

# Interview Question Preparation & Tips



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# **PART 1: QUESTIONS YOU COULD BE ASKED**

## **Getting to know you**

- How would others describe you?
- How would your last boss describe you?
- What are your career goals?
- What motivates you?
- What is your greatest strength?
- What personal or professional accomplishments are you most proud of?
- Why should we hire you for this role?
- How do you want to improve yourself in the upcoming year?
- Who are your heroes?
- When were you most satisfied in a previous job?
- What is the biggest lesson you've learned from a mistake you've made?
- How did you prepare for this interview?
- How do you manage your own time and objectives?
- How do you determine your priorities?
- How do you keep yourself organized?
- Why did you choose your university/degree subject/not to go to university?
- Are you willing to travel?
- How do you handle stress?
- How do you cope in adversity?
- Where do you see yourself in 5/10 years?
- Who has impacted you most in your career?
- What is your least favorite thing about yourself?
- Are you more of a leader or a follower?
- Tell me about a time you felt you went above and beyond.
- Describe your work style.
- What is your ideal company size?
- What is a book that everyone needs to read and why?
- Do you find it difficult to adapt to new situations?
- How would you assess your ability to bring about change?

## **Job Role & Task Management**

- What is the first thing you accomplish on your task list?
- When was the last time that you had to take on extra work at short notice?
- When was the last time that you had to work to a particularly tight deadline?

## **Decision Making**

- Describe a time in which you found it difficult to make a decision at work. How did you arrive at a solution?
- Can you tell us about a time when you made a particularly good decision? What was the situation? What decision did you make and how did you make it? How did others respond? How did you determine that it was a particularly good decision?

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### **Making you think outside the box**

- What commonly accepted view do you disagree with and why?
- If you suddenly gained the ability to time travel, what's the first thing you'd do?
- Which is more important, creativity or efficiency?
- Is it better to be good and on time or perfect and late with your work?

### **Teamwork**

- Do you prefer to work alone or as a part of a team?
- How do you influence people in a situation with conflicting agendas?
- Provide an example of a time you showed strong teamwork skills.
- What strategies would you use to motivate your team?
- Can you tell me about a time when a lack of teamwork hindered a project and how you addressed the situation?
- What would you contribute to our team culture and why you make a good team player?
- Describe a situation when team members on a project you were working on disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?
- Imagine having a colleague you don't get along with, but you need his/her help on a project you are responsible for. How would you handle this situation? Would you approach this colleague and ask for help? How would you do it? Would you try to get help in some other way?
- How do you galvanise your team into action?
- How would you overcome the challenge of working with a difficult co-worker on a team project?

### **Work Relationship & Communication**

- How do you prefer to communicate? In person? Over the phone? Via email or messages? Please explain your preferred choice.
- What would you do if there was a breakdown in communication at work?
- Have you ever faced some obstacles or difficulties in communicating your ideas to a manager? What happened? How did you handle that?
- Who do you have the best communication with?
- How would you go about simplifying a complex issue in order to explain it to a client or colleague? How would you go about explaining a complex idea/problem to a client who was already frustrated? How would you go about persuading someone to see things your way at work?
- What would you do if you misunderstood an important communication on the job?
- Talk about a time when you made a point that you knew your colleagues would be resistant to.
- Is it more important to be a good listener or a good communicator?
- Tell me about a time you had to relay bad news to a client or colleague.
- Talk about a successful presentation you gave and why you think it did well.
- Please name five things about the communication within an organization that must be present so you can give your best and work most effectively?
- If you had to choose between being a good listener or a good communicator, what would be your choice? Please explain your answer.
- Please describe the ways in which you ensure that your audience has appropriately received a message you are communicating and give examples of how you would deliver that same message to different people.



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### **Client Skills**

- Describe a time when you responded to a customer's complaint.
- Describe a situation where you needed to work with a client or customer who was very different from you. How was that for you? How did you approach that situation?
- Tell me about a time you had to deal with conflict with a client.
- Give an example of a conflict you had with a customer and how you responded.
- How would you deal with an angry or irate client?
- Can you tell us about a time when you exceeded a customer's expectations? - What were their expectations? - How did you determine their expectations? - How did you exceed them and why? - How did they respond?

### **Problem Solving**

- Tell me about a time when you identified a new approach to a problem
- Give me an example of a time you had to prioritize certain tasks or projects over others.
- Tell me about a time when you had to be creative to solve a problem.
- Tell us about a time in which you developed an unconventional approach to solve a problem. How did you develop this new approach? What challenges did you face and how did you address them?
- Describe a situation in which you changed your approach in the middle of a project. What made you decide to change your approach? How did you work to implement this change smoothly?
- Describe a situation in which you were asked to perform a task you had never performed previously.
- Do people come to you with particular problems to solve? Give examples.
- Can you give an example of a time that you sold an idea, concept, or product by identifying a particular need, issue, or concern in the mind of the person you are selling it to?

### **Questions about the company:**

- Describe your perfect company and how this organisation fits with that.
- Who are our competitors?
- What do you know about our company?
- What do you consider is our organization's competitive edge?

### **Career, Career Goals & Expectations:**

- Are you interviewing anywhere else?
- What project would you consider to be your most significant career accomplishment to date?
- What is your biggest achievement to date?
- Tell me about a goal you failed to achieve.
- Tell me about the best presentation you have given. Why was it good?
- Tell me about your proudest moment in your professional career and why it was meaningful to you.
- What do you want to accomplish in the first 30/60/90 days of this job?
- How long do you expect to work for this company?
- Can you give me an example of a time when you felt dissatisfied with your work?
- Tell me about a time when your work was criticized? What was your reaction?

## QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO ANSWER

- Can you tell me about the team I'll be working with?
- Who will I work with most closely?
- Who will I report to directly?
- Can you tell me about my direct reports? What are their strengths and the team's biggest challenges?
- Do you expect to hire more people in this department in the next six months?
- Which other departments work most closely with this one?
- What are the common career paths in this department?
- What's the company and team culture like?
- How would you describe the work environment here—is the work typically collaborative or more independent?
- Can you tell me about the last team event you did together?
- Is there a formal mission statement or company values? (Note: Make sure this isn't Google-able!)
- What's your favourite office tradition?
- What do you and the team usually do for lunch?
- Does anyone on the team hang out outside the office?
- Do you ever do joint events with other companies or departments?
- What's different about working here than anywhere else you've worked?
- How has the company changed since you joined?
- Is there anything that concerns you about my background being a fit for this role?
- What are the next steps in the interview process?
- Is there anything else I can provide you with that would be helpful?
- Can I answer any final questions for you?
- What do you think are the most important qualities for someone to excel in this job?
- What do you think are some of the biggest challenges for someone in this job?
- Would I be undergoing any training before starting work?
- Who do you consider your top competitor, and why?
- Do you have an ideal start date in mind?
- Are there any further details I can provide that will be helpful?

### Questions testing management experience:

- What do you consider to be good management and what effects have you had on others through your approach?
- What is your management style?
- Tell me about a time you disagreed with a supervisor.
- Describe a failure of yours as a manager.
- What do you consider to be good management and what effects have you had on others?
- Describe a situation in which you led a team?
- How many line reports do you have in your current role?
- Tell me about a time when you had to manage a difficult person?
- How do you manage stress among your team?
- How would you handle conflict between team members?
- How do they manage and coach your team?
- Tell me about a time you let an employee go?
- Tell me about a time you led by example.
- What is your biggest management weakness?
- How do you delegate tasks to your team?

## **PART 1: QUESTIONS YOU COULD BE ASKED**

### **Questions testing your technical skills:**

- What was your specific role and responsibilities on the most recent project you worked on?
- What is the project you are most proud of, and how did you contribute to it?
- What sectors have you worked across? What asset classes have you worked across?
- What is your experience across the project life cycle?
- Have you got cradle to grave experience?
- What is your experience of taking schemes through upfront and development stages?
- What is your experience of financial modelling and what models have you built from scratch?
- What technical certifications do you have?
- What do you do to stay up-to-date on your technical certifications and knowledge?

### **Questions about the role:**

- Are there any tasks that this person would be required to do that aren't included in the job description?
- How would you describe a typical day or week for someone in this role?
- Is this a new position? If not, why is there a vacancy? How has the position become available?
- What are you looking for in an ideal employee?
- What would be the most challenging thing for someone in this role to get used to?
- What is the first problem the person you hire for this role must attend to?
- How would you define 'success' for the person in this role?
- What are the key challenges of the role, particularly in the first six months?
- How many people are in my team and what are their roles?
- How does the team fit into the organisation as a whole?
- How would you describe the culture of the team and the company?
- What are the company's plans for this team over the next few years?
- With whom will I be working most closely?
- What do you like least about your current role?
- What do you feel is the greatest challenge in your current role?
- How do you control for errors in the work that you do? Give an example.
- Describe a key administrative process that you have had responsibility for. How did you operate the process? (Look for attention to detail, rather than details of the process itself).
- Can you give an example of when things have gone wrong because you missed a detail? What caused the error? What was the result?
- Describe a task you found challenging in your job.
- Describe some of the more imaginative things that you have done in your current/last job. What was the outcome?

# **PART 1: QUESTIONS YOU COULD BE ASKED**

## **Work Environment & Preferences**

- What is your ideal working environment?
- How many hours per week do you normally work?
- Do you ever take your work home with you?
- What three things are most important to you in your job?
- What is one negative thing your last boss said about you?
- What will you miss about your previous job?

## **Analytical & Mathematical**

- How many times per day do a clock's hands overlap?
- How many stacked pennies would equal the height of the Empire State Building?

## **General**

- Describe a time when you had to be careful talking about sensitive information. How did you do it?
- Can you describe how you handled a change in your department to which your team were opposed? How did you approach the change?
- How do you ensure you are informed on what is happening in other parts of your company?
- Do you have to make decisions that affect other parts of the organisation? How do you ensure that such decisions are the right ones? How do you ensure that they are accepted?
- Describe an occasion when you chose not to work as part of a team.
- When has a colleague let you down and how did you react?
- Tell me about the last time that you had to work as part of a team to achieve a specific outcome.
- Whilst part of a team, has there ever been a time where you witnessed conflict?
- Describe a time when a colleague or friend has annoyed you.
- Have you ever had to modify your approach to take account of someone else's views?
- Can you recall a time when where you have needed to offer constructive feedback to a friend or colleague?
- Describe a time you went above and beyond at work. Tell me about the last mistake you made.
- Describe a time when your work was criticized.
- What are some positive things your last boss would say about you?
- What is the greatest challenge or obstacle to success that you have faced at work and how did you overcome it? - What effect did this have on your longer-term motivation skill?
- What are the highest-pressure situations you have been under in recent years? How did you cope?
- Tell us about the biggest change you have had to deal with in your previous employment. How did you handle it?
- Talk me through a time when you have had to work towards a challenging, ambitious objective.
- Has there ever been a time where you have had to work harder and longer to ensure that a time deadline was met?
- When was the last time that you were called upon to do more than would normally be expected of you?
- Describe a situation where you have had to deal with highly sensitive or confidential material. How did you ensure that it was kept secure?

## PART 2: QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK THE COMPANY

### Questions about the interviewer:

- What's been your best experience working here and what do you like most about working here?
- Why did you choose to work for this organisation?
- How have you progressed in this company?
- How would you describe your management style?
- Favourite project they have worked on?
- What are the core objectives for this organization, and how does this job contribute to those initiatives?
- What is the biggest challenge facing this organization?
- What do you consider to be your organization's most important assets?
- Do you promote employees from within?
- What processes do you use for assessing the performance of your staff?
- Do you have staff meetings? What is the structure of the meetings? Is there a review mechanism? Are actions accorded and assigned?
- Give an example of a decision when you have taken a long time to make up your mind. Why did you take a long time?
- Describe a decision you have made without all the relevant information. Why did you make it? What was the result?
- Describe a situation where you have delegated responsibility and have been particularly satisfied with the outcome. What did you do?
- Can you describe a situation where you have been disappointed with the outcome of delegating a responsibility to a member of your staff? What went wrong?
- Have you ever prepared or contributed to the budget for your department? What issues did you have to face?
- What kind of financial reports have you had to prepare in your job?
- Think of the most successful people you have managed. What part did you play in their development? Describe the ways in which you help your staff to improve their performance in their jobs. Describe some of the results of this help.
- Tell us about a decision you made that you knew would be unpopular with certain people. How did you handle the decision-making process? How did you handle other people's negative reactions?
- Describe a project you have managed/been responsible for: - How did you plan your time? (And others' time?) - How did you deal with obstacles?
- Have you ever managed a project that you knew would run over the timescales? – What did you do? - What could you do differently next time?
- When was the last time you disciplined a member of staff? - How did you handle the situation? - What was the outcome?
- Describe a time when you have set goals for an individual or for your team? - How did you go about it? - Were they achieved?
- How have you introduced change to your team?
- How do you ensure your team gets feedback on its performance? Describe a situation in which you coached a team member
- Did you ever have a negative experience with a Supervisor/Manager?
- Tell me about a time when you made a mistake and how you fixed it?
- How would you feel about reporting to a person younger than you?
- What do you consider to be good management, and what effects have you had on it?
- How is performance measured and how often is it reviewed?



## PART 2: QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK THE COMPANY

- What are the major plans for the company in the next five years?
- Are there any plans to move the office?
- Is there an opportunity to get involved in the fundraising activities of the firm – if so, would be keen to get stuck in?
- Is there a fundamental strategy for choosing a development site?
- Do you buy sites speculatively? Without Planning, etc...
- What does the capital stack look like?
- What does the approval process look like? Signing off, etc...
- Do you model using any kind of software or via a bespoke excel model?
- How has the position become available?
- How is performance measured, and how often is it reviewed?
- What long-term career opportunities are available, and how do you support the up-skilling of staff?
- What are the key challenges of the role, particularly in the first six months?
- How would you describe a typical day in this position?
- What are the most immediate projects that need to be addressed?
- Can you show me examples of projects I'd be working on?
- What are the skills and experiences you're looking for in an ideal candidate?
- What attributes does someone need to have in order to be really successful in this position?
- What types of skills is the team missing that you're looking to fill with a new hire?
- What are the biggest challenges that someone in this position would face?
- What sort of budget would I be working with?
- Is this a new role that has been created?
- Do you expect the main responsibilities for this position to change in the next six months to a year?
- How will I be trained?
- What training programs are available to your employees?
- Are there opportunities for advancement or professional development?
- Would I be able to represent the company at industry conferences?
- Where is the last person who held this job moving on to?
- Where have successful employees previously in this position progressed to?
- What are the most important things you'd like to see someone accomplish in the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job?
- What are the performance expectations of this position over the first 12 months?
- What is the performance review process like here? How often would I be formally reviewed?
- What metrics or goals will my performance be evaluated against?
- Has your role changed since you've been here?
- Why did you come to this company?
- What's your favorite part about working here?
- I've read about the company's founding, but can you tell me more about...?
- What are the current goals that the company is focused on, and how does this team work to support hitting those goals?
- What gets you most excited about the company's future?
- What long-term career opportunities are available, and how do you support the up-skilling of staff?
- What is the leadership style of the upper management team?
- I read about (name issue) in (name research/source). What other key issues is the company facing at the moment?

# INTERVIEW TIPS

## Dress to impress & self presentation

- Dress smart. Interview smart, even for video interviews. For video interviews, wear a tie no jacket, brush your hair, look the part, wear a shirt / dress / be aware of how they dress and represent themselves as a business. Don't smoke just before an interview and remove chewing gum whether attending in person or on a video interview

## Time Keeping

- Always be on time, if not let the recruiter know.
- If you are ill, let the recruiter know. If you have issues finding the building or joining the call let the recruiter know. Plan your journey to the interview ahead of time

## Research Research Research

- Research the company on the internet / Social Media. If you know people at the company take the time to reach out and find out further information, tell the interviewer you have done this – it shows motivation.
- Tell the company their culture aligns with your values.
- Review the job description, if available. Explain and give examples of how you have delivered the tasks of the job description.

## Be Prepared

- Take a notebook to the interview with questions noted to ask so you don't forget them and get phased, – and to make any notes as appropriate. It shows you are prepared and have really thought about the role

## Body Language

- Consider your body language, don't cross your body. Remember to smile and try not to be nervous. Remember to shake hands when leaving and meeting the interviewer and ensure you make eye contact when speaking. Ensure you act with confidence!

## Negativity about your current employer

- Being negative about your existing employer is one of the worst things you can do.

## Thank you

- Remember to thank the interviewer for their time. All good company cultures are founded on respect and part of that is being polite and cordial. So often candidates forget this builds into the interviewers 'last impression' of them.

## Finally...

- Don't say 'we', say 'I' Candidates should refer to their successes as a personal achievement
- Follow up with the Recruiter.
- Don't ask about Holiday allowance. Questions regarding working from home, holidays booked, holidays allowance can be dealt with by the recruiter
- Don't ask about Salary – wait until it is brought up, if it is brought up. Money is rarely discussed in the first or any interview and the recruiter can pick up discussions on this for you.

## FURTHER INTERVIEW READING

### Books

| <u>Title</u>   | <u>Author</u>                   |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Why you? 101 interview questions you'll never fear again                     | James A. Reed                   |
| Brilliant answers to tough interview questions                               | Susan Hodgson                   |
| The Interview Questions and Answer Book                                      | Susan Hodgson                   |
| Interview BetterView – A job seeker's essential guide to interviewing Skills | Thomas J Franke                 |
| Basic Interviewing Skills  | Raymond L Gorden                |
| Success in interviews  | Patrick McNamee                 |
| 60 seconds & You're hired  | Robin Ryan                      |
| How to Answer Interview Questions  | Peggy Mckee                     |
| Get That Job!: The Quick and Complete Guide to a Winning Interview           | Thea Kelley and Orville Pierson |
| 101 Great Answers to the Toughest Interview Questions                        | Ron Fry                         |