

Interview preparation.

Inspired Staffing is here to support you to successfully advance your career objectives. Here is a list of common interview questions. Practice by writing out your responses. Then practice in front of the mirror. Be prepared, be yourself and make sure you're ready to answer some tough questions.

"Tell me about yourself.."

Be prepared to talk for two minutes about yourself. Be logical. Start anywhere, such as high school, college or your first professional position. The interviewer is trying to evaluate your communication skills and linear thinking. You may try to score a point or two by describing a major personal attribute. Paint a picture that sums up your career and what you have been doing so far.

"Why are you leaving your current position?"

This is a very critical question. Don't bad mouth your previous employer or co-workers or sound too opportunistic. It's fine to mention major problems, a buy-out or a shutdown. You may want to state that after long personal consideration, your chance to make a contribution is very low due to extensive company-wide changes.

"What do you consider your most significant accomplishment?"

A good answer to this question can get you the job. Prepare extensively—discuss hard work, long hours, pressure and important company issues at stake. You may want to tell a two minute detailed story, discussing personal involvement.

"Why do you believe you are qualified for this position?"

Pick two or three main factors about the job and about yourself that are most relevant. Discuss for two minutes, including specific details. You may mention a technical skill, a management skill and/or a personal success story.

"Have you ever accomplished something you didn't think you could?"

The interviewer is trying to determine your goal orientation, work ethic, personal commitment and integrity. Prepare a good example where you overcame difficulties and succeeded. Prove that you're not a quitter.

"What do you like/dislike most about your current or last position?"

The interviewer is trying to determine compatibility with the open position. Be careful; don't say you dislike overtime, like management, or get too detailed. It's safe to say that you like challenges, pressure situations, opportunities to grow, or that you dislike bureaucracy and frustrating situations.

"How do you handle pressure? Do you like or dislike these situations?"

High achievers tend to perform well in high-pressure situations. Conversely, these questions could imply that the open position is pressure-packed and out of control. Know what you're getting into. If you do perform well under stress, provide a good, detailed example. Be descriptive.

"The sign of a good employee is the ability to take initiative. Can you describe a situation where you did this?"

The proactive, results-oriented person doesn't have to be told what to do. To convince the interviewer you possess this trait, give a series of short examples describing your self-motivation. Discuss one example in-depth, describing the extra effort, your strong work ethic and your creative, resourceful side.

"What was the worst/most embarrassing situation of your career? How would you have done things differently with 20/20 hindsight?"

Your interviewer wants to know how introspective you are, and to see if you can learn from your mistakes. Don't be afraid to talk candidly about your failures, especially if you learned something significant from them.

"How have you grown or changed over the past few years?"

Maturation, increased technical skills and increased self-confidence are important developmental aspects. To discuss these effectively is indicative of a well-balanced, intelligent individual. Overcoming personal obstacles or recognising manageable weaknesses can help identify you as an approachable and desirable employee.

"What do you consider your most significant strength?"

Know your key five or six strengths—the ones most compatible with the job opening. Discuss each with specific examples. Don't include your management or interpersonal skills unless you can describe specific examples of good management, or how your relationship skills have been critical to your success.

"Deadlines, frustrations, difficult people and silly rules can make a job difficult. How do you handle these types of situations?"

Most companies, unfortunately, face these problems daily. If you can't deal with petty problems, you'll be seen as uncooperative. How you overcome these are important. Diplomacy, perseverance and common sense will prevail in difficult circumstances.

"One of our biggest problems is... What has been your experience with this? How would you deal with it?"

Think on your feet. Ask questions to get more details and break the problem into subsections. It is highly likely that you will have had some experience dealing with the subsections. Answer these and summarise the total. If you can't answer directly, state how you would go about solving the problem. Be specific and show your organisational and analytical skills.

"How has your technical ability been important in accomplishing results?"

A potential employee needs a strong level of technical competence. Most strong managers have good technical backgrounds. Describe specific examples of your technical abilities, and how you resolved a technical issue.

"How would you handle a situation with tight deadlines, low employee morale and inadequate resources?"

Your interviewer is looking for strong management skills. You need to be creative and describe your toughest management task, even if it doesn't meet all the criteria. Most situations don't. Organisational and interpersonal skills, handling pressure and good handling of this question are indicative of effective management skills.

"Are you satisfied with your career to date? What would you change if you could?"

Be honest. The interviewer wants to know if you'll be happy. Are you willing to make some sacrifices to get your career on the right track? Your degree of motivation is an important selection factor.

"What are your career goals? Where do you see yourself five or ten years from now?"

Be realistic! Pie-in-the-sky goals label you as immature. One or two management jumps in 3-5 years is a reasonable goal. If your track record indicates you're in line for senior management in 10 years, then mention it. If you've had a rocky road, be introspective.

"Why should we hire you for this position? What kinds of contributions would you make?"

This is a good chance to summarise. By now, you should know the key problems. Restate and show how you would address them. Don't be arrogant—instead demonstrate a thoughtful, organised and strong attitude.