

Top 10 Difficult Interview Questions:

Here are our top 10 interview questions, if you encounter one that you think should make for an 11th or 12th email info@taylorrollinson.co.uk or tweet us @taylorrollinson

1. Tell me about yourself
2. What is your greatest weakness?
3. What made you apply for this position?
4. What do you most enjoy about your current role?
5. What do you least enjoy about your current role?
6. What do you think of your Line Manager/MD/CEO
7. What is your management style?
8. Have you ever needed to dismiss someone?
9. What is the most difficult thing about being a manager or executive?
10. Why do you want to leave your current job?

Tell me about yourself

This is a very popular opener in interviews. I've been promoting something called the 'elevator pitch' for the last few years. It goes something like this – imagine you're in an elevator and have the time it takes between floors to deliver your pitch.

Lets use the example CV from the CV section ([click here to download and read alongside](#))

"I've recently graduated from University of Westlake and have achieved a 2:1. My goal is to now work in the laboratory and as you'll see from my course I've focussed on skills that will appeal to your industry, Pharmaceuticals. I'm intending to work in analytical chemistry as I've enjoyed this area of Chemistry from my course and have achieved a good grade on my dissertation. What's attracted me to this opportunity is the prospect of working well in such a function and developing those skills further. In my spare time I enjoy running and competing for my athletics club"

What is your greatest weakness?

There is an age-old practice of sandwiching negatives in between two positives. The overall goal is to not avoid this question, but to explain the circumstances around your negative and also make the point you are looking to improve on this. I always use disorganisation, which for a guy who is trusted to handle peoples career move may not be the best trait, here is how I present my problem

"I will answer with disorganisation. I am kept very busy in my job receiving many demands on my time leading to my feeling disorganised at times. This is controlled by keeping the same diary system I have had since I was 21, and ensuring my staff know this system so can follow what I am doing"

What made you apply for this position?

Talk about the opportunities that working in this business will convey. For example you may be wishing to expand your proven expertise into a bigger market geography, manage a larger team or control a higher budget, whatever your (genuine) reason for going for this job, put this in terms of the positives for the company you are joining. Avoid things like job security, salary, perks or any negatives about your current job you want to move away from, none of this will sell you into the new company.

What do you most enjoy about your current role?

Be truthful but there are no games here, this question is designed for your new manager to find out what makes you tick. Be honest, my answer is always getting people jobs they love and I get enjoyment out of doing that. It's not arrogant to say this kind of thing, an answer like "I like using my initiative to provide good quality answers to my clients in a tight timeframe and winning their respect, however I'm aware I've reached a point where I want to expand this to working more nationally"

What do you least enjoy about your current role?

Again, be truthful, but careful with how you present this. The fact is if you are a high quality candidate you are unlikely to be in a low quality job, and if you are, how does that reflect on you? Think on that before laying into the current work. I typically would say something like "I enjoy my job but I find the companies lack of willingness to expand into new business areas frustrating, especially when I see our competitors doing well in these fields"

What do you think of your Line Manager/MD/CEO

This has to be positive. I've worked for bosses I liked and bosses I did not think much of, if you asked me about any one of them you would get a positive answer, why? As a boss you are in a position of being unpopular at times in the best interests of the company, as an employee this can be unpleasant but professional employees realise we all have a boss. Your Line Manager will be under pressure from the MD the MD from the CEO the CEO from the Board. You need to present this person in a positive light as logically the person interviewing you will be the object of this question one day, and any attitude here like "he's a bully" or "he's disorganised" for me will set off alarm bells, about the candidate not their boss.

What is your management style?

By the time of interview your research will have highlighted the kind of organisation you are going for. Truthfully align your answer to this, typically you can be results orientated, task orientated, participant, open-door/arms-length or paternal. Different organisations will respond differently to you giving the same answer. Here is where your being selective about which companies you've gone for will pay off as you should naturally answer with the style they hope for.

Have you ever needed to dismiss someone?

Say that while this was a very unpleasant and uneasy situation you were able to manage this and the person being dismissed understood the reasons and process. While you do not enjoy this kind of work, you are able to handle this efficiently and effectively.

What is the most difficult thing about being a manager or executive?

Be honest, if you are comfortable discussing cost control then go for it, motivating staff is a good as every manager experiences this at one point or another. "I find that my staff are a motivated group but keeping this level of motivation high on long term projects is difficult, I handle this by ensuring we speak frequently both in formal meetings and informal lunches and such"

Why do you want to leave your current job?

There is an on-going theme in these answers which is honesty and positivity. This answer should be no different, cite how in order for you to develop professionally you are seeking a bigger remit/budget/area of operations. Or you may be looking to work in a company that is in an interesting area of research to you.