

Killer Interview Questions

When it comes to interviews there are often ‘common’ questions that are asked, such as ‘what attributes could you bring to the job; ‘why do you want to work for us?’ and ‘what is an example of a recent problem that you had to solve?’.

The interviewer / potential new employer will expect a well thought out answer, and depending on how much they go through this exercise themselves, will know that candidates are generally becoming more prepared for this type of questioning.

This can mean that the interviewer throws a few curved balls at you. Imagine the scene: you are half-way to two-thirds into what was until now a smooth-running interview, and are suddenly hit with something relatively obscure and unrelated to the subjects already being discussed (eg: what television programme did you enjoy watching the most last night?, or, ‘which public figure should be removed from office?’).

Another interviewer's approach may be asking what are your least relevant attributes and experience for this application. Stumped? You may well be: your answer could flag up something that you omitted from your CV (that 2-month stint helping a friend's business etc).

So what do you do? Well, basically, always expect the unexpected for a start. Build on that with seeking clarification on what you are actually being asked – are they seeking a speedy response following a swift change of subject? Are they trying to see how easily you fluster? Are they actually trying to relax you and put you at ease, and so change the mood and subject of the interview to give you a ‘breather’? Well for a start, ask. Ask for clarification on what they actually mean/seek. This not only does just that but also buys you some thinking time (particularly important if you are outgunned by more than one interviewer). You can answer the question honestly, hopefully not too thrown and suspicious as to why you have been asked it in the first place.

You may have the scenario where they are talking about how long you have stayed with each employer: ‘how long do you envisage staying in this role, if it is offered to you?’ A stock answer could be that you envisage your next move being ‘long-term’, and that you are open to future challenges and career progression. Close with then asking the interviewer if they see the role as becoming limited in the fullness of time, and if so, when?

If you are ever completely stuck, your mind really does go blank, then tell them so, Say that you have not considered that in detail, and ask if you can come back to it later. There will be a small snippet of a gap later to reflect on the question in more detail, gather your thoughts.

Finally, never assume that ‘they’ will know what you mean without explanation, and will always interpret what you say in the way that you intended.