



Don't Get Caught Out in Your Client Interview – We all know what they're going to ask really!

Interview questions and answers are a source of many questions for us, no pun intended. Why? Because our candidates know, like the Scouts, they need to “BE PREPARED” and who doesn't want to have the answers to the test in advance?

Check out this popular job interview questions and answers crib-sheet:

Q1. Tell me about you and your experience?

This is the most commonly asked question during interviews. What the hiring manager really wants is a quick, two-to-three minute snapshot of who you are and why you're the best candidate for this position. Take time to write a prepared, polished answer that is short and crisp. Your answer should give a brief overview of your experience and accomplishments as it relates to the position you are interviewing for.

Q2. Why did you leave/why are you leaving your most recent position?

Put a positive spin on your response. Emphasize the desire to grow and learn, and expand your responsibilities and experience. If you were part of a downsizing, sale, merger etc. be prepared to talk about that too. Never bad mouth your current/past employers or co-workers. Emphasise a positive about that position you are interviewing for.

Q3. What do you know about us? Why do you want to work here?

You are not expected to be an expert, but you should review the organizations website and read recent press releases. Emphasize a strong point or positive from your research. Reach out to a current or former employee on LinkedIn. This is a great source of inside knowledge about a company that you should take advantage of. Also, do some homework on the industry this can help you expand on your answer. In addition, it can help when there is not much public information about a specific company is available. This is particularly true of family run business, startups, divisions of larger companies etc.

Make sure you map your experience and skills to the position, the company, or the industry you are interviewing for and also relate your reason to a positive about the organization.

Q4. Do you work better in teams or as an individual?

This question is trying to determine if you are a team player. The answer is that you work well in teams and individually depending on the requirement of the task. Make sure you give some examples from previous jobs.

Individual – Talk about dedication, resolve, ability to work independently and/or under tight deadlines.

Teamwork – Emphasize behavioural examples and focus on your openness to diversity of backgrounds. Talk about the strength of the team above the individual. And note that this question may be used as a lead into questions around how you handle conflict within a team, so be prepared.

Q5. What is your greatest strength? and weakness?

This is another question that you want to prepare for in advance. The key is to keep it positive with both you strength and weakness.

Strengths – This is easy one. Pick three or four that show your intelligence, work ethic, leadership skills, problem solving ability etc.

Weaknesses – This is the harder one. Most career books tell you to select a strength and present it as a weakness. Such as: “I work too much. I just work and work and work.” Wrong. First of all, using a strength and presenting it as a weakness is deceiving. Second, it misses the point of the question.

You should select a weakness that you have been actively working to overcome. For example: “I have had trouble in the past with planning and prioritization. However, I’m now taking steps to correct this. I just started using this great planning tool....”

Talk about a true weakness and show what you are doing to overcome it.

Q6. How do you deal with conflict with your superiors? Please describe an example.

Everyone experiences, conflicts in the workplace. The key is how you behaviourally reacted to conflict and what you did to resolve it.

For example: “Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I’ve found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other person’s perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, and then I seek to work out a collaborative solution. For example...”

Focus you answer on the behavioural process for resolving the conflict and working collaboratively.

Q7. Have you been assigned tasks with unclear or incomplete instructions? How did you handle it? Please give a recent example.

Whenever you have received an unclear task or incomplete instructions, you clarify with appropriate stakeholders before beginning the task.

Q8. How do you manage yourself and competing priorities?

This question is checking your time management and prioritization skills. You want to respond from two points of view. First emphasize how you worked with supervisors and other stakeholders to prioritize each assignment, then give examples of your time management skills and how you do what it takes to meet the deadlines.

Q9. So what’s the 5 year plan?

You need to demonstrate a growth path that shows you plan to continue learning and taking on more responsibilities. Make it clear you are flexible, but be honest with your end objective. The key is to focus on your achievable objectives and what you are doing to reach those objectives. Also, your plans must involve the company you are talking to – they don’t want to spend all that money employing you for you to just run off in a year or two.

An example answer, “Within three years, I would like to become the most knowledgeable accountant within your department. I want to work toward becoming the expert that others rely upon. And in doing so,

I feel I'll be fully prepared to take on any greater responsibilities which might be presented to me. For example, here is what I'm presently doing to prepare myself..."

Then go on to show by your examples what you are doing to reach your goals and objectives.

Q10. What key things is your current/last employer losing in your departure? or What makes you the best applicant for this position, Why should we hire you over other applications?

This question is basically asking what the KSPs (Key Selling Points) are that you are going to bring the company. Focus on you demonstrated strengths, give recent substantiated examples. Make sure the examples are relevant to the position you are interviewing for. Highlight your best attributes, skills and experience and how they relate to this position.

Give examples of your unique qualifications and experience, be careful to give very relevant answers and not fluff. The easy answer is that you are the best person for the job. And don't be afraid to say so. But then back it up with what specifically differentiates you such as a passion for excellence, commitment to producing superior results etc.

Q11. What do your colleagues say about you?

Keep it positive and give a few specific examples around reliability, work ethic, can do attitude, ability to deliver, etc. Keep in mind that many employers ask for references from peers. If you're applying for a management position, be prepared to answer a similar question regarding what your subordinates say about you. Again, it's not unheard of for an employer to ask for a reference from a subordinate.

Q12. Can you do this job?

This is a key question, so gather all of your confidence when answering. The answer is yes, but a qualified yes with examples from recent experience and education. Provide specific examples demonstrating skills, experience and interest that are relevant to the position you are interviewing for.