

HR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR LEADING IT COMPANIES

1. Tell me about yourself.

Ans:- This is the dreaded, classic, open-ended interview question and likely to be among the first. It's your chance to introduce your qualifications, good work habits, etc. Keep it mostly work and career related. Start with the present and tell why you are well qualified for the position. Remember that the key to all successful interviewing is to match your qualifications to what the interviewer is looking for. In other words you must sell what the buyer is buying. This is the single most important strategy in job hunting. So, before you answer this or any question it's imperative that you try to uncover your interviewer's greatest need, want, problem or goal.

2. What are your greatest strengths?

Ans:- You know that your key strategy is to first uncover your interviewer's greatest wants and needs before you answer questions. Then, once you uncover your interviewer's greatest wants and needs you can choose those achievements from your list that best match up. You should have a list mentally prepared of your greatest strengths. You should also have, a specific example or two, which illustrates each strength, an example chosen from your most recent and most impressive achievements.

3. What are your greatest weaknesses?

Ans:- Everybody has weaknesses, but don't spend too much time on this one and keep it work related. Along with a minor weakness or two, try to point out a couple of weaknesses that the interviewer might see as strengths, such as sometimes being a little too meticulous about the quality of your work. (Avoid saying "I work too hard." It's a predictable, common answer.) For every weakness, offer a strength that compensates for it.

Disguise strength as a weakness.

Example: "Nobody's perfect, but based on what you've told me about this position, I believe I'd make an outstanding match. I know that when I hire people, I look for two things most of all. Do they have the *qualifications* to do the job well, and the *motivation* to do it well? Everything in my background shows I have both the qualifications and a strong desire to achieve excellence in whatever I take on. So I can say in all honesty that I see nothing that would cause you even a small concern about my ability or my strong desire to perform this job with excellence."

4. Which adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

Ans:- Answer with positive, work-oriented adjectives, such as conscientious, hard-working, honest and courteous, plus a brief description or example of why each fits you well.

5. Tell me about something you did – or failed to do – that you now feel a little ashamed of.

Ans:- As with faults and weaknesses, *never confess a regret*. But don't seem as if you're stonewalling either. Say you harbor no regrets, then add a principle or habit you practice regularly for healthy human relations.

Example: Pause for reflection, as if the question never occurred to you. Then say, "You know, I really can't think of anything." (Pause again, then add): "I would add that as a general management principle, I've found that the best way to avoid regrets is to avoid causing them in the first place. I practice one habit that helps me a great deal in this regard. At the end of each day, I mentally review the day's events and conversations to take a second look at the people and developments I'm involved with and do a double check of what they're likely to be feeling. Sometimes I'll see things that do need more follow-up, whether a pat on the back, or maybe a five minute chat in someone's office to make sure we're clear on things... whatever."

6. Which adjectives would you use to describe yourself?

Ans:- Answer with positive, work-oriented adjectives, such as conscientious, hard-working, honest and courteous, plus a brief description or example of why each fits you well.

7. Why should I hire you?

Ans:- By now you can see how critical it is to apply the overall strategy of uncovering the employer's needs before you answer questions. If you know the employer's greatest needs and desires, this question will give you a big leg up over other candidates because you will give him better reasons for hiring you than anyone else is likely to... reasons tied directly to his needs. Whether your interviewer asks you this question *explicitly* or not, this is the most important question of your interview because he *must* answer this question favorably in his own mind before you will be hired. *So help him out!* Walk through each of the position's requirements as you understand them, and follow each with a reason why you meet that requirement so well.

8. What do you know about our company?

Ans:- To answer this one, research the company before your interview.

9. Why do you want to work for us?

Ans:- This question is your opportunity to hit the ball out of the park, thanks to the in-depth research you should do before any interview. Best sources for researching your target company: annual reports, the corporate newsletter contacts you know at the company or its suppliers, advertisements, articles about the company in the trade press.

10. Aren't you overqualified for this position?

Ans:- As with any objection, don't view this as a sign of imminent defeat. It's an invitation to teach the interviewer a new way to think about this situation, seeing advantages instead of drawbacks.

Example: "I recognize the job market for what it is – a marketplace. Like any marketplace, it's subject to the laws of supply and demand. So 'overqualified' can be a relative term, depending on how tight the job market is. And right now, it's very tight. I understand and accept that. I also believe that there could be very positive benefits for both of us in this match. Because of my unusually strong experience in _____, I could start to contribute right away, perhaps much faster than someone who'd have to be brought along more slowly."

11. What past accomplishments gave you satisfaction?

Ans:- Briefly describe one to three work projects that made you proud or earned you pats on the back, promotions, raises, etc. Focus more on achievement than reward.

12. What makes you want to work hard?

Ans:- Naturally, material rewards such as perks, salary and benefits come into play. But again, focus more on achievement and the satisfaction you derive from it.

13. What type of work environment do you like best?

Ans:- Tailor your answer to the job. For example, if in doing your job you're required to lock the lab doors and work alone, then indicate that you enjoy being a team player when needed, but also enjoy working independently. If you're required to attend regular project planning

and status meetings, then indicate that you're a strong team player and like being part of a team.

14. Why do you want this job?

Ans:- To help you answer this and related questions, study the job ad in advance. But a job ad alone may not be enough, so it's okay to ask questions about the job while you're answering. Say what attracts you to the job. Avoid the obvious and meaningless, such as, "I need a job."

15. How do you handle pressure and stress?

Ans:- This is sort of a double whammy, because you're likely already stressed from the interview and the interviewer can see if you're handling it well or not. Everybody feels stress, but the degree varies. Saying that you whine to your shrink, kick your dog or slam down a fifth of Jack Daniels are not good answers. Exercising, relaxing with a good book, socializing with friends or turning stress into productive energy are more along the lines of the "correct" answers.

16. Where do you see yourself five years from now?

Ans:- Explain your career-advancement goals that are in line with the job for which you are interviewing. Your interviewer is likely more interested in how he, she or the company will benefit from you achieving your goals than what you'll get from it, but it goes hand in hand to a large degree. It's not a good idea to tell your potential new boss that you'll be going after his or her job, but it's okay to mention that you'd like to earn a senior or management position.

17. Describe your ideal company, location and job.

Ans:- The only right answer is to describe what this company is offering, being sure to make your answer believable with specific reasons, stated with sincerity, why each quality represented by this opportunity is attractive to you.

18. What are your career options right now?

Ans:- Prepare for this question by thinking of how you can position yourself as a desired commodity. If you are still working, describe the possibilities at your present firm and why, though you're greatly appreciated there, you're looking for something more (challenge, money, responsibility, etc.). Also mention that you're seriously exploring opportunities with one or two other firms.

If you're not working, you can talk about other employment possibilities you're actually exploring. But do this with a light touch, speaking only in general terms. You don't want to seem manipulative or coy.

19. What are your outside interests?

Ans:- Try to gauge how this company's culture would look upon your favorite outside activities and be guided accordingly. You can also use this question to shatter any stereotypes that could limit your chances. If you're over 50, for example, describe your activities that demonstrate physical stamina. If you're young, mention an activity that connotes wisdom and institutional trust, such as serving on the board of a popular charity.

But above all, remember that your employer is hiring you for what you can do *for him*, not your family, yourself or outside organizations, no matter how admirable those activities may be.

20. Why did you choose your college major?

Ans:- The interviewer is likely fishing to see if you are interested in your field of work or just doing a job to get paid. Explain why you like it. Besides your personal interests, include some rock-solid business reasons that show you have vision and business sense.

21. The "Silent Treatment".

Ans:- You answer an interviewer's question and then, instead of asking another, he just stares at you in a deafening silence. You wait, growing a bit uneasy, and there he sits, silent as Mt. Rushmore, as if he doesn't believe what you've just said, or perhaps making you feel that you've unwittingly violated some cardinal rule of interview etiquette. When you get this silent treatment after answering a particularly difficult question, such as "tell me about your weaknesses", its intimidating effect can be most disquieting, even to polished job hunters.

22. How do you feel about reporting to a younger person (minority, woman, etc)?

Ans:- You greatly admire a company that hires and promotes on merit alone and you couldn't agree more with that philosophy. The age (gender, race, etc.) of the person you report to would *certainly* make no difference to you. Whoever has that position has obviously earned it and knows their job well. Both the person and the position are fully deserving of respect. You believe that all people in a company, from the receptionist to the Chairman, work best when their abilities, efforts and feelings are respected and rewarded fairly, and that includes you. That's the best type of work environment you can hope to find.

23. Would you lie for the company?

Ans:- Try to avoid choosing between two values, giving a positive statement which covers all bases instead.

Example: “I would never do anything to hurt the company..”

If aggressively pressed to choose between two competing values, *always choose personal integrity*. It is the most prized of all values.

24. What makes you angry?

Ans:- Give an answer that's suited to both your personality and the management style of the firm. Here, the homework you've done about the company and its style can help in your choice of words.

Examples: If you are a reserved person and/or the corporate culture is coolly professional:

“I'm an even-tempered and positive person by nature, and I believe this helps me a great deal in keeping my department running smoothly, harmoniously and with a genuine *esprit de corps*. I believe in communicating clearly what's expected, getting people's commitment to those goals, and then following up continuously to check progress.”

“If anyone or anything is going off track, I want to know about it early. If, after that kind of open communication and follow up, someone isn't getting the job done, I'll want to know why. If there's no good reason, then I'll get impatient and angry...and take appropriate steps from there. But if you hire good people, motivate them to strive for excellence and then follow up constantly, it almost never gets to that state.”

If you are feisty by nature and/or the position calls for a tough straw boss.

“You know what makes me angry? People who (the fill in the blanks with the most objectionable traits for this type of position)...people who don't pull their own weight, who are negative, people who lie...etc.”

25. Who has inspired you in your life and why?

Ans:- Have a few heroes in mind, from your mental “Board of Directors” – Leaders in your industry, from history or anyone else who has been your mentor. Be prepared to give examples of how their words, actions or teachings have helped inspire your achievements. As always, prepare an answer which highlights qualities that would be highly valuable in the position you are seeking.

26. How do you feel about working nights and weekends?

Ans:- First, if you're a confirmed workaholic, this question is a softball lob. Whack it out of the park on the first swing by saying this kind of schedule is just your style. Add that your family understands it. Indeed, they're happy for you, as they know you get your greatest satisfaction from your work.

27. Are you willing to relocate or travel?

Ans:- First find out where you may have to relocate and how much travel may be involved. Then respond to the question. If there's no problem, say so enthusiastically. If you do have a reservation, there are two schools of thought on how to handle it.

One advises you to keep your options open and your reservations to yourself in the early going, by saying, "no problem". Your strategy here is to get the best offer you can, then make a judgment whether it's worth it to you to relocate or travel.

28. What do you see as the proper role/mission of... ..a good (job title you're seeking); ...a good manager; ...an executive in serving the community; ...a leading company in our industry; etc.

Ans:- Think of the most essential ingredients of success for each category above – your job title, your role as manager, your firm's role, etc. Identify at least three but no more than six qualities you feel are most important to success in each role. Then commit your response to memory. Here, again, the more information you've already drawn out about the greatest wants and needs of the interviewer, and the more homework you've done to identify the culture of the firm, the more on-target your answer will be.

29. How could you have improved your career progress?

Ans:- You're generally quite happy with your career progress. Maybe, if you had known something earlier in life (impossible to know at the time, such as the booming growth in a branch in your industry...or the corporate downsizing that would phase out your last job), you might have moved in a certain direction sooner. But all things considered, you take responsibility for where you are, how you've gotten there, where you are going...and you harbor no regrets.

30. What are your goals?

Ans:- Be ready to discuss your goals for each major area of your life: career, personal development and learning, family, physical (health), community service and (if your interviewer is clearly a religious person) you could briefly and generally allude to your spiritual goals (showing you are a well-rounded individual with your values in the right order).

Be prepared to describe each goal in terms of specific milestones you wish to accomplish along the way, time periods you're allotting for accomplishment, why the goal is important to you, and the specific steps you're taking to bring it about. But do this concisely, as you never want to talk more than two minutes straight before letting your interviewer back into the conversation.

31. "The Salary Question" – How much money do you want?

Ans:- For maximum salary negotiating power, remember these five guidelines:

a. Never bring up salary. Let the interviewer do it first. Good salespeople sell their products thoroughly before talking price. *So should you.* Make the interviewer want you first, and your bargaining position will be much stronger.

b. If your interviewer raises the salary question too early, before you've had a chance to create desire for your qualifications, *postpone* the question, saying something like, "Money is important to me, but is *not* my main concern. Opportunity and growth are far more important. What I'd rather do, if you don't mind, is explore if I'm right for the position, and then talk about money. Would that be okay?"

c. The #1 rule of any negotiation is: *the side with more information wins.* After you've done a thorough job of selling the interviewer and it's time to talk salary, the secret is to get the employer talking about what he's willing to pay *before* you reveal what *you're* willing to accept. So, when asked about salary, respond by asking, "I'm sure the company has already established a salary range for this position. Could you tell me what that is?" Or, "I want an income commensurate with my ability and qualifications. I trust you'll be fair with me. What does the position pay?" Or, more simply, "What does this position pay?"

d. Know beforehand what you'd accept. To know what's reasonable, research the job market and this position for any relevant salary information. Remember that most executives look for a 20-25%\$ pay boost when they switch jobs. If you're grossly underpaid, you may want more.

e. Never lie about what you currently make, but feel free to include the estimated cost of all your fringes, which could well tack on 25-50% more to your present "cash-only" salary.

32. How do you define success...and how do you measure up to your own definition?

Ans:- Give a well-accepted definition of success that leads right into your own stellar collection of achievements.

Example: “The best definition I've come across is that success is the progressive realization of a worthy goal.” “As to how I would measure up to that definition, I would consider myself both successful and fortunate...” (Then summarize your career goals and how your achievements have indeed represented a progressive path toward realization of your goals.)

33. If you won \$10 million lottery, would you still work?

Ans:- This type of question is aimed at getting at your bedrock attitude about work and how you feel about what you do. Your best answer will focus on your positive feelings.

Example: “Of course, since I can't count on winning, I'd just as soon create my own destiny by sticking with what's worked for me, meaning good old reliable hard work and a desire to achieve. I think those qualities have built many more fortunes than all the lotteries put together.”

34. Why should I hire you from the outside when I could promote someone from within?

Ans:- Help him see the qualifications that *only* you can offer.

Example: “In general, I think it's a good policy to hire from within – to look outside probably means you're not completely comfortable choosing someone from inside.”

“Naturally, you want this department to be as strong as it possibly can be, so you want the strongest candidate. I feel that I can fill that bill because... (then recap your strongest qualifications that match up with his greatest needs).”

35. On a scale of one to ten, rate me as an interviewer.

Ans:- Once again, *never be negative*. The interviewer will only resent criticism coming from you. This is the time to show your positivism. However, don't give a numerical rating. Simply praise whatever interview style he's been using. If he's been tough, say “You have been thorough and tough-minded, the very qualities needed to conduct a good interview.”

If he's been methodical, say, “You have been very methodical and analytical, and I'm sure that approach results in excellent hires for your firm.” In other words, pay him a sincere compliment *that he can believe* because it's anchored in the behaviour you've just seen.