

## COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & POTENTIAL ANSWERS

In the vast majority of interviews, the interviewer is going to ask some questions which are characterized as behavioral-based questions. The best way to answer such questions is try use the “STAR” method, which means to frame your answer by including the following:

- S: Situation** – Provide a specific example of a situation that will help show you in a favorable way. You many want to include the 4 W’s of the situation; who, what, when & where. Remember to use who, what, when, where, and how elements in your answer for conciseness.
- T: Task** – Describe the task for which you were responsible or the goal you were working toward. Highlight any obstacles, barriers or other factors that were involved.
- A: Action** – Concisely describe what steps you took, who you involved (e.g., subject matter experts; key stakeholders) & how you decided on the “best” way to attain the desired outcome.
- R: Result** – State the result, including any means by which success was measured. Provide a lesson you or others learned.

### ABOUT YOU, THE HIRING COMPANY & THE POSITION

#### 1. Tell me about yourself

- This question is not about you, your personal life or your family.
- Translate it as “Tell me about you professionally”, and it’s intended for the interviewer to get an overview of experiences, qualifications & skillset that are relevant to the position.

Example: (Mine)

*I’m a senior HR executive with 15 years serving as the Chief HR Officer for three \$2B+ global corporations. I have my Master’s degree in HR Management & am certified as a Senior Professional in Human Resources. Most recently as the CHRO at XYZ Manufacturing, based in Philadelphia with annual revenue of \$2.5b and 6,000 employees, where I lead a team of 20 HR professionals.*

*While in this role I worked with my Executive Team mates & the Board to initiate a Succession Planning Program for the top 25 positions in the company. I revamped our short-term incentive compensation plan to create greater connectivity between measurable corporate, functional & individual objectives & the associated rewards. I also championed the goal of being recognized by the Best Place to Work Institute, which we have been for each of the last 3 years.*

*What I would bring to your company is someone who has expertise in Human Resources, while at the same time having a businessperson perspective. I combine strategic focus with tactical execution; build effective relationships; anticipate changing internal or external circumstances & am decisive yet open to the ideas of others.*

- The example addresses 3 key aspects of the question, reflected by our separating the answers into 3 paragraphs of 2-3 sentences each.
  - 1) An overview of your professional background/qualifications/credentials.
  - 2) Selected key accomplishments, which you should gear toward the position.
  - 3) Your skillset, which you should customize to the position description.
    - This 3<sup>rd</sup> part of your answer is intended to convey to the hiring decision makers “What Is In This For Them”.
- The example above is about 90 seconds. Your response should seek to be less than 2 minutes & should be practiced but yet not be perceived as recited/

#### 2. What do you know about our company? Our industry?

- Know products, size, income, reputation, image, goals, problems, management talent, management style, people, skills, history, and philosophy.
- Project an informed interest, let the interviewer tell you about the company, let them define their business in their terms.
- Do your homework about the company, its industry & anyone who will be interviewing you!

### 3. Why do you want to work for us?

- The hiring manager doesn't want to hear:
  - Why you want to leave your current position & company – do NOT badmouth it.
  - They also don't want to hear "it's close to my home" –that's NOT a reason that conveys what they want to hear, which is what you like about them & this opportunity.
- Don't talk about what you want; first talk about the company—what you had known about them; what you've learned since initially being contacted. What makes them & this opportunity attractive to you.
- If you are aware of a certain challenge the company has, talk about how you feel you can help meet the challenge.
- For example, if I as a CHRO knew the company has been fighting off being unionized, I'd talk about my success is creating a work environment that kept my company/companies union-free & would be prepared to highlight how I did so.

### 4. Describe what you feel to be an ideal working environment.

- teamwork & collaboration
- where people are able to fully use their skills & abilities;
- able to function with an appropriate amount of independence with their being held accountable for their performance;
- have opportunity to continue professional development;
- are treated respectfully & as professionals; are rewarded based on their contributions to the company's success/their performance;

## **YOUR CURRENT JOB (LAST JOB IF BETWEEN JOBS) & THIS ONE**

### 1. Why are you considering leaving your present job?

NOTE: Assuming not due to firm/location closing or staff reduction

- *I feel underutilized; ready for a new set of challenges; company is not positioned to be successful in the long-term, company is re-relocating & I'm been offered chance to re-locate but don't won't to; etc.*

### 2. What do you think of your boss?

- Be as positive as you can. Do not get into specifics if the answer is negative.

### 3. In your current or last position, what are or were your five most significant accomplishments?

- You could cite something you talked about in your answer to Q1, but then get into the key accomplishments already identified on resume.

## **WORK HABITS AND STYLE**

### 1. If I spoke with your previous boss, peers or what staff what would they say are greatest strengths? weaknesses?

- Emphasize skills -- don't be overly negative about your weaknesses; it's always safe to identify a lack of a skill or experience as a shortcoming rather than a personal characteristic.

### 2. What are some adjectives you would use to describe yourself or others would use?

(Consider the organization, its culture & the role. Chose 5 to 7.)

- Professional
- Energetic/Hardworking
- Positive/Optimistic
- Self-Motivated
- Collaborative/Team-Oriented
- Inquisitive/Curious/Continuously Learning
- Good communicator, especially in listening
- Decisive
- Confident without being arrogant
- Results-Driven
- Caring/Compassionate without disregarding accountability
- Creative/Innovative
- Analytical balanced with being Intuitive
- Pro-active
- Resilient
- Resourceful
- Trustworthy/Dependable
- Flexible
- Developer of others
- Hungry (especially a good for one for Sales/Sales Management role)

### 3. How to do handle being under pressure & having deadlines?

- *Quite simply, it is a way of life in business. However, pressure & deadlines can be lessened to some extent by proper planning.*
- *I'm not troubled by it so I try to remain calm & confidence, & display that to those I'm working with. In a leader panics, typically so does the team.*

⇒ Be prepared to give example(s) of such situations if asked.

### 4. What is the biggest mistake or failure in your career & what did you learn from it?

- Don't sweat this question. Everyone (including the interviewer) has fumbled the ball at least one time in their career.
- But be prepared with an appropriate answer--& not necessarily "a fumble that was the reason your team lost the Super Bowl".

### 5. How would you describe your leadership style?

⇒ **Here is how I've answered this question. But you need to describe yours, not mine.**

*First & foremost, it's important to let others know I'm not a perfect leader & that I believe all of us together are better, smarter & more capable of achieving great things than any of us individually.*

*I would describe myself as a flexible leader. Having led various people and teams in my career, I've learned that different approaches work with different people and teams.*

*I try not to limit myself to one leadership style only, but instead utilize the style that will be most effect--given the situation & the individuals. For example, if the building were on fire, I wouldn't seek a consensus on what we should do.*

*I try to know the strengths and weaknesses of my team members. By doing so, I can put each in a position to be successful & to develop, which sometimes means someone taking on a challenge beyond what they think they are capable of. That's part of my being responsible for developing those around me, as well as for my development.*

*My emphasis is teamwork, which includes trust, communication, collaboration, accountability & keeping the team & organizational goals & values in mind.*

