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Database of Interview Questions

Accountable

- Describe a situation when your work did not meet your coworker or supervisor’s expectations. What happened? What action did you take?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deliver on a commitment that was difficult for you. What did you do to motivate yourself?
- Have you ever been in a situation where your role or responsibilities haven’t been clearly defined? What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you had to conform to a policy or procedure you did not agree with.
- If someone told you that you had made an error, describe how you would react and what you would say in your defense.

Administrative / Management Skills

- What did you like best about your previous job? Least?
- What part of your work has given you the greatest felling of achievement and satisfaction?
- What part of your work have you found the most frustrating or unsatisfying?
- Why did you choose this particular line of work?
- What are the most important administrative responsibilities you have taken on? How well did you like them?

Assertive or Self Confident

- Tell me about a situation when you had to speak up (be assertive) in order to get a point across that was important to you or crucial to your customer.
- We all find ourselves in stressful situations at work when keeping a positive attitude is most useful. Tell me about such a time and how did it turn out?
- Tell me about a time when you felt compelled to immediately address a difficult situation with your boss or supervisor when others wouldn’t. (You had to do the right thing.) What happened? What was the outcome?
Calm / Stress Tolerance

• Tell me about a time when you were under extreme pressure and remained calm and focused at work.
• Tell me about a time when events collided or you were expected to accomplish much in a short time, but you were able to keep your composure. What was the situation and result?
• Tell me about a time when you had to make a split second decision. What skill did you use to keep your composure? What was the outcome?
• Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an uncomfortable situation at work. How did you manage it?
• Describe a time when you were proud of your ability to withhold your comments until you had all the facts. What was the result?
• Tell me about a time when you had to let go of your need to control a situation. What was the issue? Why was it necessary for you to let go?
• Describe what you would classify as a crisis.
• You are angry about an unfair decision. How do you react?
• Under what kinds of conditions do you do your best work?
• What kinds of conditions do you find the most difficult?
• What kinds of pressures do you feel in your job? How do you cope with them? What frustrates you the most?
• Describe a situation in which you were under particularly great pressure. How did you deal with it? How successful were you?
• How do you know when you are stressed? What do you do to de-stress?
• How would your past employers describe your response to hectic or stressful situations?

Communication

• Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off. Perhaps a situation when others missed a key idea or issue.
• Describe your most successful experience in delivering a presentation or giving a speech. When did this happen?
• Describe a complex writing assignment (longer than 10 pages) you had to complete. Tell me how you organized the document and what help you had (if applicable) finishing it.
• Tell me about a recent meeting you were in charge of. How did you keep people focused on the meeting objectives? What method did you use to follow-up on assignments?
• Some situations require us to express ideas or opinions in a very tactful and careful way. Tell me about a time when you were successful with this particular skill.
• Have you ever had to get a point across to different types of people? What approach did you take?
• Give me an example of how you would explain a complicated procedure to someone who was new to the situation?
• Have you ever given instructions to someone, and then learned they did it wrong? Why do you think that happened?
• Describe a decision you made based largely on data you obtained by asking questions.
• How do people react when you ask questions? How well do they seem to understand what you want to know?
• Can you give me an example of a time you had to sell a proposal to a group of your superiors or co-workers? How did you do? Why do you think Tings went that Way?
• Have you ever done any public speaking? How did you handle the assignment? How did it work out?
• Tell me about an instance from your previous job when you had to rely on verbal information from someone else to get the job done.
• Have you ever had an occasion when you misunderstood someone else's instructions? Why do you think that happened?
• Describe what you would say if asked to talk about yourself in a group of 15 people.
• What kind of people do you find it most difficult to work with? For example, assume you are in a situation where you have to deal with a person very different from yourself and you are finding it difficult. What would you do?
• What do you do when others resist or reject your ideas or actions?
• What do you do when you know you are right and your boss disagrees with you? Give me an example of when this has happened in your career.
• Describe a difficult time you have had dealing with an employee, customer, or co-worker. Why was it difficult? How did you handle it? What was the outcome?

Control

• Describe the procedures you have used to keep track of things that require your attention.
• Describe a typical staff meeting in your department.
• What do you do to keep track of your subordinates' progress on delegated assignments?
• What procedures do you use to evaluate your subordinate's performances?
• What do you do when you find that a subordinate is not meeting your standards?
Customer Focused

- Tell me about a time when your success depended on your prior working relationship with a customer. Describe the situation and the outcome.
- Tell me about a time when you went the extra mile to meet the needs of a customer.
- Tell me about a time in your previous job when you accommodated the client or customer even though it was more work for you or went against your instincts. What was the result?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to remain quiet when dealing with a hostile customer. How did you handle the situation?

Decision – Making

- What was the toughest decision you had to make in the last year? What made it so difficult?
- Describe a work-related problem you had to face recently. What procedures did you use to deal with it?
- Are there any occasions when you feel you make up your mind too quickly? Too slowly?
- Have you ever delayed a decision so you would have more time to think? Give me an example.
- What was the best decision you ever made? What were the alternatives? How did you go about making it?
- Tell me the same thing about the worst decision you ever made?
- How about the hardest decision you ever made?
- Describe a situation in which one or more subordinates had roles in the decision-making process. How did you make use of their contributions?
- What methods do you use to make decisions? When do you find it most difficult to make a decision?

Delegation

- Describe your normal methods of assigning work to subordinates.
- Who is in charge while you are gone? How do you inform this person of that limits and responsibilities you expect him/her to observe?
- Have you ever moved up to a position where you had to supervise former peers? How did you handle it?
• Describe a project that required a major effort by many members of your staff. Who did you ask to participate? Why did you choose them? What assignments did they have?
• You’ve probably had a situation in which you delegated a responsibility, but the work wasn’t done as you expected. Why do you think this happened? What would you do differently next time?

Detail Oriented

• Describe a situation when you coordinated several events or people at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?
• Tell me about a recent job situation that required great precision to complete a task. How did you handle the situation?
• Tell me about a task that was tedious or boring to you—but had to be done. How did you approach and tackle the task?
• Tell me how you manage your daily work schedule.
• When have you found it valuable to use a detailed checklist or procedure list to reduce potential errors on the job? What as the outcome? What would you do differently today?
• Give me an example of a situation where you needed to pay attention to small but important details? When was this? How did it turn out?
• Tell me about a time when you had to manage large amounts of paperwork. How did you keep things organized to maintain order and accuracy?
• Have you ever had an experience in which you were glad you had paid attention to some particular detail? Please describe it?
• Have you ever found an error in your own work? How did it happen? What did you do about it?

Empathetic/Optimistic

• Tell me about a time when you were sensitive to how another reacted in an emotional or tense situation. What did you do? What was the outcome?
• Tell me about a time when you volunteered your help to someone in need. How did they react? How did it turn out?
• Give me an example of a time when your positive attitude caused others to be motivated or energized. What was the situation? What was the result?
Flexible

- Tell of a situation where you had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?
- Tell me about a time when you had to change your point of view or your plans to take into account new information or changing priorities.
- Describe an example of a time when you had to approach people (with different perspectives) for support or cooperation. How did you appeal to each person? What was the result?
- Describe a situation in which your first attempt to sell an idea failed. How did you react to this? What other approaches did you try?
- Tell me about a time when your work effort didn’t go as planned (blocked by obstacles). How did you resolve this issue? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to accommodate unplanned activities or demands?
- Tell me about a time when you had to adapt quickly to changing conditions to accurately complete your job. What were the circumstances?
- Tell me about a time when you had to work in a chaotic or noisy environment. How did you deal with this situation? How did you ensure your productivity and accuracy in this environment?
- Have you ever had an experience in which you failed to see an idea gain cooperation the first time, but succeeded later? What was the difference?
- Tell me about a time you had to surmount an obstacle to reach a goal. What was the problem, and what did you do about it?
- How would you handle a performance problem with your best employee? Your worst employee?
- Suppose you are in a situation where deadlines and priorities change frequently and rapidly. How would you handle it?
- Give an example of a time when you were trying to meet a deadline, you were interrupted, and did not make the deadline. How did you respond?
- It’s 4:30 on a Friday afternoon. Your supervisor gives you an assignment that needs to be finished by 8:00 Monday morning. You have already made plans to be away the entire weekend. What would you do?

Independence

- Give me an example of a project or idea you've undertaken, even though you knew it would not be popular with some people. How did things work out?
- What were the limits of authority in your previous job? Did you ever find it necessary to go beyond them?
- It's possible, of course, to be loyal to your employer, but still to disagree with some rules and policies. Can you cite an example I your own experience?
• On what occasions did you feel you had to consult with your boss before proceeding with some action? When did you feel it was proper to act on your own.
• Describe how you like to be managed, and the best relationship you’ve had with a previous boss.

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Integrity

• Give me an example of a time you found it necessary to make an exception to the rules in order to get something done.
• Do you feel some rules should be obeyed more stringently than other? Give me some examples.
• How strictly do you believe your co-workers normally follow the rules? Do you approve of their attitude?
• If you observed a co-worker who made inappropriate sexual or racial remarks to another employee, and it was obvious to you that the situation was creating an uncomfortable environment, what would you do?
• Suppose your supervisor asked you to get information for them that you know is confidential and he/she should not have access to. What would you do?

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Leadership / Mentor

• In a supervisory or group leader role, tell me about a time when you had to discipline or counsel an employee or group member? What was the nature of the discipline? What steps did you take?
• Tell me about a time when you coached a coworker to help them improve their skills or job performance, what did you do?
• Describe a situation where you helped motivate someone to improve his or her performance, what was the outcome?
• Have you had to introduce a new policy or idea that departed from the customary way of doing things? What approach did you take to gain cooperation? How did it work out?
• Tell me about a time you had to gain the cooperation of a group over which you had little or no authority. What did you do? How effective were you?
• What did you do to help your subordinates set performance objectives last year?
• Describe a situation in which you had to help a subordinate solve a problem or meet an objective. What did you do? How successful were you?
• Describe a situation in which a subordinate had a performance or disciplinary problem. How did you handle it?

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Learning Ability

- Have you ever had trouble learning a new machine or procedure? How did you deal with that situation?
- How long were you in your previous job before you felt at ease with the company’s products or services?
- What did you have to learn to be effective in your previous job? How long did it take? Which parts were the most challenging?
- What were your strongest courses in school? Your weakest?
- Did you take (specific subject)? How well did you do?
- How did you gain the technical knowledge you need to do your job?
- How long did you have to study before you took you (specific license) exam? How many times did you take the test?
- Under what kinds of conditions do you learn best?

Organizational Cooperation

- With what other departments did you normally work in your previous job?
- How did events in your department affect other parts of the organization?
- Tell me about a problem you have had that would affect more than one department. How did you try to solve it?
- What other departments have been most useful in providing information or helping with problems? Least useful?
- What contacts do you make with other departments while setting goals?
- Describe a time when you performed a task outside your perceived responsibilities. What was the task? Why did you perceive it to be outside your responsibilities? What was the outcome?

Persuasiveness

- What do you consider the best idea you ever sold to a superior? A co-worker? A subordinate? How did you do it?
- What do you consider the best idea you ever failed to sell? What do you think the problem was?
Planning / Time Management

- Describe a typical workweek. How did you plan the week’s activities? How well did the schedule work?
- Tell me about an occasion when your schedule was upset by unforeseen circumstances. What did you do?
- How do you determine which activities have top priorities on your time?
- Describe a situation in which your department experienced a major backlog, or the threat of one. How did you deal with that problem?
- How do you develop short-range plans for your organization? Long-range plans?
- Give me an example of a time when expenses in your department threatened to run over budget. What did you do about it?

Proactive / Initiative

- We can sometimes recognize a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example of how you acted to prevent a larger problem from occurring.
- Tell me about a time when you thought through the consequences of a specific action in planning a project. What obstacles or barriers did you discover?
- Describe a situation in which you forecasted a problem and prepared a strategy for handling it. How did it turn out?
- Give me an example of a time you did more than was required in your job.
- Tell me about a time your effort helped some project or idea succeed.
- What have you done to make your job easier or more rewarding?
- Describe a situation where you found you had a serious problem. What did you do to solve it?
- Tell me about an idea you generated. What did you do? How did things work out?
- How often did you take on extra credit projects in your school courses? Describe a few of them?
- Have you ever developed any new ideas or make suggestions in your school or social activities?
- Can you tell me about a time during your previous employment when you suggested a better way to perform a process?
- Tell me about a personal or career goal that you have accomplished and why that was important to you.
- What was your primary contribution/achievement? Biggest challenge?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals?
- In what areas would you like to develop further? What are your plans to do that?
- Could you share with us a recent accomplishment of which you are most proud?
- What are your career path interests?
Problem Solving

- What was the most difficult work problem you ever faced? How did you address the problem? What were the results?
- Tell me about a time when you used fact-finding skills to solve a problem. What was the situation? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to step away from traditional methods to solve a difficult or complex problem. Can you describe your approach and the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to respond quickly to a crisis situation. What were the circumstances? What was the final outcome?
- Give me an example of a project you personally planned, implemented, measured, and evaluated. What problems did you solve along the way?
- Give me an example of how you solved a problem in a unique way within the past 18 months.
- Describe a project or idea you originated in the last year. How did you know it was a good idea?
- What do you do to keep informed about possible work-related problems?
- Have you ever recognized a problem or opportunity before anyone else, what happened?
- Tell me about a situation you wish that you had handled differently based on the outcome. What was the situation? What would you change (or will you change) when faced with a similar situation?

Quality

- Tell me about a project that you were completely responsible for completing. How did you stay on task to complete it even though no one was checking your progress?
- Tell me about a time when you felt it would benefit the situation to disregard structure or formal processes to achieve a better outcome. What were the circumstances? How did it turn out?
- Give me an example of a time when you recognized an opportunity for process improvement in your department or group. What did you do?
- Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem? What was the outcome?

Resilience

- Describe a situation in which you suffered a major disappointment. How did you deal with that?
Risk Taking

- We all learn through our mistakes. Tell me about a time when you confronted a coworker or supervisor because you knew they were making a mistake. What was the issue and how did it turn out?
- Tell me about a time when you had to collaborate with another to resolve a conflict that initially felt uncomfortable, but actually turned out better than you anticipated.
- Tell me about a time when you perceived friction or resistance from a coworker, supervisor, or customer and you immediately addressed this issue to enhance your working relationship. What happened? How is your relationship today?
- Tell me about a time when you felt compelled to express an unpopular viewpoint to maintain your integrity. What did you say and how did you say it?

Safety

- What are the major safety requirements of your job?
- Do you feel these requirements sometimes interfere with your performance? What do you do then?
- Have you recently seen someone else doing a job in an unsafe manner? Why did you notice? How did you react?
- Have you recently had an accident or a close call? Why do you think it happened?

Salesmanship

- Describe one of your toughest sales experiences. How did you deal with that problem? Did you make the sale?
- What do you think has been the biggest improvement in you sales ability during the last year?
- Describe a typical sales encounter. Exactly what would you say to convince a customer to buy?

Teamwork

- Tell me about a time when someone else neglected or failed to deliver on their work commitments—and it had a negative impact on your productivity. How did you react? What was the outcome?
- Collaborative work relationships often ease tension and facilitate productive relationships. Can you give me a recent example where you intentionally enhanced a relationship to get a job done?
Tell me about a time when you needed additional information from other people or references to make an informed decision. What did you do? How did your extra-credit research impact the outcome?

Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist them? What was the result?

Tell me about a time when you improved a process by creating a cross-functional team. What was the issue and how did it turn out?

Can you give me a recent example of how you displayed loyalty or commitment to your current work group? Why was this act important to you? What was at stake?

When were you part of a great team? What were the circumstances? How did you contribute?

Tell me about a time when you disagreed with your team’s agreed course of action. What did you do?

If someone asked you for assistance with a matter that is outside the parameters of your job description, what would you do?

You are a committee member and disagree with a point or decision. How will you respond?

Tell me about a time when you were a part of a great team. What was your part in making the team effective?

Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. How did you handle the situation?

How do you think your co-workers would respond if you were absent from work?

If I asked several of your co-workers about your greatest strength as a team member, what would they tell me?

What do you think are the best and worst parts of working in a team environment? How do you handle it?

Technical Ability / Professional Knowledge

Give me an example of an especially difficult assignment or project. What was your role? What did you do?

Have you received any commendations for your performance?

It says on your application that you have operated a personal computer. Describe a typical project.

What do you think is the most important development in your field today? What impact do you think it will have?

How do you keep informed about what's happening in your field?

To what job-related publication do you normally read?

Have you recently attended any conferences or seminars in your field? What did you get out of them?

What do you think about SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures)?

What skill set do you think you would bring to this position?
• What are your qualifications in your area of expertise, i.e., what skills do you have that make you the best candidate for this position? Include any special training you have had (on-the-job, college, continuing education, seminars, reading, etc.) and related work experience.

Well Adjusted

• Describe a situation where you had to deal with someone who didn't like you (or you didn't like). How did you handle it?
• Tell us about a time when you had to use coping strategies when dealing with a high-pressure situation?
• Tell me about a time when you found yourself on unfamiliar territory: a new situation. How did you adapt to this situation? What was the eventual outcome?
• Occasionally our work is judged or criticized unfairly or our intent is misunderstood. Can you tell me about a recent situation that fits this description? How did you react?
• Tell me about a recent threatening or difficult work situation. How did you approach this situation? What was the outcome?
• Tell me about a time in the past year when your patience was tested with coworkers, customers, or supervisors. How did you handle the situation? What was the result?
• We all get angry or frustrated from time to time. Give me an example of how you reacted in a recent situation.
• You've probably had this experience: You worked hard on something, only to be told to change priorities and do it some other way. How did you handle that?
• What kinds of problems have you had in switching from one job to another?
• Going from high school to college is usually a big change in your life. How did you find it?
• Switching from one school to another must have been difficult. What problems did you have? How did you deal with them?

Work Standards

• How would you define a good job in your line of work?
• What personal performance standards do you set for yourself? What have you done to meet them? What do you do if you find yourself falling short of a standard?
• Do you make extra efforts to meet deadlines? Describe what you have done to complete a project or report on time.
• If you were going to evaluate your own performance, what factors would you consider most important?
• To you, which is more desirable: A business that is run in an efficient business-like manner OR a business that is run in a personal and friendly way?
• What are the important things your department has contributed to the organization in the last year?
• Are you satisfied with your department's performance? Why or why not?
• In your mind, what is the greatest thing that distinguishes a superior employee from someone who gives typical good performance?
• What factors do you consider most important in judging a subordinate's performance?
• Explain the phrase “work ethic” and describe yours.
• How would your co-workers describe your work style/habits?
• Describe an ideal work environment or “the perfect job.”
• In what way(s) do you express your personality in the workplace?

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Written Communication Skills

• What are some of the most important documents you have written? What kinds of problems did you have writing them? What kind of reception did they receive?
• What is the most difficult writing assignment you have undertaken recently? Why was it so challenging? How did you handle it?
• Have you ever written instructions to be followed by employees or customers? What did you do?
• Recall an important report you had to prepare. How did you go about planning and organizing it?
• To what kind of audience do you address most of your written work? What level of language do you use?
• Have you ever had to write technical material for lay people? Please give me an example.

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Other Miscellaneous Questions

• What do you know about our company?
• Why should we hire YOU?
• If the position required it, would you be willing to travel?
• If the position required it, would you be willing to relocate?
• If you were offered this position, when would you be available to start?
• After learning about this opportunity, what made you take the next step and apply for the job?
• If you are the successful applicant, how would you expect to be different after a year in this position?
• Now that you have learned about our company and the position you are applying for, what hesitation or reluctance would you have in accepting this job if we offer it to you?
• Tell me anything else you would like us to know about you that will aid us in making our decision.
• What questions would you like to ask me?
• What would your last boss say about you?
• Why have you applied for this position?
• What would you have liked to do more of in your last position? What held you back?
• Tell me about your present or last job. Why did you choose it? Why did you/do you want to leave?
• What was the most creative thing you did in your last job?
• If I asked your previous/current co-workers about you what would they say?
• Describe what you see as your strengths related to this job/position. Describe what you see as your weaknesses related to this job/position.
• Tell us a bit about your work background, and then give us a description of how you think it relates to our current opening.
• What strengths did you rely on in your last position to make you successful in your work?
• What are some positive aspects of your last employment/employer? What are some negative aspects?

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