

## Interview Guide

### **1. Can you tell me a little about yourself?**

This question seems simple, so many people fail to prepare for it, but it's crucial. Here's the deal: Don't give your complete employment (or personal) history. Instead give a pitch—one that's concise and compelling and that shows exactly why you're the right fit for the job. Start off with the 2-3 specific accomplishments or experiences that you most want the interviewer to know about, then wrap up talking about how that prior experience has positioned you for this specific role.

### **2. Give me an example of a complex process or task you had to explain to another person or group of people.**

Are you able to effectively express yourself verbally? Include the ability to adapt your level of communication (words and terminology) to the target audience, actively listen to questions and requests for more information, and check for understanding by asking for feedback.

### **5. How would your boss and co-workers describe you?**

First of all, be honest (remember, if you get this job, the hiring manager will be calling your former bosses and co-workers!). Then, try to pull out strengths and traits you haven't discussed in other aspects of the interview, such as your strong work ethic or your willingness to pitch in on other projects when needed.

### **6. Tell me about a time when you succeeded on a project or improved the workflow of a process. Give a specific example and results.**

The employer is looking to assess your thought process in regards to problem solving and to see if you take initiative.

### **7. How do you manage your time and priorities tasks?**

Are you going to be able to cope with different tasks with different deadlines without getting yourself in a muddle and forgetting what you need to do? Can I trust you to just get on with it and use your common sense? How organized are you? I make a list. I work out what order to do things in by thinking about which tasks are urgent and how important each task is. If I'm not sure what's urgent and what isn't, or how important different tasks are, I find out. If I'm given a new task I add it to the list and decide when to do it, so I adapt the order in which I do things as necessary.'

### **8. You're working on a project with a tight deadline but you find that you're unable to complete your section because your coworkers and your supervisor are unavailable to answer a few key questions. How do you deal with the situation?**

Interviewers ask situational questions like these because the interviewer wants to know how you would handle a problem that might actually arise if you're hired for the job. Most of their questions are based off potentially real situations and the last thing you want to do is give them a reason to fire you before they even hire you! If your response includes any sort of passing off the task to another individual in order to absolve yourself of responsibility or as an excuse to cut out early from work...well, good luck.

**9. Describe a situation when you needed to take initiative.**

A good answer should show off the applicant's proactivity. The situation should be a case where the candidate recognized a problem that nobody else was resolving and took initiative to attack the issue. The action should show a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty when required. Proactivity and problem solving are rare traits that firms should be looking for; this question can go a long way toward revealing these attributes in a candidate.

**10. Describe a situation where you worked under a tight deadline.**

Here, you are asking interviewees to tell a success story that demonstrates how they organized their workflow, dealt with pressure, and navigated through competing priorities. It's a good opportunity to hear a candidate's planning process, how they communicate with others, and how they collaborate with colleagues toward a common goal. Did the candidate try to extend the deadline if possible? Did the candidate ask for additional help? Most importantly, did they fully commit their own time to meeting the deadline and ask others to commit, too?

**11. Describe a situation where you needed to work with a client or coworker who was very different from you.**

Similar to the last question, this one asks candidates to demonstrate how adaptable they are when interacting with various personalities. Explore whether candidates can change up their style of communication for different people. This question allows you to evaluate emotional intelligence and people skills.

**12. Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?**

Sample excellent response:

In my current job, I have to handle multiple responsibilities in developing new projects, maintaining existing ones, and maintaining good client relations. I allocate a certain amount of time for each area daily. That way clients can see very clearly that projects are progressing, and I have more satisfaction in accomplishing multiple tasks under pressure.

**13. Please describe for me a time when your work was constructively criticized by your boss or other co-workers.**

No one is always perfect, and the interviewer knows this. The interviewer wants to see if you can admit that you've made mistakes, but more importantly how you dealt with the situation and learned from it. You want to share with the interviewer an example criticism that had a measurable positive outcome. Make sure to turn the negative criticism into a positive experience.

**14. In the field of engineering, priorities often change quickly. Give me an example of a time when that happened. How did you handle it?**

In this sample interview question the interviewer wants to know if you can effectively perform in different environments and with different tasks, people and responsibilities. Show that you can adjust your actions to meet changing demands and tasks. Tell me about a time you had to quickly adjust your work priorities to meet changing demands.

"I was in the middle of drawing up my departmental budget when I was asked to put

together a costing for a big project we were tendering for. (Situation)

I made an outline of the information I needed immediately for the costing and assigned a portion to each of my staff. I spent the next couple of days drawing up schedules of the tasks that needed to be carried out to complete the costing and meeting with staff members to brief them and get feedback. I was then able to re-focus on completing the budget on time. (Action)

The costing was completed on time, each staff member really contributed and I didn't miss my budget deadline". (Result)

#### **4. What would you do if the priorities on a project you were working on changed suddenly?**

Sample excellent response:

I would notify everyone working on the project of the changes. I would then want to know why the priorities have changed, and if there is risk of them changing again in the future. I would then meet with everyone involved with a new strategy to address the new priorities.

[contributed by Andra]

#### **10. You disagree with the way your supervisor says to handle a problem. What would you do?**

Sample excellent response:

I would evaluate why I disagreed with my supervisor and come up with a different way that I think the situation should be handled. I would then sit down with my supervisor — in private — and discuss the problem with him and how I think it should have been addressed.

[contributed by Andra]

#### **15. Sometimes it's just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?**

First, Answer the Question: Is Everything Really Important?

Even if everything on your plate is supposed to be equally important, you still need a way to break down which ones you spend your time on, and how you slice up your time. The first question you have to get past is whether or not everything really is of equal importance. Here are a couple of tips to help you cut through the fog and get a feel for how important your responsibilities and projects really are.

One of the primary responsibilities of any manager is to help you understand what's important, what's not, and what you should be working on.