

Interviewing Practice Questions: “General Questions”

Teamwork:

- Tell me about a time when you played a lead role on a team. What went well? Poorly? What makes a good team?
- What does it mean to be flexible?
- How do you give feedback?
- What are the secrets of building lasting professional relationships?
- Tell me about a situation in which you’ve coached others. How do you coach?
- How do you influence others when you disagree with them? Give an example.
- How do you show employees/team members you are listening to them?
- What kind of feedback have you been given regarding your listening ability?
- Did you have any team members who do not work together well? What have you done to get them to do so?
- Given a choice, do you prefer to work alone or as part of a team? How do you think you are most effective?
- Tell me about a team that you worked on? What was your role? What did you accomplish?
- If I were a student at Columbia, why would I want you on my team?

Management:

- Have you ever recognized a problem before others in an organization or group? Explain.
- How do you stay attuned to potential problems in the organization where you work?
- Tell me about some of the people who have become successful as a result of your management. What was your role in their development?

Leadership:

- Describe a situation or project where you used your leadership skills?
- Have you ever led task forces, committees, or groups that didn’t report to you but from whom you had to get work? What did you do to get what you wanted from the group? What were the satisfactions and disappointments?
- How would others describe your leadership style?
- Have you ever had problems in getting your team to accept your ideas for department goals? What approach did you use? (Look for involvement of subordinates in decision making) How effective was it?
- How would you describe the leadership style to which you best respond?
- Describe a leadership situation that makes you most proud.

Analytics:

- Describe a situation or project where you used your analytic skills?
- What kinds of project or strategic planning have you been involved in or initiated?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to learn quickly
- Tell me about an analysis you completed that “pushed the envelope”
- Give me an example of a creative approach you’ve taken to solve a problem
- What type of data do you routinely look at and utilize (or tailor to a previous job)?
- What analysis have you requested or directed that helped you or an organization you are/were involved with make some change or take action?
- Describe any significant projects, ideas, etc., you have conceived within the past year. How did you know they were needed and would work? Were they used? Did they work?
- What data is most useful to you in doing your work/studies? How do you get it?
- When (if ever) have you delayed decisions to give yourself more time to think or collect data? What is the longest you delayed and why?
- Give examples of situations in which you made up your mind too rapidly. Explain.

Puzzle:

- If you had \$100m, where would you put it?
- You've got 10 white balls, 10 black balls, and 2 bags. I am blindfolded and will pick a bag, then pick a ball out of that bag. How do you distribute the balls into the 2 bags in order to maximize the probability that I pick a black ball?
- What is the weight of a cow? Explain your reasoning.
- How many hairs are on a dog? Explain your reasoning.

Behavioral/Personality:

- Tell me about a situation where you didn't agree with the boss and how did you convince them of your opinions?
- You're on a flight to San Fran to do a deal. What 3 magazines do you take with you?
- Describe a typical day, a typical week (listen for planning)
- What are some recurring problems you faced in past or present situations (listen for complete answers – problems, actions, results)?
- How often is your time schedule upset by unforeseen circumstances? Give me a recent example.
- How have you determined what constitutes top priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.
- Do you have any systems for keeping track of projects, reports, outcomes of tasks you request from others. What is that system?
- Are there any procedures which you find helpful for keeping track of things which require your attention? What are they?
- Tell me about a situation in which you've overcome significant resistance to achieve a great result.
- How do you keep track of what your team is doing?
- How difficult is it to establish priorities in your current situation?
- What are some of the worst communication problems you have experienced?
- What different approaches do you use in communicating with different people?
- What are some of the biggest or most demanding groups you have made presentations to?
- Describe an experience in which you were too persistent. What happened? How could you have improved that outcome?
- Most of us have been in situations where other people have agreed to do work, and they didn't do what they agreed to do. Can you tell me about some of those? Why did it happen? (Look for unclear instructions, assignments to inappropriate person, and lack of due dates.)
- What was the most stressful thing you had to deal with and how did you handle it?
- Give me an example of a conflict that you had to manage at work?
- Describe a situation in which or a person to whom you have had a difficult time listening or remaining focused?
- Describe the most difficult person you have ever had to work with. How did you deal with them?
- Tell me about some of the toughest groups you have had to get cooperation from. Did you have any formal authority? What did you do?
- What are some of the most difficult one-to-one meetings you have had with your team members or staff? Why were they so difficult?
- Under what conditions do you work best? Describe your ideal boss, position, team?
- What are the highest-pressure situations you have been under in recent years? How did you cope with (follow up on one)?

Marketing:

- From past experience, what make you think that you would be a good product manager?
- You have been working on a new product launch for introduction next month. You just learned that your competitor will be pre-empting your launch with their own product. What do you do?
- You are the brand manager for Brand X. How would you increase the unit volume sales of this old brand?
- You are put on a brand that is unprofitable. What three pieces of information do you want to know?
- I am the product director on Brand X and you are taking my place. What do you want to ask me?
- Describe a product that you would market differently?
- Choose a brand from our product mix and tell me how you would improve it.
- What brand are you?
- What are your favorite marketing programs and why?
- What is the most creative thing you've done in your life?
- Describe a situation or project where you used your creative skills?
- Why brand management?
- Tell me about an effective advertisement and why it is effective.
- Tell me about an innovative product and why it is innovative.
- Give me an example of your persuasive selling capabilities.

Banking/Finance:

- You're a CFO. Give me five ways to manipulate your earnings that conform to GAAP.
- A company takes a write-off related to a merger. What is the first thing that you look for? The second? The third?
- What things make a merger successful?
- Why didn't you get an offer from Goldman?
- How do you feel about doing grunt work that you won't get credit for? (they seriously asked this)
- Explain DCF to me like you would to your mother who doesn't know finance.

General you:

- Tell me about yourself. (first and only question)
- So, how do you think the past half-hour went?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years and 10 years?
- It's 10-15 years from now and an article is written about you. Where does it appear and what does it say?
- What are the biggest decisions you have made in the last year? Tell me how you went about making them. What alternatives did you consider?
- What were the toughest decision you had to make while at (former firm)? Tell me about them. What alternatives did you consider?
- In your job at (former firm), what decision did you ponder the longest before making? Why was it difficult? Tell me about it.
- Describe some situations when you gave your all, but failed. What happened?
- What are the most difficult decisions you have made in the last six months? What made them difficult?
- Tell me about some rules, policies, or approaches at work you didn't agree with and what you did about them.
- Tell me about an ethical dilemma you've faced recently.
- When have you had to go against traditions or policies to accomplish a goal?
- What personal factors do you consider most important in evaluating yourself, your success, your growth?

- All jobs have their frustrations and problems. Describe some examples of specific job conditions, task or assignments that have been dissatisfying to you. Exactly what was dissatisfying? How did you handle them?
- What do you feel is your singular greatest accomplishment (either business or personal)?
- Tell me about your biggest challenge at your previous position where you succeeded, and the biggest challenge you failed to meet. Why did you succeed or fail?
- Tell me about a project you had that failed?
- Give an example of a short cut that you took to get something done.
- When did you take a calculated risk and fail?
- What is the biggest barrier that you have and to overcome. How did you overcome it?
- How would friends describe you/How would enemies describe you?
- Describe a situation or project where you used your persuasiveness skills?
- How would you describe yourself?
- Why should we hire you?
- Give us three example of your results-orientation.
- Do you think your grades are indicative of your ability to achieve?
- Tell me about something you read in the paper today.

General knowledge of company:

- What can I tell you about our firm? (first and only question of the half hour)
- Tell me about the negative things you've heard about us.
- Why should you be considered for this position? (evaluate selling skills and credibility of response)
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- What do you bring to the company?
- Why our company?
- What do you see as the most important issues this organization will address in the next five years?
- How would you differentiate this organization from our competitors?
- How do you think you will fit into the culture here?