

MEDIA COVERAGE

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FACE-OFF Talent managers show how to respond to tricky questions in interviews early in your job-life

12 Interview Questions that CAN DECIDE YOUR FUTURE

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New Delhi | Bengaluru: Job interviews early on in your career can be pretty daunting. Human resource managers are not just looking to understand whether you are the right fit for the job but also trying to delve into your personality in the short time you are grilled in a meeting room.

For those making their first few job switches, acing the interview is critical. Managers across industries are looking for analytical, on-the-ball thinkers who make that great first impression. Here are a few questions to expect and how best to respond to them.

Why are you the right candidate for the role?

What the recruiter really wants to know is why the candidate thinks he or she should be hired, said Sameer Khanna, head of HR at Ericsson. So if you are asked this question, describe your skills but don't make the mistake of hard-selling yourself or going over the top with the answer. "Talk about what you can bring to the role and tie that in with the specifications of the role itself so that the interviewer knows you've properly understood the job description," said Khanna.

TALK ACHIEVEMENT

Compensation isn't considered a good enough reason for changing jobs. Speak achievements instead

SV Nathan

Chief Talent Officer, Deloitte India

Another great way to answer this tricky question is to highlight skills from your resume that would be appropriate for the role you are being interviewed for. "Most resumes are two-three pages long, so picking up the most essential and relevant parts from that would contribute to a great answer," said Khanna.

What will give you a sense of fulfilment in your professional life?

Ashutosh Telang, chief human resources officer at Marico Limited said his experience of meeting youngsters is that many of them are not sure whether they understand themselves as individuals and whether they are doing a job that resonates with their inherent strengths. "During our interview process, when I ask candidates about what will give them a sense of fulfilment in their professional life, some of them find it difficult to respond to this ques-



tion," he said.

Could you talk about some events that influenced you to become what you are today?

"I find that that they generally respond with an answer which they believe can help them get the job rather than introspecting to determine what they are really seeking. As a result of this, certain candidates tend to create a façade rather than sharing a true reflection of themselves, which does not help us or them," said Telang.

He said his suggestion to all those seeking jobs is to first reflect, introspect and clarify to themselves their career goals, inherent strengths, preferences and aspirations, and then evaluate how a particular job opportunity fits in with their career goals.

How will you describe yourself using five adjectives?

Sometimes tough questions masquerade as easy questions just as when a manager asks you to describe yourself. "We are looking for five distinctive adjectives that best describe you. If the interviewee doesn't do a good self-assessment, it gives managers a chance to probe further," said SV Nathan, chief talent officer at Deloitte India.

What would be your plan of action and strategic vision if you were to take the role?

To answer this satisfactorily, you should have spent enough time understanding the company. "The answer has to show commitment and genuineness. The interviewer, by asking this question, is looking

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Innovation needn't always bring radical changes; it can be simple alterations that add efficiency

Anil Warriar

Head, Talent Acquisition, SAP India

to see whether the candidate is really interested in the role, whether he or she has spent enough time understanding the company and whether they are aware of the challenges and opportunities at a higher level," said Puneet Bhirani, chief people officer at Mphasis.

Why are you switching jobs? Why are you leaving your last employer?

That's the trickiest question of all, said Nathan of Deloitte. Answers like, "I'm bored; I don't like my boss; or I'm changing my job for money", will put off your interviewer. Instead, answer with something like, "I'm seeking fresh challenges," he said.

"If you answer, 'I don't think I'm paid well', the interview is over. Compensation isn't considered a good enough reason for changing jobs. Speak of your achievements instead," he said.

Could you talk about an issue on which you disagreed with your manager?

Tricky as this question is, it provides a great opportunity for you to demonstrate to the interviewer your courage, conviction and log-

ic. Don't beat around the bush or try to make up an answer; your interviewer will immediately know you are not being honest. "Give a genuine answer and describe an example of disagreement with your senior in the past, where you had put your viewpoint across," pointed out Khanna.

What your interviewer also wants to know is how you resolved this issue. So be sure to describe how you handled the disagreement with maturity and how you maintained professionalism and a cordial relationship afterwards.

Can you tell us about a time when you brought in some innovation, however small, to your work and that ultimately started helping your team?

This is a tough question where the interviewer can figure out whether the candidate is someone who brings in change to the team or just ensures status quo. "Innovation needn't always bring radical changes; it can be simple alterations which add efficiency and effectiveness to the overall product or services," said Anil Warriar, head of talent acquisition at SAP India.

What do your colleagues think that you should stop doing?

It is difficult to break some habits. This question will help the interviewer understand your weaknesses or areas of improvement from the point of view of your colleagues.

The question makes the candidates really think about the perception their colleagues could

carry about them, said Mohit Gundecha, co-founder of Jombay, a talent assessment firm.

Which are the other companies you are interviewing with and for what positions?

This is to check if the candidate is really interested in the kind of role the company is offering. This will also help the interviewers understand whether the candidate has thought through about his or her next job requirement, researched the opportunities in the sector and what he or she is really ready for.

CLEAR ABOUT ROLE

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Sameer Khanna

Head, HR, Ericsson

How have your efforts in your job added value to the business?

An aspect that many young professionals tend to overlook is the final deliverability of their work and how their efforts can be monetised. The reality is that at the end of the day, someone has to pay and buy a product or service that your company works for, said Warriar.

What are the three reasons we should not hire you?

"This has brought some responses like 'My salary expectations'. This is a good way to understand what the other person really stands for," said Gundecha. The usual question - "Why should we hire you?" - puts the interviewee in selling mode. More often, the question evokes standard, sugar-coated answers. Flipping the question can bring out the real self, he said.

How would you like your manager to work with you, or would you prefer to work alone and why?

This question is meant to reveal whether the candidates prefer being on their own or managed at every step. "We are looking to find out if they would feel less empowered if they are micromanaged or whether they would prefer a free work environment wherein which they get evaluated periodically," said Amandeep Singh Arora, senior vice president-talent excellence at Teleperformance.

"We also ask the potential employees to support their answers by examples from their previous jobs or with their personality traits," he said.