

Acing an Interview is No Mystery

There are no magic questions and no magic answers during an interview. So says R. Wendell Williams, managing director of the Emergenetics Consulting Group in Atlanta.

But there is a method to most interviews, says Williams. Understand the method and strategy and you're more likely to deliver killer answers that will leave your competition in the dust. "You should go into interviews knowing there are four broad personal skill areas that can influence your chances of being hired," he says.

"These are your ability to: 1) learn and solve problems; 2) plan and organize work; 3) get things done through people; and 4) show evidence of your motivations and interests. Williams offers, 10 hypothetical questions:

- Can you prove you have the ability to learn and apply information?
Discuss different types of technical knowledge you have acquired. Emphasize when and how you acquired it.
- How would you demonstrate effective problem solving skills?
Give examples about challenges you faced, what you did to solve the problem and the result.
- How would you plan and execute projects?
Emphasize the process you used. Give concrete examples.
- How would you get things done through people?
Share examples of working with team members, customers or clients. Stress teamwork.
- Why do you think it is important to get along with people and work closely with them?
The goal is to dispense the myth that techies are misanthropic geeks who prefer to work alone 14 hours a day. Stress the importance of cooperation and the value of accepting criticism.
- Do you consider yourself a motivated person?
Organizations like people who give them the most for their money. That means hiring people who think work activities are very important. Warning: "There is a trend among [information technology] professionals to be committed more to their profession than to the organization," says Williams.
- Can you cite examples that demonstrate your motivation?
Demonstrate how you are conscientious about your work (but not compulsive), giving examples of quality and caring.
- How do you know you "fit" this job?
Prepare yourself for this, question by making a list of jobs you liked the most or least and reasons why. Focus on work conditions like freedom vs. structure, casual vs. formal, independent vs. team-oriented, innovative vs. conventional.
- What do you know about the company?
If you can discuss how the corporate culture fits your personality and the type of person it hires, you'll make an impression.
- Do you have any questions?
Ask about the company's direction and stability' why people stay or leave, what the turnover ratio is and where the department is going. Don't ask questions about pay and benefits. These questions should be asked after an offer is made.

Bob Weinstein's latest book, *I Hate My Boss! How to Survive and Get Ahead When Your Boss Is a Tyrant, Control Freak or Just Plain Nuts*, is published by McGraw-Hill.