

Preparing For Interviews- Do Your Homework

by Barbara Reinhold

Monster Contributing Writer

Whether you're the interviewer or the interviewee, you need to know what industrial psychologist Brad Smart, has to say about interviews: Using thorough, structured interview questions will boost your hiring effectiveness by more than 25 percent. What's more, hiring somebody at \$100,000, only to have that person not work out, will probably cost you nearly \$840,000 when you consider the costs of hiring, training, unsuccessful interventions, severance and re-hiring. So, this is serious business.

If you're the interviewer, that means you must ask the following questions (some specific, some very open-ended) about every job a candidate has held. And if you're on the receiving end of this challenge, it means that you have a ton of homework to do, so you don't have to troll for them in terror while the interviewer sits and waits. Here are the 15 things that need to be explored in a good interview.

1. The name of the employer, the location and the dates of employment
2. The job title
3. Starting and final levels of compensation. You can be vague about or fudge salary history on resumes and in cover letters, but you'd better have real numbers for the interview because someone will be checking!
4. Expectations for the job.
5. Responsibilities and accountabilities
6. What was going on when you arrived? What challenges did you face?
7. Results, successes and accomplishments
8. Major mistakes: What would you like to be able to do differently?
9. The most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of the job
10. The least enjoyable and least rewarding aspects
11. Talents you inherited and changes you made
12. Reason for leaving
13. Supervisor's name, title and contact information
14. What was it like to work for this person? What were his or her major strengths and shortcomings as a supervisor?
15. What would your supervisor say about your strengths, weaknesses and general performance?

There's more to come. In addition, ask or expect the next four questions about future goals, says Smart:

1. What do you want in your next job?
2. What other jobs are you considering and why?
3. What is your ideal position?
4. Rate this job in terms of your ideal position.

Then comes self-appraisal, a skill that psychologists like Daniel Goleman, author of [*Working with Emotional Intelligence*](#), sees as essential to corporate success. Smart suggests these questions:

1. What are your strengths, assets, and things you do well and like about yourself?
2. What are your shortcomings, weaker points and areas for improvement?

Finally, leadership: here's how to get at (or, if you're in the hot seat, demonstrate) your managerial strength:

1. Describe your leadership philosophy and style.
2. How do you think your subordinates view you?
3. How might you modify your approach to dealing with subordinates?
4. For your last two jobs, give a sketch of each subordinate -- title, length of employment, strengths, shortcomings and overall performance.