

Six Interview Answers You Need to Get Hired

By Peter Vogt, Monster Senior Contributing Writer

During the typical job interview, you'll be asked a lot of questions. But do you really understand what the interviewer needs to know?

"Most students have no idea why a recruiter asks a particular question," says Brad Karsh, a former recruiting professional for advertising giant Leo Burnett and current president of career consulting firm Job Bound. "They tend to think it's a competition to outwit the interviewer."

The reality is that employers have neither the time nor inclination to play games with you, especially when hiring. Your interviewer is not trying to outguess you -- he's trying to assess your answers to six key questions:

Do You Have the Skills to Do the Job?

According to Karsh, the employer must first determine whether you have the necessary hard skills for the position, e.g., the programming knowledge for a database administration job or the writing chops to be a newspaper reporter.

"By really probing into what the candidate has done in the past, an interviewer can tap into hard skills."

But the interviewer is also looking for key soft skills you'll need to succeed in the job and organization, such as the ability to work well on teams or "the requisite common sense to figure things out with some basic training," says Terese Corey Blanck, director of student development at internship company Student Experience and a partner in College to Career, a consulting firm.

Do You Fit?

"Every organization's first thought is about fit and potentially fit in a certain department," Corey Blanck says. That means the interviewer is trying to pinpoint not only whether you match up well with both the company's and department's activities but also whether you'll complement the talents of your potential coworkers.

Do You Understand the Company and Its Purpose?

If the organization fits well with your career aspirations, you'll naturally be motivated to do good work there and stay more than a month or two, Corey Blanck reasons.

"I don't want someone to take the position because it's a job and it fits their skills. I want them to be excited about our mission and what we do."

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How Do You Stack Up Against the Competition?

You're being evaluated in relation to other candidates for the job. In other words, this test is graded on a curve. So the interviewer will constantly be comparing your performance with that of the other candidates.

Do You Have the Right Mind-Set for the Job and Company?

"I'm always looking for someone who has a can-do type of attitude," Corey Blanck explains. "I want someone who wants to be challenged and is internally motivated to do well.

Corey Blanck points out that an employer can't train for this essential trait. "But you can hire for it. And if you don't, you'll end up with a lower-performing employee."

Do You Want the Job?

Most employers know better than to believe everyone they interview actually wants the position being offered. They understand some candidates are exploring their options, while others are using an interview with a company they don't care about to hone their interview skills.

So you have to prove you really want the job, says Al Pollard, senior college recruiter for Countrywide Financial.

"I use the ditch-digger analogy!

- Many of us can dig ditches
- Few are willing to
- Even fewer want to!"

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