

Questions Clustered by Topic:

- **Your Background, Skills and Experience**
 - Tell me about yourself.
 - What aspects of your last job relate to this position?
 - What kind of person was your immediate supervisor?
 - How would you describe your leadership style?
 - Describe a situation when you had to take directions from several people at the same time.
 - Describe for me the most fun you have had on the job.
 - In which areas do you consider yourself to be a specialist, and how do you envisage being able to utilize your expertise within our organization?

- **Your Goals and Objectives**
 - What would your ideal career position be?
 - Where would you like to be in three years?
 - Tell me about a time when you took the initiative to set career goals and objectives?
 - In what specific areas do you need to expand your knowledge to become more proficient at this job?

- **Your Education and Training**
 - Tell me about a time when you used your education and training?
 - When did you last volunteer to take a work project simply because it allowed you to expand your personal knowledge of the internal structure within your company?

- **Sensitive Issues**
 - Pick an example from your current job when your work was criticized.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Question: *Tell me about yourself.*

Strategy: Talk about skills, traits, accomplishments and interests. Focus on what you know this employer needs and select the most relevant material you have. Be sure this is concise and of reasonable length.

Possible Answer:

As a Packaging Engineer, I led a team of three people that designed and implemented innovative packages for new products. Our task was to create packaging that was effective, had an expanded commercial shelf impact and was a cost saving to alternatives. I acted as the technical liaison with market research, advertising, quality control and manufacturing. One of our last products was designed and implemented in record time to meet a marketing deadline. We did in three months what typically had taken six. This enabled us to establish our product on the shelves before the competition.

Question: *What aspects of your last job relate to this position?*

Strategy: Discuss what you have done, stressing accomplishments, results and benefits to the organization. In selecting material, pick the items most relevant to the needs of the employer who asked the question.

Possible Answer:

You mentioned that profitability was more of an issue than sales volume in two of your services. I faced a similar challenge in my last job. Our sales group was steadily increasing its sales volume, but profits were declining because

they were selling the wrong service mix. I looked into it and discovered that many of our salespeople simply did not understand some of the more complex services. As a result, they were selling the ones that were easier to sell, which were also low profit services. I provided training and adjusted incentives, and profits went up 40% in one year. But the best part was that overall volume also increased and customer satisfaction ratings jumped 25%.

Question: *What kind of person was your immediate supervisor?*

Strategy: This is an excellent opportunity to discuss some of the things you most admire about your last supervisor or that person's accomplishments. If you criticize your last supervisor at a job interview, you have just signaled your willingness to criticize your next supervisor behind his or her back as well. Any indication of problems with your last supervisor may be taken as a sign that you are unable to get along with supervisors. Remember, you are talking to a person who might even know your supervisor, either personally or by reputation. If you have ever had problems with supervisors, be sure to prepare carefully for this kind of question.

Possible Answer:

My last supervisor was very knowledgeable, had a sense of humor and was fair to subordinates. She was also a holder of high standards. She managed to keep the company's strategic direction in mind and yet, managed us in a way that built our reputation as a team.

Question: *How would you describe your leadership style?*

Strategy: This question is a way of getting you to describe your management and leadership style. It is a predictable question and people seeking management roles should be prepared to answer it. Like many other questions this one can be turned around. As with most questions, a carefully thought out honest answer is the best approach. If your management or leadership style differs significantly from the organization, you probably do not want to work there.

Possible Answer: *My research on your organization shows....*

Then you might ask:

Is that how you would describe your management style?

What kinds of leadership and management styles predominate in this organization?

Question: *Describe a situation when you had to take directions from several people at the same time.*

Strategy: This is actually two questions; how to handle priorities, and how to manage tasks.

Possible Answer:

On a website development project, I worked with three different department managers who had conflicting priorities. In order to communicate with the managers and to solve conflicts, I initiated a weekly call. During that call we handled priorities and tasks. Although all tasks were high priorities, some must be higher than others. I would look into each task in detail, give my best recommendation and then talk to the group for consensus on the priority.

Question: *Describe for me the most fun you have had on the job.*

Strategy: Talk about having fun by accomplishing something for the organization.

Possible Answer:

We were working on an intense IT project with short deadlines. I organized an impromptu volleyball game for all of us working on the project and even awarded prizes for the winning team. As teammates, we had a chance to have fun, but had a chance to work together in a new way.

Question: *In which areas do you consider yourself to be a specialist, and how do you envisage being able to utilize your expertise within our organization?*

Strategy: You will want to demonstrate a commitment to expand your expertise by building a foundation of core knowledge.

Possible Answer: *A*

s an Instructional Designer of over twenty-five training courses currently being offered in our company, I am definitely a specialist in how to design and deliver training. I could envision using this expertise in designing training for our sales and marketing team on new products. There might also be a potential of designing training for the users of our products.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Question: *What would your ideal career position be?*

Strategy: If you are not satisfied with your career, the person to talk to is your career consultant, not your interviewer. The real question the interviewer is asking is, "Would you be happy and productive in this position?" Give an honest approach that seems positive and enthusiastic. This is an excellent opportunity to discuss how the position at hand fits the next logical next step for you towards your ideal career.

Possible Answer:

I don't know if there is such a thing an 'ideal job' because different people add unique talents to each position. So anyone who tries hard enough and works long enough can make a position into a meaningful creative outlet.

Question: *Where would you like to be in three years?*

Strategy: The interviewer is usually looking to see if your aspirations fit the realities of the organization. This question can also be a way of gauging your level of ambition. Suggest career paths that you know are realistic and reasonable for the organization.

You can also turn this question around, asking your interviewer: "What kind of career progress is possible, assuming that I do well in the immediate position"

Possible Answer:

I would like to be working here three years from now. I have gathered enough information on your company to convince me this is the kind of organization I would be happy working for. I want to remain in financial services because I have always liked this line of work. I especially enjoy computers and would expect to learn some new software packages as well as using some of the software I already know. Three years from now I'd like to be using those skills to excel in your department.

Question: *Tell me about a time when you took the initiative to set career goals and objectives.*

Strategy: Answer should show that you want to keep updated on latest developments and have a strong belief in life-long learning.

Possible Answer:

I'm the type of person who doesn't wait for an official policy to keep my career vital. One year ago, I sat down and developed a statement of career goals for myself. I used my career goal statement to talk to my boss about the coaching I would need from her to attain some of my more ambitious goals. The result of my effort was that I reached most of my career goals months before my target dates.

Question: *In what specific areas do you need to expand your knowledge to become more proficient at this job?*

Strategy: You should demonstrate a commitment to expanding knowledge in core functional areas and recognize the need to change and expand ideas.

Possible Answer:

Currently, I use a wide variety of presentation applications. However, I am currently learning how to move these applications into a webcast environment in order to deliver the web-based training this job requires. I have attended webcasts in real time via live streams and accessing Microsoft PowerPoint slide decks of recent speeches given by our company president.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Question: *Tell me about a time when you used your education and training.*

Strategy: Questions about education and training are sometimes asked to determine if you have the knowledge it takes to do the job. Here's where you can use an accomplishment story about your education or training and the role it played in a relevant success.

Possible Answer:

During my last project, it quickly became apparent that the team I had inherited needed a strong manager who could deal with the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the individuals on the team. In particular, there were three team members of widely different personal backgrounds who were sometimes in conflict and often simply ignored each other, even though they worked on the same projects. I had attended a training program called Diversity and the Bottom Line and used some of the techniques that I learned in that course. Specifically, I used a quick assessment to facilitate a discussion on how our differences influence our business relationships. Within a month, those three team members were regularly seeking each other's opinions and collaborating with each other.

Question: *When did you last volunteer to take a work project simply because it allowed you to expand your personal knowledge of the internal structure within your company?*

Strategy: Your answer should demonstrate a commitment to learn about the internal structure of your working environment.

Possible Answer:

One of our top producing offices needed to conduct a strategic planning session for their team. Since my background prior to coming to this company was as a strategic planner, I volunteered to plan and conduct the off site meeting for them. It gave me an opportunity to learn about their team and what made them winners!

QUESTIONS ABOUT SENSITIVE ISSUES

Question: *Pick an example from your current job when your work was criticized.*

Strategy: Everyone's work is criticized from time to time. If the criticism is not overly frequent or overly severe people usually do not remember the specifics. This could be an opportunity to talk about your proven ability to use criticism as an opportunity to improve.

Possible Answer:

Two years ago I submitted a project plan to my boss. She called me into her office and criticized it from top to bottom. The conversation turned out to be one of the most productive we had ever had. It was a great learning experience for me because I had never done a project like that one before. As a result, I reworked the plan and the project went very well. My boss gave me a high performance rating that year mainly because of my success in managing that project.