

The 25 most difficult questions you'll be asked on a job interview

Being prepared is half the battle.

If you are one of those executive types unhappy at your present post and embarking on a New Year's resolution to find a new one, here's a helping hand. The job interview is considered to be the most critical aspect of every expedition that brings you face-to-face with your future boss. One must prepare for it with the same tenacity and quickness as one does for a fencing tournament or a chess match.

This article has been excerpted from "PARTING COMPANY: How to Survive the Loss of a Job and Find Another Successfully" by William J. Morin and James C. Cabrera. Copyright by Drake Beam Morin, inc. Published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Morin is chairman and Cabrera is president of New York-based Drake Beam Morin, nation's major outplacement firm, which has opened offices in Philadelphia.

1. Tell me about yourself.

Since this is often the opening question in an interview, be extra careful that you don't run off at the mouth. Keep your answer to a minute or two at most. Cover four topics: early years, education, work history, and recent career experience. Emphasize this last subject. Remember that this is likely to be a warm-up question. Don't waste your best points on it.

2. What do you know about our organization?

You should be able to discuss products or services, revenues, reputation, image, goals, problems, management style, people, history and philosophy. But don't act as if you know everything about the place. Let your answer show that you have taken the time to do some research, but don't overwhelm the interviewer, and make it clear that you wish to learn more.

You might start your answer in this manner: "In my job search, I've investigated a number of companies. Your's is one of the few that interests me for these reasons..." Give your answer a positive tone. Don't say, "Well, everyone tells me that you're in all sorts of trouble, and that's why I'm here" even if that is why you're there.

3. Why do you want to work for us?

The deadliest answer you can give is "Because I like people." What else would you like - animals? Here, and throughout the interview, a good answer comes from having done your homework so that you can speak in terms of the company's needs. You might say that your research has shown that the company is doing things you would like to be involved with, and that it's doing them in ways that greatly interest you. For example, if the organization is known for strong management, your answer should mention that fact and show that you would like to be a part of that team. If the company places a great deal of emphasis on research and development emphasizes the fact that you want to create new things and that you know this is a place in which such activity is encouraged. If the organization stresses financial controls, your answer should mention a reverence for numbers.

If you feel that you have to concoct an answer to this question - if, for example, the company stresses research, and you feel that you should mention it even though it really doesn't interest you- then you probably should not be taking that interview, because you probably shouldn't be considering a job with that organization.