

Answering the Seven Toughest Interview Questions

By Kate Lorenz, CareerBuilder.com Editor

There you sit, waiting to be ushered into your interview. Your suit is pressed, your shoes are shined and your resume is top notch. But, as the minutes tick past, you feel a mounting sense of doom as you anticipate the questions that will cause a deafening silence during the interview.

Want to avoid an interview disaster? Check out these tough interview questions and their suggested responses:

Q: "What are your weaknesses?"

"Don't take this literally and go into a detailed explanation of your weaknesses," says John Challenger, CEO of global outplacement consultancy Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. He advises taking a potential weakness and putting a positive spin on it.

A: "I am very detail oriented and in some industries that may not be a good fit. But for this accounting position, I think this trait truly will help me excel."

Q: "How would you solve this problem?"

Challenger says that these kinds of hypothetical questions can be risky. First of all, they may not like your answer; if they do like it, there's a chance they will steal it. That's what happened to June Sullivan when she interviewed for an activity director's position at a long-term care facility. When asked about marketing ideas, June laid out her entire plan. Well, she didn't get the job, but later recognized some of her strategies being used by the facility.

A: "I think you can increase product awareness by enacting some marketing strategies that could employ advertising, direct mail or media placements."

Q: "Why did you leave your last job?"

Again, Challenger suggests presenting everything in a positive light. An interview is not the time to dish the dirt on your previous employer.

A: "The company just wasn't a good fit for my innovative personality. But what I learned is that organizations have distinct personalities just like people do. Now I know to concentrate my job search on companies who value independent thinking and alternative methods."

Q: "Why do you want to work here?"

Questions like these require you to do your homework before the interview.

A: "I want to be a part of a global company that last year alone invested \$1.4 million in research and development of eco-friendly industrial processes."

Q: "Tell me about yourself."

This is a chance for you to shine -- but not to tell your life history. Begin by listing your traits and accomplishments you feel are relevant for the position. Don't delve into personal information unless it relates to the position you're vying for.

A: "I am very creative and resourceful. I have been a sales manager for the past five years and used my creativity to devise unique incentives to keep the sales representatives motivated. Because of this my sales team earned numerous company awards."

Q: "Tell me about the worst boss you ever had."

Take the high road and don't give into the temptation to vent any past frustrations.

A: "While none of my past bosses were awful, there are some who taught me more than others did."

Q: "What are your goals?"

This is best answered by reiterating your objective statement on your resume. Keep your aspirations to be a vice president of marketing, own your own company or retire at 40 to yourself.

A: "I want to secure a civil engineering position with a national firm that concentrates on retail development. Ideally, I would like to work for a young company, such as this one, so I can get in on the ground floor and take advantage of all the opportunities a growing firm has to offer."

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