

What is your greatest weakness?

When you're asked what your greatest weakness is, try to turn a negative into a positive. For example, a sense of urgency to get projects completed or wanting to triple-check every item in a project can be turned into a strength i.e. you are a candidate who will make sure that the project is done on time and your work will be close to perfect.

Note that the term "weakness" isn't used in the sample answers - you always want to focus on the positive when interviewing.

Sample Weakness Answers

From a technical standpoint I use the result of FEA analysis, but have little background in running FEA programs. I would consider that a weakness in my technical background.

Being organized wasn't my strongest point, but I implemented a time management system that really helped my organization skills.

I like to make sure that my work is perfect, so I tend to perhaps spend a little too much time checking it. However, I've come to a good balance by setting up a system to ensure everything is done correctly the first time.

I used to wait until the last minute to set appointments for the coming week, but I realized that scheduling in advance makes much more sense.

What is your greatest strength?

This is one of the easier interview questions you'll be asked. When you are asked questions about your strengths, it's important to discuss attributes that will qualify you for the job. The best way to respond is to describe the skills and experience that directly correlate with the job you are applying for.

Sample Strength Answers

When I'm working on a project, I don't want just to meet deadlines. Rather, I prefer to complete the project well ahead of schedule.

I am innovative engineer, as an example I have 3 design patents for..... and 1 pending for..... The company has exceeded its sales goals in every quarter, since my patented features were introduced into the market.

My time management skills are excellent and I'm organized, efficient, and take pride in excelling at my work.

I take pride in resolving difficult engineering situations, as an example.....

In your current position what were your expectations for the job and to what extent were they met?

In many cases, interviewers will want to know what you expected from your last job when you were hired, so, be prepared to answer the interview question "What were your expectations for the job and to what extent were they met?"

There isn't a right or wrong answer to this question. The best way to respond is to discuss what you expected when you took the job and give examples of how the position worked out for you. If the job wasn't exactly what you expected, it's fine to mention that. However, you should focus on the job itself, not the company, your boss, or your co-workers (if they were a problem). Do be careful how you answer and don't focus too much on the negative. Instead, address the highlights of the job.

When responding, be specific. Prepare some examples to share with the interviewer in advance. For example, if your job involved creating new products using Pro-e, discuss the specific programs you developed and the responsibilities you were given. If you were provided training and opportunities for professional development to help you achieve your goals, mention that, as well.

What were your starting and final levels of compensation?

Interviewers expect a candidate for employment to be able to provide the details of their compensation history. Be prepared to tell the interviewer how much you earned at each of your prior positions.

Make sure that what you tell the interviewer matches what you listed on your job application. Refresh your memory prior to the interview by reviewing your compensation history, so, you can speak in detail and accurately. Don't exaggerate or inflate your earnings. Many employers will check references and confirm your salary history prior to making a job offer. A discrepancy between what you reported and what the employer says could knock you out of contention for the job.

How do you handle stress and pressure?

A typical interview question, asked to get a sense of how you handle on-the-job stress, or pressure?" It's a good idea to give examples of how you have handled stress to your interviewer. That way, they get a clear picture how well you can work in stressful situations.

Examples of good responses include:

I react to situations, rather than to stress. That way, the situation is handled and doesn't become stressful.

I actually work better under pressure and I've found that I enjoy working in a challenging environment.

From a personal perspective, I manage stress by visiting the gym every evening. It's a great stress reducer.

Prioritizing my responsibilities so I have a clear idea of what needs to be done when, has helped me effectively manage pressure on the job.

If the people I am managing are contributing to my stress level, I discuss options for better handling difficult situations with them.

Why are you leaving your job?

One of the questions that is typically asked in an interview is "Why are you leaving your job?" or "Why did you leave your job?" if you have already moved on. If you left of your own accord, review these suggestions on how best to answer and tailor your response to meet your particular situation. Be direct and focus your interview answer on the future, especially if your leaving wasn't under the best of circumstances.

Don't Badmouth Your Boss

Regardless of why you left, don't speak badly about your previous employer. The interviewer may wonder if you will be bad-mouthing his company next time you're looking for work. I once interviewed a person who told me that his last employer was terrible. They didn't pay him enough, the hours were awful and he hated the job. That company happened to be my company's biggest, and most important, customer. And there is no way I would have hired someone who felt that way, justified or not, about our valuable client. So, he gave up any opportunity of getting the job as soon as he answered the "Why did you leave?" question.

Prepare answers to typical job interview questions, like this one, in advance. Practice your responses so you sound positive, and clear, about your circumstances and your goals for the future.

Sample answers to the interview question "Why did you leave your job?"

I found myself bored with the work and looking for more challenges. I am an excellent employee and I didn't want my unhappiness to have any impact on the job I was doing for my employer.

There isn't room for growth with my current employer and I'm ready to move on to a new challenge.

I'm looking for a bigger challenge and to grow my career and I couldn't job hunt part time while working. It didn't seem ethical to use my former employer's time.

I was laid-off from my last position when our department was eliminated due to corporate restructuring.

I'm relocating to this area due to family circumstances and left my previous position in order to make the move.

I've decided that is not the direction I want to go in my career and my current employer has no opportunities in the direction I'd like to head.

After several years in my last position, I'm looking for a company where I can contribute and grow in a team-oriented environment.

I am interested in a new challenge and an opportunity to use my technical skills and experience in a different capacity than I have in the past.

I recently received my degree and I want to utilize my educational background in my next position.

I am interested in a job with more responsibility, and I am very ready for a new challenge.

I left my last position in order to spend more time with my family. Circumstances have changed and I'm more than ready for full-time employment again.

I am seeking a position with a stable company with room for growth and opportunity for advancement.

I was commuting to the city and spending a significant amount of time each day on travel. I would prefer to be closer to home.

To be honest, I wasn't considering a move, but, I saw this job posting and was intrigued by the position and the company. It sounds like an exciting opportunity and an ideal match with my qualifications.

This position seemed like an excellent match for my skills and experience and I am not able to fully utilize them in my present job.

The company was cutting back and, unfortunately, my job was one of those eliminated.

What were your responsibilities?

When you are asked questions related to your current or previous positions, it's important to be specific and to be positive about what you did in your previous position(s).

The best way to respond is to describe your responsibilities in detail and to connect them to the job you are interviewing for. Try to tie your responsibilities in with those listed in the job description for the new position. That way, the employer will see that you have the qualifications necessary to do the job. Focus most on your responsibilities that are directly related to the new job's requirements.

It's also important to be honest. Don't embellish your job, because you don't know who the hiring manager will be checking with when they check your references.

What major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?

When asked the job interview question "How did you handle a challenge?" be sure to include specific examples of how you handled a particular difficult situation. Discuss how you researched the issue and contributed to finding a solution. Examples of good responses include:

During a difficult financial period, I was able to satisfactorily negotiate repayment schedules with multiple vendors.

When the development of our new product stalled, I coordinated the team which managed to get the schedule back on track. We were able to successfully troubleshoot the issues and solve the problems, within a very short period of time.

What did you like or dislike about your previous job?

When you're asked what you don't like about your previous job, don't be negative. The reason is that you don't want the interviewer to think that you'll speak negatively about the new job or the company when you're ready to move on, if you get this job. It makes sense to talk about yourself and what you're looking for in a new role.

Sample Answer

I enjoyed the people I worked with. It was a friendly and fun atmosphere and I actually enjoyed going into work each morning. I felt the leadership team was great as well. They knew all of their employees on a first name basis and tried to make those personal connections. I also enjoyed that fact that the office tried to do community outreach with local organizations.

One of the reasons I am leaving is that I felt I was not challenged enough at the job. After being there for so many years, I felt I was not able to reach my full potential because of the lack of challenge and there was no room for advancement in the company. While I did enjoy working there, I feel my skill set can be better utilized elsewhere, where my capabilities are more recognized and there is the opportunity for growth.

What Was Most / Least Rewarding?

This interview question can be tricky. You want to make sure that the things you say are least rewarding aren't responsibilities that are going to be a major part of the job you are interviewing for. For example, if the last job you had involved extensive customer service telephone work that you hated, and if being on the phone doing something similar is even a minor part of the new job, don't mention it. Instead, focus on the tasks that were most rewarding and highlight those.

When interviewing, always be cognizant of the job you are interviewing for and tailor your response accordingly. Try to accentuate the positive, regardless of what question you have been asked, because you don't want to be construed as someone who is negative about work, in general.

What were the biggest accomplishment / failure in this position?

Your potential employer will want to know what you accomplished, and what you didn't, in your current or last position.

The best way to respond is to give examples of engineering accomplishments that is directly related to the job you're interviewing for. Review your resume and review the job posting. Find the best match and use that to show how what you accomplished will be beneficial to the company you are interviewing with.

If you didn't fail at anything, say so. If you can think of an example, be sure that it's a minor one and turn it into a positive. For example, if you were working on a project that was behind deadline, explain to the interviewer how you adjusted the workload and the timeline to get back on track and ahead of schedule.

Job Interview Questions about Co-Workers and Supervisors and Sample Answers

For the most part, the following questions may be asked to determine if you are a team player. Take a few seconds, when asked a difficult question, before you answer. An interviewer is not expecting you to have a ready answer.

Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a co-worker who wasn't doing his/her fair share of the work. What did you do and what was the outcome?

I worked closely with Ann who, for the most part, always carried her fair share of the work load. During a stressful time, working on a project with a deadline, I realized Ann's contributions to the project were almost minimal. I made the decision to speak with her. I'm glad I did, because I learned she'd been going through a very tough time in her personal life. She appreciated my willingness to understand her situation and went extra mile so the project was completed on time. As a result, our ability to work well together significantly increased.

Have you worked with someone you didn't like? If so, how did you handle it?

Yes, I've worked with someone whom I found difficult to like as a person. However, when I focused on the skills they brought to the job, their ability to solve problems, my attitude towards them changed. We were never friends, but we did work well together.

Tell me about a time that you misjudged a person.

There was a long-time employee (George) at my second company who was very gruff when he spoke to me. At first, I went out of my way to win the George's approval. Then I realized that was compounding the problem. So I observed how he interacted with other employees and discovered I wasn't alone. He was gruff to most people. I quit trying to gain his approval and, in the process, discovered he'd learned his behavior from a former boss he'd had whom he admired.

What do you find are the most difficult decisions to make?

There is no right or wrong answer to questions like "What are the most difficult decisions to make?" or "Describe a difficult work situation / project and how you overcame it. These are designed to discover how you handled certain situations. The logic behind these types of questions is that how you behaved in the past is a predictor of what you will do in the future.

Give concrete examples of difficult situations that actually happened at work. Then discuss what you did to solve the problem. Keep your answers positive ("Even though it was difficult when Jane Doe quit without notice, we were able to rearrange the department workload to cover the position until a replacement was hired.") and be specific. Itemize what you did and how you did it.

The best way to prepare for questions where you will need to recall events and actions is to refresh your memory and consider some special situations you have dealt with or projects you have worked on. You can use them to help frame responses. Prepare stories that illustrate times when you have successfully solved a difficult situation.

What do people most often criticize about you?

The interview question "What Do People Most Often Criticize About You?" is asked to find out how sensitive you are.

Best Answers

There's no on-going criticism. I'm open to personal and professional growth and welcome the opportunity to improve.

If humor is appropriate, this is a good time to use it. Example: I have a teenage daughter - few things I do are okay on her radar screen.

If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something how would you handle it?

The question "If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something, how would you handle this?" is asked to find out how you deal with a difficult situation.

Best Answers

An answer that works well is: "It depends on the situation and the personality of the supervisor." To elaborate, give examples:

If my supervisor is a hot head I do my best to get the results he wants. As long as he gets the desired results he is happy. I saved myself stress, and gave him what he wanted, so I'm happy and he's happy.

If my supervisor is more easy-going and if I told him/her "you know, I think it might work better if I do what you asked in such and such a way," they say "okay, try it."

What challenges are you looking for in a position?

A typical interview question to determine what you are looking for your in next job, and whether you would be a good fit for the position being hired for, is "What challenges are you looking for in a position?"

The best way to answer questions about the challenges you are seeking is to discuss how you would like to be able to effectively utilize your skills and experience if you were hired for the job.

You can also mention that you are motivated by challenges, have the ability to effectively meet challenges, and have the flexibility and skills necessary to handle a challenging job.

You can continue by describing specific examples of challenges you have met and goals you have achieved in the past.

What are your goals for the next five years / ten years?

The best way to respond to the interview question "What are your goals for the future?" or "Where do you see yourself in five years?" is to refer to the position and the company you are interviewing with.

Don't discuss your goals for returning to school or having a family, they are not relevant and could knock you out of contention for the job. Rather, you want to connect your answer to the job you are applying for. Examples of good responses include:

My long-term goals involve growing with a company where I can continue to learn, take on additional responsibilities, and contribute as much of value as I can.

I see myself as a top performing employee in a well-established organization, like this one. I plan on enhancing my skills and continuing my involvement in (related) professional associations.

Once I gain additional experience, I would like to move on from a technical position to management.

In the XYZ Corporation, what is a typical career path for someone with my skills and experiences?