

Possible Interview Questions for Advanced Stages of Interview Process

College History:

Be able to discuss events from college that might have affected later career decisions
Work experience during school... types of jobs, hours worked, summer months?
What were you like back then? What was school like?
Curriculum/Activities/how did in school?
What people during college days might have had influence on your career?
Any Awards/Honors?

Looking for: Extraordinary initiative and motivation

Work History:

Prepare to discuss co's worked for and dates, also prepare for questions about revenues/quotas/products/services/number of employees
Starting and final levels of compensation?
Expectations for the job?
Responsibilities and Accountabilities?
What did you find when you arrived? What shape was job in... talent, performance, problems? What challenges did you face?
What results did you achieve in terms of successes and accomplishments? (Individual vs. shared accomplishments, barriers overcome, "bottom-line" results, impact on career -bonuses, promotion)
We all make mistakes - what would you say were mistakes or failures experienced on job? What would you do differently?
Most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of job? Least enjoyable?
Why left previous job or why consider leaving current job?
What was it like working for your supervisor? From your point of view, what were strengths and weaknesses of your supervisor?
What is your best guess as to what your supervisor felt was your strengths and weaknesses?

Looking for: Job assessment, qualifications, compensation, quota achievement, why looking, understanding of technical space, customer interaction, how worked with others, strengths and weaknesses (note - even though may have had bad experience with company or particular co-worker, never bash).

The Next Job:

What are you looking for?
What are other possibilities and how do you feel about each one?
Describe your ideal position, and what makes it ideal.
How does this opportunity square with your ideal position? What do you view as opportunities and advantages as well as risks and disadvantages in joining us?

Looking for: Understand why candidate is looking, trying to uncover if candidate is simply looking because "unhappy" at current job (usually due to failure) or if currently out of employment. Good rule of thumb is to base reasoning on the potential upside of opportunity interviewing for. Also, be careful not to "oversell" yourself... if you're a great candidate, hiring manager needs to sell you too.

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Self-Appraisal:

I would like you to give me a thorough self-appraisal, beginning with what you consider your strengths, assets, things you like about yourself, and things you do well.

What are your shortcomings, weaker points, or areas for improvement?

What could you do that would most improve your overall effectiveness in the future?

Looking for: Ability to be honest with oneself in respect to strengths and weaknesses and willing to take the corrective measures if need be.

Intellect:

Please describe your learning ability

Describe a complex situation in which you had to learn a lot quickly. How did you go about learning, and how successful were the outcomes?

Looking for: Ability to absorb new information rapidly

Analysis Skills:

Please describe your problem analysis skills

Do people generally regard you as one who diligently pursues every detail or do you tend to be more broad brush? Why?

What will references indicate are your style and overall effectiveness in "sorting" the wheat from the chaff?

What analytic approaches and tools do you use?

Please give example of digging more deeply for facts than what was asked of you.

Looking for: Can identify problems and opportunities; a probing mind; achievement of penetrating insights

Judgment/Decision Making

Please describe your decision-making approach when you are faced with difficult situations, in comparison with others, at about your level in the organization. Are you decisive and quick, but sometimes too quick, or are you more thorough but sometimes too slow? Are you intuitive or go purely with the facts? Do you involve many or few people in decisions?

What are a couple of the most difficult or challenging decision you have made recently?

What are a couple of the best and worst decisions you have made in the past year?

What maxims do you live by?

Looking for: showing of common sense, anticipation of consequences of decisions, consistent logic and rationale.

Conceptual Ability:

Are you more comfortable dealing with concrete, tangible, short-term, or more abstract, conceptual long-term issues? Please explain.

Looking for: effective ability to deal not only with concrete, tangible issues, but with abstract, conceptual matters.

Creativity

How creative are you? What are the best examples of your creativity in processes, systems, methods, products, structure, or services?

Do you consider yourself a better visionary or implementer, and why?

Looking for: Showing of imagination, ability to generate new approaches and ideas.

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Strategic Skills:

In the past year, what specifically have you done in order to remain knowledgeable about the competitive environment, market and trade dynamics, products/services and technology trends, innovations, and patterns of customer behavior?

Please describe your experience in strategic planning, including successful and unsuccessful approaches (interviewer is determining individual's contribution in team strategic efforts)

Where do you predict that your (industry/competitors/function) is going in the next 3 years? What is the "conventional wisdom", and what are your thoughts?

Looking for: Comprehension of the "big picture" and the ability to determine opportunities and threats through comprehensive analysis and future trends. Having understanding of competitive strengths and vulnerabilities.

Pragmatism:

Do you consider yourself a more visionary or pragmatic thinker, and why?

Looking for: ability to generate sensible, realistic, and practical solutions to problems.

Risk Taking:

What are the biggest risks you have taken in recent years? Include ones that have worked out well and not so well.

Looking for: ability to take calculated risks with generally favorable outcomes

Leading Edge:

How have you copied, created, or applied best practices?

Describe projects in which your best-practice solutions did and did not fully address customer/client needs
How will references rate and describe your technical expertise? Are you truly leading edge, or do you fall a bit short in some areas?

How computer literate are you?

Please describe your professional network?

Looking for: candidate uses best practices and strives to be leading edge.

Education:

How have you improved your professional skills? (seminars, formal education, solution selling, readings)

Looking for: Demonstration of continuous learning through reading, seminars, networks

Integrity:

Describe a situation or two in which the pressures to compromise your integrity were the strongest you have ever felt.

What are a couple of the most courageous actions or unpopular stands you have ever taken?

When have you confronted unethical behavior or chosen to not say anything, in order to not rock the boat?

Under what circumstances have you found it justifiable to break a confidence?

Looking for: "Ironclad". Does not cut corners ethically, earns trust of co-workers, maintains confidences, puts company interests above self.

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Initiative:

What actions would you take in the first weeks, should you join our organization?

What sorts of obstacles have you faced in your present/most recent job, and what did you do?

What are examples of circumstances in which you were expected to do a certain thing and, on your own, went beyond the call of duty?

Who have been your major career influences, and why?

Are you better at initiating a lot of things or hammering out results for fewer things (be prepared to provide examples)?

Looking for: Goes beyond call of duty, resourcefulness, overcomes obstacles, action oriented - a "doer" and is in the "now" mode

Organization/Planning:

How well organized are you? What do you do to be organized and what, if anything, do you feel you ought to do to be better organized?

When was the last time you missed a significant deadline?

Describe a complex challenge you have had coordinating a project.

Are you better at juggling a number of priorities or projects simultaneously, or attacking few projects, one at a time?

Everyone procrastinates at times. What are the kinds of things that you procrastinate on?

How would you describe your work habits?

If I were to talk to administrative assistants you've had during the past several years, how would they describe your strengths and weaker points with respect to personal organization, communications, attention to detail, and planning?

Describe a situation that did not go as well planned. What would you have done differently?

Looking for: Focus on key priorities... Plans, organizes, schedules, and budgets in an efficient, productive manner. Attentiveness to detail.

Excellence:

Have you raised the bar for yourself or others? Explain how you did it - approach, problems encountered, and outcomes

Looking for: setting of high standards for self, high quality results, and high sense of responsibility. Possessing a low tolerance of mediocrity.

Independence:

Do you believe in asking for forgiveness rather than permission, or are you inclined to be sure your bosses are in full agreement before you act?

How much supervision do you want or need?

Looking for: commitment to team efforts, but having willingness to take independent stands.

Stress Management:

What sort of mood swings do you experience - how high are the highs, how low are the lows, and why?

What do you do to alleviate stress? (exercise, quiet periods, etc.)

How do you handle yourself under stress and pressure?

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Describe yourself in terms of emotional control. What sorts of things irritate you the most or get you down?
How many times have you lost your cool in the past couple of months?
Describe a situation when you have been the most angry you have been in years.

Looking for: Stable performance and poise under pressure (hitting #'s, deadlines, unsatisfied customers)

Self-Awareness:

Have you gotten any sort of systematic or regular feedback (360-degree or otherwise) from direct reports, clients, peers, supervisors, etc? And if so, what did you learn?
How much feedback do you like to get from people you report to, and in what form (written, face to face)?
What are the biggest mistakes you've made in last 10 years, and how have you learned from them?
What are your principal development needs and what are your plans to deal with them?
What have been the most difficult criticisms for you to accept?

Looking for: Not be afraid of constructive criticism and having the courage to not be defensive, or blame others for failures. Most important, having the ability to learn from mistakes.

Adaptability:

How have you changed during recent years?
What sort of organization changes have you found easiest and most difficult to accept?
When have you been so firm people considered you stubborn or inflexible?

Looking for: Willingness to self-improve... Ability to adjust to changing priorities and cope with complexities.

First Impression

What sort of first impression do you think you make at different levels in an organization?

Looking for: Professionalism in demeanor... Appropriate body language, eye contact, posture, voice qualities, bearing, and attire.

Likeability:

Tell me about a situation where you had to work with a person you disliked. How did you handle it?

Looking for: Puts people at ease and have ability to develop trusting relationships.

Listening:

Are you familiar with the term "active listening"? How would you define it? What would coworkers say regarding how often and how effectively you use active listening?

Looking for: Understanding of individual's opinions, feelings, and behaviors. Ability to empathize. Lets others speak and listens actively.

Customer Focus:

If you were to arrange confidential reference calls with some of your major clients/customers, what is your best guess as to what they would generally agree are your strengths and areas for improvement?
Relate an example of your partnering with client/customer - helping the client/customer to achieve its goals and financial results?

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Customer Focus (continued):

Give examples of your going beyond what was normally expected to enhance your company's reputation.
Describe your methods of diagnosing client/customer needs
What is your "track record" in both acquiring and retaining clients/customers?
Tell me about the most frustrated or disappointed client/customer you have had in recent years.

Looking for: Ability to monitor customer satisfaction. Meets internal and external customer needs. Establishes "partner" relationships with customers and is accessible.

Team Player:

What will reference checks disclose to be the common perception among peers regarding how much of a team player you are (working cooperatively, building others' confidence and self-esteem)?
Describe the most difficult person with whom you have had to work.
What have you stood up to a boss?
Tell me about a situation in which you felt others were wrong and you were right

Looking for: Approachable by peers. Earns reputation for having ability to work with peers to do what's best for organization. Cooperates with supervisor without being a "yes" person. Can establish collaborative relationships with peers without being a "pushover"

Assertiveness:

How would you describe your level of assertiveness?
When there is a difference of opinion, do you tend to confront people directly, indirectly, or tend to let the situation resolve itself?
Please give a couple of recent specific examples in which you were highly assertive, on in which the outcome was favorable, and one where it wasn't.

Looking for: Taking forceful stands on issues without being abrasive.

Communication:

How would you rate yourself in public speaking?
If we had a videotape of you most recent presentation, what would we see?
Describe the last time you put your "foot in your mouth"
How do you communicate with your organization?
How would you describe your writing style?

Looking for: Effective communications skills... clear, concise, articulate. Ability to think quickly on feet.

Political Savvy:

Describe a couple of the most difficult, challenging, or frustrating company political situation you have faced.
How aware are you of company political forces that may affect your performance? Give a couple of examples of difficult political situations in why you have been involved internally, or with clients.

Looking for: Showing of awareness of political factors and "hidden agendas" and behaves shrewdly without being a self-seeking "backstabber." Recognizes where to go to get things done and builds informal network to "wire" information sources and influence.

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Negotiation:

Describe situation in which your negotiation skill probed effective and ineffective.

Looking for: History of Winning as an essential ingredient in win/win negotiations.

Persuasion:

Describe a situation in which you were most effective selling an idea or yourself.

Describe situations in which your persuasion skills probed ineffective.

Looking for: Exhibits persuasiveness in change efforts, selling a "vision." "Charisma" desirable, though soft sell and quiet credibility are acceptable alternatives.

Goal Setting:

How do you go about establishing goals for performance (bottom up, top down, or what... and are they easy or "stretch"?)

Looking for: Having initiative to set clear and fair goals for self (preference for bottom up)

Motivation:

What motivates you?

Looking for: Showing of strong desire to achieve and having a high dedication level. Results oriented and willingness to put in the time to get them.

Enthusiasm:

How do you rate yourself in enthusiasm and charisma?

Describe the pace in which you work?

Looking for: A positive "Can Do" attitude. Dynamism, charisma, and excitement are important too.

Ambition:

Who have been career influences and why?

Looking for: Desire to grow in responsibility and authority. Slow growth in company and self are NOT acceptable.

Balance in Life:

How satisfied are you with you balance in life - the balance among work, wellness, community involvement, professional associations, hobbies, etc?

Looking for: Sufficient balance among work, wellness, relationships, community involvement, professional associations, friendship, hobbies, and interests. Having ability to meet work challenges without experiencing "burnout".

Tenacity:

What are examples of the biggest challenges you have faced and overcome?

Looking for: Result oriented. Having strong need to win and having reputation of not giving up