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Multimedia interview questions and answers

"Tell me about yourself." It's hard to find a more stressful question during a job interview. The funny thing is, this is usually the interviewer's "opener." Maybe it's their attempt to get you to relax; maybe it's their way of discovering your priorities, or perhaps they just want to see how well you can communicate verbally. But when you're sitting across the table from someone who is deciding whether you get a job, you don't really care about the purpose of the question - you just know that you hate it. It's too open-ended, and you never know quite what to cover - after all, at this point, your life experiences could be worthy of a really bad novel. As an HR manager for several brick-and-mortar businesses and online startups, I've seen many different kinds of responses - and some answers were more effective than others. There is no single right way to answer this question, but you can be prepared. Here is exactly what you should cover when the question comes your way. Speak to Who You Are Professionally They have already read your resume, so barfing that back up is a big "no-no." It is far better to begin with a quick statement about your profession and then move into a strength or quality you believe you have developed during your "time served" - one that you think is valuable to the company or organization. Mention Your Past Experience Through a Story Your interviewer doesn't need to hear a laundry list of job titles. Here is where you can tell a story that demonstrates the strength or quality that you just spoke to. Prepare your story ahead of time by thinking about positive experiences at your previous jobs: When were you praised? When did you succeed? State Why You Are There Why do you want this particular job? Remember, it's not all about you. You're there because you think you can be of value to them, not them to you. How do your background and strengths meet a need they have? Add Some Humor - Sparingly A fun real-life event is a good opportunity to lighten the mood without looking fake. When Veronica Wright, a career counselor at Resumes Centre, was faced with this question, she responded in a brilliant way - with a dose of humor. "I once sat before a panel of 'interviewers' and this was the first question. I took a deep breath and began to speak about my educational and professional background and accomplishments. But I could 'read' their faces. It was boring - they had read all of this on my resume. I changed tactics and gave a brief rundown of what I believed to be the strengths I had developed over the years, with a couple of short examples. The weaknesses? Oh, yes. I wanted to cover those too. And so, in speaking to those, I said, 'You could ask my husband about my weaknesses. They all lie in the housekeeping department.' This brought a round of laughter, the ice was broken, and I actually got the job." Breaking the ice is a nice way to get the interviewers on your side and show a bit more of your personality. But if you're going to attempt this, it doesn't hurt to try out a few attempts at home. A Real-Life Example to Follow Susan has been a high school teacher for the past six years. She has returned to school and taken courses in training and development and is now looking to get into the corporate world as a trainer. The money's better and she is ready to work with adults instead of grading papers and dealing with upset and angry parents. Obviously, she isn't going to talk about this in the interview - it's never a great idea to trend toward the negative - but you get the idea. When Susan gets the "tell me about yourself" question, here is how her answer might sound: "As you know, I have been a successful high school teacher for the past six years. During that time, one of the key understandings I developed is that "one-size-fits-all" teaching just invites failure for many students. Everyone learns differently, and so I have worked hard to master designing learning activities that honor all of those types of learners. In the very beginning of this journey, I had a student that just could not understand the workings of Congress in getting a law passed - not just the procedural process, but all of the other factors involved too. It was too complex for him. Finally, I went home and drew out the process in picture form and presented it to the whole class the next day. It was an "a-ha" moment for several students. Since that time, I have come to see that, no matter what I teach, there are many learning styles before me and I should honor them all. Then everyone has the opportunity for success. And this is how I want to approach my new chosen career as a trainer in the corporate world. Whether it is training that I develop myself or that I incorporate from outside sources, the key will be to ensure that every learner has an equal chance for successful mastery. This is one of several strengths I believe I can bring to any organization." Susan nailed it. She led with her strengths, told a story, and explained why she was there. And she did it in about 90 seconds. That's another crucial point - KISS - not keep is simple, but keep it short. You don't need to run down your entire life story. Go Forth and Practice "Tell me about yourself" isn't a question you should fear. In fact, with the right preparation, it can be a valuable way to kick off an interview and share details you actually want your future employers to know. A job interview is the gateway to landing a job, so you should prepare for the possibility of receiving an interview question you don't know how to answer. This can even happen to people who have done thorough research on a prospective employer and possess extensive experience in the occupation for which they are being considered. The typical advice is to prepare for difficult questions, but going through a long list of questions and practicing how to answer each one does not preclude you from feeling stumped by a hard question. There are several options available to you: admit you don't know the answer and move on to the next question, offer a reply that appears related to the question, or ask a probing question and see if your interviewers will throw you a bone. Along the way, an interview question could produce a visceral response, such as a bad taste in your mouth, and you won't have a good answer. If an interviewer asks what company you would ideally work for, you could fall into a trap. Career Builder's Rachel Zupek writes that you should "never say that you would choose any company other than the one where you are interviewing." Bring the focus back to this particular job. Say "I love the opportunities currently available in your organization, and I'm eager to share what special assets I can bring to this job." To decline the question, try "If it is alright with you, I would like to move on to the next question." Attempting to answer a question is a risk to take if you don't want to lose points on the interview rating sheet. If you get a question asking why you were laid off, respond that you were never sure of the reason, but you always did your best. If you get a technical question that stumps you, be honest. Say "I don't know the technical answer, but I would talk to the people in my department to get that information. Let me tell you about a similar problem I solved in my last job." Talking about a related problem could earn you points for technical expertise. Your employer could ask questions that don't really have a correct answer. In this case, your response is merely a chance for the employer to gauge your personality. You might be asked something that seems unrelated, like "Tell me what superhero you would like to be and why." You could go full force into your response, or you could first say something like "What kind of superheroes would fit best here in your company?" or "What has been the most popular response?" If you do discuss your favorite superhero, ensure that you connect the character to what you can offer the organization. Or, use the opportunity to share winning aspects of yourself, such as being a comedian or excelling at steep-face rock climbing. Acing the interview is crucial in the hiring process. Before you step into an interview, you need to practice, prepare, and research the company and role. With the right research and preparation, you can breeze through a job interview. Here are six questions every job seeker should be prepared for and the best way to answer each one.1. Why should we hire you?If you have a solid understanding of the company and role, you should implement that information into your answer. "Reread the company's job description and practice your answer prior to the interview," said Vicki Salemi, career expert at Monster. "Highlight your strengths and biggest assets that tie directly back to the company's goal for this job and their overall vision for the company."2. Why do you want to work here?The job site WayUp recommends having a three-part answer that focuses on an aspect of the company that you admire, explains how it resonates with you, and highlight your skills and explain how they are relevant to the position.Salemi agrees and said that the best way to answer this question is by showing your passion and doing your homework. "For example, if the company is launching a new product or service, mention how you've enjoyed reading about the strides they're making in the industry," she added. "Correlate your answer to how you can be a productive employee to exceed their goals - it's all about how you can be their next best asset!"3. Tell me about yourself.Salemi said this question is helpful for an interviewer who hasn't had the time to peruse your resume."Provide an overall snapshot of your strengths, what you're doing now, and then walk them through your career progression," Salemi told Business News Daily. "You may also explain why you make certain decisions - like leaving a company, for example - so you can succinctly state your interests developed in a new direction."WayUp notes this is a classic way to open an interview, and it's easy to waste an opportunity with a bad answer. Instead, keep your answer concise and hit key points - your background, a description of your interests, your past job experience, and what you want to achieve with your next job. [Read related article: 3 Things You Should Never Do After a Job Interview]4. Why are you looking to leave your current job?This is an important question to be prepared for, because you don't want to speak poorly about your current company. "This one should be simple and positive," said the WayUp team. "First, give your reason without being negative or sounding petty." "Answers for this question can range from 'there's not room to grow' to 'I'm ready for a new challenge,'" Salemi told Business News Daily. "Some candidates find it helpful to tie their answer back and pivot into what they can offer the employer."5. What is your biggest strength?Highlight your most important strengths while keeping in mind how it can help the company," said Salemi. "Employers list job responsibilities and requirements in descending order - the most important from top to bottom - so review the job description for their [top] three responsibilities and tie one of your strengths back to it."Salemi recommends showing, not telling, by providing examples. "It's one thing to say you're great at something, but you should also be able to illustrate it."WayUp also suggests picking a strength that's most relevant to the job. "If you're applying for a leadership role, you should focus your strength as a project manager."6. What is your biggest weakness?"This question can be tricky, because you have to give an honest answer while avoiding anything that could raise a serious red flag for the interviewer," said WayUp. "The key here is to pose the problem alongside your solutions for it."Salemi also recommends emphasizing what you're doing to change your weakness into a strength. "For example, a safe answer can be something like, 'I need to improve on delegating when working with someone new, as it's easier to just do the job myself rather than explain it, but I'm working on this.'"If you want more practice, here are the 50 most common interview questions according to Glassdoor. Going on a job interview can make you feel like you're back in school taking an exam. Instead of the "test" having one clear and right answer, however, responding to questions feels like hopeful guesses mixed with uncomfortable posturing.We talked to six hiring experts to find out which questions trip up most job candidates, and the better answers that could win you the job:1. Tell Me About YourselfThe problem: Most candidates find this question overwhelming, says Michele Mavi, director of content development, internal recruiting, and training for the hiring agency Atrium Staffing. "As it's a very broad and open question, candidates are prone to ramble, talking about their professional selves in very generic and general terms, and basically rehashing their resume," she says.Related: 5 Questions To Avoid Asking On A Job Interview—Unless You Rephrase Them Like ThisWhat you should say: A better way to answer it is to talk about your experience in a way that positions you as being a perfect match for the role. "Yes, you should tell a story, but one with a very clear beginning, middle, and end," says Mavi. "You should be able to end whatever you say with, 'So that's why I'm looking to make a move and am really excited about this opportunity.'"2. Why Do You Want To Work For This Company?The problem: A common answer to this question is to compliment the company by saying something like, "XYZ is the leading creator of innovative solutions, and I want to work for a market leader," says Matt Doucette, director of global talent acquisition for the job website Monster.com. A more honest answer, he adds, might be, "You were the only ones who read my resume, so of course I want to work for you. I need a job."What you should say: A good answer, however, revolves around the mission, vision, and values of the company. "If they are a match for your goals and desires, then talk about that," he says. "Talk about being connected to the values of the company. Talk about how the mission speaks to you, and then tie those things back to the description and your unique skill set."The problem: The biggest mistake candidates make with their response is focusing on how the role fits into their career plan, and how it will help them be more professionally fulfilled and advance their career, says Mavi.What you should say: A better answer puts the company's goals at the forefront. "People aren't just hired to do a job; they are hired to be part of the company as a whole, a company that has very specific objectives and goals to achieve," she says. "The main focus of the answer should be centered around how the candidate is going to add value to the organization."For example, you might say, "At my current job, I've learned skills that I'm ready to bring to the next level. I believe I can make a difference here."The problem: The common answer to this question is to list achievements and accomplishments that the interviewer can find on your resume, says Mavi. "You don't know a thing about the other candidates, so you can't really compare yourself to them, can you?" she says.Related: Exactly What To Do While You Wait To Hear Back About A JobWhat you should say: A better answer is to first acknowledge that you can't speak about the merits of other candidates. From there, talk about attributes you have that aren't listed on your resume, such as soft skills you possess that complement the role. Mavi suggests this answer: "I hope I've been able show you why I'm qualified from a professional achievement perspective. I can only imagine the other candidates are equally accomplished. What I can tell you is that I'm an excellent communicator and can think quickly on my feet. I'm very adaptable and don't get thrown off balance in a crisis. This is a high-pressure role, and in addition to my five years of experience successfully turning underproducing sales teams into high performers, I think those soft skills are a critical complement."The problem: A job candidate will often answer by calling themselves a hard worker, says Doucette. "They don't really answer the question, and what I've found is that they can't answer because most people don't know their greatest strength," he says."Most people don't know their greatest strength."What you should say: A better answer involves some prep work. "Come up with a real answer," says Doucette. "As part of your prep, sit down and think about what your 'special sauce' is and how that will benefit this specific manager and the company."For example, "I've been told that I bring energy to every project I tackle." Or, "I have the ability to connect with anyone on my team, bringing a sense of cohesiveness to the workplace."The problem: This question can trip you up if you blame someone else or say that you can't think of a time, says Tom McGuire, cofounder and managing director of Talent Growth Advisors, a human resources consulting firm.What you should say: A better answer is acknowledging that everybody screws up once in a while, he says. "The question, really, is looking to get at how well you learn," says McGuire. "A good answer would include, Here's the mistake I made, here is where I went wrong, and here is what I learned as a result."7. What Is Your Salary Requirement?The problem: Many job seekers throw out a number, and sometimes it can be based on how much they want the job, says Jayne Mattson, senior vice president of the career-coaching firm Keystone Associates.What you should say: A better answer might be, "I do not have a set figure in mind as I do not know enough about the position," she says. "If you are pressed to give an answer, tell them what your salary was in your last role and ask 'Does that fall within the range of this position?'" she says.8. What Is Your Five-Year Plan?The problem: This is a question that trips up a lot of candidates as it can be tricky to answer, says Tracy Cashman, a senior vice president and partner of WinterWyman Executive Search. "If your expectations are too aggressive, such as, 'I'd like to be a manager,' the interviewer could see you as a threat, wanting their job," she says. "If your answer is too mild, such as 'I hope to be in the same type of role,' you can be seen as not driven or ambitious."What you should say: A better answer ties your future plans into your past experience and your selling points, says Cashman. "Use this as an opportunity to talk about why you're interested in them," she says. For example, "As you can see from my background, I am someone who has been fortunate enough to find good companies to work for where I have been able to progress and be continually challenged. I would hope that my next role allows for that to continue over the next five years."The problem: Bad answers to this question include anything that is negative toward your present employer, sounds too vague, or involves confidential information, such as an impending layoff or client loss, says David Lewis, president and CEO of OperationsInc, a human resources outsourcing and consulting firm.What you should say: The better answer is anything that implies you are looking to better yourself. "I feel like I can be doing more, and the next step for me there is too limiting or not really available," he suggests.10. Do You Have Any Questions For Me?What you should say: Candidates who pass on this opportunity are missing an opportunity to shine, says Mavi. "Having no questions shows not only a lack of interest in the role or the company, but also a total lack of understanding of what the interview process is all about," she says, adding that asking questions that are easily answered by a quick perusal of a company's website is even worse, as it will highlight how little you know about that company.What you should say: A better answer is asking a question that demonstrates an understanding of the competitive landscape of your particular industry, says Mavi. "This will highlight that you've given this opportunity some deeper thought," she says. "Of course, asking questions pertaining to what needs to be achieved, or what has made others succeed or fail in the role, as well as questions about how the department fits into the larger whole of the organization, are all great."Related Video: How You Really Sound When You're Interviewing Someone

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