

Interview Questions Document

While being able to answer interview questions effectively, it is very important to realize that this is only **ONE** part of an effective interview (other areas of equal importance are: professional attire, poise, demeanor, attitude, and fit). The following document is primarily focused on providing a list of common interview questions that will serve only *as a starting point for interview preparation*. This list, along with industry analysis, company research, other interview sources and **practicing** will get you ready for an interview.

Following is a list of interview questions, both behavioral and functional. This list is in no way conclusive. The first few headings contain some sample answers based on **SDSR** (State, Define, Support, and Relate) and **STAR** (Situation/Task + Action+ Result). These are two very effective models to use in shaping your answers:

I. BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Career Goals

Strengths/Weaknesses

Leadership

Judgment

Motivation

Teamwork

You

Confidence

Creativity

Communications

Pressure

Responsibility

Risk

Supervisors

Decisions/Delegation

Discipline

Interpersonal Skills

II. FUNCTIONAL QUESTIONS

Case Questions

Finance

Marketing

Management (Entrepreneurship/Innovation)

Consulting

Supplying Chain

Ebiz

III. FURTHER RESOURCES

I. BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

CAREER GOALS

1. Where do you want to be in 5 years from now in your career?
2. Where do you want to be in 10 years?
3. What are your long term career goals?
4. Why did you make a career change?
5. Why Smeal?

(Sample answer to question 1): In 5 years from now, I want to be in a position to bring tremendous value to the company through the development of myself and those around me (State). You see, I want to be in a position that I can continually learn, grow, and contribute to the organization - I seek constant challenge in a high-paced performing environment (define). In fact, my most rewarding professional experience thus far has been helping to develop people while developing myself (insert story here for support). I see company X as a company that I can bring tremendous value to through accomplishing my goals.

(Sample answer to question 5): Why Smeal? One thing for sure – Return On Investment. No one can argue this. Furthermore, the sense of community around the small program has been very beneficial (state). I believe that this sense of community and teamwork will follow me through my career and provide value for myself as well as the company that I work for (define). This summer, I spent time with people from Acme College - none of them had met each other until this summer. They were incredibly independent and didn't work well in teams. While this may be what some companies are looking for, I prefer the team oriented approach of Penn State (support). I cherish the fact that I can go and have a drink with any of my classmates. I am very happy with my choice of coming to Smeal - I have made lifelong friends and developed a great community oriented attitude (relate).

STRENGTHS/ WEAKNESSES

1. Why should we hire you?
2. What are your three greatest strengths?
3. What can you contribute to our organization?

4. We've interviewed a number of highly qualified students for this position. What sets you apart from the others?
5. What part of your current job are you the most comfortable with?
6. What is your greatest weakness?
7. What are your weak points and how have you overcome them?
8. What about yourself would you want to improve?
9. In which area do you need to make the improvement in?

(Sample answer to question 1): You will see a lot of great candidates here today. What I concentrate on is bringing value (state). I think that everything I do brings value to me and the organizations I am with in one way or another (define). I am able to do this because of my set of skills - I can do the numbers but I also understand the business on a wider scale (talk about your classes and relevant experience in order to support this). In addition, I am someone who fits into an organization, but will continually push its outer edges. I think, for the right organization, these strengths can bring a lot of value (relate).

LEADERSHIP

1. Define leadership?
2. What personal qualities should a leader have?
3. What is your strongest leadership skill and how will it assist you for this job?
4. Provide us with an example of your leadership ability.
5. Name some of the circumstances under which a leader will fail.
6. What is the importance of leadership in the organization?
7. What have you done to develop your leadership skills?
8. What is the difference between a leader and a manager?

(Sample answer to question 1): To be an effective leader, one must first be a self-leader. One must have acute self-confidence backed by conviction and understanding. Leaders show maturity expressed in a sense of self-worth, a sense of belonging, expectancy, responsibility, accountability, and equality. Secondly, an effective leader presents a rational environment that values trust and human dignity and provides the opportunity for personal development and self-fulfillment in the attainment of the organization's goals. These are traits that I have worked hard at developing and will continue to do so - I believe these traits will be a tremendous asset to the organizations I am with.

JUDGMENT

1. In instances where you are required to assert yourself, what do you do to assert yourself effectively?
2. Describe for us your ethics.
3. Relate to us a confrontation that you've had with your supervisor. Who was wrong and why?
4. Relate to us the last time you dealt with an ethical question on the job and how did you handle the situation?
5. Tell us about a situation that would exemplify your integrity.
6. Describe a politically sensitive situation that you were in and how you handled the situation.
7. Tell us about a situation where you made a mistake. How did you handle the mistake and what was the resolution?

MOTIVATION

1. What motivational techniques do you use with your work unit?
2. What can a supervisor do to enhance an employee's job and the employee's motivation?
3. What motivates employees?
4. Tell us about a situation where you motivated your staff to extraordinary accomplishments.

TEAMWORK

1. What are the characteristics of a successful team?
2. Tell us about an unsuccessful team of which you were a member.
3. Tell us about a successful team of which you were a member.
4. What qualities do you have that make you an effective team player?
5. Do you work better by yourself or as a part of a team?
6. What can you contribute to establish a positive working environment for our team?
7. What factors would you consider in assembling a project team?
8. Through what tools can a committee become more useful or productive?
9. What actions can a supervisor take to establish teamwork in the organization?

10. What are the advantages, if any, of establishing team goals as opposed to individual goals?

YOU

1. Take me through your resume.
2. Tell us about the passion in your life as it relates to your work.
3. What aspects of your work do you get the most excited about?
4. What are your most outstanding qualities?
5. Tell me about the last book that you read.
6. What is your favorite color and what does it reflect in your personality?
7. Rate yourself from one to ten on your work ethic with ten being best.
8. Describe yourself.

CONFIDENCE

1. How confident are you that you can successfully perform the duties of this position and why?
2. Tell us about a situation that would demonstrate the level of confidence that you have in yourself.
3. Tell us about a situation that would demonstrate the level of confidence your manager has in you.
4. Tell us about a situation that would show the confidence your coworkers have in you.

CREATIVITY

1. Are you creative? Give us one example of your creativity.
2. Describe a situation where you came up with a creative solution to a problem.
3. What does creativity mean to you?

COMMUNICATIONS

1. How do you effectively communicate with others?

2. How important is listening to effective communications?
3. Tell us about a situation where you demonstrated good communication skills.
4. How would you rate your communication skills? Why?

PRESSURE

1. What experience have you had in pressure situations?
2. Provide us with an example of how you've asserted yourself in an emergency or high-pressure situation?
3. What does it take to get under your skin?
4. What are some constructive methods of dealing with stress?

RESPONSIBILITY

1. Briefly describe the most significant responsibility you have had in your career and what it taught you?
2. How do you handle responsibility?
3. Provide us with an example of your ability to work independently.
Give an example. The example may relate what you did in an emergency situation.

RISK

1. How do you deal with risk on the job?
2. Name the greatest risk that you've taken.
3. Name the greatest risk that you've taken which resulted in failure.

SUPERVISORS

1. How can a supervisor establish effective communications with staff?
2. What means of communication may be used to effectively establish a new policy?
3. Are there additional considerations in communicating to groups of employees versus individual employees?
4. What are some good rules to keep in mind when directing employees?

5. In what instances, is written communication better than verbal communications?
6. Communicating with your supervisor is an important aspect of all of our jobs. In addition to being brief, what guidelines should you follow to communicate effectively with your supervisor?
7. What are the reasons for communicating upwards to your superiors?
8. How would your supervisor rate your communications skills?

DECISIONS/DELEGATIONS

1. What type of decisions did you make in your current position?
2. What decisions are easiest for you to make and which ones are the most difficult? Why?
3. Tell us about the worst decision that you've made on the job.
4. Tell us about the best decision that you've made on the job.
5. How would you rate a job that requires you to constantly make decisions?
6. Provide us with an example of your ability to delegate work.
7. What are the steps to successful delegation?
8. Under what circumstances may a person decide to delegate upward to their supervisor?

DISCIPLINE

1. Tell us about your most recent experience in disciplining an employee.
2. What do you find difficult in disciplining employees?
3. Name the steps involved in disciplining an employee.
4. Tell us about an employee that you've terminated.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

1. What would your boss say about you - both positive and negative?
2. What would your subordinates say about you - both positive and negative?
3. What would your co-workers say about you - both positive and negative?
4. What three keywords would your peers use to describe you?
5. Tell us about the last time you lost your temper?
6. Tell us about a confrontation that you've had with a coworker.

II. FUNCTIONAL QUESTIONS

Obviously, the functional questions listed below are a starting point. Questions must be tailored to the specific job descriptions, company, and industry.

CASE QUESTIONS (GENERAL)

These questions are designed to give you the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to handle ambiguous data. The process that you follow to answer the question is much more important than arriving at the “right answer”. Your quantitative ability will be judged. Consequently, it is important to have the figures that you develop in your answer be correct.

- If you wanted to buy a ski resort, what would you consider? Draw a graph of a cost and revenue per skier. Questions regarding graphs - how they would move/ change with certain contingencies?
- Estimate the total value of all the personal items on a commuter flight that arrived at La Guardia airport at 8:30 am this morning from Boston given that the plane was approximately 2/3 full. (Tip: Don't forget to include checked luggage.)
- You are a manufacturer of toys and you have a product that cost US \$1,000. Estimate how many of those you can sell in Hong Kong.
- You're taking a trip to Indonesia tomorrow to work with a company for a period of time. You don't know anything about this firm but you are provided with the financial statement of this firm from last year. How do you get the general idea about the firm's "health" condition, given that you only have one hour to report your opinion to your boss?
- How would you go about advising a bank if it should implement an ATM system?
- Discuss the economics of a gym.
- You are the consultant for a bank. Give some quantitative measures that can tell about the productivity of the operations department.
- How many skis will be sold in the U.S. next year?
- What is the market size for wall paper?
- Estimate the number of airplane flights in a year.
- What is the market size of the paper clip industry?
- A company dealing with a commodity product is thinking about expanding internationally. If its labor costs are competitive with industry standards, what issues might influence its decision?
- What is the population of dogs in the United States?

- Where would you put a gas station if there were none in New Jersey?
- How many drug stores are there in Manhattan?
- How would you estimate demand for forks in one year?
- What is the number of people in Pennsylvania?
- How many planes take off in the U.S. per day?
- The sales of a travelers cheque company are falling. How would you go about deciding what should be done about it?
- Estimate the demand of airplanes for a select category 10 years into the future. There are three producers and 10 airlines.

FINANCE QUESTIONS

- Tell me about the CAPM (Capital Asset Pricing Model).
- Describe what you believe to be the future of the derivatives market?
- What is $.125$ squared?
- What does Finance mean to you? Why Finance?
- Tell me everything you know about finance in 2 minutes.
- How would you go about selling the idea of a derivatives hedge to a prospective client?
- What is $5 \frac{2}{7} - 3 \frac{7}{8}$?
- Two retail banks have different return rates on their loan portfolios, although default rates are similar. What might explain the difference?
- Why would the cap rate on a Holiday Inn be the same as the Plaza Hotel?
- How can you convince your client that the “higher yield” bond does not really give a higher yield?
- How would you go about valuing a firm?
- Give some suggestions to improve the credit card business of your bank.
- What is the relationship between the forward and spot interest rate?
- How would you value a hotel in Minnesota if you only had one day to look around?
- Use 12 equal sided sticks to construct 6 equal size squares.
- Why the company in particular? Why banking?
- Explain PE ratios?
- Given 10 million dollars, how would you invest?
- What have been the Dow trends in the last few weeks?
- What do you feel are the ramifications of the repeal of Glass-Steagal?

MARKETING QUESTIONS

- Interviewer picks up a paperweight and says “sell me this.”
- If you were to introduce a new product into a foreign market, what are some of the factors you would first study in that country?
- You need more shelf space in a store. How do you convince the store manager to give it to you?
- What does marketing mean to you? Why marketing?
- Describe a time when you used data to prove a point.
- Tell me everything you know about marketing in two minutes. (or, tell me everything you know about our company in two minutes)

CONSULTING

- A company’s revenues have doubled one year, while during that same year costs only increased 20%...how could they be losing money? I was asked not to discuss this, but write out formulas.
- You start up a doughnut shop in LA for \$1 million. Your revenue over the next 9 years will be \$200,000 per year with a 15% rate of return...after 9 years an earthquake will level your doughnut shop...do you still make the investment? Why or why not?
- How do you know the light in the refrigerator goes out when you close the door? Name every method you can think of.
- Why are manholes round?
- How would you estimate the cost of the U.K. switching from driving on the left side to driving on the right side?
- How many hotel rooms are there in Manhattan?
- In consulting, you must work on a diverse array of projects. Are you too focused on one subject or could you be interested in everything?
- Tell me the revenues generated from movie cinemas in the State College area.
- Experiences with groups - leadership roles, reaction to failures, etc.
- How do you feel about traveling?
- What is your math aptitude?
- What do you know about what we do?
- What’s your favorite joke?
- How do you measure the quality of your work?
- What would make you miserable at work?

EBIZ/IT

- What does technology mean to you?
- Tell me everything you know about the internet in two minutes.
- How will going online impact our existing distribution channels?
- Will Moore's law continue into the future?
- What are the pros and cons of online dynamic bidding (reverse actions)?
- Talk about the future potential of the internet.
- What were some of the primary mistakes that were made in the dot com bust over the last couple of years? What will you do in the future to prevent this from happening in your organization?
- List two key challenges that the technology industry will face over the next five years and tell me a couple of key things the industry needs to do to overcome these.
- Compare IBM and Dell.

SUPPLY CHAIN

- Compare and contrast some of the different ERP systems in the marketplace.
- Tell me about some of the key elements in being an effective supply chain manager.
- How would you go about finding the reorder point for a given part?
- What makes you a fit for a supply chain position?
- What is the most impressive thing you have learned in any of your supply chain classes?
- Tell me everything you know about supply chain in two minutes. (or, tell me everything you know about our company in two minutes)
- What are some of the pros and cons of reverse auctions?
- Where is the supply chain industry going in the future?
- Describe some of the key elements a consortium should possess.
- What do you know about some of our largest suppliers?
- In your supply chain role, there are several things that one can do. Where would you start?

III. RESOURCES

There are many key books to read that go further into the art of interviewing. Here are a couple good ones (used to build list above)

- **The 250 Job Interview Questions** by Peter Veruki
- **Knock `em Dead 2000** by Martin Yate
- **The Vault Guide to Case Interviews**

There are several key resources on electronic reserve in the library at the following link:
<http://cat.libraries.psu.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/rnqMI1D63N/22310311/81/216928/29126>

- **Five Secrets of the Hire** by Martin Yate
- **Great Answers to Tough Interview Questions/Introduction, Part III** by Martin Yate
- **How to Knock `em Dead** by Martin Yate (****Pay special attention to this one*)
- **Other Side of the Desk** by Martin Yate
- **What Kind of Person are You Really, Mr. Jones?** by Martin Yate

Go to Google.com and type in “Interview Questions”- there will be many resources returned.

- <http://www.upenn.edu/careerservices/college/sampquest.html>
- <http://www.indiana.edu/~libpers/interview.html>
- <http://content.monster.com/jobinfo/interview/questions/>
- <http://members.aol.com/mbastyle/web/intervw1.html>