

Example Interview Questions

The following document contains sample questions that you may find helpful when developing your interview questions. The questions you ask candidates should be tailored to the job requirements of the position. The same general outline of questions should be asked all candidates interviewed in a particular search so that each candidate is evaluated on the same general criteria.

Education/Training

1. Tell us the three most important things that you got out of your military/college/work experience.
2. In what way do you believe your education and training has prepared you for this position?
3. Is there an area you feel you need more training in, or an area you've had an interest in taking additional training for?
4. Describe how your college experience contributed to your overall development.
5. What special training do you have that is relevant to this position?
6. What professional affiliations do you have that are relevant to this position?
7. How did you go about acquiring the technical knowledge needed in your position? How long did it take?

Current/Past Work Experience

1. When did you begin the job you now hold? To whom do you report (name and title)? How many employees report to you, if any?
2. What aspects of your most current position appeal to you the most? Which are the most frustrating to you?
3. What were some of the setbacks or disappointments you experienced in the positions you have held?
4. Why did you leave your last employer?
5. Describe the factors that led you to start looking for another position.
6. What is the most difficult part of your current job?
7. Which of your past positions has best prepared you for this job? In what ways has it prepared you?
8. What specific skills acquired or used in previous positions do you believe relate to this position?
9. What policies and/or procedures have you developed and implemented?
10. Describe for us a recent work situation that required a good deal of planning and/or coordination and how you approached the situation. What was the outcome?
11. What computer software have you worked with? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
12. What types of reports have you developed, created, or produced?
13. What have you done in your current position to make your work more effective and efficient? What prompted you to make those changes?
14. What do you consider to be your most important accomplishments to date?
15. Tell us how your present/last supervisor would describe the kind of worker you are.
16. Describe a time you saved your organization money.
17. Tell me about something you did in your current position that made a positive impact on your customers.
18. Give me an example from your past experience of when you have suggested an improvement and how your suggestion was received.
19. Provide an example of a situation where you provided great customer service in your current position.

20. Describe the kind of work environment in which you prefer to work.
21. Describe the three most important things to you in a position.
22. What have you done that shows initiative and a willingness to work?
23. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
24. Describe how this position would meet your career goals and objectives.
25. What are your short-term and long-range goals and objectives? How are you preparing to achieve them?
26. Tell us about the career goals you have already achieved and what career goals you are currently working towards.

Communication, Skills, and Abilities

1. Give us an example of a task you performed that required attention to detail and what you did to ensure accuracy.
2. Describe those personal characteristics and job skills that you think would be most important to succeed in the position for which you are applying.
3. Give us examples when you have had multiple tasks to complete within a limited timeframe.
4. Describe for us how you organize your workday.
5. Do you prefer working independently or as part of a team? Why?
6. What organizational techniques do you use on a daily basis to accomplish your academic, work, and social goals?
7. What are some areas that you would like to improve upon or develop?
8. Describe how you learn a new skill or task and give a specific example.
9. What skill or knowledge will you need to develop to enhance your ability to perform this position?
10. What skills and/or special qualities do you possess for this position that would make you stand out from other candidates?
11. Give us an example of a time when you questioned a policy or procedure when it might have been easier to go along with it. What was the policy/procedure, and what did you do? What was the end result?
12. Describe your experience giving presentations. If so, who was the audience, and what was the purpose?
13. Describe a time when you went "beyond the call of duty" to accomplish a task.
14. What kinds of work pressures do you find the most difficult to deal with?
15. Describe the processes that you have implemented to ensure effective mutual communication and understanding with your co-workers.
16. Describe a situation in which you got people to change from the way they were doing something to the way you had suggested. How did you accomplish this?
17. Tell us about a time when you had a conflict with your supervisor. What was the conflict? How did you handle it?
18. Tell me about a time you had to take a leadership role when you were not the leader. How did you influence the work of others?
19. Describe a situation where you had a new idea and how you approached your colleagues about this idea.
20. Tell me how you have improved your own communication skills in the past after a poor customer care situation.
21. Tell me about a time when you had an urgent request for information and you were swamped. How did you handle the request?
22. Describe a time you improved a process at work. Did you have to gain input or lead the change? How did it go?
23. Tell me how you organize your work priorities in your current job so that everyone is satisfied you have dealt with their request.
24. Tell me about a time you had to do multiple tasks at the same time. How did you handle this?

25. Describe a situation when you've been given several rush projects to be completed at once. How did you establish priorities? What was the outcome?
26. Tell me about a time you needed to work with a difficult person. How did you handle working with this person?
27. Tell me about a time you solved a complex problem. What steps did you take? What was the outcome?

Teamwork

1. Tell us your definition of teamwork.
2. Describe how you demonstrate teamwork in your present/last position.
3. What is your idea of good working relationship with co-workers? How do you develop that?
4. How do you go about motivating others in your team or group?
5. Describe a committee, team, or task force you've been a part of and tell us what role you played.
6. Tell us about the situation when you had to work as part of a team under a stressful situation or when other team members didn't get along. What did you do? What was the result?
7. Describe the type of person you have worked most effectively with.
8. Describe a project/assignment where you acted as team leader. What did you find difficult about leading a team/group?
9. Tell me about a time that you had to step outside your comfort zone to ensure a project was successful.
10. Describe a situation where you have led a successful team project.
11. Tell me about a time you had to work with someone you had nothing in common with. How did you build the relationship?
12. Describe a time when you had problems getting people to work together to solve a problem or complete an assignment. What did you do?
13. Describe a time you had to work on a group project. What were the challenges and how did you meet them?
14. Describe a time you attempted a project that failed. What was your role in the project? What would you have done differently?
15. Tell me about a time when you did not meet a deadline. What would you do differently?

Problem-solving and Decision-making

1. Describe the most difficult problem or challenge you faced on your present/former position. How did you handle it?
2. Describe for us an instance where you had some type of conflict or disagreement with a supervisor or co-worker and how you handled the situation.
3. Describe how you would respond if an employee came to you with a serious complaint.
4. Describe the type of person that has been most difficult for you to work with. Why? How did you address any problems?
5. Describe a time when you had to deny or modify a request by someone else. How did you handle the situation?
6. Describe a situation in which it was necessary for you to mediate or negotiate a solution or compromise. What was the result?
7. Describe the most frequent and difficult problems you face in your current position. How do you handle them?
8. Describe a time when you received information that you thought contained many errors. How did you handle the situation?
9. Give an example of a tough or unpopular decision that you had to make. What was your approach? What did you do to minimize the negative impact?

10. Tell me about a time when you had to use your best conflict resolution skill to de-escalate a situation.
11. Tell me about how you interacted with a colleague who was going through a difficult time at work.
12. Tell me about a time you had conflict at work with a fellow employee. What was the situation and how did you resolve it?
13. Tell me about a time when you found a flaw in a process and your recommendation for change was challenged.
14. Tell me about your most difficult customer relation experience. What happened and what was the outcome?
15. Describe a time when you implemented one of your decisions. What did you do?
16. Give me an example of a difficult decision you had to make. When do you find it necessary to bring others into your decision making process? How did the decision turn out?
17. Provide an example where you made a decision that did not lead to the outcome you expected or an incomplete project. What did you learn from the experience?
18. Give me an example of when you received an assignment that you needed to complete without all of the information needed. What did you do?

Management Experience

1. What was the level of your decision-making authority in past positions?
2. Describe some of your previous leadership roles and your accomplishments in those positions.
3. Describe a decision you made that had an unpopular result.
4. Give us an example of a decision you made that backfired and what you did about it.
5. Give an example of a decision you made that turned out better than you believed possible.
6. Describe a time when you made a decision in the absence of a clear policy regarding the issue. Did any problems result from the decision? If so, how did you address them?
7. Describe your experience in developing and monitoring budgets.
8. What fiscal authority have you had in past positions?
9. Give an example of a situation in which a budget overrun was necessary to accomplish a goal. What was the end result?
10. Describe the most challenging mandate or project that you have been responsible for, and tell us how you handled it. What was the outcome?
11. Give an example of a situation when you obtained the desired results because you persisted despite resistance or obstacles. How did you deal with these obstacles?
12. Describe the best way to get your suggestions or points of view accepted by key decision makers in the organization.
13. Tell me about a time you were leading a team that wasn't meeting expectations. How did you change course? What was the end result?
14. Tell me about a time you were singled out for your leadership. What actions were recognized?
15. Tell me about an employee you are most proud of. What was your role in their success?
16. Give an example of a situation where you participated in the formulation and implementation of a new strategic direction. What was your role? What were the results?
17. Describe how you match employee skills, knowledge, and abilities to the project requirements.
18. Describe yourself as a manager. What difficulties have you encountered in such a role?
19. Give an example of a time when you used the informal network of the organization or department to get things done.
20. Present a situation the person might expect to face on the job and ask them to describe the steps they would take, the problems they would anticipate, and their solutions.

Supervision

1. Describe the positions in which you have had supervisory responsibility. How many people have you supervised and in what kinds of positions? Did you have hiring/firing authority?
2. Describe your supervisory style.
3. Give an example of a time when you were disappointed by an employee's lack of accomplishment and what you did about it.
4. Describe what you believe motivates an employee.
5. Describe a sticky situation with an employee and what you did about it.
6. Describe what a supervisor can do to create a positive working environment.
7. Describe an effective employee performance planning and review process.
8. What recognition and reward systems have you found most effective?
9. Describe the most serious complaint an employee brought to your attention and what you did about it.
10. Provide an example of how you delegate work to employees. What criteria do you use?
11. How do you ensure that your employees are achieving their objectives? What system or process have you implemented?
12. What kind of decisions do you let your employees make? What kind of decisions would you rather make by yourself?
13. Describe the process you use to identify the developmental needs of your employees.
14. Provide an example of how do you encourage others to search for better ways of doing things.
15. Describe how you would handle someone who is always late.
16. Describe an innovative way you handled a conflict involving two or more employees.
17. How do you motivate and support people, especially when the morale is low? How do you make everyone feel that their role and contribution is important?
18. Describe a time you had to conduct a difficult discussion about performance with an employee. How did the discussion go and what was the result?
19. Share a situation in which you were able to help an employee become more engaged with a job or to an organization.
20. Tell me about an employee whose development you supported and encouraged. What did you do?
21. Describe how you motivate people who will be retiring in two years to work on five year plans and deadlines.

Miscellaneous Questions

1. How many times have you been late to work in the past three months? What was the reason?
2. Have you ever been terminated or resigned in lieu of termination from a previous position? If yes, please explain.
3. Describe your definition of good attendance.
4. Describe your relationship with your supervisor.
5. Describe the working conditions you need in order to perform at your best.
6. What distinguishes a good employee from an average one?
7. What prevents you from doing a better job where you are now?
8. What could your previous employer have done to persuade you not to leave?
9. Tell us about some of the leadership experiences you have had and give examples that show what your leadership style is like.
10. What would you do if you suspected a co-worker was stealing from the university?
11. What aspects of your job do you consider most important?
12. Why is it important to follow safety rules and regulations?

13. Describe the most important safety issues facing your present workplace. What have you done with respect to these issues?
14. What interests you specifically about this position and the duties?
15. What is the value of providing customer satisfaction? How do you ensure that your customers are satisfied? Give an example.
16. Provide an example of how you encourage an ongoing commitment to service quality.
17. What is the last new thing you learned? How have you applied this knowledge?
18. What kinds of situations or circumstances make you feel tense or nervous?
19. What is your standard for your own success?
20. What would you say to a co-worker who made a major mistake?
21. Tell us about an occasion when your performance didn't live up to your expectations.
22. Tell us about a goal you set in the past and what you did to achieve it.
23. Tell us about a goal you set and weren't able to achieve. Why do you think that happened?
24. Describe the incentives or rewards that get you excited about your work.
25. What do you do to reduce or eliminate stress?
26. How do you maintain and ensure confidentiality of employee information?
27. Describe the factor that are important to you when comparing one company offer to another.

28. Can you perform all the essential functions of this position, with or without reasonable accommodation?