



Sample Questions and Answers

Tell me about yourself

This is tricky not to waffle or give unrelated information. You need to aim to address your capability, commitment and cultural fit, here is a sample answer:

'Good morning, my name is James Smith.* I am a qualified accountant with six years post qualified experience gained within the pharmaceutical industry.

I worked with Glaxo Smith Klein* as an assistant accountant and I have spent the past 4 years working with Pfizer* where my most recent role was as project accountant.

I managed the project finance team of 8 staff and I'm proud to say that I recently implemented a new financial management system saving the company over £500,000 in year one.

I have a reputation for my attention to detail and delivering within strict deadlines and enjoy working with financial data. Going forward I want to work in a challenging finance role within the same industry and your organization is one in which I believe I could settle down and make a real contribution.'

How long have you been looking for a job

The interviewer may be concerned that there is something wrong with you that other employers have picked up on! Here is a sample answer:

'After I was made redundant from my last job, I took the opportunity to take some time out to examine my career goals and where I was going with my life. I have just begun my search in the last few weeks. I have a definite goal in mind and have been selective about the positions I consider. Your company and this position are of great interest to me.'

How did you prepare for this job interview

The interviewer is gauging if you are interested enough to do some research or are you going to wing it. Here is a sample answer:

'When I was told about this position by Hamlin Knight I was immediately interested. I checked out the company website and mission statement, looked at the bios of company founders and executives and was impressed. Once I had the interview appointment I looked at some industry press and I'm sure I'll find out a lot more in today's meeting.'

What is your salary expectation for this job

The interviewer is trying to find out if they can afford you, or if they can get you for less than budgeted. Here is a sample answer:

'I'll need more information about the job and the responsibilities involved before we can begin to discuss salary. Can you give me an idea of the range budgeted for this position?'

How do you keep current and informed about your job and the industries that you have worked in

The interviewer is trying to ascertain if once you get the job you will continue to learn and grow, stay challenged and motivated. Here is a sample answer:

'I pride myself on my ability to stay on top of what is happening in my industry. I do a lot of reading – the business section of the newspapers and industry magazines. I belong to a couple of professional organizations and network with colleagues from these. I take seminars or training whenever they are of interest or offer new information or technology.'

Tell me about a time when you had to plan and coordinate a project from start to finish

This is a behavioural questions, your interviewer is trying to seek an example of specific past behaviour. Here is a sample answer:

'I headed up a project which involved customer service personnel and technicians. I organized a meeting to get everyone together to brainstorm and get their input. From this meeting I drew up a plan, taking the best of the ideas. I organized teams, balancing the mixture of technical and non-technical people. We had a deadline to meet, so I did periodic checks with the teams, After 3 weeks we were exceeding expectations and were able to begin implementation of the plan. It was a great team effort and a big success. I was commended by management for my leadership, but I was most proud of the team spirit and cooperation which it took to pull it off.'

What kinds of people do you have difficulties working with

Your interviewer is trying to see if you are flexible and can work in a diverse environment. Here is a sample answer:

'In my last 3 roles I have worked with men and women from very diverse backgrounds and cultures. The only time I had difficulty was with people who were dishonest about work issues. I worked with one woman who was taking credit for work that her team accomplished. I had an opportunity to talk with her one day and explained how she was affecting morale. She became very upset that others saw her that way and said she was unaware of her behaviour or the reactions of others. Her behaviour changed after our talk. What I learnt from that experience is that sometimes what we perceive about others is not always the case if we check it out.'

We expect managers to work more than 8 hours a day, do you have a problem with that

The interviewer is trying to see if you are a 'workaholic' or a person that requires balance. Here is a sample answer:

'I have no problem working long hours. I have worked 12 or 14 hour days. What I have found works for me is to work smarter, not necessarily longer. My goal is to get the job done, whatever it takes, in the most efficient manner.'

When have you been most satisfied in your career

The interviewer is trying to ascertain what motivates/de-motivates you. Here is a sample answer:

'The job before the one I am currently at was my most rewarding experience for me. I worked in a wonderful team environment. There was a lot of camaraderie. I worked with a team of four people and we did some really original thinking. It is that kind of environment that I want to be involved in again.'

Why do you want this job

The interviewer is trying to see if you are using a shotgun approach to your job search or do you really know what you want. Here is a sample answer:

'I've been very careful about the companies where I have applied. When Hamlin Knight told me about this position, I knew I had found what I was looking for. What I can bring to this job is my 7 years of experience and knowledge of the industry, plus my ability to communicate and build customer relationships. That, along with my flexibility and organizational skills makes me a perfect match for this position. I see some challenges ahead of me here and that's what I thrive on. I have what you need, you have what I want.'

We are ready to make an offer, are you ready to accept today

Your interviewer doesn't want you to go away and change your mind. Here is a sample answer:

'Based on my research and the information I have gathered during the interview process, I feel I am in a position to consider an offer. I do, however, have a personal policy that I give myself at least 24 hours to make major life decisions. I could let you know by tomorrow.'

There is no way to accurately predict the questions that you will be asked by an interviewer, but you can be ready and prepared by thinking about the factors that might concern an employer before the interview

