailor your answer to a particular role and interview.

You can use this template as a guide, if you wish.

| Strength | Evidence | How does this relate to the employer’s greatest wants, needs, problems or goals Remember your potential sources of information & evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic plan – usually 3–5 years • job role / responsibilities and description • annual reports • company newsletters • articles • social media |
|----------|----------|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Adding these three elements together will give you a focused, concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

my strengths are...

no.1
nine years
in a row

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5 Q4 – Why are you leaving your current role / job

There may be any numbers of reasons you may want to leave your present job, but make sure that you do not bad mouth your; manager, colleagues, company, customers or job.

Avoid words or phrases such as:

- personality clash
- unfair promotion
- didn't get on
- they didn't understand me

Poor answers would be:

"I can't stand my boss"
"I don't like the work I do"
"nobody likes me"
"I always get overlooked for promotion"
"the customers were really demanding"

Potential employers will presume, rightly or wrongly that if you defame a current / previous employer you will do the same in the future to them. Don't forget that in today's social media environment you can easily make comments that could go global or viral. Save your job horror stories for your friends and relatives.

Take the approach of staying positive about your current role or employer. Talk about why it is time to move on and what you have learned.

You could give the following acceptable reasons:

- greater responsibility
- professional growth
- new or more challenges – shows drive ambition and motivation
- larger / smaller organisation – for greater specialisation

Skilful answers would be:

"I've learned a lot from my current role, but now I'm looking for a new challenge, to broaden my horizons and to gain a new skill-set, which, I see in this job."

"I have grown with my employer as far as a can. I want to go further and I believe that this is possible with you"

NB Don't lie about having being fired as this is easily checked. If it was due to a takeover or merger then say so.

5.1 Activity:

Write a explanation as to why you are leaving your current role / company.

Remember don't 'badmouth' or current role, colleagues or company, instead focus on the positive of both your current position and why you want to move on.

You can use this template as a guide, if you wish.

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If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role

| why you are leaving | positive statement about current role or employer | positive reason for wanting to work in new role for interviewers company e.g. greater responsibility, professional growth, new / more challenges, larger / smaller company (specialisation) |
|---------------------|---|--|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Adding these three elements together will give you a focused,concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

I am leaving my current role / job because...

6 Q5 – Why did you apply for this position?

There are two different versions of this question:

- why did you apply for this position?
- why do you want to work for us?

5a) Lets take ‘why did you apply for this role?’ first

Your answer here should include what you think are the most interesting elements of the position.

Poor answers would be:

“because it pays more”
“because you advertised in the local paper”

Skilful answers would include elements such as; more responsibility and opportunity. You can add higher salary as part of this answer but not as the sole focus or reason.

“the position offers more responsibility, challenges and interesting opportunities, as well as a higher salary”
“because it is on the cutting edge of technology”
“because you are the industry leader”

5b) The second part of the question is ‘why do you want to work for us?’

I said earlier about how important it was to check out not only the specific role you have applied for but also the company. It is this information that you can use to answer “why do you want to work for us?”

The interviewer is looking for sound reasoning and judgement behind your choice as well as how well you can articulate it. Don't act as if there was no reasoning behind your application.

Sources of information you could consider are:

- strategic plan – usually 3–5 years
- job role / responsibilities and description
- annual reports
- company newsletters
- articles
- social media
- company website
- industry specific sources
- newspapers



"I studied English for 16 years but...
...I finally learned to speak it in just six lessons"

Jane, Chinese architect

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6.1 Activity:

Write a why did you apply for this position / why do you want to work for us answer?

You can use this template as a guide if you wish.

If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role

| <p>why did you apply for this role?</p> <p>Ask yourself what you think are the most interesting elements of the position and how can I show evidence that I have the knowledge / skill</p> <p>(this is about you and the role)</p> <p>Sources of information might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applied for job role & responsibilities (desired & required) • your evidence from your current role to back up your answer | <p>why do you want to work for us?</p> <p>The interviewer is looking for sound reasoning and judgement behind your choice as well as how well you can articulate it</p> <p>(this is about the company & what your research about them has shown)</p> <p>Sources of information might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategic plan – usually 3–5 years • job role / responsibilities and description • annual reports • company newsletters • articles • social media |
|---|--|
| | |
| | |

Adding these three elements together will give you a focused,concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

I applied for this position / want to work for you because...

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7 Q6 – Where would you like to be in 5 years time?

This question may soon fall out of the top 10 as we live in a growing, fast-paced world where jobs are no longer ‘for life’.

I would guess that you don’t know where you will be in 5 years and neither may the interviewer – life would be much less complicated with a crystal ball! However, you will probably want to err on the side of caution and say that you expect to be with the same company. You can explain that you want to be in a position where your continually developing skills, talents and responsibilities can best serve the company. Again relate this back to information search you have carried out prior to the interview.

The interviewer basically is looking for indications that you are; ambitious, career orientated and committed to a future with their company. They also want to see if you are realistic about your career goals and the steps you would need to reach them.

It is best not to mention particular roles and job titles, rather concentrate on the work itself and don’t be tempted to be a comedian!

Poor answers would be:

*“doing your job”
“lying on a beach”
“not here!”*

A skilful answers would be:

“In five years time I would like to have an even more in depth knowledge of this industry. Ultimately i would like to be in a management role, where I can use my people skills and industry knowledge to benefit the people working for me, and the company as a whole”

“I am passionate about making a long-term commitment to my next position. Judging by what you’ve told me about this position, it’s exactly what qualified for and looking to do. In terms of my future career path, I’m confident that if I work with my proven diligence, opportunities will open up for me. It’s always been that way in my career, and I’m confident I’ll have similar opportunities here.”

7.1 Activity:

Write a “where would you like to be in 5 years time” answer.

Remember the interviewer is looking for indications that you are:

- ambitious
- career orientated
- committed to a future with their company
- realistic about your career goals
- understanding that promotions come through hard work and are not going to be automatic
- knowledgeable about the steps you would need to reach them

Stay away from:

- mentioning particular roles and job titles
- being a comedian!

Please write your answers here – I have left more than one space so you can try out different options.

8 Q7 – Why should we hire you?

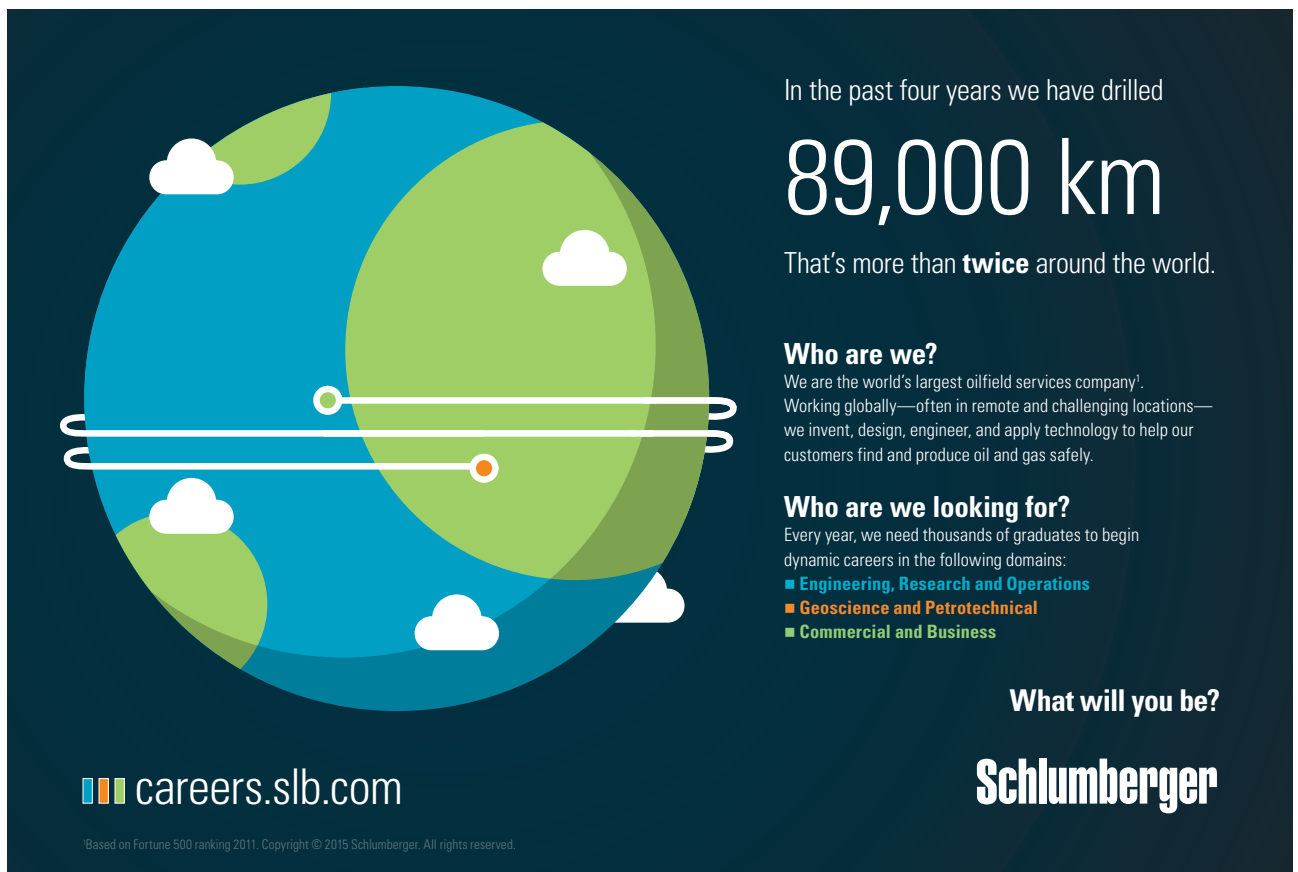
The interviewer is looking for an answer that:

- reiterates your qualifications
- highlights what makes you unique
- up-sells your positive personality traits
- shows how you can benefit the company

The interviewer is not looking for:

- a general recap of the job role description
- you to bad mouth other candidates
- outright arrogance
- a full verbatim re-read of your CV
- why this job will benefit you

It is essential you provide evidence as to how your qualifications, skills and traits match the advertised roles & responsibilities. As such the job description and strategic plan will probably be your best sources of information.



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Poor answers would be:

"I don't know"
"I'm the best candidate for this job"
"I'm fantastic and I'm sure my current employer will miss me"
"I need the money"
"this job is near my house"
"I have always been interested in what you do"

Whilst some of these reasons above may be important to you you need to keep in mind that they are not why the interviewer will hire you.

Skilful answers would be:

"I understand your primary need is to find someone who can manage the sales and marketing of your book publishing division. You said you need someone with a strong background in large volume book sales. This is where I've spent most of my 10 year career. I know the right contacts, methods, principles, and marketing techniques as well as any person can in our industry and I can make a huge contribution to your company"

"You should hire me because I have considerable experience and success in international healthcare sales. I know from your strategic plan that your company is looking to expand its operations outside its national market. In my current role I successfully opened up markets in china and India, resulting in a 40% increase in sales"

8.1 Activity:

Write a "why should we hire you" answer.

You can use this template, if you wish. I have given you more than one space so you can try out different options.

If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role

| how can you benefit the company – what do they need? | what are your qualifications? | what makes you unique? | how can you up-sell your personality traits? | what is your evidence? |
|--|-------------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Adding these five elements together will give you a focused, concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

You should hire me because...

9 Q8 – What salary are you expecting?

You need to avoid giving a specific figure and instead reiterate your commitment to the job. If you have to, then give a broad salary range based on your research and where the job is geographically located. If you have not done your research or have been unable to determine a salary range then ask the interviewer if the company has a scale and give an answer based on that.

Be aware that some companies will sometimes phrase this question in the more direct, blunt manner of *“how much do you think you are worth”*. The answer you give will be the same as we discuss here you don't let the direct nature of this version put you off.

Candidates often fear this question for two main reasons:

- If you go too high you will automatically be out of the running for the job
- If you go too low you will de-value your “worth” and will be ‘held to ransom’ with a low salary or be out of the running because the interviewer wonders why you are prepared to settle for such a low salary



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Poor answers would be:

"I currently earn \$30,000 – so I am now looking for £35,000"
"whatever you are offering"
"I earn [insert a grossly overestimated incorrect salary here], so that could be a starting point"

Skilful answers would be:

"I'm more interested in the role itself than the pay. That said, I would expect to be paid in the going range for this role and based on my eight years experience. So, I think a fair salary given the high cost of living here in New York City would be..."

"I have done some research and found that the average salary for a _____ ranges from \$... to \$... per year in this geographic area. I am not set on a specific number and am willing to negotiate depending on the specific responsibilities and duties involved"

If there is room for negotiation:

- know your lower limit
- know what the industry maximum for the role is
- put forward a range or non-specific figure
- go mid point not low

For example if your lower limit is \$50,000 and the industry upper limit is \$60,000 then say that you expect something in the mid-fifties. If you offer too broad a range, say of \$50,000–\$60,000, the chances are you will be offered something at the very lower end of the scale.

9.1 Activity part 1:

Write a “what salary are you expecting?” answer.

You can use this template, if you wish

If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role

| what do you currently earn * | how much experience do you have? | what is the current salary range for someone in your role and with your experience? | where do you live? |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| | | | |

* You may wish to leave out the first column (how much do you currently earn), but be aware that this is something you may be asked and you can not lie.

Adding these four (or three) elements together will give you a focused, concise and positive answer.


You can write this here.....

I am expecting a salary of...

9.2 Activity part 2:

Write a salary negotiation answer.

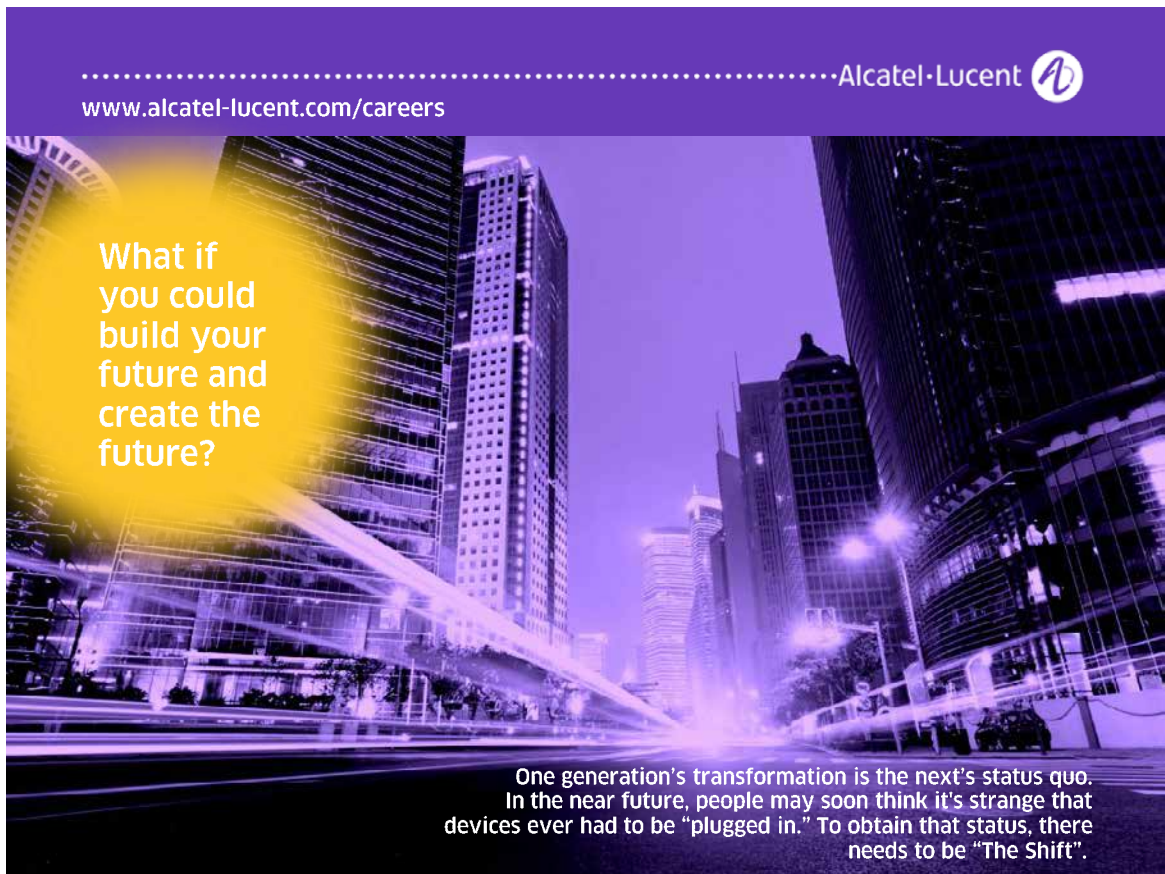
You can use this template, if you wish. I have used the figures from the previous lecture in this table as a reminder for you.

.....Alcatel-Lucent 

www.alcatel-lucent.com/careers

What if you could build your future and create the future?

One generation's transformation is the next's status quo. In the near future, people may soon think it's strange that devices ever had to be "plugged in." To obtain that status, there needs to be "The Shift".



If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role

| what is your lower salary limit? e.g. \$50,000 | what is the industry maximum (for your role, experience and location) e.g. \$60,000 | what salary are you going to put forward? remember don't be: • too specific • too low e.g. \$ mid 50s |
|---|---|--|
| | | |

Adding these four elements together will give you a focused,concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

the salary I would like to negotiate is ... I have based his on...

10 Q9 – How do you explain a gap in your employment?

You must have a sound (but truthful) reason for not working or having a gap in employment. You want to highlight factors which have prolonged for search for the right role through your own choice.

These might include:

- raising children
- returning to school / university to gain further qualifications or training
- a period of self employment (add to cv timeline)
- freelancing or consulting (add to cv timeline)
- owning your own business (add to cv timeline)
- volunteering (add to cv timeline)
- exploring or travelling (add to cv timeline)

Poor answers would be:

"no one would hire me"

"for some reason I keep getting asked to leave"

"my previous employer had it in for me from day one"

"I spent twelve months travelling because I wasn't ready to settle down. I don't remember most of it"

Skilful answers would be:

'I took six months out to immerse myself in a different culture and feel I've not only gained a new perspective, but I've also learned some valuable life lessons. I'm now ready to start focussing on my career.'

"It was my first time in sales and I wasn't meeting my goals. I now know I'm not a sales person but have re-trained in marketing and have successfully gained a 1st degree, which I am really looking forward to putting into practice as I know this is a key part of this role"

'My previous employer was forced to make a series of cuts and had a 'first-in, last-out' policy. Unfortunately I was relatively new to the company and was made redundant. But, I'm proud of what I achieved during my time there and this can be reinforced by my previous manager, who has provided one of my references"

What do you do if you were fired?

Obviously this is more difficult to explain. Describe that you are now looking for a role which requires different strengths to the one you needed in your previous role – if you can ensure these new strengths match those that the interviewer needs.

Emphasise the steps you have taken to correct any past issues and how this is actually a positive thing and a potential benefit to the interviewer.

A skilful answer would be:

"After my job was terminated, I made a conscious decision not to jump on the first opportunities to come along. In my life, I've found out that you can always turn a negative into a positive. I decided to take the time I needed to think through what I do best, what I most want to do and where I'd like to do it. I then sort out those companies that could offer these opportunities such as yours."

10.1 Activity part 1:

Write an "explain any gaps in your employment" answer.

You can use this template, if you wish.

If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role

| how long was / were your period(s) of employment gaps? | what were you doing? | what is your 'positive spin' on this? | how can you match your 'positive spin' to what the company / role wants or needs? |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Adding these four elements together will give you a focused, concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

the gaps in my employment are due to...

10.2 Activity part 2:

write an “explain the reason for being fired” answer.

You can use this template, if you wish.

If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role.



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Sources: Keuzegids Master ranking 2013; Elsevier 'Beste Studies' ranking 2012; Financial Times Global Masters in Management ranking 2012

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| answer honestly – 'why were you fired' | what did you do as a result | how can you put a positive spin on what you did | how does this positive spin match your potential employers role, needs and wants? |
|---|--------------------------------|--|--|
| | | | |
| | | | |

Adding these four elements together will give you a focused,concise and positive answer.

You can write this here.....

I was asked to leave my previous employment because...however / as a result...

11 Q10 – Do you have any questions?

This is usually the last question you can expect during an interview. I cannot overestimate how important to have some intelligent questions to ask the interviewer, otherwise you may just sound dull and un-interested.

As this is often the last chance you will have with the interviewers it is important that you leave then with a positive up tempo impression of you.

Questions about; salaries, benefits or holidays should not go here.

If you know in advance and have researched the interviewer(s) you can ask a question related to their area of expertise. This will leave them with a positive image of you and you will come across as a great conversationist with well developed interpersonal skills.



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Having questions already prepared makes you appear; motivated to excel in the interview, generally organised, prepared and put-together. If all else fails, ask the interviewer if they need any further clarification about your qualifications, experience or skills.

Poor answers would be:

"no"
"ermmmm, I don't think so"
"how many holidays will I get?"

Skilful answers would be:

Is this a new position? How long has this position existed?
How many people have held this position in the last two years?
Who would be my supervisor?
To whom would I report?
Whom will I supervise?
Who will I be working most closely?
What do you like about working for this company?
Do you have any current plans for expansion or cutbacks?
What kind of turnover rate does the company have?
What projects and assignments will I be working on?
What happened to the person that held this position before? Was he promoted or fired?
What is this company's culture
What is the philosophy of the company?
What are the company's long and short term goals?
Why do you (the interviewer) enjoy working for this company?
Describe the typical responsibilities of the position.
What are the most challenging aspects of this position?
Describe the opportunities for training and professional development
Will I receive any formal training?
What is the company's promotional policy?
Are there opportunities for advancement within the company?
When can I expect to hear from you?

You can of course also ask anything you found out during your pre-interview research.

Remember sources of information could be:

- strategic plan – usually 3–5 years
- job role / responsibilities and description
- annual reports
- company newsletters
- articles
- social media
- company website
- industry specific sources
- newspapers

11.1 Activity:

Write a “do you have any questions?”

You can use this template, if you wish.

Please think of a question for each of the potential areas. You can then tailor your particular question to the interview you are attending.

If you don't have a job interview planned then complete this activity for a potential or desired role.

| potential areas | Q's you could ask |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| company strategic plan | |
| job role & responsibilities | |
| company newsletters | |
| articles | |
| social media | |
| company culture & philosophy | |
| general industry information | |

12 Summary

The top ten interview questions we looked at were:

1. Tell me about yourself
2. What are your weaknesses / what is your greatest failure?
3. What are your strengths?
4. Why are you leaving your current role / job?
5. Why did you apply for this position / why do you want to work for us?
6. Where would you like to be in 5 years time?
7. Why should we hire you?
8. What salary are you expecting?
9. How do you explain a gap in your employment?
10. Do you have any questions?

Some of the 'rules' for job interviewing are:

You must sell what the employer wants to buy

You must know the employers greatest; wants, needs, problems, or goals.

Key sources of information include:

- strategic plan – usually 3–5 years
- job role / responsibilities and description
- annual reports
- company newsletters
- articles
- social media
- company website
- industry specific sources
- newspapers

You must practice your answers so they become spontaneous

for further info & videos please see

<https://www.udemy.com/ace-that-interview-answer-the-top-10-questions-like-a-pro/?couponCode=bookboon>

13 Supplementary information

These are things we have covered during this book, but, it is worthwhile highlighting these here.

13.1 Sources of pre-interview information

Sources of information you could consider prior to your interview are:

- strategic plan – usually 3–5 years
- job role / responsibilities and description • annual reports
- company newsletters
- articles
- social media
- company website
- industry specific sources
- newspapers

13.2 Marketing yourself

What do we mean by marketing yourself?

These are the elements we looked in Question 1 “*tell me about yourself*”:

- what are your strengths – self confidence, reliability, enthusiasm, leadership • what personal characteristics and skills translate into career strengths
- use real life examples to illustrate your points
- match your skills and experience to the companies; wants, needs, problems or goals

for further info & videos please see

<https://www.udemy.com/ace-that-interview-answer-the-top-10-questions-like-a-pro/?couponCode=bookboon>