

***“Don’t wish you had less problems, but that you had more skills”***

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# **BRINGING INTERVIEWS IN-TO-VIEW**



The very word ‘interview’ can make a grown man quake in his boots. So lets just start by breaking down the word.

***Inter-***

***1*** *between; among*

***2*** *mutually; reciprocally: interactive.*

*ORIGIN from Old French* ***entre-*** *or Latin* ***inter ‘between, among.’***

***View***

***2*** *a particular way of considering or regarding something; an attitude or opinion:*

So this would suggest that an interview is **TWO** people, **mutually** seeing if both parties see the opportunity the same way. I.e. it is a two way process: Both parties being in control.

# **PREPARING FOR DIFFICULT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS IS IMPORTANT AND THE FIRST STEP**

Being prepared and organised often takes the fear out of the situation. Fear often comes from the unknown.

***Let’s explore* 10 Popular Interview Questions:**

1. **"Tell me about yourself?"**

Don’t use this as an excuse to ramble on. If you are not sure what they want to know then simply ask if there is a particular aspect of your background that they would be interested in. This will help keep your answer on track.

Whichever way you go in answering this question, steer clear of personal topics and keep in to your professional triumphs, values and ambitions (where appropriate). Use this as an opportunity to give one or more short examples of your personal attributes. For example you could say that one of your passions is working as a set designer, which is what fueled your creativity and passion to work as a window dresser (if this is what the position is).

Or you might describe yourself as someone who is able to communicate with a variety of people, so give an example from your personal life that indicates an ability to communicate also at work.

Like I always say, be a ‘scout’, and ‘be prepared’! These questions are hard to answer on the spot, so think about it, write down your answers and have an answer ready that promotes your best traits to an employer.



1. **"Why do you want to work here?"**

To answer this question, it will serve you well to have done some research. As a minimum one would think, you would have looked at their website and checked out who and what they do.

Always highlight the company's attributes or values. Perhaps finish with something about how you feel that the company can provide you with a great work environment, thus fostering your best work.

"I'm not looking for just another pay check. I enjoy my work and am proud of my profession. Your company produces a superior product/provides a superior service. I share the values that make this possible, which should enable me to fit in and complement the team." – A sentence such as this (if you believe it) highlights what really matters to you and can show the employer where your values stand.



1. **Why should I hire you?**

Your answer should be short and to the point. It should highlight the areas from your background that relate to the current wants of the employer. Recap the interviewer's description of the job, meeting it point by point with your skills. Finish your answer with: "I have the qualifications you need… [go on to list them], “

 **4) "What did you like/dislike about your last position?"**

The interviewer is looking for possible incompatibilities. If a trial lawyer says he or she dislikes arguing a point with colleagues, such a statement will only weaken--if not immediately destroy--his or her candidacy.

Most interviews start with a preamble by the interviewer about the company. Pay attention: That information will help you answer the question. In fact, any statement the interviewers make about the position or organisation can be used to your advantage.

So, in answer, you liked everything about your last position. You might even say that the position taught you the importance of certain keys from the business, achievement, or professional profile. Criticising a prior employer is a land mine statement that could be a problem. No one intentionally hires trouble, and that's what's behind the question. Keep your answer short and positive. You are allowed only one negative about past employers, and only then if your interviewer has a "hot button" about his or her department or company; if so, you will have written it down on your notepad. For example, the only thing your past employer could not offer might be something like "the ability to contribute more in different areas"

You might continue with, "I really liked everything about the job. The reason I want to leave it is to find a position where I can make a greater contribution. You see, I worked for a large company that encourages specialisation of skills. The smaller environment you have here will, allow me to contribute far more in different areas." Tell them what they want to hear--replay the hot button.

Of course, if you interview with a large company, turn it around. "I work for a small company and don't get the time to specialise in one or two major areas."

**5) "What would you like to be doing five years from now?"**

The safest answer contains a desire to be regarded as a true professional and team player. As far as promotion, that depends on finding a manager with whom you can grow. Of course, you will ask what opportunities exist within the company before being any more specific: "From my research and what you have told me about the growth here, it seems operations is where the heavy emphasis is going to be. It seems that's where you need the effort and where I could contribute toward the company's goals." Or, "I have always felt that first-hand knowledge and experience open up opportunities that one might never have considered, so while at this point in time I plan to be a part of [e.g.] operations, it is reasonable to expect that other exciting opportunities will crop up in the meantime."



**6) "What are your biggest accomplishments?"**

Keep your answers job related. You might begin your reply with: "Although I feel my biggest achievements are still ahead of me, I am proud of my involvement with . . . I made my contribution as apart of that team and learned a lot in the process. We did it with hard work, concentration, and an eye for the bottom line."

**7) "Can you work under pressure?"**

You might be tempted to give a simple "yes" or "no" answer, but don't. It reveals nothing, and you lose the opportunity to sell your skills and value profiles. Actually, this common question often comes from an unskilled interviewer, because it is closed-ended. As such, the question does not give you the chance to elaborate. Whenever you are asked a closed-ended question, mentally add: "Please give me a brief yet comprehensive answer." Do this, and you will give the information requested and seize an opportunity to sell yourself. For example, you could say: "Yes, I usually find it stimulating. However, I believe in planning and proper management of my time to reduce panic deadlines within my area of responsibility."

**8) "Do you prefer working with others or alone?"**

This question is usually used to determine whether you are a team player. Before answering, however, be sure you know whether the job requires you to work alone - then answer appropriately. Perhaps: "I'm quite happy working alone when necessary. I don't need much constant reassurance. But I prefer to work in a group--so much more gets achieved when people pull together."

** 9) "What is the most difficult situation you have faced?"**

The question looks for information on two fronts: How do you define difficult? What was your handling of the situation? You must have a story, one in which the situation was tough and one which will allow you to show yourself in a good light. Avoid talking about problems that have to do with co-workers. You can talk about the difficult decision to fire someone, but emphasise that once you had examined the problem and reached a conclusion you acted quickly and professionally, with the best interests of the company at heart.

**10) "What are some of the things that bother you?"** **"What are your pet hates?"**



These questions are so similar that they can be treated as one. It is tremendously important that you show you can remain calm. Most of us have seen a co-worker lose his or her cool on occasion--not a pretty sight and one that every sensible employer wants to avoid. This question comes up more and more often the higher up the corporate ladder you climb, and the more frequent your contact with clients and the general public. To answer it, find something that angers conscientious workers. "I enjoy my work and believe in giving value to my employer."

Of course there are many questions that can be asked at an interview, so the best thing is to know your resume in side and out and have thought about these questions before you go into an interview.

# **More Interview Questions**

**Questions about your qualifications**

* How do you think a friend or someone who knows you well would describe you?
* What do you think is your greatest weakness?
* Can you summarise the contribution you would make to our organisation?
* What accomplishment has given you the most satisfaction?
* Tell me about your experiences at school.
* What has been the most rewarding university experience?
* Please tell me about the greatest professional assignment you've ever handled.
* Tell me about your most significant work experience.
* How would those who have worked with you describe you?
* Why are you the best candidate for this position?
* Have you ever supervised anyone?

**Questions about your ability to work for the Company**

* Why are you interested in this job?
* What do you know about us?
* What qualities should a successful manager possess?
* In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
* What criteria are you using to evaluate the organization for which you hope to work?
* Are you a team player?
* How do you handle conflict?
* How do you work under pressure?
* What major problem have you encountered and how have you dealt with it?
* How competitive are you?
* What do you expect from your supervisor?
* Describe the relationship that should exist between a supervisor and those reporting to him or her

**Questions about your career choices**

* What are your long-term career goals? When and why did you establish these goals and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
* What are the most important rewards you expect in your business career?
* What do you do in your spare time?
* What kind of salary are you looking for?
* Are you willing to relocate?

**Difficult to answer questions**

* Did you ever have a group leader or boss you disliked? Why did you dislike him/her?
* How would someone who dislikes you describe you?
* Talk about a group situation in which there were problems. How did you handle the situation and what was the outcome? What role did you play in the group? How could the group improve its performance?
* Tell me about a time when you experienced a failure and how you reacted to it.
* Tell me about a time when you were under considerable pressure to meet one or more goals.
* Describe a situation where you had to resolve a problem at work and explain how you resolved it.
* Give me an example of how you are a risk taker.
* If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
* What motivates you?
* Why do you want to work for us and not for our competitor?
* Why should we hire you over everyone else we spoke to today?
* What do you think is the most important/difficult ethical dilemma facing corporations today?
* Give a one sentence positioning statement of yourself.
* How do you go about deciding what to do first when given a project?
* Tell me about an experience you have had in a working environment (school, work, or community).
* Describe a situation where you did not agree with something your boss asked you to do and how you resolved the problem.
* Can you work under pressure?
* What did you like/dislike about your last job?
* What would you like to be doing five years from now?

# **REMEMBER YOU ARE BOTH SEEING IF THIS IS THE RIGHT FIT**

As I began this workbook by saying, this is a two way process: They are interviewing you, and you are interviewing them. They want to make sure that they employ someone with both the skills and personality that suits the position and the their particular company structure and you want to make sure you end up with the right company structure and employer to suit your personality. This is why it is important to have questions of your own prepared that you can engage in with the interviewer and make sure you are completely clear on what you need and want from the position before accepting anything.

Examples include:

* What is the induction process?
* Is there a hand over period for this position?
* What opportunities are there for ongoing training?
* How is performance measured – KPI’s (Key Performance Indicators)?
* What support do employees have in reaching their targets?
* What hours or days would I be expected to work?
* Would I be expected to travel between sites (if applicable)

# **INTERVIEW FORMATS**

**1-to-1**

* This is the traditional and in the past has been the most popular method of interviewing. It is meeting directly with the interview face to face, which for some they find very intimidating. This method of interviewing will allow the interviewer to ask you questions and in return for you to ask questions of them.

**BY PHONE**

* As you cannot give off any visual clues over the phone, Tone and manner is going to be even more important.
* Active listening is essential when on the telephone. This way you know when to speak with out talking over the person, and can pick up on the hints they give you from their tone and manner. Having short silences is fine to allow for a smooth flow of conversation without talking

over each other.

* Always stand when taking an important phone call and smile. A smile can be heard in your voice and by standing you are not restricting breath, so you speech will be clearer and sound more confident.

**PANEL INTERVIEW**

* Similarly to the 1-to-1, a panel interview is run face to face takes except you may have two or three people in the room with an invested interest in the outcome.
* People tend to find the greatest challenge in this type of setting is knowing where to look.
* The key here is to always start by acknowledging the person who asked the question by holding their gaze for about two seconds and then look one by one at each of the other panel members.



**IN A GROUP SCENARIO**

* Group interviews are quickly becoming a more popular way to cull large numbers of people.
* They look at how each person interacts within a group and the comfort zone they draw to. Are they a leader, doer, thinker or carer.
* The key to this environment is to participate enough without taking total control of the group. This could possibly be seen as trying to dominate other people and is not looked upon favorably.
* Activities may include group work, problem solving as a team and selling a product.

# **PREPARING TO PUT THE INTERVIEW IN-TO-VIEW**

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* The information the employer has of you at this point is from your resume, so this is where they will draw their questions. Make sure you know your own resume and that it is accurate.
* Having a copy of your resume with you can be reassuring, so you don’t feel like you have nothing to refer to.
* Before your interview, make sure you know what method of interview it will be, and how many people are interviewing you. Walking into a room and being shocked by four people sitting there when you didn’t expect it, is not a good way to start the interview.
* Do your homework, so you can pre-empt questions and answers for the employer as we have looked at previously. It doesn’t hurt to have researched the role itself, having looked up job descriptions’ as well as the values of the business or organisation.
* Take time to think of your strengths and be ready to market yourself favourably.
* As we have said you are interviewing them, as much as they are interviewing you. They will have their questions ready; make sure you do the same thing.
* Make sure you are organised and have double-checked the time and location of the interview, and arrive approximately 10 minutes early.

***“Be prepared and be honest.”***

***John Wooden***

**OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

**HYGIENE**

* ****A shower never goes astray to make sure that body odour is In check.
* Make sure you have cleaned teeth, washed and brushed hair (if long have it out of your face) and check finger nails (toe nails too if you are wearing open toed shoes.
* If you are a smoker, try where possible to avoid doing so before the interview. Studies have shown that non-smokers, if all other things are fair and equal, will get the job 99% of the time over a smoker.

**APPEARANCE**

* ****Check that clothes and shoes are appropriate for the industry (nothing that will distract the other person or impact on how seriously they consider your chances).
* Employers are looking for respect. The first way they will tell whether you are series and respect them is how you dress. The term ‘dress for success’ has never been truer. No matter what the job, never wear work clothes or jeans etc to an interview. Show them that you mean business and you are not here to waste their time by dressing well.
* Plan ahead to make sure these are clean and IRONED.

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**TREATING THE STAFF AND OTHERS WITH RESPECT**

* As soon as you walk on site you are on display so always make the right impression with everyone you come into contact with, not just the employer!

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**THE FIRST IMPRESSION**

* When the interviewer comes out to meet you stand with good posture or if you are led into meet with them, state your name to the employer (first and last), smile and shake their hand (it communicates confidence, equal standing and purpose to the other person).
* Remember having good eye contact shows confidence.

**INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE**

* To leave the right impression always ask where you should sit in their office or in the board room. Taking the wrong seat can set you off on the wrong foot with the employer.
* At both the beginning and the end of the meeting thank the employer for their time – this communicates respect, confidence and gratitude.
* ****Just as a courtesy ask the employer at the beginning of the meeting if they mind if you take notes.
* Ask questions that will display interest that you should have brought with you.
* Avoid rambling and keep it short unless the interviewer asks for you to elaborate. No more than 1 to 2 minutes.
* Always ask for clarification if you do not know what the employer asked you – Remember, there is no such thing as a stupid question.

**EXPELLING DOUBT FROM THE EMPLOYERS MIND**

* ****Be aware of your past employment history and prepare to respond to any likely land mines the interviewer may perceive.
* Be honest without talking yourself out of the game.
* The employer wants to see how you take initiative to finding answers to any perceived or actual challenges.



**HIGHLIGHTING HOW THE PAST**

**CAN BENEFIT THE FUTURE**

* Highlighting transferable skills is a must.
* Identifying how your skills can bring value to this job – focus on two of the most relevant skills and give an example of each.
* Don’t focus on what you want out of this position, but focus on what you can bring to the business, so that you look appealing for the role.



**TO DO OR NOT TO DO - ASK ABOUT PAY?**

* Simply the answer is yes. Employers will always try and get employees for as little as possible as wages are a major expense to any business.
* How can you budget if you don’t know what you are budgeting with? Money would be ***one*** of the factors that you need to take into consideration if offered the position.
* Employers may be looking for your response on this one, to get an indication of how much you value yourself and what you have to bring to the table.
* No one is responsible for our financial future bar us, so keep this in mind.
* Again, be prepared. Know what you should expect to be paid. Industry award wages can be found at [www.safeworksa.gov.au](http://www.safeworksa.gov.au)

**LET YOUR ENTHUSIAM BE KNOWN**

* Positive last impressions are essential, so that when it comes to making the decision, you are the one that the employer thinks of.
* ****Ask final questions either from your prepared list for the employer or from the notes you made during the meeting.
* Don’t be afraid to show passion and your interest in the position and organisation.
* Always thank the interviewer for their time and shake their hand.
* It is fine to ask when a decision may be made if they are interested in the position.