

109 Interview Questions & Sample Excellent Responses:

PART 2 of 2

By Gary L. Melling

This Whitepaper includes 50 of the most typical interview questions that you may either ask or face in job interviews; Part 1 of this series contain the previous 59 questions. Developed by eLancer, questions are in no particular order, so take your time and go through the entire list. Whether you are about to graduate from University, a seasoned professional or an HR Practitioner looking for questions to use, there is something here for everyone.

60. Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.

Sample excellent response:

Although I had already punched out, I stayed behind to help a colleague solve a problem. A customer was very angry as he had waited very long for his coffee. My colleague was new, she was quite slow. I came out and explained things to the customer. Although he was very angry at first, I just listened to him and told him that we try to bring our best out to each customer who walks in to our store. After a one-hour discussion, he left with a happy face and was satisfied.

61. Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).

Sample excellent response:

During my time in the theater, I had one director with whom I absolutely did not work well. However, because of my track record, she would assign me as stage director and/or assistant director. I was usually involved in the day-to-day operations of the play and the details of how the play would be performed. I handled the operation for the play by directing scenes the best way I could and then showing them to her for approval. If she did not like the way a scene worked, I gave her my opinion as to why it should be my way. If we still could not compromise, I would follow her directions to the best of my ability. Understanding that people don't usually have malicious intentions is key, and understanding that you will never be able to convince some people that your way is right is the best way to avoid conflict and still get the job done.

62. Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head." Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.

Sample excellent response:

It's impossible to know everything in the IT field because of rapidly changing

technology, so recently when we were having troubles with our circuit emulation over our ATM network, I had to call in some engineers from North Carolina to come help me out. The nice thing about asking for help is that when you get the assistance, you can learn from what you are told and apply it to future situations.

63. Give an example of how you applied knowledge from previous coursework to a project in another class.

Sample excellent response:

Last semester I was taking a microeconomics and a statistics course. One of the microeconomics projects dealt with showing the relationship between the probability that customers would stop buying a product if the price was raised a certain amount. Through what I learned in statistics I could find the median where the price was the highest and still kept most of the customers happy.

64. Describe a situation where others you were working with on a project disagreed with your ideas. What did you do?

Sample excellent response:

I was on a project team in a business class in my freshman year in college. The group brainstormed ideas for the video we were assigned to produce, and everyone but me was leaning toward an idea that would be easy. I suggested instead an idea that would be more difficult but would be something different that no other group would be doing. I used my communications skills to persuade the rest of the group to use my idea. During the project, we really learned what teamwork was all about, became a close team, and ended up putting a lot of hard work into the project. All the team members ended up feeling very proud of the video, and they thanked me for the idea -- for which we earned an A.

65. Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your professor's or supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?

Sample excellent response:

Recently I was asked to put together a proposal for a migration of network systems. Misunderstanding my boss, I thought it was just an informal paper. When I presented it to him days later, he was upset with the quality since it had to be presented to our VP. I explained my misunderstanding, apologized, reworked the paper, and had it back to him with enough time for him to review it before he presented it successfully at the meeting.

66. Tell of a time when you worked with a colleague who was not completing his or her share of the work. Who, if anyone, did you tell or talk to about it? Did the manager take any steps to correct your colleague? Did you agree or disagree with the manager's actions?

Sample excellent response:

During a group project in college, we had one member who would do no work whatsoever. The project was to compare and contrast four companies in a

single industry, so his work was vital. We first discussed the situation and asked for the bare-bones minimum of what we needed from him. We got just below that. As a result we as a group went to the professor and told her our situation -- not expecting or requesting action -- just informing her of the situation we were dealing with. Then we as a group split up the non-contributor's work, and completed our work collectively on his share. In phase two in which we analyzed the information and reported how each of our companies fared compared to the others, we did not get a paper from the group member. As a result, we told the teacher that we had our work done, and were willing to do the extra paper but that we would rather spend time polishing our own work, and not picking up slack. She agreed and said to focus on the three companies we had compiled the most info on while not entirely neglecting the fourth. The papers came out very well, but were understandably weak when comparing the fourth company. The professor understood, and we received the grades we deserved. I was pleased with our teamwork and the way we handled the situation.

67. Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.

Sample excellent response:

My first semester in college, I was a political-science major. My introductory government class professor had a differing political view than I. We disagreed on everything, and many classes were filled with criticizing each others' view. However, on one test I answered a question with the view I believe in, and she marked it wrong. So I asked her how an opinion can be wrong, and she said because her opinion is the way she taught it in class. I pointed out that my answer showed I understood the concepts of the question. She agreed, and I also agreed not to be so combative in answers on tests. Compromise is the key to problem resolution.

68. What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision?

Sample excellent response:

Following standard models for problem-solving and decision-making can be very helpful. Here are the steps and how they helped me solve a problem with a group project:

1. Define the problem to be solved and decision to be made. For a project in an introductory management class the assignment was to report on the corporate structure and financial situation of a couple of companies. The decision to be made was what companies to profile and how to present the information.
2. Gather the necessary information. Some group members wanted to report on automakers, while others wanted to do electronics firms. We gathered information on both types of company.

3. List all possible choices. We made lists of companies in both categories.
4. Consider possible outcomes for each choice. We decided that a report about car companies could have a positive outcome, but one about electronics firms might be more futuristic with high-tech products such as HDTV, video game consoles, and DVD players.
5. Check out how you feel about each of the choices. Given that this was a group project, we had to consider the feelings of all group members.
6. Relate the choices to your values and priorities. Again, all group members weighed in on their values and priorities.
7. From the possible alternatives, choose one. We decided that we'd do electronics companies because we could bring in products from each company and show what lies ahead.
8. Commit yourself to your chosen decision and disregard the others. Concentrate your energies in one direction. Once we made our decision, we focused all our work on electronic forms.
9. Take steps to turn your decision into positive action. All group members got interested in how the companies were doing.
10. Evaluate your progress from time to time. Change your decision if necessary. We were pleased with our progress and didn't feel a need to change our decision. We got an A on the project.

69. We can sometimes identify a small problem and fix it before it becomes a major problem. Give an example(s) of how you have done this.

Sample excellent response:

When I worked in a large retail store, the standard procedure was to leave a product on the shelf until it ran out, then place more items out. This practice obviously wasted a lot of man-hours. Of interest particularly to me were the air conditioners. Not only did I have to put the heavy thing on the shelves, but they were selling at a very high rate. So if somehow AC units ran out on a day in which I could not restock them, they would not be available to customers. As a result I started making a list of products (including the AC units) that the overnight stock people could put on the shelves. As a result, the people on duty always had a job to do, so labor hours were not wasted, and the shelves were always stocked full of product.

70. In a supervisory or group leader role, have you ever had to discipline or counsel an employee or group member? What was the nature of the discipline? What steps did you take? How did that make you feel? How did you prepare yourself?

Sample excellent response:

As president of a community-service organization, I was faced with a board member not carrying out his duties as management development vice president. I consulted with him as to what we could do together to fix the problem. We agreed that he really couldn't devote the time that it took to carry out certain projects, and he ended up resigning his position, but he also stated he would help his replacement in whatever capacity he could. It made me feel as though we had come to the conclusion together, rather than him thinking I was criticizing his performance, which was not the case. I had a plan of action and carried it out successfully.

71. Recall a time from your work experience when your manager or supervisor was unavailable and a problem arose. What was the nature of the problem? How did you handle that situation? How did that make you feel?

Sample excellent response:

My supervisor was absent once when I was in charge of a soccer game. An actual assault took place at the game. A player hit the referee. With no supervisor to turn to, I immediately called the police, who quickly restored order to the situation. I felt I made an effective decision.

72. Recall a time when you were assigned what you considered to be a complex project. Specifically, what steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What one step would you have done differently if given the chance?

Sample excellent response:

I had to give a marketing presentation while attending community college. The project was about Anheuser-Busch. We were assigned to report on key management personnel (CEO, Chairman of the Board, President, key VPs), divisions and subsidiaries, major products/brands/services, key financials for the most recent year (sales revenue, expenses, total income, net income, sales growth or loss for the last year), market share, key competitors, mission statement, product positioning, and number of employees. Among the steps I took were visiting the company's Miami branch to interview employees and gather visual aids for the project. I spent a lot of time organizing and writing the presentation. Then I spent time reviewing my speech over a period of several days. As a result I was calm while giving the presentation and received an "A" for the project. The one additional step I perhaps wish I'd taken would have been to talk to some consumers and store owners about the product.

73. What was the most complex assignment you have had? What was your role?

Sample excellent response:

My senior research was my most complex assignment. It took two semesters to complete and was made up of many components. I had to make many critical decisions along the way that would affect the outcome of my research. I made these decisions independently with minimal influence from my professor. I was very successful and happy with my final product.

74. How was your transition from high school to college? Did you face any particular problems?

Sample excellent response:

The transition was somewhat challenging for me because I traveled a great distance to attend college. To help myself adapt, I got involved with as many organizations as I could. I also made it a point to get to know my professors. I used my interpersonal and communication skills to the best of my ability to make a lot of friends, and college became one of the best experiences of my life despite a beginning that seemed a bit overwhelming.

75. Tell of some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?

Sample excellent response:

The bank in which I worked instituted a policy that centralized the lending process. An application was to be taken from the client and sent off to be approved/declined, processed, prepared, and returned to the branch to be signed by the client. While the process was streamlined, it also took away valuable face-to-face knowledge about the client and the loan. If the employee did not have any prior lending experience, he or she couldn't answer simple loan questions from the client. While I appreciated the newly created time on my schedule, I felt that the clients were being slighted. I did adjust quickly to the new procedure and did my best to help those around me by sharing my knowledge.

76. Compare and contrast the times when you did work which was above the standard with times your work was below the standard.

Sample excellent response:

I was involved in two group projects in a psychology class. In the first, we had to decide on a research experiment to conduct and garner results from it. The group I was in was not very motivated, and the members wanted to do a simplistic comparison on color preferences of men and women. I felt that project was below the standard I was capable of. For the second project, I proposed a study in which we compared how people of different age ranges valued money. I knew the project would go over well with the teacher and would not be difficult to conduct. I proposed the idea in a way that sounded fun. Instead of collecting data in someplace boring, I suggested we could go to the mall. The group agreed and worked relatively well on the project. Discussion is the key to mediation, and the key to my achieving a second project that I felt was above the standard.

77. Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

Sample excellent response:

I failed my first business calculus test, which made me very unhappy. I wasn't going to let this incident set the trend for the rest of the semester. I went to

my counselor and arranged to meet with a tutor once a week. My tutor helped me out incredibly. My grades soon improved, and I went on to redeem myself from my one slip-up on the first test.

78. What are your standards of success in school? What have you done to meet these standards?

Sample excellent response:

I don't believe in trying to get by with the least possible effort, and I am always willing to ask questions to learn how to perform an assignment successfully. In my human-resources management class, for example, we were assigned a paper on "Why corporate culture is a practical way to increase income and productivity." All of the literature on the subject was written in the language of PhDs. I asked some other students what they were doing, and they said just writing their opinions and not doing any research to back up the claims. I felt I could do better. So I worked closely with my professor, who "translated" the academic literature for me, and over time I understood what was being written. Working with the professor's guidance, I turned in a very good paper. Asking questions is one thing I am not afraid to do and realize that without them I will be turning in work that is not as beneficial as it could be.

79. How have you differed from your professors in evaluating your performance? How did you handle the situation?

Sample excellent response:

After I wrote a paper for an English class, my professor told me that I was not doing the paper in the proper format or with the proper content. I went to him and asked if he would help me learn the correct way so that I could succeed with the paper. He did help me, and I ended up doing well in the course.

80. Give examples of your experiences at school or in a job that were satisfying. Give examples of your experiences that were dissatisfying.

Sample excellent response:

I turned a dissatisfying experience into a satisfying one when I was on the cross-country team in college and had never run the whole race in under 30 minutes. With only a month left in the season, I decided that I would run the race in 25 minutes. I ran every day to build up my stamina, and in that last race I achieved my goal time of 25 minutes, which was a very satisfying experience.

81. What kind of supervisor do you work best for? Provide examples.

Sample excellent response:

I like to work for a supervisor who allows me the autonomy to perform my job to the best of my abilities. I also like constructive criticism and feedback so I can improve myself and the organization. One example was my boss at a university. He hired me as an administrative coordinator because of my

administrative and organizational skills. He knew that I had many new ideas and allowed me the opportunity to implement many new programs. Of course, I kept him constantly informed and sought advice when needed. I improved communications in the department by implementing a departmental Web page. I also streamlined the check-in process by preparing the amount of work that could be done the day before. I improved staff morale by implementing a desk-assistant-of-the-month, which led to lower turnover. These are just a few examples. I was given the Recognizing Outstanding Student Employees Award for my efforts and unique ideas. I gained not only my boss's confidence and support but his respect as well.

82. Describe some projects or ideas (not necessarily your own) that were implemented, or carried out successfully primarily because of your efforts.

Sample excellent response:

I had been recently given the duty of being the head swim team coach for the YMCA I was employed with. A swim meet was just around the corner, but only five swimmers had enrolled for the program, none of whom had ever been a part of an organized team. Funding would be cut for the team if more interest could not be generated. So I decided that I would take action and actively recruit people to join. Not only did I have to run the practices and correct any technical mistakes the swimmers were making, but I had to contact other local swim teams to invite them to join the meet. I had to meet with the parents and the children separately and organize a way to help pay for t-shirts, swimsuits, goggles, and swim caps. By the third week of the program, I had gained 15 more swimmers and every single one had beat his or her own time in practice. When the meet came, I organized the events, ordered ribbons, and recruited volunteers. At the end of the meet, my team had come in first place among four other teams. The parents were delighted, and the profits from the swim team had skyrocketed to the approval of the board of directors.

83. Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?

Sample excellent response:

In my current job, I have to handle multiple responsibilities in developing new projects, maintaining existing ones, and maintaining good client relations. I allocate a certain amount of time for each area daily. That way, clients can see very clearly that projects are progressing, and I have more satisfaction in accomplishing multiple tasks under pressure.

84. Have you found any ways to make school or a job easier or more rewarding or to make yourself more effective?

Sample excellent response:

I find that taking a proactive mindset to recognizing and solving problems before they happen make any job more rewarding. It not only saves time and effort but gives me a sense of accomplishment and ownership in my job. I demonstrated my pro-activeness when I worked with Food Lion. As a

bookkeeper, I was responsible for the offices. The safe was kept outside of the office in front of the cash registers, where anyone could get inside of it if I or another office associate had it open to drop a deposit or get money in and out. I realized that the situation was a security hazard. Although we could not move the safe to the inside of the office where it was more secure, I ordered a time-lock compartment and had it installed, and the safe could be opened only at a specific time when the store closed each day. Only money could be dropped through a slot in the compartment door. We kept large sums of money in that compartment. We kept operating cash on hand since we needed some excess money to perform daily functions. One month after I left that store to attend college, I learned that it was robbed. Because of my efforts and foresight, the robbers only got a small amount of cash. My previous supervisor thanked me for my efforts, which gave me a great feeling, and I carried this proactive mindset to my other jobs thereafter.

85. How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.

Sample excellent response:

I took a time-management course in which I learned to prioritize all tasks on A, B, or C lists. I always try to tackle the A list first. In every working situation, co-workers have always complimented me on how well I manage my time. I enjoy the social atmosphere of the office, but I make it a point not to waste much time on chitchat with colleagues. I've also learned that the average office worker spends about an hour a day handling e-mail. I make it a point not to deal with my e-mail more than once or twice a day and I filter my messages into folders so I can prioritize the way I deal with them.

86. Tell of a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you -- maybe a time when other people missed the key idea being expressed.

Sample excellent response:

When I presented my senior research in college, I was questioned by the members of my major department as a "panel." My grade was determined largely on my ability to answer the questions effectively and smoothly, which depended very much on my ability to listen carefully to what was being asked. I had seen other students slip up when they misunderstood what the panel was asking because they didn't listen well enough. I succeeded in listening well and did well on my presentation.

87. What has been your experience in giving presentations? What has been your most successful experience in speech making?

Sample excellent response:

I have grown to be a confident presenter. My most successful presentation took place at my university when I was responsible for presenting a leadership-development program for a class of Resident Assistants. The point of my program was to teach each RA his/her leadership style, so he/she knew how to interact on his/her floor as a student leader. The most significant aspect of this program is that it taught them about their leadership styles without their

knowing it. Each student filled out a general questionnaire that asked about preferences. Each person according to his/her responses was assigned to a group with a general name. I then gave each group a book to read. Each group had to read it aloud. After each group read each book, I then explained how each group tackled the task. They all had handled the task differently. Each student successfully understood how they approached tasks and from that how they would approach their job as a RA. Not only did I engage the audience in what was being presented, I have since seen the program adapted in other presentations by RAs in that class. Not only did they enjoy it, they learned something about themselves that would help them help their residents.

88. Tell of the most difficult customer service experience that you have ever had to handle -- perhaps an angry or irate customer. Be specific and tell what you did and what the outcome was.

Sample excellent response:

I was making business phone calls behind the membership office at the YMCA when an angry man came up to the counter demanding a refund. He began yelling at the membership workers and complaining about the swimming program, saying that it was a rip-off. The other workers were flustered, and even though membership services were not my department, I calmly asked the man what was wrong. He said that his son had been in swimming lessons for four weeks and was still afraid of the water. Instead of instantly giving him the refund, I offered to personally give his son private swim lessons for a week, explaining to him that sometimes children react differently to each instructor's teaching techniques. He finally agreed to accept without the refund. After a week of private lessons, his son was no longer afraid of the water and he could swim nearly a lap of the pool. At the end of the lessons, not only did he sign his child up for another paid session of private lessons, but he bought a family membership and apologized to me for his behavior the week before.

89. Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. Why was this person difficult? How did you handle that person?

Sample excellent response:

As a Resident Advisor, I had another RA who often sought me as a person to confide her complaints to and shared quite a bit of information about activities she'd engaged in that violated the rules. Although I did not mind being a resource for this person, I knew that I could not compromise my integrity or her residents' safety. Although she became very outraged and angry with me, I talked to her about the situation and told her that I would have to tell my supervisor. She eventually understood my responsibility and why I had to come forward with information. She knew that what she had done was against the rules, but never realized before I talked to her that she had jeopardized her residents' safety.

90. Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?

Sample excellent response:

When I first began working at the YMCA, I was the youngest member of the staff. An older woman really "knew the ropes" of the place. When I first got there she barely acknowledged my presence, and through word of mouth I discovered that she thought that I was too young to successfully fulfill my duties because I was so inexperienced. She assumed I was immature. I did my job and took every opportunity to make a good impression. I was a very diligent worker and behaved in a highly professional manner at all times, learning quickly the best way to do things. After about two weeks of the silent treatment from her, she came up to me and told me how impressed she was with me. She told me that I had done an excellent job and was the fastest learner that she had ever seen. She apologized to me for ignoring me and took me under her wing and shared what she knew with me.

91. Give me a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others.

Sample excellent response:

When I was coaching my swim team at their first swim meet, the swimmers on my team were intimidated by the other team because they were bigger and obviously more experienced. The other team members looked like pros in their matching swimsuits, unlike my swimmers' mismatched suits. I encouraged them and told them that they had practiced for so long and so hard that they deserved just as much respect as those other teams. I told them that it didn't matter whether we had matching swimsuits or not and that I would stand behind them 100 percent no matter what. They were so excited and pumped after my speech. They cheered each other on, and not only did every child break his or her own record, but my team won first place in the meet among four other teams that had been together for a much longer time.

92. Tell me about a difficult situation when it was desirable for you to keep a positive attitude. What did you do?

Sample excellent response:

While directing a play, I was faced with numerous problems. The sets were not coming together; the performers were fighting and not working hard; the technical aspects of the play were far from complete, and in general it was a mess. I was the "stage manager," which means that I tell people when to go on stage and tell the crew when to bring pieces of the set on stage. So I organized everything and told people to do specific jobs and asked them in a firm yet positive manner. People began to have fun, and the production went on extremely well (all performances sold out). The play was regarded as one of the smoothest shows to have been produced by the group.

93. Give me an example of a time you had to make an important decision. How did you make the decision? How does it affect you today?

Sample excellent response:

My sophomore year was about to begin and I had to decide on a major. I could

not waste any more credits figuring out what I was interested in. I took some personality and career assessments to get a better handle on my interests, skills, and values. I talked to faculty in several departments to decide which faculty members I was most comfortable with. I studied the course offerings to see which courses appealed to me the most. I decided on communications studies and feel it is the best decision I ever could have made.

94. Give me an example of a time you had to persuade other people to take action. Were you successful?

Sample excellent response:

I was the leader of my macroeconomics group in college. As leader, I had to delegate parts of the assignment to other group members. Not only did I do a written part for each paper, but I gathered all of the props we needed for our oral presentation, and I typed all of the five papers assigned. I was also taking four other classes at the time. By the fourth paper, I decided to persuade some of the other group members to edit and finalize it. I learned a lot about delegation and leadership when I discovered that they were happy to help out.

95. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult person. How did you handle the situation?

Sample excellent response:

I have participated in several groups throughout my academic career. Recently, I had to work with a group in my statistics class and I had some personality clashes with one of the group members. However, I realized the importance of completing the assignment in a prompt and efficient manner. I made it a point to put my differences aside and complete my part, along with offering assistance to the other group members. As a result, we finished our assignment without any conflict.

96. Tell me about a time you had to handle multiple responsibilities. How did you organize the work you needed to do?

Sample excellent response:

While attending college, I also worked at a law firm. I was successful because I practiced good time-management skills and I made a to-do list every day. As I completed each task, I checked it off the list. It is funny how something so simple can keep you so organized. As a result of my to-do lists, I was able to visualize my daily progress.

97. Tell me about a time when you had to make a decision, but didn't have all the information you needed.

Sample excellent response:

I had to make a decision recently between two configurations on one of our routers. Time was quickly moving away from me, and I had to have all the equipment back up in a matter of minutes. I chose the configuration that I had

the most data on because I knew at least that I could better troubleshoot it if there was a problem. My decision was the right one.

98. What suggestions do you have for our organization?

Sample excellent response:

After examining several sources, including your company's annual report and Web site, as well as some of your competitors' sources, I see that you have a strong product line with good demographic segments, in a growing industry. I did notice that your competitors seem to direct more of their efforts to the baby boom market, and while that is certainly a large market for your products, I think you have a great opportunity to expand your target market and increase your market share by marketing your product line to the Baby Boomers' kids -- Generation Y. These teens and preteens are extremely brand conscious and have a high discretionary income -- and you are in a great position to attract them to your product and build a very large core of brand loyal consumers on top of your existing customer base.

99. What is the most significant contribution you made to the company during a past job or internship?

Sample excellent response:

My organization was undergoing an accreditation process. I developed two detailed accreditation self-evaluation reports that documented how the organization met accreditation standards. These self-evaluations served as basis for accreditation site visits and enabled all eligible programs to be accredited in record time.

100. What is the biggest mistake you've made?

Sample excellent response:

The biggest mistake in my life that I have made is taking for granted the sacrifices my parents endured for me. I look back and realize that everything they did for me was so that I could succeed in life. I am thankful now and do everything to my best ability to make them proud because I am so thankful that they have been there for me so that I can give back to society and to my job the opportunities that they never had.

101. Describe a situation in which you had to use reference materials to write a research paper. What was the topic? What journals did you read?

Sample excellent response:

In my academic career I have had to write several research papers. The most recent one I wrote was on whether zero-tolerance policies about drugs and weapons in high schools are reasonable. To answer this question, I went to several high schools and interviewed their principal or top-level employees. I also interviewed students and parents. I visited the Health Department to gather data. Finally, I conducted the remainder of my research on the Internet.

As a result, I was able to get perspective from every group this topic would affect.

102. Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker or classmate criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others?

Sample excellent response:

Another manager became upset with me since some projects were not being completed. Without discussing the situation with me first, she criticized me in front of one of the employees I directly supervised. I was upset that she made me look bad in front of my workers, but I remained calm and asked her to step into the office so that we could talk about it in more detail. We discussed the problem, and she learned that the non-completion of the tasks was not my fault. Another manager did not receive his instructions telling him the tasks he needed to complete. After that I learned not to jump to conclusions when dealing with others that I work and that sometimes a miscommunication can lead to a much larger problem. I've learned to get the complete facts.

103. Give me a specific example of a time when you sold your supervisor or professor on an idea or concept. How did you proceed? What was the result?

Sample excellent response:

Last summer, I wanted to help organize a summer camp for local low-income children. My supervisor knew the demand would be there but feared we would not have enough staff. I convinced her that since I went to the facility daily, I could network with acquaintances and convince them of the importance of this camp. My supervisor trusted me. We had hundreds of children sign up for the program, and I had reached so many people that we were able fully staff the camp, as well as have a backup supply of people who were willing to volunteer their time and services to the organization.

104. Describe the system you use for keeping track of multiple projects. How do you track your progress so that you can meet deadlines? How do you stay focused?

Sample excellent response:

I keep an electronic hand-held organizer that I synchronize with a schedule on my computer. I keep track of each task in order of priority and due date. I use an electronic organizer because it is very portable and has an alarm to remind me of about what is due so I don't have to waste time by looking at my organizer every hour. I start with the projects with the closest due date and the highest priority. I take these tasks and then schedule times in my calendar for me to work on them to ensure I meet deadlines. I stay focused by going over my organizer each night before bed so I know immediately what I have accomplished and where I need to start the next day. Here let me show you...

105. Tell me about a time when you came up with an innovative solution to a challenge your company/class/organization was facing. What was the challenge? What role did others play?

Sample excellent response:

The trucks at Wal-Mart come loaded by personnel at by a distribution center, box-by-box. After receiving a few trucks, I noticed that my employees were unloading broken merchandise that took a lot of time to clean up before the rest of the truck could be finished. The broken glass, paint, or whatever material it was prevented the employees from proceeding farther into the truck, causing more person-hours than normal. I noticed that the merchandise was broken because heavier boxes were on top of lighter boxes. After a couple of days of this situation, productivity decreasing, I learned that the rest of the stores in my district faced the same problem. As a result, I asked each store to take pictures of the mess so the distribution centers could see exactly what was happening. I also asked each one to write down how many additional person-hours it took to clean up the mess. After we gathered this information for a four-week period, we had a pretty a good estimate of how much the company was losing, approximately \$9.50 per person-hour...an average of \$125 per store times 15 stores times 30 nights a month amounted to a substantial sum. We took the information as a group to our district manager. Once he realized how much money his district was losing each month because of broken merchandise in the trucks, he contacted his regional manager, and the trucks after that were loaded more carefully. The district made our Profit and Loss the next month by a 9 percent increase.

106. Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer or professor. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?

Sample excellent response:

When I was working as a receptionist at an apartment complex, a tenant argued that he had turned in his rent payment the day it was due. He stated that he had slipped it under the door because our office was closed for the day. I decided to consult my manager because I realized that maybe the office needed a sign that stated that we did not accept rent money that is slipped under the door. My boss agreed, and we posted the sign. We never again had a problem with tenants who claimed they'd paid their rent that way.

107. Describe a time when you got co-workers or classmates who dislike each other to work together. How did you accomplish this? What was the outcome?

Sample excellent response:

When I worked for a law firm, my co-workers and I had a huge mailing to complete. We had the choice of working more efficiently as a team -- or individually in a much more time-consuming manner. My two co-workers did not care for each other and they wanted to complete the mail-out on an individual level. When I presented them with the evidence that we would finish at least an hour earlier by working together, they decided that working together was the right path to take. As a result, we finished the mail-out in a short period of time and could work on other tasks that day.

108. Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?

Sample excellent response:

I recently failed to meet a deadline in my communications course with a project I had to do on the Internet. I did not meet the deadline because I underestimated the amount of time the assignment would take me to complete. Therefore, the assignment was incomplete when I turned it in. As a result I lost points on my final grade. I learned the importance of examining tasks more carefully so I can better estimate the amount of time required to complete them. I also learned to build some flex time into projects so that if my estimates are wrong, I'll still have time to complete the tasks.

109. Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker or classmate understand a task. How did you assist him or her? What was the result?

Sample excellent response:

I was studying right before a major finance test. As the class came into the classroom a couple of students indicated that did not understand a concept that I did. Although there was a small section of material that I had not completely mastered, I realized that I knew enough about that section that I could perform well enough to earn a good grade. I knew that the section that the other students did not understand was a major portion of the exam since the professor had an interest in this particular subject. I stopped what I was doing to explain to the small group about the Multiplier Effect of Bank Reserves on the overall supply of money. Those students learned enough from what I taught them that they did well on the exam. I missed a few points on the section of material that I had not mastered, but I did well enough to get an A, and the satisfaction I got from teaching others the concept made me feel proud.