



[Job Interviews: Why Only 3 Questions Really Matter](#)

Interviews can be nerve wracking. In order to give us the best chance of success we tend to prepare for many of the difficult questions we anticipate, questions like:

- Why should we hire you?
- What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
- What are your key strengths and weaknesses?

Of course, you can never predict how an interview will go and what questions you will get. You might get an interviewer who fires one tough question at you after the other, or one that turns the interview into a more comfortable, natural two-way conversation. Preparing, therefore is difficult. In most cases we practice the answers to a long list of possible questions. The problem is that this can leave you over-prepared and as a consequence your pre-conceived answers can come across a bit robotic.

From my experience, there are really only 3 questions you have to prepare for and you can link most of the interview questions back to these three. Preparing for these three questions also means you can answer most questions more naturally, simply by referring mentally back to your preparations for these three questions.

Basically, any interviewer wants to establish 3 key things:

1. **Have you got the skills, expertise and experience to perform the job?**
2. **Are you enthusiastic and interested in the job and the company?**
3. **Will you fit into the team, culture and company?**

However, during the job interview, the interviewer might use many different questions and angles to get to the answers. If the interviewer doesn't get what he or she wants from one question, they might ask them in different ways. Or they might probe from different angles to test for consistency in your answers.

Here is what's behind these 3 questions:

1. Have you got the skills, expertise and experience to perform the job?

Think about the key skills you might need for the job you have applied for and assess your own level of expertise and experience in that context. It makes sense to identify the more specific or technical skills that your potential employer might expect as well as some more generic skills such as being a good communicator, having good IT skills, being a team player, etc. Once you have prepared for this question it will help you answer many different interview questions without getting sidetracked into talking about things that are not relevant. Remember that you want to demonstrate that you are aware of the key skills, expertise and experience required to do the job and that you have what it takes to perform it. Always go back to the key skills, expertise and experience when answering scary (and sometimes silly) questions like:

- Tell me about yourself?
- What are your greatest strengths / weaknesses?
- What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
- Why do you think you are right for this job?
- What do you think the main challenges will be?

2. Are you enthusiastic and interested in the job and the company?

Any potential employer wants to know that you are interested in the company and excited about the prospect of working there. You therefore want to demonstrate that you have researched the company, understand its strategy, current performance, structure, market position and products and that you can't wait to join them. For most, you will have done your homework before you even applied for the job, but if you haven't then check out the 'about us' section on their website and search for the latest strategy documents, annual reports, key statistics as well as the company history. Show that you know them and demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job and company. Here you might also want to think about your ambitions and how they fit into the company you have applied for. You can then use the insights for answering questions such as:

- What do you know about our company?
- What do you think our company is aiming to achieve?
- What do you know about our products and services?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- Why do you think this job is right for you?
- What motivates you?

3. Will you fit into the team, culture and company?

This final key question is about your personality and your style and how you as a person fit into the team and culture of the company. Companies have different cultures, which translate into different ways of behaving and working. It is important to make sure you fit in and don't feel like a fish out of water. In fact, it is important for the company as well as for you. Again, hopefully you will have done some research prior to applying for the job. Sometimes, it can be tricky to find detailed knowledge about the company culture, in which case you simply talk about your assumptions and why you feel you fit in. You want to map the culture of the company or the team you are planning to join and compare this to your personality traits, style and behaviors. Again, once you have done this you can use it to answer questions such as:

- How would you describe your work style?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- What makes you fit into our company?
- What makes you a good team member?
- If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

Of course, any interview is a two-way process. In the same way the interviewer wants to find out that you are right for the company, you need to assess whether the company is right for you. Each of the questions can be turned around so that you can assess:

1. By joining this company, will I make best use of my skills and expertise and will they help me to grow them further?
2. Is the company excited about having me work for them and will they give me the necessary support?
3. Is the company culture the right fit for me so that I can flourish and be myself?

If you ask relevant questions from your point of view then this will make the interview more balanced and create a more natural conversation.