

# Sample of Appropriate Interview Questions

**Instructions:** This file is **several pages** long. We suggest you review the questions and eliminate those that you do not need. Save that file for future use with the same position. This document will periodically be revised. You may download or print this document as needed, depending on your needs.

Because each position is unique, these questions may or may not suit your specific needs. You may have to adapt or rephrase them to the specifics of your position. When you consider the components of the position, you may wish to develop groups of job-related questions, which you can use to evaluate the level of technical skills possessed by the interviewee (i.e. accounting, computer operations, human resources, mechanical, etc.).

## ALL POSITIONS

### Previous Job Experience/Performance

What is/was your job title?

What are/were your responsibilities and accountabilities?

Briefly describe the major responsibilities of your current/most recent position.

What were your successes and accomplishments?

How were you most effective in your previous organization? Be specific.  
Why did you leave?

Describe any experience you've had with computers or word processors.

Please describe the hardware and applications you are familiar with and the extent of your experience and expertise with each.

What do you spend the most time doing in your present/past positions?

Describe the working environment in your present job.

What has been the hardest or most difficult part of your present job?

Tell me about some of your experiences in organizing- (for example, setting up meetings, conferences, banquets, etc.)

Describe the most creative work-related project that you have carried out.

What kind of experience have you had working with confidential materials?

### Expectations for This Job

What are your expectations for this job?

What type of work setting motivates you?

Why did you apply for this position?

Why should you be hired for this position?

Based on what you know about the position, which aspects of it would be most attractive to you? Least Attractive?

How would you describe your past performance in a similar position?

What do you think are the most important qualities we should look for in someone to fill this particular position?

What is important to you in a job and why?

What approach do you take to establish yourself in a new job? What techniques do you use to create working relationships?

What is your philosophy about work ethic, integrity and commitment to the job?

## **Management Attitudes**

What in your opinion is the most important function of a manager?

What kind of direction do you prefer from a supervisor?

Give an example of a specific occasion when you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.

What do you consider to be important attributes of a supervisor?

What kind of supervisor do you enjoy working for most? Least?

## **Decision Making/Problem Solving/Analytical Skills**

Describe a specific time on any job that you've held when you were faced with issues that tested your problem-solving skills. What did you do?

Give an example of a time when you had to keep from speaking or not finish a task because you did not have enough information to come to a good decision. Be specific.

Give an example of a time when you had to make a quick decision.

Give an example of a time when you had to use your fact-finding skills to get information to solve a problem- then describe how you analyzed the information to come to a decision.

Give an example of a problem you faced on a job and describe how you solved it.

What are some examples of important types of decisions or recommendations you are called upon to make in your past/present position?

Most of us can think of an important decision we'd make quite differently if we could do it over. What examples from your experience fall into this area? What would you have done differently? Why?

Give an example of a difficult decision you had to make at your last job. How did you solve it? Follow-up: Why did you choose that method instead of another solution?

What has been a stubborn or recurring problem area you would like to solve in your current job, but haven't yet?

What process do you follow in solving problems?

What methods do you use to make decisions? Please give an example of your approach.

What kinds of decisions do you have authority over? Which ones did you have to check with your manager before making?

What information or technical support has helped you succeed on the job?

Have you ever had to make a decision before you had all the data you wanted? Give an example. What did you do?

## **Interpersonal/Communication Skills/Conflict**

How do you define effective communication?

Tell me about a job experience when you had to speak up in order to be sure that others knew what you thought or felt.

Describe how you would convince your supervisor to grant you additional funds for a purpose you have in mind.

Describe some projects you worked on that required strong writing skills. What was the level of your responsibility? Who was the primary audience?

How would you characterize your written and oral communication skills?

Name one recent success you've had in dealing with an unhappy student, co-worker, patient, vendor, etc. How did you accomplish it?

In a past job, when did you find it necessary to disagree with your supervisor? How did you approach him/her and what was the result?

What kind of performance feedback do you want and how often would you like it?

Describe what you did when your supervisor asked you to perform a task you did not feel competent to handle. If you knew you were competent to handle it but thought it more appropriate for someone else to do it. If you believed yourself able to perform the task, considered it appropriate for you, but didn't want to do it.

Assignments are often ill-defined and often require quick response. Describe how you responded to a request that you considered vague or unreasonable?

What role do you usually take in a group meeting or discussion?

When you have started new jobs, how have you established good relationships with your co-workers? With management?

What does the "open door" policy mean to you? Do you think it works?

What should a manager do to minimize conflict at work? How much should he/she get involved in solving it?

Describe a situation when you found it necessary to confront someone at work? How did you handle it?

What was the most unpopular stand you have taken? Please describe.

## **Leadership Qualities**

Give an example of a time when you were able to build motivation in your co-workers or subordinates at work.

Describe a situation in which you were able to positively influence the actions of others in a desired direction.

Describe a work situation in which you were required to be very attentive and vigilant to your environment.

Describe a time when you believed it was necessary to modify or change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another co-worker.

## **Motivation/Goal Orientation**

Give an example of an important job goal you have set in the past and discuss your success in reaching it.

Give an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done.

Describe how your work history reflects your job objectives and abilities.

Why did you choose this profession? What reward does it give you?

What should a manager do to motivate others?

When has your morale been the highest at work? Why?

Please describe how you set and measure work goals.

How do you monitor the progress of assignments and projects?

## **Overall Job Performance**

How do you typically handle yourself in a fast-paced environment? Please provide an example.

How would you describe your work pace: fast, moderate, slow, or if it varies and under what circumstances?

What do you consider to be your strengths?

What do you consider to be your weaknesses?

How do you handle a heavy workload with many strict deadlines?

In all jobs there are heavy workload periods and light workload periods. What do you do in such cases?

Describe an experience where you were given several rush projects to be completed in a short period of time. How did you establish priorities? Why?

How would you describe your organizational abilities?

How would you describe your attendance and punctuality habits?

How would you describe your work habits?

How would you describe your own performance standards?

### **Initiative/Creativity and Innovation**

What ideas did you contribute to your department? What were the results?

Give an example of something you recommended that was adopted.

What have you done to make your job easier or more interesting?

Give an example of a project you were responsible for starting. What did you do? How did it work out?

How much information do you need to get started on a new project or assignment?

Give an example when you had to produce results without sufficient guidelines or information? What did you do?

What is the most creative thing you have done in a past job? How did it occur?

In the last year, what innovative ideas have you had at work? Were you able to implement them? How were they innovative?

### **Ability To Learn**

Give an example of an employment situation when you have had to keep up with changes in technology, terminology, and information specific to your field?

How quickly have you learned new processes for a job? What did you have to learn?

How soon could you learn this job well enough to become productive?

If time did not permit a training period on a new job, how would you go about learning the things expected or required of you?

Give three examples of your adaptability.

Describe the most recent formal learning experience you've had.

What are your long-term professional goals? How do the duties and responsibilities in this position relate to that goal?

### **Dependability/Flexibility**

In a past job, describe when you had to alter your standards to meet your employer's? When? Why?

If we hired you, what could we count on you for without fail?

What results were you expected to accomplish in your last job? How were they measured?

Have you worked in an organization that changed its policy or procedure frequently? How did you deal with that?

Give an example of a time when you were given tasks to accomplish without advance warning.

Has a policy or directive come down with which you really disagreed? What did you do?

## **Organization/Attention to Detail/Use of Time**

How do you believe a meeting should be organized to be most effective? Give an example of one you've coordinated, attended or led.

Would you rather formulate a plan or carry it out? Why? Give an example of a plan you have implemented.

Have you ever had an experience when you were responsible for coordinating several small tasks to accomplish a large one? Please give an example.

How do you keep track of your paperwork, schedules, etc? Please be specific.

Please describe the techniques that you use to establish priorities and ensure that you are meeting deadlines.

This position includes many different tasks. Organizational skills are very important. Could you please describe your organizational skills and what method you envision yourself using to remain organized?

Organizational skills also indicate your ability to prioritize your tasks. You can never estimate the number of requests for assistance that you will field in one day. Can you describe for us the type of direction that you are used to working under, what type you prefer, and what motivates you to accomplish your daily tasks?

In your last job, if something wasn't due for several weeks, when and how did you approach getting it done?

Describe how you handled the details of your last major project.

Describe a way you have improved the organization of a system or a task at your last/present job.

How did you organize your daily tasks? How did you prioritize them or decide what you should work on next?

How do you monitor tasks that need your attention?

## **Cooperation**

What did you do to support your co-workers in your last job? Please give a specific example of a time when you helped or supported a co-worker.

Give an example of a time when you had to take the lead with your work group to get a task done. How did you get cooperation?

How did you get cooperation from co-workers, other departments, etc?

What did you do in your current/previous job to contribute to a teamwork environment?

Which problems do you believe are appropriate to bring to your manager? Give an example. How do you usually approach a manager with a problem?

What do you require from a supervisor?

Would you rather work on a team or on your own?

Describe what a "team" environment means to you.

What experience have you had working as a member of a team? What are the advantages?

## **TECHNICAL SKILLS**

### **Graphic Design/Desktop Publishing**

What experience have you had with graphic design and desktop publishing? Please provide samples.

What are some basic principles of working with colors?

Describe considerations you gave when designing a brochure?

What do you look for in a blueline?

What information and materials would you provide to a service bureau if you had to produce a brochure?

### **Web Design**

If money were not a concern, what platform would you choose for an Internet information server, and why?

When creating Web documents, what tools do you use? What kind of experience do you have with HTML editors? Plain text editors? Web site management tools?

What does it mean for a program to be called a CGI? What is your experience with CGI programming?

Please illustrate by describing a good Web site that you recently produced. How did you plan and design the Web site? How do you decide when and how to revise or enhance a Web site?

What, in your opinion, are the basic characteristics of a bad Web site? How would you proceed if you were asked to re-design a less than adequate departmental Web site?

If you were given an assignment to put an existing print publication on the Web, how would you proceed? Why?

Have you ever connected Web forms to a backend database? Discuss your experience with such forms.

How do you stay current with developments in communications, graphic design, and Web publishing?

### **Areas of Communication**

How would you define effective communication? What skills do you have that make you a good communicator?

How do you choose which medium/media to use to reach your various audiences? What are the strengths and weaknesses associated with each medium?

What are some of the strategies you have used to communicate technical information to a wide variety of people with differing levels of expertise?

Please describe an experience where you had to work with conflict between yourself and the subject of your story?

## **MANAGEMENT, SUPERVISORY OR ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS**

### **Organizational/Planning Skills**

How would you describe your planning skills?

How would you describe your budgeting skills?

Assume we faced a significant cut in expenditures: for example a 10 to 20 percent reduction within a two-year period. How would you plan and implement such a cut in your areas of responsibility?

Describe any new plans or programs you've developed.

Describe the extent of your responsibility in policy formulation.

In what way have you improved your planning over the last few years?

Have you ever had to reorganize work assignments for several part-time and full-time staff members? What assignments would you reserve for yourself?

### **Interpersonal/Communication Skills/Conflict**

Describe the most significant written document, report or presentation that you have had to complete.

Describe how you would notify the people you supervise about a new procedure that you were responsible for implementing. It would mean that these people would be assuming new and more complex duties.

Describe how you would notify a large number of people about a new policy or regulation that you were responsible for implementing.

Describe your background in making group presentations.

### **Decision-Making/Problem-Solving Abilities**

Give an example of a time when you had to carefully analyze a situation in order to effectively guide your actions or decisions.

What types of analytical studies have you conducted?

Describe an experience when you found it necessary to bring others into your decision making process.

Describe your approach to decision-making and problem-solving. Why do you do it this way?

When you recommend something to management, what approach do you usually use? Give an example.

How much leeway do you give your employees to make decisions? How do you still maintain control?

How do you assemble relevant data to make your decisions? How do you know when you have enough data?

What have you done to find creative solutions to problems? Provide a specific example.

## **Management Attitude/Style**

How would you describe your management philosophy and style?

Have you ever had to initiate corrective action for an employee? If so, what steps did you take to implement this action?

In what ways might you want to modify your approach to dealing with subordinates?

Some managers keep a very close check on their organization. Others use a loose rein. What patterns do you follow? How has it changed during the last few years?

How would you describe your standards of performance? What would your staff say? What would your supervisor say?

How did you deal with an employee who was not doing his or her job properly?

What philosophy and techniques do you use in motivating your staff and energizing them?

How did you deal with an employee who did not appear to measure up to increasing demands of a job?

How do you think your staff would describe your delegation style?

How have you motivated your employees (or others) to follow you?

Give an example of how you delegated responsibility for a recent assignment; for instance, how you delegated an assignment, and what you did to monitor it.

## **General Knowledge**

Can you give us an overview of how an academic department functions in a higher education institution?

What is your commitment to and understanding of Affirmative Action as it relates to students, staff, faculty and recruitment? What about retention, staff development or promotion?

Describe the type of relationship you think should exist between staff, faculty and students on this campus.

## **Administration**

How do you make sure that your employees are accountable?

What do you typically do when you hear of a problem in your area?

How useful have you found written procedures and guidelines in helping you manage your area?

Do you believe that the chain of command is important? Why? When do you think it might inhibit organizational effectiveness?

## **Financial**

What responsibility do you have for budgeting? What budgeting method do you use?

How do you go about estimating expenses and budgets?

What recent decision have you made that had an impact on finances? How did you assess its impact?

What experience have you had with long and short-term budget projections? Please explain.

## **Evaluation Performance**

What have you done to ensure objectivity when you evaluated the work of others?

What sort of performance standards have you used for evaluating employee performance? Were they written?

How long does it take you to write a performance evaluation? What steps do you follow?

How do you get your employees involved in their own evaluations?

How do you plan for performance improvements?

When you evaluate someone's performance orally, what approach do you take? What if their performance has been exceptionally good? Marginal?

How do you conduct an evaluation process?

## **Employee Relations**

How have you helped your employees become committed to a job or to the organization?

What types of employees do you find hardest to manage? Why?

How have you dealt with an "attitude" problem? Please give a specific example.

How often do you think it's necessary to meet with your employees?

How have you handled "complainers"?

Describe a time when you had to discipline an employee. What was your strategy?

How do you develop trust and loyalty in your employees?

Do you think the "open door" policy works? How much time do you spend with your employees?

Describe a time when you had problems getting people to work together in solving a problem or completing an assignment.

Describe a time when you had to intervene to solve a conflict. Why did you handle it that way?

## **Planning/Goal-Setting**

How far in advance do you typically plan activities for yourself and your employees? By what method?

Give an example of a change you saw coming, or a situation or practice that you thought was necessary to change. How did you go about planning for the change?

How do you assess priorities? How do you then assign them?

What would you say are some of your more important accomplishments? I'd be interested in your operational results and any other accomplishments you consider important. Considering these accomplishments, what are the reasons for your success?

Describe your personal professional training/staff development goals.

## **Organizational Relationships**

What would you describe as an effective staff meeting? An ineffective one?

How do you typically get cooperation from someone in another department?

Have you had to make oral presentations to other managers? Describe what you did and how effective it was.

Give an example of a time when you believed it was necessary to be assertive to get what you needed from your manager.

Describe a time when you had to "sell" a decision or policy to your employees when you did not agree with it.

Please describe what the Principles of Community means to you as a Manager.

## **Work Life**

How have you handled requests for alternate work schedules/ alternate work arrangements in your former organizations?

Follow up question if they have: How did that work out?

Follow up question if they have/haven't: What would you need to consider to grant such a request?

Describe how you would respond to an employee who has come to you because his/her mother has just had a stroke and is wondering what, if any, are my work schedule options.

Describe your experiences with the benefits of having work life programs like alternate work schedules, telecommuting, etc, for an organization.

## **Principles of Community**

Describe what the Principles of Community means to you as a Manager?

How do you define Affirmative Action?

Describe a situation as a manager where you had to address cultural sensitivity.