

Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself?

Value question

Start by quoting your “Brand / Value Statement”, which is basically what you are known for. Prepare and be ready to state two or three brief brand / value statements that describe how you work and what you provide to an organization.

Ask the interviewer if they would like an example of one of your brand / value statements. This is what we call an achievement.

Why should I hire you?

Value question

You will use your two or three brand / value statements.

“The reason you should hire me is because I am known for (refer your brand / value statements.) And whenever I am given the opportunity to take these actions, I always bring value to the organization / team.”

Ask the interviewer if they would like an example of one of your brand / value statement. This is what we call an achievement. It illustrates that your “brand” is true and clear. An achievement of the approach and value you talked about in our brand / value statement.

Tell me about a time you succeeded when using a specific technology, industry skill or program?

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... “Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult customer?

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: Example: "I created a new billing system for my department at _____ company. To further answer your question about working with a difficult customer, here's how I did it."

How You Did It: "I identified problems with the existing systems."

"I spoke with clients with billing problems."

"I built rapport and followed up after new systems were built according to the need of the clients."

Results: Example: Increased customer satisfaction and reduced billing error-related expenses.

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?"

Describe a project that you completed where you had to find another way to accomplish the task due to time constraints?

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?"

What's your greatest strength?

Value question

Quote your top brand / value statement.

Ask the interviewer if they would like an example of one of your brand / value statements.

Describe the most creative work-related project you have completed?

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

What's your ideal job?

Value question

You will use your brand / value statements.

Answer: "My idea job is one where I can bring value in (two or three) way..."

Refer to your brand / value statements. Use achievement examples to illustrate your brand / value statements, if you are asked to give an example.

End you answer by asking something like... ""would theses skills be valuable for someone in this position to have?

Give me a specific example where you had to handle multiple tasks at one time?

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

Can you give me a specific example of how you led a team or organization?

Ability question

What you did: Example “ I developed an orientation program for new managers within the company. To further answer your question and about how I led a team or organization, here’s how I did it.”

How you did it: Example: “I interviewed existing managers to identify best practices.”

“ I recruited a group of ten managers that would partner with me on the project.”

“ I rolled out a pilot program for the organization.”

‘ I lead the team of managers to implement the orientation.”

Results: Example: “It created retention of managers and employees and supported the mission vision and value of the organization.”

Ask for the fit: Example: Ask the interviewer...”Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to lead a team and increase employee retention?

What did you do in your last job in order to be more effective with your organization and planning?

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... “Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

Describe a time when you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

Give me an example of an important goal you set and describe your progress in reaching that goal.

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

What motivates you?

Value question

Begin by saying.... "What motivates me is when I can..."

Use your brand / value statements, which are basically what you are known for – two or three brand / value statements that describe how you work and what you provide to an organization.

Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something unexpected by a customer.

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

Tell me about a time when you initiated a change at work.

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

Describe a situation, task or assignment that challenged your skills.

Ability question

The answer must use all four of these.

What You Did: (One sentence) Start with an action word.

How You Did It: (Think in bullet points) Think in sequential order and in a way that answers the question.

Results: (One or two sentences) In what ways did this benefit the company?

Ask For The Fit: Ask the interviewer.... "Would it be valuable for someone in this position to know how to _____ ?

Why do you want to work for this organization?

Fit question

Answer with some form of "I don't know yet but..." or "I am not sure but..."

Then add..."here's what I found from..." and reference information you gained from:

- Reading (Be early to interview)
- Literature: brochures / catalogs
- Annual reports
- Infotrak (library)
- Webpage (Often www.companyname.com)
- Networking information

End by asking..."How accurate am I?"

What's your 5 or 10-year career goal?

Fit question

Answer with some form of ... "I not sure with your organization but what I learned, heard, etc..."

Then add..."here's what I found from..." and reference information you gained from:

- Reading (Be early to interview)
- Literature: brochures / catalogs
- Annual reports
- Infotrak (library)
- Webpage (Often www.companyname.com)
- Networking information

End by asking..."How accurate am I?"

What kind of manager or director do you work best with?

Fit question

Answer with some form of "I don't know what you are looking for but I am known for working with many different leadership styles..."

Then add..."here's what I found from..." and reference information you gained from:

- Reading

- Employees that I've met
- Customers that I've talked with....
- Reputation within the community
- Webpage (Often www.companyname.com)
- Networking information

End by asking..."How accurate am I?"

Describe the specific job duties of your past employment that would relate to the position you are applying for today.

Fit question

Answer with some form of ..."I'm not sure of all the variables but..."

Then add...".... Here's what I learned so far about this role from..." and reference information you gained from:

- Reading (Early to Interview)
- Job Description
- Talking with the hiring manager
- From the phone interview
- Webpage (often www.companyname.com)
- Networking information

Connect your past role with what you found.

End by asking..."How accurate am I?"

How would you manage reporting to two directors that have two different leadership styles?

Fit question

Answer with some form of..."I'm not sure if this is the situation with this position, but I am known for working with different leadership styles..."

Then add... "Here's what I found from..." and reference information you gained from:

- Reading
- Employees that I've met
- Customers that I've talked with....
- Reputation within the community
- Webpage (Often www.companyname.com)
- Networking information

End by asking..."How accurate am I?"

Why are you leaving your present job / looking for a different job?

Weakness question

Answer with truthful statement such as "Here's what I learned from _____." (i.e. layoff, company re-org, etc.)

Add..."I'm looking for an organization where I can (use your brand / value statements) because every time I use them I succeed."

Note: If you were fired from your job, you need to reframe the negative into something positive without stating that you were fired. Make the mask that question outright and then tell the truth if they ask. Take ownership of mistakes made and state what you learned from them.

What frustrates you the most when dealing with others ?

Weakness question

Start with..."Here's what I learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.)

Ask..."Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....? (This will redirect the question back to them.)

Describe how you have handled truthful criticism.

Weakness question

Start with..."Here's what I learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.)

Ask... "Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....? (This will redirect the question back to them.)

What's your weakness?

Weakness question

Say something like... "What I've learned is to make sure to ask questions of those involved in the problem before I act on what I believe are the solutions. I did this at _____ company when the mailroom reported they might have found anthrax in our mail. Instead of jumping to conclusions and alarming everyone, I first assessed the situation by talking with those involved in the crisis. I then was able to appropriately direct and manage the crisis, keeping everyone in the building safe and well advised of the situation.

Ask... "Would these skills – first stopping to ask questions, then assessing and managing problem – be valuable to someone in this position? (Redirect the question back to them.)

Tell me about a time that you failed to complete an assignment on time.

Weakness question

Start with... "Here's what I learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.)

Ask... "Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....? (This will redirect the question back to them.)

What's the most difficult part of learning a new job or skill?

Weakness question

Start with... "Here's what I learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.)

Ask... "Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....? (This will redirect the question back to them.)

Why are there holes in your employment history?

Weakness question

It is important that you look at the gaps in your employment history and come up with a strategy to fill them before they get too big. Consider setting up your own consulting company, even if it's primarily for the purpose of the volunteer work related to your field.

If you have to explain gaps in your history, here are some tips:

Don't volunteer stories about past issues that led to a need for extended time off (i.e. leave to care for a sick relative.) These could raise a red flag and doubts regarding your future availability to work.

If you were part of a layoff, frame it as being part of a "company restricting," if possible.

Stay away from saying, "I've been looking for work but there are no jobs!"

Why some of your past employments are experiences relatively short term?

Weakness question

Start with..."Here what I've learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.)

Ask..."Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....?" (This will redirect the question back to them.)

Why were you fired from your last position?

Weakness question

Start with..."Here what I've learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.) But make sure you take ownership of your past failures.

Ask..."Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....?" (This will redirect the question back to them.)

On the application you said that had a misdemeanor on you arrest record. What was the situation?

Weakness question

Start with..."Here what I've learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.)

Ask... "Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....?" (This will redirect the question back to them.)

Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult customer who didn't like your solution to their problem.

Weakness question

Start with... "Here what I've learned..."

Use positive information to answer the question briefly. (Reframe bad history.)

Ask... "Is this something that would be valuable in this position, when one knows how to.....?" (This will redirect the question back to them.)

What are your salary requirements?

Negotiation Question

Try to postpone salary talk until there's an offer made. Use phrases like....

"What range did you have in mind?"

Salary shouldn't be a problem."

"I'm sure that you pay a fair salary, don't you?"

"Are you making me a job offer?"

When discussing salary, let them go first.

If they give you a range, repeat the number at the top of that range, appear to be thinking about it, and wait 30 seconds.

If they offer you a job and specify the salary, say..."When do you need to hear back from me on my decision?" (Do not accept on the spot.)

Can you travel three days a week?

Negotiation question

Say something like... "I'd consider it." Remember that you can't give your gut response yet if you feel those three days a week would be difficult. This could be a negotiable point but you can only talk about it after you have received an offer or you will be eliminated as a candidate.

After you receive the offer, find out if a compromise is possible.... "Is it possible that could travel two days each week until the needs of this position?"

What will it take for you to come on board?

Negotiation Question

Try to postpone salary talk until there's an offer made. Use phrases like....

"What range did you have in mind?"

Salary shouldn't be a problem."

"I'm sure that you pay a fair salary, don't you?"

"Are you making me a job offer?"

When discussing salary, let them go first.

If they give you a range, repeat the number at the top of that range, appear to be thinking about it, and wait 30 seconds.

If they offer you a job and specify the salary, say..."When do you need to hear back from me on my decision?" (Do not accept on the spot.)

Our policy requires benefits start after 90 days of employment. Vacation is earned after one year. Will that work for you?

Negotiation question

Answer... "I'd consider it." (These can be terms for negotiation once you have a real offer.)

Try to postpone salary and terms discussion until there's an offer made. Use phrases like..."I would need to look at all of the benefits as well as the job offer in order to respond to this question. Let's talk about how we can take the next step and move forward."

If they offer you a job and specify the salary and terms, say..."When do you need to hear back from me on my decision?" (Do not accept on the spot.)

We offer a draw for the first six months, plus commission. Is that what you had in mind?

Negotiation question

Try to postpone salary talk until there's an offer made. Use phrases like..."I'd be happy to talk with you more about compensation but I would like at this time to focus on the details of the job and how I can solve your need / your problem."

When discussing salary, let them go first.

If they give you a range, repeat the number at the top of that range, appear to be thinking about it, and wait 30 seconds.

If they offer you a job and specify the salary, say..."When do you need to hear back from me on my decision?" (Do not accept on the spot.)

Currently the job description reads as follows... Is this job description something you would be interested in doing?

Negotiation question

Say something like.... "From what I understand the job to be, I am interested. But let's talk more about the details of the job to see how well I fit and can meet your needs."

Often, part of negotiation can be about your role within the company. For example, you might be able to talk about transforming a part-time position into a full-time position if you clearly understand the scope of the firm's needs!

With this position you will earn two weeks of vacation per year. How do you feel about that?

Negotiation question

Say something like.... "Based on the offer and other benefits, I'd be interested."

Do not try to negotiate terms until you have a firm offer in hand and time to think about it.

You need three things in hand before you negotiate – an offer letter, job description and a benefits package. You are not in a position to negotiate the deal unless you get the employer to solidify these three parts of the offer...in writing.

EXTRA

Ask something like... "Do you have any hesitations about my ability to do the job? If so, I'd like to be given the opportunity to address your concern."

You might say something like... "Now...when I am on the job, what is the first problem I can solve for the organization?"

Ask something like... “How would my success in this position be measured?”

Make sure the ball ends up in your court.

Suggest “I’ll call you...”

If they say “I’ll call you...” you say something like.... “Great. So if I don’t hear from you by ____, I’ll give you a call...”

If you think they are really saying “Don’t call us, we’ll call you...” ask if the process is over?

Write a “Thank you” letter to each person you spoke with.

If you get a “Thanks But No Thanks” letter, send another “Thank you” letter anyway! Leave them with a good impression that you really want to work there.

Questions / Answers provided by David Hults.