

# Interview Questions

## Career Skills

Team FME

[www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com)

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# Table of Contents

Preface.....	2
Visit Our Website.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Interview Behavior.....	6
Capability Questions.....	9
Commitment Questions.....	11
Compatibility Questions.....	14
Questions About Your Self-Image.....	17
Questions About Your Application.....	20
Questions You Should Ask.....	23
Summary.....	26
Other Free Resources.....	28
References.....	29

## Preface

This eBook describes the various types of interview question that you can expect to be asked and gives you detailed guidelines for answering them.

You will learn:

- The three fundamental things that you must convince the interviewer about if you want the job.
- How to categorize questions in a way that ensures your answer ticks the right box.
- The key behaviors you need to impress the interviewer, including how to deal with disagreement.
- Why you need to pay particular attention to questions about your self-image.
- What questions to ask the interviewer to demonstrate that you understand the issues and responsibilities you will face in the role.

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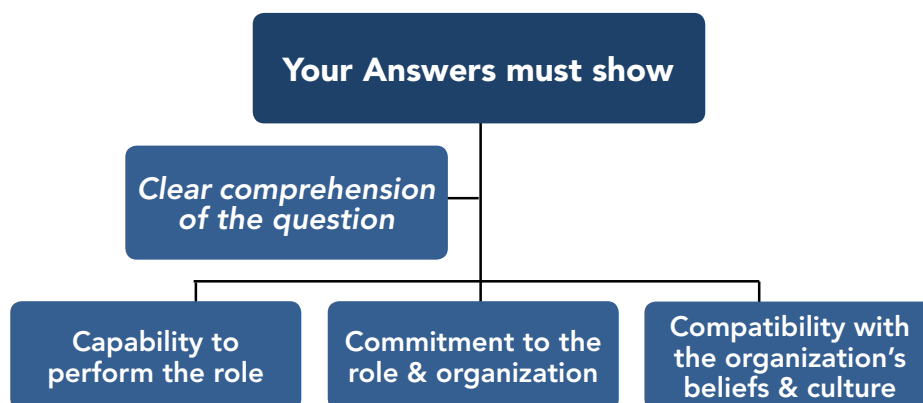
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## Introduction

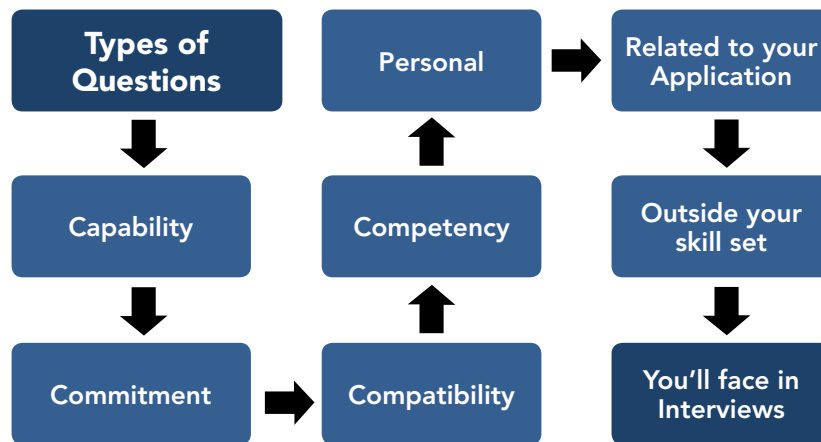
This eBook deals with what happens on the day of the interview. Your preparation should give you a good idea of what to expect from both the organization and the role on offer. The fact that you have been invited to the interview is a sign that they believe you are a suitable candidate for the post. The interview is really to find out whether you are the 'best' candidate.

One thing to remember is that the interview is a two-way process and it gives you the opportunity to see at first hand what the organization is like and to get a feel for the role beyond what you already know from the job specification.

Your success in an interview relies on your ability to demonstrate that you have the Capability, Commitment, and Compatibility to perform the role effectively. These are often referred to as the '3Cs'.



If you have not prepared properly you can find yourself on the defensive, trying to justify yourself in the face of tough questions rather than having the chance to 'sell' your benefits. A well-trained interviewer will throw all sorts of odd and challenging questions at you in an attempt to assess your true suitability for the job.



There are several different styles of questions you can be asked in an interview. These can be categorized as:

- Capability
- Commitment
- Compatibility
- Competency based
- Related to your self-image
- Related to your application

Answering them in a way that will impress the interviewer depends on how effectively you have prepared, and the outcome of interviews is usually decided well in advance of the interview itself. Many strong candidates who prepare poorly for interviews struggle to get job offers and are surprised to see less obviously qualified candidates being offered the job. This is because the employers attach more significance to the interview than to the applicant's resume.

Preparing properly for an interview takes a significant amount of time and effort, although it gets easier with practice. Our free eBook '[Interview Preparation](#)' explains:

- What research you need to do before applying for a job and where to find the information.
- How building up a rapport with a respected employment agency can get you into interviews you would otherwise miss out on.

- What competency-based questions are and why they are such an essential part of the management interview process.
- How to use the job ad, role description, and employee specification to identify and rank the required job competencies.
- How to match your existing competencies to those you have identified as being essential for the role and identify any weaknesses.

Competency-based interview questions require their own structured approach and this is explained in our free eBook [‘Answering Competency-Based Questions’](#).

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Success relies on demonstrating that you have the Capability, Commitment, and Compatibility to perform the role effectively.
- ✓ The outcome of an interview is usually determined by how well you have prepared.

## Interview Behavior

Always remember that the interviewer is interested in what you can bring to the role and the organization. This means that you should only refer to things that you have done and can talk about in detail and avoid talking about things that you were only peripherally involved with.

You should always use ‘I’ rather than ‘we’ when answering a question. Some people find this awkward because they are used to referring to themselves and their team as one entity in management meetings, and find ‘we’ more natural. Good answers usually begin with something like:

*‘I decided to...’*

*‘My first step was to...’*

*‘I set up a review of...’*

*‘My personal responsibility was to...’*



All of the examples you use to illustrate your answers should be specific and directly relevant to whatever is being asked. Clarify anything you are uncertain of; the interviewer would rather spend a few seconds rephrasing the question than listen to an irrelevant answer.

If you are struggling to think of an answer, it is always better to ask if you can come back to it later. Quite often, as you progress through the interview and become more relaxed, a good illustration of what was asked for comes to mind. Always be honest and don't try to make something up just to fill in the silence—answering the 'wrong' question can make you look like a poor listener.

An interviewer may say something deliberately provocative or something that they know you will disagree with in order to put you under pressure and to see how you react. This is actually a good thing and usually indicates that the interviewer is satisfied with the basics and is now trying to establish what you would be like to work with if you were involved in a disagreement over something. Candidates who have done well up to this point often let themselves down because they switch to agreeing with the interviewer without making sufficient effort to argue their point, or they take the matter personally and become confrontational.

The balance of power in an interview varies depending on economic climate and the supply of and demand for the skills being recruited. However, it is always best to assume that the power lies with the interviewer because they will usually see it this way and will resent any perceived challenge to it. This can become a problem if you have a fundamental difference of opinion with the interviewer, so you need to be careful if this happens.

- If you disagree with something that the interviewer says, check your understanding first. Ask a question or questions to clarify their meaning as this demonstrates that you are keen to establish the precise facts, ahead of making your point.
- Never become confrontational. Some questions are designed to see how you handle disagreement and, whilst you do not want to appear weak, neither do you want to be seen as a difficult person to work with.
- If you are convinced that you are right and decide to stick to your point, do so in a way that is polite and courteous. This demonstrates that you do not see any major issue; you simply have different views. How you conduct yourself in the interview is how the interviewer will picture you behaving in the working environment.

The above points are valid for all types of interview, but confrontation in panel interviews is particularly difficult to handle because you are outnumbered. Generally speaking, once a confrontation starts then the panel members tend to band together because they are on one side of the table and you are on the other. Even panel members who are inclined to see things your way may prefer to remain silent rather than support you against the others on the panel. This means that in any sort of confrontation in a panel interview you will usually come off badly.

It is not unheard of for interviews to be conducted for intelligence gathering rather than to fill a position. If you are in a particularly competitive market this is something that you need to be aware of. Don't be afraid to say that you can't answer a question because it would be a breach of trust with your current employer. If the interview is legitimate then this won't count against you. In addition, do not be tempted to give out any commercially confidential information because it is illegal and could make you look disloyal to your present employer.

Sometimes the person interviewing you may not be very experienced and may actually be more nervous than you are. This is more common in preliminary interviews where the task has been outsourced or delegated to a junior member of staff. Although it can also happen when the person who is supposed to conduct the interview is suddenly unavailable.

If you find yourself being interviewed by someone who is inexperienced then you may need to help them out. For example, inexperienced interviewers often ask closed questions that you could answer with a 'yes' or 'no.' If this happens then take the initiative and give reasons for your answer even if this was not asked for explicitly. Just giving a one-word answer not only makes you sound offhand but it can fluster the interviewer, who may not realize that they are asking closed questions.

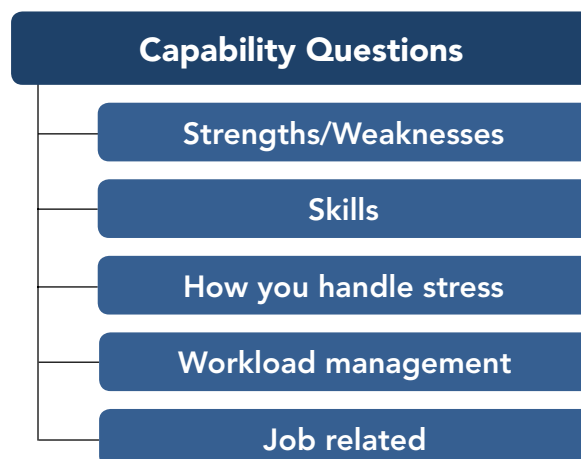
### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Only refer to things that you can talk about in detail.
- ✓ Always use 'I' rather than 'we' when answering a question.
- ✓ Ask for clarification if you are not clear what the interviewer is asking.
- ✓ If you are struggling to think of an answer, ask if you can come back to it later.

- ✓ If you disagree with something that the interviewer says, check your understanding first.
  - ✓ Never become confrontational—always remain polite and courteous.
  - ✓ If an interviewer is inexperienced then help them out.
- 

## Capability Questions

Specific, job-related questions are designed to assess your suitability for the position. Select examples from your past experiences, both work- and nonwork-related, to demonstrate the capability the employer is looking for.



These questions usually form about 50% of the interview. It is essential that the examples you select are a good match for the role. It is much easier to have thought about this during your preparation than to try and attempt it under pressure in the interview itself. Examples include:

### **What is your greatest strength?**

If you've prepared properly you will have several strengths to choose from. The obvious choice would be the strength that best suits the demands of the job. This is one of the most common questions and represents a good opportunity to assert your career statement. Pick an instance that illustrates your ability to demonstrate the top competency of the job.

### **What are your weaknesses?**

You could mention something that is not critical for the job, skills you have improved on, or turn a negative into a positive. Even though the question is about weaknesses, your answer should always be framed around positive aspects of your skills and abilities as an employee.

One approach to answering this question is to analyze the key skills and strengths required for the position you are interviewing for and then come up with an honest shortcoming that is not essential for success in that job.

Saying that you have none is not a sensible option, but neither do you want to admit to weaknesses. Often the most effective approach is to link this question to your continuous professional development (CPD) activities.

Explain why you have focused on this skill and what you have done or are doing to develop it. You can discuss the steps you have taken to improve this area, and then focus on your current, improved level of skill. This approach shows you are self-critical and take ownership of your personal and professional development.

Another option is to try and turn a negative into a positive. For example, a sense of urgency to get work completed or wanting to double-check every clause in a contract can both be turned into strengths, demonstrating that you are a candidate who will make sure that tasks are completed on time and who pays attention to detail.

### **What skill have you acquired most recently?**

It may be a formal qualification or on-the-job training that demonstrates your commitment to CPD. Once again make sure that the skill demonstrates a key role competency or how you will add value to the organization's skill base.

*'Budgeting and costing have always been an area I have struggled with so I have recently attained an AAT Level 2 certificate with the Association of Accounting Technicians. This has given me the knowledge and confidence to perform the essential accounting aspects of the job.'*

### **Give an example where you have worked well under pressure**

This question is designed to ascertain your ability to control and plan your own workload. Make sure to select an example that is appropriate for the role and avoid assigning blame.

## KEY POINTS

- ✓ Capability questions usually form about 50% of the interview.
- ✓ They include questions about strengths, weaknesses, skills, and workload management.
- ✓ Preparation is the key to choosing the best example in each case.

## Commitment Questions

These questions explore your motivational skills and willingness to commit to your responsibilities and the organization. Employee turnover is expensive and disruptive so most organizations want you to show a degree of loyalty to them in exchange for the benefits they are offering.



This means that you need to exercise some judgment when answering 'commitment' questions. You don't want to give the impression that you'll be looking for another job after a few months, nor do you want to give the impression you lack ambition. The following questions are quite obvious but you need to be mindful there are more subtle ways they can be asked.

### **What was it like working for your previous employer?**

The most effective way to answer this type of question is to focus on one aspect of that organization, such as leadership style, product development, adoption of technology, project philosophy, etc. As your answer develops, bring out the benefits of this experience and the value this will add to the new role and organization.

*'I feel that I really benefitted from their use of matrix management in projects and found it developed by planning and organizational skills, which I would want to develop in my team.'*

Don't forget that the interviewer is looking for how you display your commitment to the organization. You can also use this as an opportunity to emphasize your flexibility and focus on getting the job done.

### **Have you done the best work you are capable of?**

Be careful in answering this because you could inadvertently give the impression you've peaked. Use your CPD plans to show that you always give 100% to every task, but you also believe that there is always something new you can learn that will improve your performance.

### **How long will it be before you make a net contribution?**

The best way to answer is to acknowledge the induction period that most individuals receive when they join an organization and then say that you expect to be effective within a month or two from then.

You will know from the job description what the organization expects of you, so incorporate this into your answer. This also allows you to confirm that what you have read is still up to date. Every organization is aware of the settling-in period for new employees and their induction program is designed so that the individual will be contributing as soon as possible.

### **If you got this job, how long would you stay with us?**

The job description and your own research into the organization will indicate the prevailing culture. With the increasing use of short-term contracts, organizations want to feel secure that you will commit for at least that period, so your answer needs to take account of contractual obligations.

*'I see myself fulfilling the two-year contract. It presents some challenges I look forward to mastering and an opportunity to bring the breadth of my experience to the team and organization. If at the end of the contract there is an opportunity to extend or make the position full-time I would be more than happy to discuss it.'*

Answering these questions requires a clear understanding of the organization's culture and should also acknowledge where you are in your career. For example, a mature individual implying that they are seeking a long-term role in a company would be on safe ground, but a graduate of two or three years implying the same thing could be seen as lacking ambition.

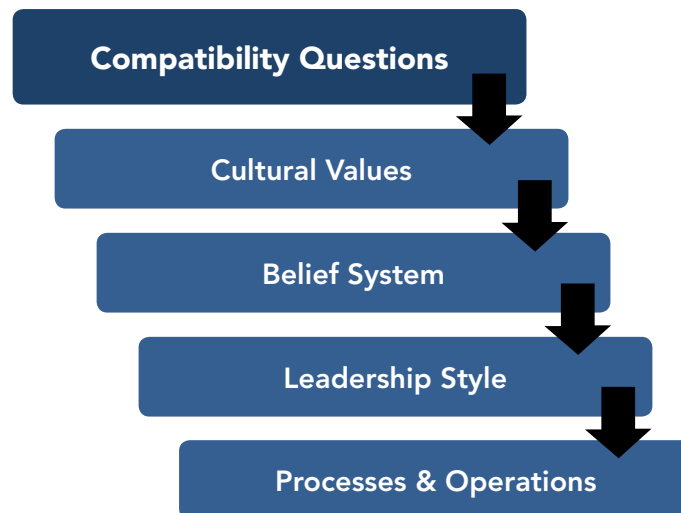
Be careful not to imply that you will only remain with them as long as you are being challenged and learning new skills. Your answer should acknowledge that your professional development is secondary to getting the job done, generating revenue, and meeting customer expectations.

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Commitment questions are concerned with how much you want to do the job and how much loyalty they can expect from you.
  - ✓ There is an implicit conflict between loyalty and ambition so your answers need to take account of this.
  - ✓ They also try to determine what your level of contribution will be—in other words how 'hard' you expect to work.
  - ✓ These questions tend to be more subtle than capability questions.
-

## Compatibility Questions

These questions can be the deciding factor when organizations need to select one person from several equally qualified individuals.



Organizations need people who will seamlessly fit into their culture, ethos, and operations. Therefore it is important that your answers assure an interviewer that you are a perfect fit with the organization's:

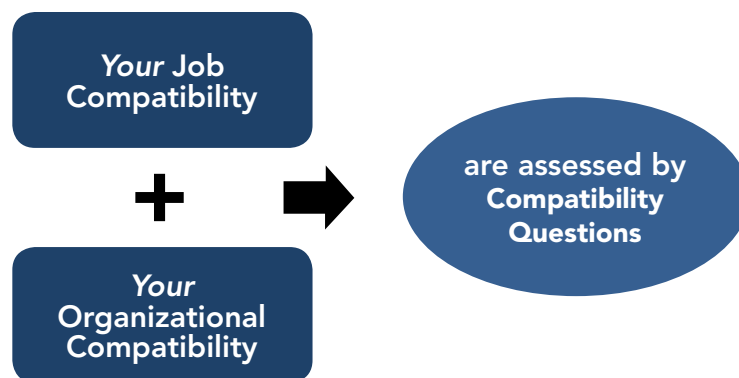
- Culture and image
- Values and belief system
- Operational processes
- Leadership.

The more senior the role, the more important it is that candidates have a close fit with the organization's ethos and mission. These questions provide you with an opportunity to gauge how comfortable you would be working within the culture of the organization. [Actively listening](#) to everything the interviewer says can give you an indication of what to expect if you worked there.

There is unlikely to be a 'perfect fit' between your values and those required, so you will need to make a value judgment as to whether or not you are going to be comfortable with the management style and belief system. However, there is no need to do this during the



interview and it is something you can think about later. The best approach is to give all of your attention to answering the questions you are asked with the aim of showing how you would quickly and seamlessly fit into the organization. The research you have done in your [interview preparation](#) should give you a broad understanding of how you will be expected to manage your team, delegate tasks, and interact with other teams.



You can use compatibility questions to demonstrate that you understand the organization's position in the marketplace and how it plans to develop using the information that you have gathered during your preparation. Some examples of the type of compatibility questions you may be asked to answer are:

### **How do you see yourself fitting into the management team?**

Answer this by giving examples of how you have fitted into teams. Both work- and sports-related examples can be used to illustrate your past success in this area. Be sure to emphasize that your addition to the team was not disruptive and describe how you were able to add value in terms of performance.

### **How easily are you able to adapt to a new environment?**

Describe a situation that illustrates how you have adapted to change and explain the strategies you have used. Be careful to describe your current organization in positive terms and to make it clear that you find change painless.

*'Whilst I have been at ABC for nearly ten years, within that time I have made several successful moves between its divisions and worked in several locations. Having a flexible and open mind has enabled me to communicate easily with a new team and to quickly become a productive member.'*

### **How do you go about getting to know new work colleagues?**

You should select examples that illustrate your flexibility and adaptability but most importantly your ability to listen and observe the internal and external interactions of the group.

### **Where do you see yourself in five years' time?**

Your answer needs to express your ambitions in a structured and realistic way taking account of the job you are applying for and what you know of the organization's structure. If there is anything about the latter that you are unclear about then this is a good opportunity to ask about it. Your interviewer could be your future boss or someone in a position to influence your career within the organization.

*'In five years' time I would like to be chasing a director or partner's role as I will then be in a position to add considerable value to ABC.'*

The answers you give to compatibility questions are designed to assess how well you and the organization could work together for mutual benefit. This is assessed in terms of how suited to the role you are, and how closely your own values match those of the organization.

As well as the generic compatibility questions above, you may be asked some very specific ones about how you would behave in certain hypothetical circumstances. You need to pay particular attention to these types of question as they can indicate areas where the organization's real values are different to those they are happy to publicize.

### **KEY POINTS**

- ✓ Compatibility questions are concerned with how well you would fit in with the current team and other managers, as well as the overall culture of the organization.
  - ✓ These questions can give you valuable insight into the organization's real values, rather than the ones that they publicize.
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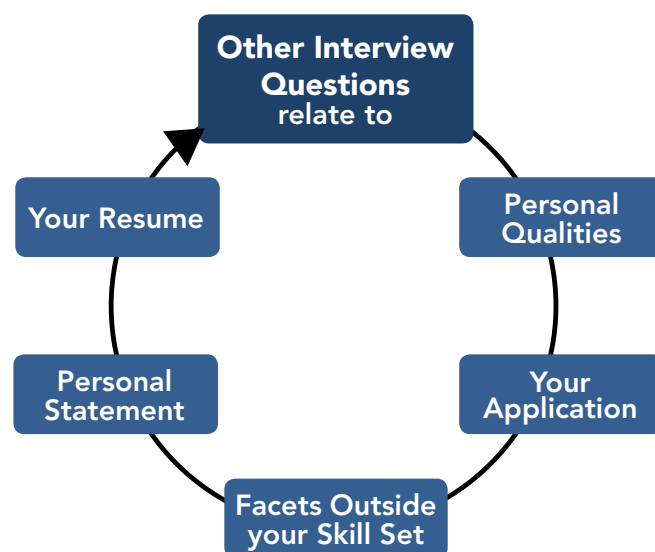
## Questions About Your Self-Image

All interview questions are designed to establish one or more of the following: your capability, your commitment, and/or your compatibility. The three key questions from the interviewer's perspective are:

1. Can you do the job?
2. Will you do the job?
3. Will you fit in?

Giving an answer that implies a 'No' to any of these things will put you out of the running straightaway. If the interviewer believes that you are incapable of doing the job, you don't want to do the job, or you won't fit in then the interview is effectively over. When this happens the interviewer will almost always continue asking questions until the scheduled time is up. However, the answers tend not to be followed up with more probing questions because the interviewer is simply going through the motions and running the clock down. Another sign that this has happened is that the interviewer becomes noticeably more friendly and relaxed because there is no longer anything at stake.

Thinking about questions in terms of capability, commitment, and compatibility is helpful in both the preparation phase and when actually answering them. If you get into the habit of pausing for a second to consider why a particular question has been asked, you can give a much more focused answer than if you don't.



This applies to all interview questions but there are also some areas where the interviewer is trying to find out something specific. The rationale behind these questions may not be quite so clear cut as those that focus on the three 'C's' and you should think of them as being designed to find the best candidate rather than someone who simply fulfills the basic criteria.

Questions about how you see yourself form part of most interviews and they are important because even if someone is capable and committed and shares the values of the organization, they may lack the 'emotional intelligence' to work well with other people.

Obviously, it would be much better from the interviewer's perspective to see evidence of this for themselves—by observing the candidate's behavior in a group exercise, for example—but this is not always possible. Consequently, 'self-image' questions are sometimes used to gauge someone's level of emotional intelligence. Examples include:

### **Do you consider yourself a natural leader?**

Some individuals will simply say 'Yes' and back this up with an example of either a work or leisure/social example. But not everyone is a 'natural' leader and your answer should be honest. You may prefer to describe yourself as a competent or confident leader, describing an instance of your leadership and its success.

Question: *Tell me about yourself*

Be honest & open

Use how others describe you

Be concise & focused

Illustrate each quality with a work or professional example

DON'T take control

SET yourself a time limit

DON'T waffle

### **Tell me about yourself**

This is often a favorite question in many preliminary or agency interviews and quite disorientating because it provides no focus or purpose. Give yourself a few seconds to structure your answer—take a sip of water, for example. Then open with something along the lines of:

*'I believe that if you were to ask my colleagues and friends that question they would say that my best qualities were ... For instance, the time ... illustrates...'*

Keep your reply focused on the top three or four competencies of the role and use work-related illustrations where possible. It is often beneficial to intimate that this skill has also helped you socially, demonstrating that you are a well-rounded individual.

With carefully thought you could guide the interviewer to ask more direct questions that enable you to describe an event that outlines your suitability. Be relaxed and honest in your reply whilst at the same time being focused on showing you have the right attributes for the role. Give yourself three minutes or so to answer this question but be careful not to take over the interview or go on too long.

### **What would you say are your biggest accomplishments?**

As with the previous question be honest and keep them work-related if possible. If you have achieved something significant outside of work then by all means use it as an example but try to relate it back to how it has helped you professionally.

**Question:**  
What are  
your biggest  
accomplishments?

- Explain situation
- Outline challenges faced
- State desired objectives
- Describe significance of accomplishment

Select the most recent, but if a more historic event best illustrates a significant achievement then state why you have chosen this in your reply. For each accomplishment describe the situation, the challenges you faced, what you wanted to achieve, and the significance of the final accomplishment.

The most important thing when answering these questions is to be honest about yourself. The ideal candidate is someone who has the capability and commitment to do the job and has a sense of perspective about how they are going to fit in.

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ The three key questions from the interviewer's perspective are: 'Can you do the job?', 'Will you do the job?', and 'Will you fit in?'
  - ✓ Giving an answer that implies a 'No' to any of these things will put you out of the running straightaway.
  - ✓ Questions about your self-image give the interviewer an idea of your level of emotional intelligence.
  - ✓ The ideal candidate is someone who is neither too egotistical nor retiring.
- 

## Questions About Your Application

These questions are related to your resume or personal statement, and are often asked because of some inconsistency between them and something you have said. That is why it is important to keep copies of everything you send as part of the application process.

Sometimes these questions may result from the organization having received information that gives them cause for concern. Questions include:

### **What did you dislike about your last job?**

The best way to answer this question is to say there are always aspects of any job that are mundane or routine but you give them the same level of dedication as the more rewarding and challenging aspects.

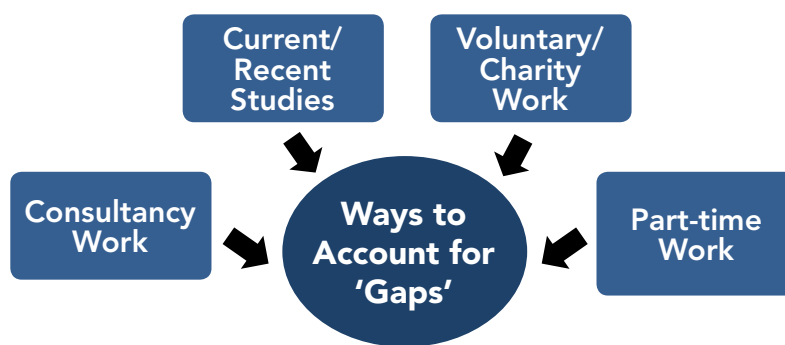
Ideally, you want to reassure the interviewer that you are not running away from some part of your previous job that you found disagreeable.

### **Why have you been unemployed for such a long time?**

The definition of 'long' varies between different occupations and industries. For a highly specialized role in a niche industry a 3-6 month gap between jobs may be perfectly normal.

Whatever your circumstances it is important to honestly minimize the 'gap.' You can achieve this by talking about:

1. Recent or current professional studies
2. Charity or voluntary work
3. Consultancy work
4. Part-time work.



Suitable roles, such as the one you are being interviewed for are rare, resulting in frequent gaps between contracts. Your aspirations are to remain in this specialist field, reflecting the considerable investment you have made in acquiring your knowledge and skills.

### **Why aren't you earning more at this stage of your career?**

The interviewer may be implying that you lack ambition. You can answer this by saying:

*'Experiences I have gained were too valuable to miss, so I focused on knowledge rather than rewards.'*

*'Personal circumstances prevented me—partner's commitments, unable to move location, young family, elderly parent, etc.'*

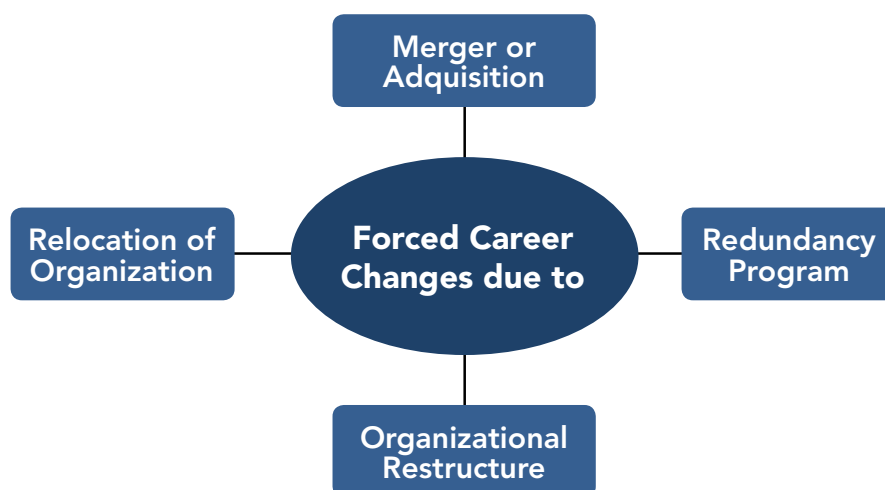
The interviewer could also be asking this to assess your real level of interest in accepting the position. Organizations only want to go through the recruiting process once so when they make an offer they want to be 100% certain it will be accepted.

### Why have you changed jobs so frequently?

You should be honest but structured in your reply giving sound explanations for the number of changes. You should also show that you maximized the opportunities each change presented. It is not unrealistic for some of those reasons to have been out of your control, such as:

1. *Your role ceased to exist following a merger or acquisition.*
2. *Closure or relocation of the organization.*
3. *An organizational restructure left you in a stagnant or unchallenging role you weren't willing to accept.*

It is better to avoid this potential question by ensuring that you application items and in particular your personal statement have removed the concern behind it.



### Why were you made redundant?

Just give a short explanation of the circumstances that led to the redundancies—for example, downsizing, outsourcing, offshoring, or restructuring, and why your particular role or department was affected. This is not something to be ashamed of: it is a common occurrence in today's economic environment.

### What happened to result in your dismissal?

If you have been dismissed, then you need to give an honest and objective answer explaining the circumstances.



Avoid blaming your previous manager or organization, as this will make you appear disloyal. The way you present the situation is key and will demonstrate your attitude towards your responsibilities and accountability.

***NOTE: If you are facing an unfair dismissal or sacking it is best to negotiate a fair or standard reference from the organization before you leave to avoid this appearing on your resume.***

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ These questions can indicate an inconsistency between your application and something that you have said.
- ✓ The interviewer may also be concerned about something and is looking for reassurance.

## Questions You Should Ask

An interview gives you the opportunity to ask questions and it is important to think about these and prepare carefully. Make sure that you have read all of the documentation you have been given so that you don't ask a question that you've already been given the answer to.

The things you learn in your preparation for the interview should enable you to ask questions that demonstrate your understanding of the issues and responsibilities you will face in the role. This becomes more significant the farther along the recruitment process you are.



Organizations want employees who will add value and make a contribution beyond just doing the basics of the job. Asking questions that demonstrate that you are one of these people can make a positive impression on the interviewer. For example:

ASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you see as the top three priorities for the successful candidate?</li> <li>• How will these be measured?</li> </ul>
ASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What external communications do you see as essential for my role?</li> </ul>
ASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the recent legislation how do you see this impacting on my role?</li> </ul>
ASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which of the objectives outlined in the annual report do you see my role making the largest contribution to?</li> </ul>
ASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the key short-term objectives of my role?</li> </ul>
ASK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you envisage the balance between short-term gains &amp; long-term objectives for my role?</li> </ul>

These questions could make you stand out from the other candidates. The best approach is to ask just enough questions to demonstrate you are serious about wanting the position, knowledgeable about the organization and its environment, and most importantly that you are someone who can be proactive and add value.

Have the questions you'd like to ask written down and ensure that as many as possible are open questions. Ask for a few seconds to look through the questions you have prepared and use this time to search through your prepared list to select those most pertinent depending on what has been discussed in the interview so far. Avoid coming across as conceited but do not be afraid to ask searching questions, for example:

*I notice that XYZ offers its new customers 'Q product.' Is this something ABC have considered? Does it fit in with their service philosophy stated by the CEO in the annual report?*

With this type of question make sure you have also noted what this philosophy and Q product were. This will enable you to give an intelligent response if the question is returned and gives you the opportunity to express your view.

As a manager it is also worthwhile asking questions about your team, management colleagues, and third parties. For example:

<b>ASK</b>	• How long has the team been together? Has turnover been an issue?
<b>ASK</b>	• How frequently are management meetings held? Do they have a particular format?
<b>ASK</b>	• Which of our customers is the most difficult? Why is that?
<b>ASK</b>	• What is your performance management policy? What initial support can I expect?
<b>ASK</b>	• How is information disseminated from the executive? How does it work in reverse?

It is essential to keep your eye on the clock as you don't want your interview to over-run. You can also assess the mood of the interviewer from his or her body language. Let the interviewer know you are conscious of the time and ask if you can continue to ask questions. Consciously keep the balance of power with the interviewer. If time has run out, ask if they would prefer you to email questions to them or ask them at the next stage. This subtly asks if you have been selected or not.

Ensure the phrasing of your question does not put the interviewer in an awkward position or embarrass them because they don't know the answer. For example, asking detailed technical questions of HR personnel may result in a negative reaction and influence their decision.

### KEY POINTS

- ✓ Don't ask a question that you've already been given the answer to.
- ✓ Ask questions that show you understand: the market, organizational priorities, role-level priorities, and statutory issues.
- ✓ Take a list of these into the interview with you.
- ✓ Don't ask questions that the interviewer can't answer.

## Summary

By the end of your interview your objective is to have made a strong and favorable impression. You should also ensure that you leave knowing what will happen next and to ask for feedback if you are unsuccessful.

One thing to remember is that the interview is a two-way process and it gives you the opportunity to see at first hand what the organization is like and to get a feel for the role beyond what you already know from the job specification.

Don't let your keenness to get a new job blind you to anything you see on the day that gives you cause for concern. You should pay particular attention to the following:

1. What does the physical environment look like?
  - Are the premises clean and tidy looking?
  - Is the technology and equipment up to date?

If they are not then this could indicate chronic underfunding, which means working there could be stressful because you'll constantly be battling against budget constraints. Underfunded organizations typically have little opportunity for financial rewards even if you do your job well.

2. Do the people look reasonably relaxed?

Try to arrive ten minutes early with the intention of observing those who work in the organization and their interactions with others. Ask yourself:

- Is the atmosphere relaxed and professional?
- Do people look reasonably happy?
- Do the receptionists sound stressed?
- Does it feel too quiet and oppressive?

Your answers will give you a feel for how well you would fit into the prevailing culture. There are some truly grim places to work and you don't want to find yourself stuck in one. It takes a lot of time and effort to change jobs so make sure that it suits you.

**3.** Make an objective assessment of your interviewer.

- Do you feel this is someone you could work for?
- Do you feel they can be trusted?
- Do you feel they are being honest with you?

The interviewer may be the only person working in the organization that you are able to actually meet. There can sometimes be a difference between an organization's real values and those in its PR material. The interviewer's attitude and demeanor can often tell you a lot about the prevailing culture. This is not a trivial matter because they may turn out to be your immediate boss.

**4.** Does the role match your expectations from the ad and other material you've received?

- Is the job specification the same as you've been sent?
- Are there any responsibilities that were omitted from the ad?
- Is there any aspect of the job that the interviewer seems reluctant to discuss?

Subtle changes do occur as organizations respond to external circumstances, and this can account for minor differences in the role you applied for and the one on offer. However, if there has been a high turnover of staff in a particular role because of an ongoing problem, then the interviewer may try to play this down. It is essential to [actively listen](#) to the interviewer at all times and to clarify anything that seems incongruous.

The other eBooks available in this skill set from [www.free-management-ebooks.com](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com) are:

- Management Assessment
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