

## INTERVIEWING QUESTIONS

### THE EMPLOYERS' INTERVIEW PERSPECTIVE

Interviewers want to determine if you are a fast learner, a good problem-solver, and a versatile, goal-directed person, whether you will fit the job and add value to the organization.

Interviewers will try to deduce from your responses to their questions

- your capability and expertise,
- your level of responsibility and need for supervision,
- your performance level,
- your compatibility with colleagues and the corporate culture,
- your commitment to your own professional development and career,
- and the probability you will stay with the company.

Employers should not ask questions about race, ethnic background, or national origin, religious affiliation, marital status and family, gender and sexual orientation, age, weight or height, or arrest record.

### YOUR INTERVIEW GOAL

Preparation and consistent practice will allow you to develop the confidence and prove the competence you need to show in an interview.

You want to convince the interviewer that

- you will bring immediate and long-term benefit to the organization
- you will generate revenue, cut costs, and increase productivity
- you will be creative and innovative, improve product and service quality, and save time
- that you will use technology effectively
- that you will motivate and persuade others
- and that you will provide excellent customer service.

Focus all your responses toward filling the employer's needs. Make sure you understand the question and take time to think before answering.

Quantify your answer when possible and use specific, concrete examples. Be clear, thorough, and accurate; then, stop talking.

### GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.
- How would a close friend describe you?
- Why did you leave your old job?
- Why do you want to work for us?

- What kind of salary are you looking for?
- What are your expectations of a future employer?
- What are three important events in your life?
- Who has been your most influential role model?
- What is most important to you?
- How do you determine and evaluate success?
- Have you always done your best?
- What would you like to change about yourself?
- What motivates you to do your best?
- How would you describe your ideal job?
- What job would you seek if money were not an issue?
- Why did you choose the career you are seeking?
- How would your peers/professors describe you?
- What are your long-range goals?
- Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
- What new goals have you set recently?
- How do you manage your time?
- Tell me about your study habits.
- What are your five/ten-year career goals?
- Tell me about a decision you made which you later regretted.
- Define leadership. What is the difference between a leader and a manager?
- Tell me about a leadership experience which did not go as you planned.
- Name some of the circumstances under which a leader can fail.
- Describe the best boss you have had. How would you define the qualities of a good manager?
- Give me an example of your creativity/your initiative/your competitiveness.
- What is the last book you have read?
- How do you keep up with current events?
- If you could change any world event, what would that be and why?
- What is your biggest strength/weakness?
- What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life?
- What was your greatest frustration in your last job?
- How do you deal with criticism?
- When you left your last job, did the employer ask you to stay?
- Give me an example in which you successfully resolved a conflict.
- Tell me about a time that you tried and failed.
- What makes you stand out from your fellow students?

- How much training will you need to become a productive employee?
- Do you have plans for further education?
- What do you do to stay physically fit? Do you enjoy athletics?
- What decisions for you are easiest/hardest?
- Give an example of a problem you have solved and the process you used.
- Describe an assignment that best describes your analytical skills.
- Give me an example of how you organized your activities when you had several commitments due at the same time.
- How do you work under pressure?
- Has your work or performance ever been criticized?
- What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
- What is the biggest risk you have taken?
- Give an example of a situation in which no guidelines existed for your work and how you coped.
- Under what conditions do you perform your best work?
- Give an example of a situation which would demonstrate the level of confidence you have in yourself? Your co-workers have in you? Your manager has in you?
- Give an example of your ability to work independently.
- Describe the most significant professional or educational responsibility you have had.
- How do you get along with others?
- How do you build relationships in a new environment?
- Do you find it difficult to work with some people?
- Give an example of successful teamwork.
- Define cooperation.
- How do you evaluate your success or the success of others?
- Give an example of an experience in which you successfully persuaded others to your point-of-view.
- Describe a situation where you feel your solutions were more creative than those of your peers.
- Have you ever encountered a situation where you went out of your way to help someone, even though not asked? Tell me what you did exactly.
- What was the biggest surprise to you on your last job?
- What is your communication style?
- What is your personality style?
- What gets under your skin?
- What are your effective methods for dealing with stress?
- What kind of manager do you prefer?
- Why would you be a good manager?

- What would your most recent boss say about you?
- How will you manage people older than you?
- What can you do for us that no one else can do?
- How did you prepare for this interview?
- Do you like to work overtime?
- You seem over-qualified or you seem under-qualified.
- Why should we hire you?

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EDUCATION**

- Why did you decide to pursue your degree/ your major/your minor? /your concentration?
- Why did you choose NC State?
- How has your degree prepared you for this career/position?
- Tell me about your GPA. What is your GMAT score? Are your grades a good indication of your academic ability or achievement? Do you think grades are important?
- What were your favorite classes? Why?
- Who were your favorite professors? Why?
- What has been the easiest or the most difficult course you have taken?
- What electives have you taken? Which did you enjoy/dislike most?
- What are the most important experiences you have had outside the classroom?
- How do you make priorities and balance your studies with other activities?
- How do you think you have changed personally since you started college?
- Did college fulfill your expectations?

### **QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TARGETED INDUSTRY, COMPANY OR ORGANIZATION, AND JOB**

- Why are you interested in \_\_\_\_\_?
- What makes you want to be a \_\_\_\_\_?
- Why are you attracted to our organization?
- What type of organization fits your style? Why?
- What do you predict will happen to this industry in the next five years?
- What do you see are the greatest challenges in our industry?
- Why did you select our company?
- Who is our parent company?
- What is our company's mission? How does the company try to achieve this goal?
- What profits did our company declare last year?

- How do you go about evaluating a business?
- What do you think is our company's greatest asset?
- Who are our company's competitors?
- What characteristics are most important in a company leader/a manager?
- Why did the company create this job?
- What do you think this job requires?
- How many hours a day do you think a person should spend on the job?
- What interests you most about this position?
- What parts of the job will you find the least satisfying?
- What value would you add to our company?
- What are your skills which will transfer from past experience to this job?
- You have five minutes to describe the most relevant items in your background which show you are highly qualified for this position.
- Do you have a geographical preference? Why?
- Are you willing to relocate every year or two?
- How do you feel about travel? Are you familiar with the difficulties of routine travel?
- Is money important to you? How much money do you need to make you happy What salary do you want?
- How are you conducting your job search and how will you make your decision?

## **GENERAL QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK INTERVIEWERS**

Your questions tell the employer how seriously you are thinking about the interview, the organization, and the job. Your questions measure your common sense, your intellectual curiosity, your maturity, and your communication skills, including active listening.

Intelligent questions require preparation and thorough research. You can narrow broad questions on these subjects by accumulating general knowledge in advance of your interview; your questions during the interview should be to elicit specific information about this particular job. You want to understand from an insider's perspective what differentiates this employer from competitors.

Let the employer initiate salary and benefit discussions. Avoid any culture question that could be answered by personal research, including questions about vacation, work hours, work space, or dress code.

- How is the department organized?
- What are the challenges, opportunities, and problems of the department?
- What are the plans for future growth? In what direction do you see the organization/department heading during the next five years?

- What do you think makes this company different from its competitors?
- What is the corporate management style/leadership style/problem-solving model/decision-making process?
- Describe the work environment or the company culture on a day-to-day basis.
- How does the company view this position?
- What are your most important concerns about this job and the new hire?
- Describe a typical week/quarter/first-year assignment. To whom would I report?
- Do you have an initial training program/ongoing programs?
- What is the first problem that would need the attention of the person you hire?
- What three things would you want me to accomplish in the first six-twelve months?
- What resources are available to get the job done, i.e. budget, training, etc?
- What would you like to be able to say about the new hire one-year from now?
- What are the criteria for evaluation and promotion?
- What are opportunities for professional development?
- What is a typical career path? What is the realistic timeframe for advancement?
- May I have a mentor as well as a supervisor?
- Do you have assignments: team/interdepartmental/across functions?
- What are the characteristics of a successful person in your organization?
- Why do you enjoy working for your organization?
- I really would like this job! Will you tell me what our next step will be?

## **EMPLOYER QUESTIONS FOR SPECIFIC AREAS OF SPECIALIZATION**

### **FINANCIAL POSITIONS**

#### **EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

Prepare carefully by reading *The Wall Street Journal* and other topical business publications. Emphasize your attention-to-detail and your problem-solving, analytical and quantitative skills; also stress your positive interpersonal and creative characteristics. Be prepared to talk about ethical implications of financial issues.

- Take me through your resume and explain your major decisions.
- What was the toughest problem you had to solve on your last job?
- Give an example of a recent bad situation you turned around.
- Give an example of a personal entrepreneurial experience.
- Relate how your extracurricular activities will make you a better banker.
- Tell me an example of your working on a problem with a time pressure.
- Give me an example of a courageous act or stand you took and tell me exactly what you did.
- Why did you choose NC State if New York City is your goal?
- Can you manage new financial analysts right out of college?

- What is your opinion of derivative instruments?
- What was the yield curve today? How is the shape going to change? What does that mean to me as a potential investor?
- What stocks do you follow? What do you think the market will do in the future?
- What is the biggest investment mistake you have made?
- What key financial ratios do you look at when determining a firm's financial health from its balance sheet?

### **YOUR QUESTIONS**

- Describe typical associate involvement in the transaction process.
- What are the characteristics of the most successful people in your organization?
- Give an example of the corporate ethics of your firm.
- What is the growth potential of your firm in the next five years?

### **MANAGEMENT CONSULTING POSITIONS**

Research your targeted company and its specialties so you can prove that your qualifications fit and you add value. Be prepared for case questions. Show your analytical, problem-solving, teamwork, and leadership skills, as well as your intellectual curiosity, maturity, energy, and passion for this work.

### **EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

- How did you choose this school? Why did you choose this discipline?
- What courses interest you least? How did you do in these courses?
- Why consulting? Why this firm?
- With what other companies are you interviewing? How do we compare?
- What does a consultant do? What are the three most important qualities of a successful consultant? Do you understand the hours we work and why?
- How is this firm different from others? What is our culture? How do we rank with our competition? What are your criteria for selecting our company?
- Describe two or three qualities that a work environment must have to stimulate you.
- What is the most significant thing you have learned in the last year?
- Describe the personal satisfaction from your last achievement.
- Highlight your top accomplishments/your greatest setback..
- Describe one or two personal qualities you like least about yourself.
- Give me an example of a situation in which you have had a major problem, how you identified the problem, the methods you used to solve the problem, and the resolution and consequences.
- What is the relationship between goals and objectives?
- How will you ensure that the implementation of a plan is consistent with the objectives of a plan?

- Please describe an ethical dilemma you have faced and tell me how you handled the situation.
- Describe an example of your solving a poorly defined problem.
- Give a recent example of turning around a bad situation.
- Describe a failure. What did you learn from the experience?
- Describe a group study experience.
- What qualities do you like least in other people?
- How do you try to influence people who disagree with you?
- Convince me of your analytical skills.
- How good are your writing skills? Give me some convincing evidence.
- What are your personal career objectives for the next five years?
- If I give you an offer right now, would you take it?
- Imagine you have received three job offers. How will you decide which one to accept?
- Why should I hire you?

### **YOUR QUESTIONS**

Consultants see the ability to ask the right questions as a critical element in their business relationships, so the interviewer will evaluate you on the quality of your questions. Do your homework and know the particular firm:

- What skills does your firm value most? How is success determined?
- How does your firm staff its projects?
- How does the company plan for change? What is the fit between your consulting/accounting/technology firms?
- What is your firm doing to position itself in the industry in the next five/ten years?
- Do you follow up with clients to see the impact of your recommendations?
- I have an interest in \_\_\_\_\_; what opportunities do you have for me?
- What is the career progression?
- I heard at the information session about your 20% growth in each of the past five years-- to what do you attribute that success?

### **MARKETING POSITIONS**

#### **EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

Prepare examples of projects, start to finish, with results, consequences, and your lessons learned. Show your creativity, your initiative, and your problem-solving, critical-thinking, teamwork and project-management skills. Be clear, logical, and confident. Interpersonal skills are extremely important.

- What is your leadership style? What would your teammates say about you?
- What would those who work for you say?



- Describe an experience and the methods you used to convince someone who initially disagreed with you to follow your recommendation.
- What is the hardest decision you made in the last two years?
- What is the biggest risk you have taken and what was the result?
- Create an advertisement for yourself.
- Give an example of an innovative product.
- Market and position a product to which you have brand loyalty; now do the same for its largest competitor.
- How would you target new consumers to try an aging brand?
- How would you market us to our clients?
- Give an example of your using data to make a decision.
- What sets you apart from other candidates I am talking to today?

### **YOUR QUESTIONS**

- What are characteristics of successful marketers in your organization?
- What are the layers of marketing management?
- What exposure to new brands do new hires have? To established brands?
- With what criteria do you evaluate a brand manager?
- At what level do you become the primary contact with product development/market research/sales/the advertising agency?
- Who takes part in the budget preparation?
- What are the sources of new revenue in your company?
- Describe your first-year-training program.

### **BUSINESS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

- How would you develop an information management system which supports our corporate strategy?
- Within a business, what are the operations areas leveraged by e-commerce?
- What are some pitfalls when an e-business strategy is poorly planned or executed?
- Name a successful e-business site and describe five effective characteristics.
- Tell about your experience in developing or maintaining an Internet site.
- What are factors to consider in establishing a web presence?
- What are the benefits of an Intranet?
- What considerations would you address in purchasing a new automated system?
- How can you use document management to improve the flow of an organization's information?
- What are good reasons for automating a process or procedure?

- How do you function in a rapidly changing and unstructured environment?
- How do you organize what you do on a day-to-day basis?

## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT POSITIONS**

### **EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

- What differentiates a project from a routine operation?
- What are the essential steps to successful project management?
- How do you plan for a project? When given a project, what steps do you take to complete that assignment?
- What qualifications distinguish an effective project manager?
- How would you handle a cost overrun at a critical point in the project?
- How would you deal with receiving an assignment as project manager over a team whose members have been previously appointed?
- How would you handle a team of new employees and entry-level staff on a project with a tight deadline? What would you do to facilitate a project which is bogged down with conflict, constant delays, or change orders?

## **SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT, OPERATIONS AND LOGISTICS POSITIONS**

While you emphasize your quantitative and problem-solving skills in the production environment, also show your ability to motivate, influence and interact with a wide variety of people.

### **EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

- Describe a case from one of your classes.
- Describe a teamwork experience from one of your courses.
- What is your leadership style/ your teamwork style?
- How did you convince someone who initially disagreed with you to follow your recommendation?
- How did you weigh the alternatives in your last difficult decision?
- What is the greatest risk you have taken and how did you decide to make that risk?
- How would you approach a major downsizing of our firm's manufacturing facilities?

## **YOUR QUESTIONS**

In addition to the questions culled from the other disciplines, you may ask what is the core strategic advantage that your company offers relative to the competition?