

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

Many career experts recommend composing written responses to Frequently Asked Job Interview Questions as a way to prepare for interviews. Composing responses in writing helps you solidify effective answers in your mind so you won't be caught off guard in the interview, making you sound exceptionally prepared.

*These 109 questions include both traditional and behavioral interview questions with excellent sample responses.*

### **1. How would you describe yourself?**

*Sample excellent response:*

My background to date has been centered around preparing myself to become the very best financial consultant I can become. Let me tell you specifically how I've prepared myself. I am an undergraduate student in finance and accounting at \_\_\_\_\_ University. My past experiences has been in retail and higher education. Both aspects have prepared me well for this career.

### **2. What specific goals, including those related to your occupation, have you established for your life?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I want to be working for an excellent company like yours in a job in which I am managing information. I plan to contribute my leadership, interpersonal, and technical skills. My long-range career goal is to be the best information systems technician I can for the company I work for.

### **3. How has your college experience prepared you for a business career?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I have prepared myself to transition into the the work force through real-world experience involving travel abroad, internship, and entrepreneurial opportunities. While interning with a private organization in Ecuador, I developed a 15-page marketing plan composed in Spanish that recommended more effective ways the company could promote its services. I also traveled abroad on two other occasions in which I researched the indigenous culture of the Mayan Indians in Todos Santos, Guatemala, and participate din a total language immersion program in Costa Rica. As you can see from my academic, extracurricular, and experiential background, I have unconditionally committed myself to success as a marketing professional.

### **4. Please describe the ideal job for you following graduation.**

*Sample excellent response (equates ideal job with job he's interviewing for):*

My ideal job is one that incorporates both my education and practical work skills to be the best I can be. Namely combining my education in finance with my working knowledge of customer service operations, entrepreneurial abilities, computer skills, and administrative skills. I want to utilize my analytical expertise to help people meet their financial goals. This is exactly why I am convinced that I would be a very valuable member of the Merrill Lynch team.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### 5. What influenced you to choose this career?

*Sample excellent response:*

My past experiences have shown me that I enjoy facing and overcoming the challenge of making a sale. Without a doubt, once I have practiced my presentation and prepared myself for objections, I feel very confident approaching people I don't know and convincing them that they need my product. Lastly, I like sales because my potential for success is limited only by how much of myself I dedicate toward my goal. If any profession is founded on self-determinism, it surely must be sales.

### 6. At what point did you choose this career?

*Sample excellent response:*

I knew that I wanted to pursue information systems technology about my sophomore year in college. It was then that I realized that my hobby (computers) was taking up most of my time. My favorite courses were IT courses. I also realized that I was doing computer-oriented work-study that I enjoyed so much I would have done it for free.

### 7. What specific goals have you established for your career?

*Sample excellent response:*

My goals include becoming a Certified Financial Advisor so I can obtain a better working knowledge of financial research analysis, which would allow me contribute to my client base as a better financial consultant since I would have that extra insight into the companies they are seeking to invest in. Also this is the foundation block to advancing my career to portfolio manager or even branch office manager.

### 8. What will it take to attain your goals, and what steps have you taken toward attaining them?

*Sample excellent response:*

I've already done some research on other workers at Merrill Lynch to see how they achieved similar goals. I know that Merrill Lynch encourages the pursuit and will reimburse for tuition of a graduate degree. I plan on pursuing a MBA to give me an even more extensive knowledge of business and financial analysis.

### 9. What do you think it takes to be successful in this career?

*Sample excellent response:*

I believe successful salespeople put forth that extra effort that turns potential clients into first-time customers. Salespeople who attend to the details by doing whatever it takes to win over a prospective customer distinguish themselves from the countless others who don't go to any extra effort. Second, I think that if you label success as an attainable goal, you will never consistently remain successful. You can only succeed if you learn all there is to learn about your product, your competitors, and personal selling. Since this learning process is continuous, it's an unattainable goal. With good reason, salespeople should not consider success an attainable ending point but an objective that will always linger slightly beyond their reach.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

**10. How do you determine or evaluate success? Give me an example of one of your successful accomplishments.**

*Sample excellent response:*

Last semester I was hired by university's Council for Student Activities. The group negotiates contracts of entertainers, sets up sound equipment, markets the entertainers to students, and generally decides what kind of programming should be done. When I got hired, I didn't know the first thing about how fill any of those responsibilities. I decided, however, that I wasn't going to fail. Four months later, I have become the Webmaster for the group. I also write our campus newsletter and created Game Night, a student competition of table games. That event yielded the biggest audience ever for a non-concert event.

**11. Do you have the qualifications and personal characteristics necessary for success in your chosen career?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I believe I have a combination of qualities to be successful in this career. First, I have a strong interest, backed by a solid, well-rounded, state-of-the-art education, especially in a career that is technically oriented. This basic ingredient, backed by love of learning, problem-solving skills, well-rounded interests, determination to succeed and excel, strong communication skills, and the ability to work hard, are the most important qualities that will help me succeed in this career. To succeed, you also need a natural curiosity about how systems work -- the kind of curiosity I demonstrated when I upgraded my two computers recently. Technology is constantly changing, so you must a fast learner just to keep up or you will be overwhelmed. All of these traits combine to create a solid team member in the ever-changing field of information systems. I am convinced that I possess these characteristics and am ready to be a successful team member for your firm.

**12. What has been your most rewarding accomplishment?**

*Sample excellent response:*

A recent satisfying accomplishment I was sent to one of our branch banks that was notorious for not growing their loan base. The branch had logged \$75,000 in new loans in an 18-month period prior to my arrival. Having a reputation as a "hired gun" when it came to loan production I was successful in the solicitation and booking of \$700,000 in my first six months at the branch.

**13. If you could do so, how would you plan your college career differently?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I wouldn't change anything. All that I have done was a great learning experience that I will carry forward throughout the rest of my life.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **14. Are you more energized by working with data or by collaborating with other individuals?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I like the validity of information and also like the energy that comes with working with people. The best thing about working in a group is combining the great minds from different perspectives and coming up with something extremely great, compared with when you're working alone. At the same time, information can generate vitality in the project you're working on. No matter how many heads you've got together, without information, you can't go very far. The perfect situation would be a combination of working with information and people, and I'm confident of my abilities in both areas.

### **15. How would you describe yourself in terms of your ability to work as a member of a team?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I have had many opportunities in both athletics and academics to develop my skills as a team player. My tenure as a rower with my college's crew team serves as a good example. I learned a great deal about teamwork while rowing because all the rowers in the boat must act as one, which meant that we incessantly worked to keep each movement in the boat synchronized. On an individual basis, we still worked toward group goals through weightlifting and land-rowing. My experience as a marketing research team leader also helped me to learn the role of "team player." I viewed my position as that of group leader and of group member. I ensured that everyone in the group had equal opportunity to contribute, maintained excellent communication among group members, and coordinated their energies toward reaching our team's goal.

### **16. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?**

*Sample excellent response:*

You would think that because I am interested in sales, only financial compensation would motivate me to achieve. Although monetary rewards are important to me, I am driven to succeed internally. More than anything, I want to be respected by my friends and coworkers for being the best at what I do. Whether I am considered to be the best car detailer in my hometown or the best columnist for my college newspaper, I want to be recognized as the best.

### **17. Given the investment our company will make in hiring and training you, can you give us a reason to hire you?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I sincerely believe that I'm the best person for the job. I realize that there are many other college students who have the ability to do this job. I also have that ability. But I also bring an additional quality that makes me the very best person for the job -- my attitude for excellence. Not just giving lip service to excellence, but putting every part of myself into achieving it. In college and at my previous jobs, I have consistently reached for becoming the very best I can become. I think my leadership awards from my college, and my management positions are the result of possessing the qualities you're looking for in an employee.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### 18. Would you describe yourself as goal-driven?

*Sample excellent response:*

Yes, and I demonstrated my goal orientation as president of the local Jaycees, a community service organization. I am very proud of the fact that I set a goal of signing 50 new members by the end of the year, and I accomplished that.

### 19. Describe what you've accomplished toward reaching a recent goal for yourself.

*Sample excellent response:*

My first few years in banking had me on the fast track to branch management. I realized at some point along the way that my true passion was in offering financial advice not limited to checking accounts and loans. It was at that point that I made the necessary arrangements to go back to school full-time to pursue my goal, which I am just about to achieve.

### 20. What short-term goals and objectives have you established for yourself?

*Sample excellent response:*

My short-term objectives are to graduate from the Professional Development Program before the standard two years and begin developing a clientele. As an intern, I prepared ahead of time by studying for the Series 7 and Series 64 exams that constitute a majority of a beginning financial consultant's time. I'd like to make the company that hires me wonder what it ever did without me.

### 21. Can you describe your long-range goals and objectives?

*Sample excellent response:*

My primary objectives are to learn as much as possible about your company's product offering, organizational structure, and professional sales techniques so that I may become the most productive member of your sales team.

### 22. What do you expect to be doing in five years?

*Sample excellent response:*

Although it is hard to predict the future, I sincerely believe that I will become a very good financial consultant. I believe that my abilities will allow me to excel to the point that I can seek other opportunities as a portfolio manager (the next step) and possibly even higher. My ultimate goal continues to be -- and will always be -- to be the best at whatever level I am working at within Merrill Lynch's corporate structure.

### 23. What do you see yourself doing in ten years?

*Sample excellent response:*

Ten years from now I see myself as a successful consultant for a world-class firm like yours. I want to have developed a wonderful bond with my employer I will have proven myself a highly competent systems analyst and will represent my company in helping others find solutions to their information-systems needs in a professional and timely manner.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **24. How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I believe I am quite good at handling conflict. Working in retail and in the residence halls required that I make many unpopular decisions at times, whether it was terminating an associate or taking judicial action on a resident. Often the person in conflict with me would be upset and sometimes physically outraged. I would always make sure that I fully explained the situation, the policies behind my decision, and why those policies exist. Usually by the end of the conversation, the person could see the other side of the situation.

### **25. Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor or instructor? How did you resolve the conflict?**

*Sample excellent response:*

Yes, I had an incident with my Spanish professor. I turned in an essay that she said was too good to be mine. I was honest with her; I told her that I had a native speaker review the essay, but he made very few corrections. However, I had broken the Golden Rule of Spanish Composition -- the essay must not even touch the hands of a native speaker. To prove to her that I was capable of producing an essay that exceeded her expectations of a non-native speaker, I offered to re-write another essay in her office. I earned an A-minus.

### **26. Tell me about a major problem you recently handled. Were you successful in resolving it?**

*Sample excellent response:*

While working at K-mart, I was one of three people to work in the electronics department. One day upon arriving at work, I was told the district manager was coming the next day to do a store inspection. The two other people who worked in electronics were both over 55. Neither could lift heavy objects, and one refused to work at all. As a result, the electronics department was usually left to me to keep stocked with product and kept in order. I had about five hours of work time to get the entire department in order. Those five hours passed around, and there was still a substantial amount of work to be done. I asked the store manager if I could stay and work after hours while the overnight stockers were there. He said that because of the employment budget, he could not let me. I was faced with bringing the entire store's rating down, so I suggested a creative staffing solution, allowing me to work the extra hours while temporarily reducing the hours of the other two members of the department. Because of this solution, in a matter of hours, the department was in tip-top shape -- and still under budget. And the results? The electronics department got a score of 95 out of 100.

### **27. Would you say that you can easily deal with high-pressure situations?**

*Sample excellent response:*

Yes. My past experience as an Administrative Coordinator required me to deal with many serious situations since I held emergency on-call duties as a supervisor. One example was when I was called by a Resident Assistant to deal with an attempted suicide on her residence hall floor. The situation required that I think clearly and quickly in this life-and-death situation. I had to weigh the many tasks that needed to be completed. I had to assign RAs to call 911, make sure that EMS could get into the locked building, while at the same time applying first aid, and ensuring that the rest of the residents on the floor were OK. I also had to make sure the privacy of the resident in need was respected. I

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

basically prioritized and dealt with each task by its importance. I delegated responsibility to RAs for things that they were capable of handling because I could not physically be in many places at once. Once the resident was taken to the hospital, I was responsible for paperwork and follow up to make sure the staff members, residents, and the resident-in-need adjusted back to "normal" life. I know this is an extreme example not found in the financial consulting field; however, it shows just how well I can deal with extreme pressure.

### **28. What quality or attribute do you feel will most contribute to your career success?**

*Sample excellent response:*

My greatest strength is my flexibility. I have learned that work conditions change from day to day and throughout the day, as well, no matter where I have worked in the past. I also have realized that certain projects require individual attention and others involve a teamwork approach. These are just a few examples of the changes that happen in the financial consulting field, as you are well aware. My flexibility to adapt to the different demands of the job has allowed me to surpass my supervisor's expectations.

### **29. What personal weakness has caused you the greatest difficulty in school or on the job?**

*Sample excellent response (shows how he recognized his weakness and worked to improve):*

My greatest weakness had been delegation. I would take it upon myself to do many small projects throughout my shift as a manager that could have been done by others in an attempt to improve my workers' efficiency. Once I realized that I was doing more work than the other assistant managers, and they were achieving better results, I reevaluated what I was doing. I quickly realized that if I assigned each person just one small project at the beginning of their shift, clearly state expectations for the project, and then follow up that everything would get done, and I could manage much more efficiently and actually accomplish much more.

### **30. What were your reasons for selecting your college or university?**

*Sample excellent response (tells how education specifically will benefit the employer):*

My college has always had a reputation as having an excellent accounting department, so I knew that if I enrolled there, I would achieve first-class preparation for my chosen career field. It is also a highly accredited school known for satisfying employers with the preparation of its graduates -- that's why companies like yours recruit at my school -- the school produces top graduates. The school offers an excellent liberal-arts background, which research shows equips graduates with numerous qualities, such as versatility and strong critical-thinking skills. Finally, having visited the campus before enrolling, I knew that the business school emphasized group projects. During my four years in the school, I participated in more than 35 group projects, which taught me invaluable teamwork, communication, and interpersonal skills.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **31. If you could change or improve anything about your college, what would it be?**

*Sample excellent response:*

My major department had a wonderful internship program, and I was able to complete three valuable internships with my department's guidance. Some other departments in the business school don't have internship programs that are as strong as my department's. I'd like to see all the departments have strong internship programs so all my school's business grads would have the same opportunities that I had.

### **32. How will the academic program and coursework you've taken benefit your career?**

*Sample excellent response (response is very specific to the job he is interviewing for):*

As you will note on my resume, I've taken not only the required core classes for the finance field, I've also gone above and beyond by double majoring in accounting. I doubled majored since I knew that the financial consulting field requires much knowledge of portfolio analysis and understanding of the tax laws. I believe that my success in both areas of study have specifically prepared me for this area. But it's not just taking the classes in these two areas that allows me to offer Merrill Lynch clients more. I minored in Spanish to understand the growing hispanic clientele in the Central Florida area, which as you are well aware is a growing source of revenue for the industry. If you like, I can elaborate on other aspects of my education further.

### **33. Which college classes or subjects did you like best? Why?**

*Sample excellent response:*

My favorite classes have been the ones pertaining to my major, which is marketing. These classes have laid the groundwork for my career in marketing. They have also taught me skills that I can bring to my employer, ranging from communication skills to interacting with others.

### **34. Are you the type of student for whom conducting independent research has been a positive experience?**

*Sample excellent response:*

Yes, I love it. I thoroughly enjoyed my senior research in college while many others in my class were miserable. I was never tired of learning more about my topic and found it exhilarating to be researching something that had not been studied before.

### **35. Describe the type of professor that has created the most beneficial learning experience for you.**

*Sample excellent response:*

My favorite professors were the ones who gave me hands-on learning experiences that I can apply to my career. Any person can make you memorize the quadratic equation, but someone who can show you how to use it, and why, were the professors I liked. I liked teachers who realized that sometimes there is more than one answer and everyone thinks differently.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **36. Do you think that your grades are a indication of your academic achievement?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I have focused much of my energy on work and obtaining real-world experience. I commend my classmates who have earned high GPAs, but I also feel it's important to be well-rounded. In addition to work experience, I participated in sports and extracurricular activities in school. These activities taught me leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. Sometimes my heavy load has not allowed me to keep up with some of my studies, but I have learned an enormous amount that I can apply in my future industry. As you will discover if you talk to my supervisors, my ability to work effectively is much more reflective of my future potential than is my GPA.

### **37. What plans do you have for continued study? An advanced degree?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I plan to continue my education for the rest of my life. In any technology-related field, keeping up to date through continuing education is of the utmost importance. Continuing education can include on-the-job training, courses sponsored by the employer, and courses taken in new technologies as they emerge. I plan to be not only a career employee but a career student so that I can be the best information systems analyst I can be. I will ensure, however, that any education I pursue not only doesn't interfere with my job or the company's policies, but will enhance my value as an employee.

### **38. Before you can make a productive contribution to the company, what degree of training do you feel you will require?**

*Sample excellent response:*

My background has been focused on preparing me for the financial consulting industry, so I can be productive right away. I already have obtained the educational credentials and skills to allow me to become an immediate asset to Merrill Lynch. After interning for a semester, I am well aware of the shared beliefs of the organization and its corporate values. I already have a very good working knowledge of the financial consulting business. I am confident of my ability to get up to speed quickly in any assignment with which I'm not familiar.

### **39. Describe the characteristics of a successful manager.**

*Sample excellent response:*

A successful manager should have the vision and capabilities to formulate strategies to reach his or her objectives and communicate these ideas to his or her team members. In addition to serving as a positive role model for co-workers, successful managers must also be capable of inspiring others to recognize, develop, and apply their talents to their utmost potential to reach a common goal. These are the traits I hope to demonstrate when I'm a manager.

### **40. Why did you decide to seek a position in this field?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I want to work in the marketing and PR industry because ever since I took my first marketing course in college, I have felt very passionate toward the industry and cannot imagine myself doing anything else.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **41. Tell me what you know about our company.**

*Sample excellent response:*

You're large and respected worldwide. You're both a clinical and teaching hospital. Over the last 60 to 70 years you've produced award-winning research. In reviewing your Web site, I've familiarized myself with many of your corporate goals and objectives.

### **42. Why did you decide to seek a position in this company?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I am convinced that there would be no better place to work than Accenture. You are the top consulting firm in the United States. You provide your employees with the tools they need to stay competitive and sharpen their skills while working in an open, team-based environment. I am also aware that you provide a mentor for all new employees, and I would embrace any opportunity to work with a mentor and eventually become one myself.

### **43. Do you have a geographic preference?**

*Sample excellent response:*

Although I would prefer to stay in the Mid-Atlantic area, I would not rule out other possibilities.

### **44. Why do you think you might like to live in the community in which our company is located?**

*Sample excellent response:*

Just a few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to spend several days in your community, and I fell in love with it. I love the fact that you have a thriving riverfront. I'm impressed with the many cultural opportunities here -- opera, theater, art, and independent films. I've also already become a fan of the Saints and the other sports teams based here. I have conducted significant Internet research on this city, so I am quite comfortable with your location.

### **45. Would it be a problem for you to relocate?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I'm open to opportunities within the company; if those opportunities involve relocation, I would certainly consider it.

### **46. To what extent would you be willing to travel for the job?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I am more than willing to travel. I understand the importance of going above and beyond the call of duty to satisfy customer requests is sometimes required and that Merrill Lynch's customer focus belief means that travel is expected in some circumstances. I am willing to make this commitment to do whatever it takes to develop that long-term relationship with a small business or client. It is only through this relationship that loyalty can be maintained and financial gains and growth can occur for both the client and Merrill Lynch. It is my understanding from other financial consultants that I have interviewed at Merrill Lynch that this occurs maybe one or two times a month.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **47. Which is more important to you, the job itself or your salary?**

*Sample excellent response:*

A salary commensurate with my experience and skills is important, but it's only one piece of the package. Many other elements go into making up a compensation package, but more importantly, it's critical to me to enjoy what I'm doing, fit into the corporate culture, and feel I'm making a genuine contribution.

### **48. What level of compensation would it take to make you happy?**

*Sample excellent response:*

I am not depending on money to make me happy. What makes me happy is having a satisfying job that provides challenge and new situations daily.

### **49. Tell me about the salary range you're seeking.**

*Sample excellent response:*

I am sure that I am the candidate you are looking for. If you feel the same, then I'm sure your offer will be fair and commensurate with the value I can bring the company.

### **50. Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way?**

*Sample excellent response:*

Recently my company asked for bids on a phone system for our new college campus. Two companies came in very close with their bids, and most of my department wanted to go with a vendor that we have used in the past. After I looked over the proposals, it was clear that this was the wrong decision. So, I talked individually with each member of our staff and was able to change their minds and get the best product that would save money and provide the highest quality.

### **51. Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.**

*Sample excellent response:*

When I was a resident assistant at my college, a student I did not know asked me if he could use my phone to call another room. Although I did not know the student, I allowed him into my room. He used the phone and in the course of his conversation, he stated that he had just come from a fraternity party and was high from taking some drugs. Well after his conversation, I had to enforce the student conduct code by writing him up. He became very hostile towards me and would not give me any identification or information. I stood in the doorway to prevent him from leaving. I noted the serial numbers on his keys, so when the situation got to the point where I felt unsafe, I allowed him to leave. I still performed my job without jeopardizing my or his physical welfare.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

**52. Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.**

*Sample excellent response:*

I had a client come into the bank where I worked and request a \$5,000 personal loan to "pay off some bills." In the customary review process, I determined that what was really needed was a \$25,000 debt-consolidation loan. Rather than giving the customer a "quick-fix" to the problem, I logically solved the problem in a way that was in the best interest of both the bank and the client.

**53. By providing examples, convince me that you can adapt to a wide variety of people, situations and environments.**

*Sample excellent response:*

I've shown my ability to adapt by successfully working in several very different jobs. For example, I lived with a native family in Costa Rica. I worked as a nanny for a famous writer in Cape Cod. I was responsible for dealing with Drug Court participants. And I catered to elite country-club clientele. I did it all well and had no trouble adapting.

**54. Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.**

*Sample excellent response:*

Arriving at the language school I was attending in Costa Rica in the middle of the night with very minimal Spanish-language skills, I found my way to a very small town with no street addresses or names and found my temporary residence. I was scared, but I handled the situation very well, very calmly. In very stressful situations, I am always the one in the group to stay calm and focused. My friends, family, and professors have always said that I am an oasis of calm in a storm.

**55. Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.**

*Sample excellent response:*

This happens often in the IT industry, but one recent example was when we had a core backbone switch die. It died at the worst possible time -- during exams -- as they always seem to do, and I needed to get it back up and running quickly. I analyzed the logs and system status, and using my previous experience, I made some quick decisions that rectified problem and got the equipment back up only minutes later.

**56. Describe a time when you had to use your written communication skills to get an important point across.**

*Sample excellent response:*

As an Administrative Coordinator, I had a staff of 27 students. Having such a large student staff all working different shifts and having varying class schedules meant that meetings could not be held with everyone at one time. I needed to communicate with everyone about important policies and information often, so I came up with the idea of designing a Web page for my staff with written announcements. Each Desk Assistant was required to check the Web page daily at the beginning of his/her shift. I also sent email communications by a distribution list that allowed each Desk Assistant to keep informed about anything. The one situation that stands out in my mind is a last-minute summer

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

camp that decided to come in a day early with only one day's notice. I had no staff scheduled to check in the camps or to organize the keys. I posted an update to the Web page and sent an email. Within four hours, I had the following day completely staffed and desk assistants there to organize room keys for the campers that night.

**57. Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.**

*Sample excellent response:*

When I worked at Home Depot as an assistant manager, I was always looking for way to boost my employees' morale. Unloading trucks is a very routine and physical job and can become very boring and exhausting, so to improve the unloaders' attitude toward their duties and make the best of the situation, I put a radio in the receiving dock. It worked; however, the district manager did not approve of the radio in the workplace even though it did not interfere with any set policy of company objectives. The radio was also out of any areas where customers would hear the music. I did not agree with my DMs decision to remove the radio; however, I understood his point of view once he explained it to me and promptly complied to his request. The employees were not happy that their radio was gone, so I found an alternative method of reward and morale boosting by implementing a program in which we provided lunch for the unloaders from any restaurant of their choice if they unloaded the trucks faster than normal. This program succeeded by increasing their unloading time from 2 1/2 hours to only 1 1/2, a savings in payroll of 8 percent of sales for that shift.

**58. Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.**

*Sample excellent response:*

As a senior in high school, my goal was to attend college and play college golf. But I was nowhere near the player I needed to be to play or even get on the team. So over that summer I worked on my golf game to the point where I won almost every tournament I entered. I spent every hour I had during the day to make myself a better all-around player. I eventually walked on my freshmen year and was exempted from qualifying because I played so well in my first outing.

**59. Describe the most significant or creative presentation that you have had to complete.**

*Sample excellent response:*

The most significant presentation I have ever had to present was at a national research symposium. I was presenting research I had completed on digital analysis of mammograms and had to present to a panel of more than 100 judges who were at the top of their field. I focused on the research, which could sell itself, and just let the information flow. It went over very well, and I received many more invitations to present the research, including on national television.

**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

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

**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 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 be so combative in answers on tests. Compromise is the key to problem resolution.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **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 electronics 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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

- 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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### **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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

- 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 proactiveness 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 timelock 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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

**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 were 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 was the outcome.**

*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

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

what was wrong. He 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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

- 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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

**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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

### 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 effect.

### 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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

- 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 preceding 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.

## 109 Job Interview Questions with Excellent Sample Responses

- 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.

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