



## Top tips for answering interview questions

### **Why should we hire you?**

Here's your chance to re-introduce/formally introduce yourself to the interview panel. They've read your application and they like you – now you need to let them know why they should continue to like you. This is your opportunity to bring your CV to life – tell them a little bit about career history (they'll ask more questions about this later on), why you're interested in the job and any other info to show that you're keen. Remember to include some points from the person specification and job description here too. Show them your enthusiasm.

### **Why do you want to work here? Or Why do you want this job?**

This may be asked in place of or alongside 'Why should we hire you?'. Be careful here – you don't repeat yourself. Tell them what you know about the company, show them that you've done your research. Talk about the company's growth and accomplishments, the opportunities for development and learning, and why the company is a good fit for you and vice versa.

### **Tell us your strengths and weaknesses.**

As mentioned in our interview tips video (up on our You Tube channel now), you'll know that this is a difficult question to answer. Finding the right answers for this can be tricky as sometimes you may not know how 'weak' or 'strong' your answer should be. The strengths side can be the easier part to tackle – talk about what you're great at and back it up with an example. On the weakness side, perfectionism can be a good choice as it shows that you always strive to do a good job, but you'll need to have more. Whichever ones you choose be sure you also say you're working on them and *how* you're working on them too.

### **Where do you see yourself in X years?**

Here's where you talk about staying in the company. Interviewers will know that you want to progress in your role, that's a given, but what they really want to know is that you'll stay with them for a while. Talk about the training you hope to have gained by a particular time and the opportunities you'd like to have. Mention the things you'd like to do in the company too like leading a project or helping to train new staff, something along those lines.

### **What is your salary expectation?**

You'll probably be asked this towards the end of the interview, most likely just before the interviewer or interviewers ask if you have any questions for them. This can be a scary question, because a lot of people deep down want to be paid generously but don't know how to ask for what they want. Here's a tip – do your research! Find out how much other companies are offering for the same role. Also, find out what the industry standard is for the role you are going into as well – the more info you have the better. The Glassdoor website is great for this. If the pay for your role is between two amounts, say £18-£20K, and you want to be closer to £20K, justify it. Talk about your knowledge, skills and experience and why you warrant a higher pay grade. You can also look at the job descriptions of the same or similar roles at different companies that pay similar or higher amounts too. See if you can match your experience to the details in the person spec for these roles and take this info into the interview with you.

### **Do you have any questions for us?**

Have a couple of questions prepared for the panel – this is your chance to interview the people that are interviewing you. Ask about the culture of the company – do they have any socials, teams, societies or anything else you can be involved in? Ask about the team you might be going in to as well – what challenges are they facing? Are there any interesting projects on the horizon?

## Competency based questions

These questions are really common. Interviewers want to see links between your skills, knowledge, experience and attitude. You may have the perfect package for the first three, but if you have a bad attitude or can't show how well rounded you are, you may have a problem. This is something to work on. You may also find it a bit difficult to think of or even describe a scenario, so preparation is key.

Competency questions are centred on scenarios. You'll either be given a scenario (problem) to solve or asked how you dealt with a difficult situation in a previous role. Here's a few questions that may come up:

*How would you solve X issue? (X will be a scenario they will give you)*

*How would you motivate your team if their energy was low? How would you motivate someone that isn't working well within your team?*

*How would you give constructive feedback to your manager?*

*Tell us about a time when you were finding a task difficult and what you did you resolve the issues you were having.*

*Describe a time when you worked successfully as member of a team.*

*Tell us about a time where you made a decision and changed your mind.*

*Give us an example of a time when you worked with a difficult person or client and how you managed the situation.*

The first rule of answering questions like these is to not delve into your emotions and how you felt about the situation – it'll come across as you whining. You can say that you found a situation 'difficult' or 'challenging', but don't give a full-blown description of how much you hated it. You're not having a chat with the interview panel. Keep it top-level and stick to the solution – focusing on your contribution in particular. The S.T.A.R. technique can help you with this.

### **S.T.A.R.**

**SITUATION:** Provide some background/context for the panel. Set the scene for them, it will help them understand exactly what was going at the time and the importance of what you did in broader terms. Talk about your role at the time, when it took place and the issue that arose.

**TASK:** What did you have to do?

**ACTION:** Describe how you took the task on and completed it successfully. Focus on speaking about yourself and what you did. Speak in the 'I' and not 'We'. How did you solve any challenges that arose? Did you come up with an original problem-solving method? Tell them! The people listening to you need to know about the great job you did and your awesome decision-making skills. Be truthful when talking about what you did. Don't exaggerate anything – if you did a good job the truth is more than enough.

**RESULT:** What was the outcome of your actions? Did you exceed anyone's expectations? Did you change the way your team or company worked? What was the overall result for your team? Describe the positive results of your work.

An interviewer may throw a curveball and ask you to speak about a time when something went wrong and you couldn't fix it. In situations like these describe the lesson you learnt, any training you've done to improve and what you'd do better next time.