

AMGI  
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INTERVIEW GUIDE

### **Interview Objective**

An interview has one objective: to have an adequate exchange of information to enable the employer to determine if you are a viable candidate and for you to learn enough to make a sound decision should you be offered the job. The company will examine your work history, education, strengths, weaknesses and accomplishments. They will also evaluate your level of motivation, values, attitude and personality. You need to determine the responsibilities, expectations, work atmosphere, opportunities and company direction.

### **PREPARE**

**You most probably will not be the only qualified candidate under consideration. The deciding factor may well be the way you present your skills and qualifications relevant to the position, how you conduct yourself during the interview, the image you project and the 'chemistry' with the manager(s).**

### **RESEARCH THE COMPANY**

Be prepared to tell the interviewer why their company is attractive to you, to assure them that you have made the decision that theirs is a company with which you would be comfortable and that the association between yourself and the company would be mutually beneficial.

Preview the organization's website.

### **WHAT TO TAKE TO THE INTERVIEW**

#### **Positive, Confident Attitude**

#### **Resume**

Take a 'crisp', clean, unfolded copy for each person on your interview schedule (as well as a few "spares").

#### **References**

List only people who can reflect on your professional activity. Have at least four easily contactable people. Use former (or present) managers who are familiar with your work. Always consult with references for their approval and availability.

#### **Other Items**

- Folder, pad and pen(s).
- Thoroughly prepared, written questions.
- Directions to the interview location.
- Interview schedule.
- Organization's and first interviewer's phone numbers.
- Performance results that may not be in the resume and any letters of recommendation you may have. Never discuss or show proprietary information.
- In general take all information that might be needed to complete an application. You may not be asked to, but if you have all the information at hand, you are ready.
- Expense receipts, mileage, etc. You may be able to request expense reimbursement while there.
- If taking a cell phone or pager, please turn them off.

### **APPEARANCE**

Unless otherwise advised, business attire is appropriate. Conservative is always preferred. Avoid extra jewelry and fragrances.

### **ARRIVAL AT THE INTERVIEW**

Arrive fifteen minutes before the interview. Get there early and wait for the proper timing.

If asked, complete an application. Complete it in full and leave no blanks. Do not write "see resume" as a response to any application question. Respond to "expected salary" questions as "open", and to "current salary" questions truthfully. List references if requested. AMGI and the recruiter with whom you are working should be your response to any "referred by" questions.

### **THE INTERVIEW**

**First impressions are (almost) everything!**

In many instances, the hiring decision is 'mentally' made in the first few minutes of the interview, then the manager seeks to justify the decision. People hire people they **like**. The first few moments are your opportunity to create 'chemistry'. Be ready.

**I have yet to have a hiring manager ask me to send someone who is withdrawn, egotistical, negative, bitter, lethargic or abrasive. You have to sell yourself before they will "buy" your capabilities.**

Shake hands firmly and maintain eye contact with the interviewer. **This is a sales effort.** It's a good idea to "mirror" the demeanor of the interviewer, i.e., if they are low key, maintain a low key attitude, but if they're enthusiastic and high energy, be more animated, as well. Be alive! Try to avoid drinks (spills!) but don't be discourteous about it. No smoking! Engage in 'ice breaker' conversation. Go in with something you have picked up in your research that you can comment on...preferably to compliment the company (even compliment the way the receptionist greeted you (if true)...you never know, they may be a relative.

**Don't go overboard and don't fake it.**

If you know present or past employees, **be careful.** You should let it be known, if asked, but do not indicate your support for that person until you are sure they are 'in favor' with the interviewer. A common associate can be the key to your getting the job, but if that person is about to be terminated and you say 'we're just alike', you've lost points.

Most importantly, **be yourself.**

### **TYPICAL EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

The hiring manager is looking for reasons to hire you, not disqualify you. Give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. When possible, use questions as a basis for developing information that you want to make sure is presented. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way.

Describe previous jobs in terms of duties and give indicators of good performance such as raises, sales volume, and promotions.

Include **SHORT** stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them. Describe the results you achieved. Avoid 'rambling on. Answer questions in terms of the qualifications required of the position. Keep responses concise and avoid being derogatory or negative about previous jobs.

**In the interview and/or office tour, look for areas of familiarity to you and get across that you know about it (systems, etc.)**

**Look for opportunities to compliment the company. Maybe you have heard that they were well thought of in the marketplace or that they had just been recognized for something positive.**

***Tell me about yourself.***

This means "Tell me about your qualifications," not you personally. Prepare a one to two minute overview of your qualifications. Start with education, discuss your experience, and describe your performance (in raises, promotions, innovations, sales volume, increased profits, etc.)

***Why are you looking for another job?***

Again, be positive. "I have to say that I have really enjoyed my years at \_\_\_\_\_. There are a lot of good people over there. But I am looking for a more progressive organization with greater opportunities for growth and challenge. I am looking for a team where I can make real contributions and advance my career."

***What are your greatest strengths?***

Don't let modesty 'sell you short', but stick with reality. Show loyalty, willingness to work hard, eagerness, that you are a fast-learner. Technical skills, politeness, and promptness ... expressed in concrete terms are good examples. Avoid generalizations such as "I like people".

***What are your greatest weaknesses?***

Don't be intimidated. The interviewer probably wants reassurance that hiring you won't be a mistake. This is not the time to confess all of your imperfections. (Do not state "not being able to go to work on Mondays", or "coming in late", etc.). Present your weaknesses as professional strengths, (i.e., "Sometimes work too hard to make sure things are done accurately").

***What do you do in your spare time?***

Workaholics are not always the best employees. Present yourself as a well-rounded person. Your answer gives you dimension. Name some hobbies.

***Why should I hire you for this position?***

Be positive and sell! Bringing strong technical skills, enthusiasm, and desire to complete projects correctly and efficiently are good responses. Explain how your qualifications "fit" the available position. Address your interest in the job and the organization and why it's work that you enjoy.

***Why do you want to work for our organization?***

The response should be for the opportunity. Compliments about the company would help.

***Where do you hope to be in five years?***

Use conservative growth projections that clearly show that their investment in you will pay. Be sure that you know what can and cannot be achieved by the ideal candidate in the position. Show a desire for promotions.

***What interests you most about this position?***

A truthful one or two-word answer such as, "the challenge" or "the opportunity" should cause them to ask you to explain. Here again, you have a chance to demonstrate your knowledge of the organization.

***What are your career goals?***

Your answer should reflect specific time frames. Examples:

Short term - "I want to be the best in my current position, while learning additional responsibilities. This, in itself, will assure my commitment to the organization and raise me to the next level of responsibility and promotion. I see myself wanting to learn the necessary skills to lead people and projects."

Long term - "After proving my abilities, I see myself in an organization with the possibility of moving into a level of management that allows me to keep my skills finely honed."

***What are you doing to achieve your goals?***

"I look at continued learning as the key to success. I continue my education, as you see from my resume, by taking company educational courses, when offered, and college courses. I also read trade publications and magazines to keep informed about the current and future directions in my field. I participate in professional organizations in my field."

***Why did you leave your previous employer?***

Before the interview, have a solid answer ready for each job change. Having a written summary is helpful. If downsized, give specifics. If recruited away, say so. If for family reasons explain. If you were fired, be up front about it. Your background will probably be verified.

**NEVER** speak poorly about a former employer. Be pleasant, be positive and be honest. Your answer will probably be checked. Mention your desire to work for a more progressive organization that offers more growth opportunities and recognition. Or an organization that matches what you are looking for in a company.

***What did you like most about your previous job?***

***What did you like least about your previous job?***

An employer can evaluate the type of worker you will be by the items you choose. Cite specifics. You are also providing clues about the environment you seek. What you liked most can include a strong teamwork atmosphere, high-level of creativity, attainable deadlines. What you liked least should include any situations that you are **unlikely** to encounter in your new position.

***What do you think your employer's obligations are to you?***

Interviewers listen for employees who want a positive, enthusiastic, team-oriented atmosphere, with the opportunity to advance. This shows motivation and staying power.

***Are you applying for any other jobs?***

Be honest about this. If you are actively seeking a change, show that your search is geared for similar positions. This demonstrates a well-defined, focused objective.  
**Don't give an indication that you are just shopping.**

***What types of decisions are most difficult for you?***

Again, be truthful and admit not everything comes easily. Be careful what you do admit so as not to instantly disqualify yourself. Explain that you try to gather as much information and advice as you can to make the best decision possible.

***What causes you to lose your temper?***

Most people have a low boiling point on some particular issue. If you do, pick one safe and reasonable. People who are late to meetings, blame others for their shortcomings, break appointments and office "back-stabbing" are suitable responses. Be careful to point out that while certain things may be annoying, you do maintain your composure and professionalism.

***What are your greatest accomplishments?***

Be ready with one or two examples that demonstrate strong capabilities or achievements that will make you attractive to your new employer. A special project that you pioneered at your previous job, cutting department expenses, increasing productivity or receiving frequent promotions are a few examples.

**Document this information.**

***What type of salary do you have in mind?***

Do not state a starting figure. A suitable reply: "I am looking for the right opportunity and I am confident that if you find me the best candidate for this position, you will extend me a fair offer."

***What is your current salary?***

Answer truthfully and include all income such as bonuses. Cite your last W-2 and any increases since then. If a raise is due in the next three months, state the approximate percentage you expect. If you are expecting a payout, please guesstimate as closely as you can. It could be verified after the fact.

***Are you willing to relocate?***

Be ready to reassure them that not only you, but all family members are ready to go. Be prepared to discuss any factors that may complicate or delay a move. Think about this in advance.

***When could you start?*** (Immediately or with 2 weeks notice) Have a 'can start not later than' date.

**MORE TYPICAL QUESTIONS**

***Please describe yourself using three adjectives.***

***If you could improve anything about the way your present manager goes about his/her work, what would you improve?***

***Describe the best manager you ever worked for. What made him/her the best?***

***Who was the least effective manager you've ever worked for? What made him/her the least effective?***

***What do you especially enjoy about your work?***

***How are you held accountable; that is, how is your job measured? How have you performed against those measurable objectives?***

***Based on your understanding of the position we are interviewing for, what else do you need to make to a decision regarding this position?***

***If you were to accept a new position, how do you envision spending your first sixty days on the job?***

***What do you envision as your top priorities?***

***How organized are you? Do you use a system to organize yourself? Please describe.***

***Are you seeking a job or a career?***

***What are your feelings about dedication and commitment?***

***How do you accept failure and what do you do about it?***

***When you succeed at your job, what forms of recognition would you feel are most important to you?***

***Describe a typical day in your current position.***

### **BEHAVIOR-BASED EMPLOYER QUESTIONS**

Behavior based interviewing is becoming increasingly popular. It is based on the premise that the best indicator of future success is past performance. Although it is not the only indicator, as a predictive tool, past performance demonstrates the strongest correlation to future success.

Therefore, the most effective selection techniques tend to be anchored on an exploration, in behavioral terms of the candidate's past performance. Evolving from this approach is the most efficient assessment technique - the structured, behaviorally-based evaluation interview. It combines many different questioning techniques to accomplish its predictive objective. It is a flexible approach that must be adapted to each individual situation.

Behaviorally-based questions are individually designed to uncover the candidate's experience in solving problems, handling challenges, and producing results and it relates to that position. Typically they begin with one "broad" question and are followed by "probing" questions designed to get even more detail.

In answering behavior based questions it is best to use the "STAR" approach. Situation, Task, Action, Results. Listen to the question; describe the situation, the task, action you took and the end result (s). Always provide results for this is when you truly sell your skills to the potential new employer.

In no particular order and not necessarily related to any specific position, the following questions will provide you with examples of this assessment technique. Remember, the questions you will be asked will be related directly to the position you are interviewing for.

1. Tell me about a time when you went beyond what was expected of you on your job?
  - What prompted you to do this?
  - What were the results?
  - How did you feel about it?
  -
2. Give me an example of a recent conflict you had with a coworker (manager, customer, vendor)?
  - What were the causes of the conflict?
  - What specifically did you do to handle it?
  - What was the outcome?
  - How did that make you feel?
3. Tell me about a time when you had to overcome a particularly difficult obstacle in order to achieve results?
  - Why did you choose that approach?
  - What were the results?
  - How did you feel about that?
  - If you had to do it all over again, what if anything would you do differently or what would you change?
4. You just provided me with a listing of your strengths. How did you develop those strengths?
  - In specific terms, how do you utilize each of these strengths in your present job?
  - What value or benefit does this bring to your employer (job)?

5. From a business perspective, tell me about the last time you or one of your ideas or suggestions was rejected?
- How did that make you feel?
  - What role did emotion play in how you handled it?
  - What were the results?
  - Did you consider alternative approaches?
  - If you had to do over again, what if anything would you have done differently?

By anticipating job-related, behavior-based questions, questions directly related to the position you are interviewing for and the "probing" questions, you will be able to provide actual work-related examples. Also, by using the "STAR" approach in responding to the question, you will eliminate many of the follow up probing questions.

***Whether the question is "typical" or "behavioral" answer it to the best of your ability and then relax. If there is a period of silence before the interviewer asks the next question, stay calm. Interviewers often use silence to see if you can handle stress and maintain poise.***

**Your Turn!**

**The interview should be a two-way exchange. Ask questions....but in a conversational manner, not interrogation! This shows your interest in the company and the position, and enables you to gather the right information to make an intelligent decision afterwards.**

Some questions are appropriate to ask each interviewer, (what do you enjoy most about this company?, how long have you been with the company? questions about the area, etc.) while some should be restricted to the managers directly involved in the decision, (what is the first priority for the position?, why is the job open?, is there any additional information about me you would need?, etc).

Don't cross-examine the employer.

Ask questions requiring an explanation. Questions which can be answered with a "yes" or "no" are conversation stoppers.

Don't interrupt when the employer is answering YOUR question.

Ask job-relevant questions: responsibilities, the company, products, services, people.

Ask about your potential peers, subordinates, and superiors.

Take notes.

Make sure to get a complete understanding of what you would be expected to do. **This is without a doubt the most important information to be exchanged in the interview.**

***What are the responsibilities for the position?***

***How is accountability measured?***

***Describe a typical day on the job?***

***What projects would I be involved in now? In the future?***

***What is the most critical objective for the new person?***

***What are the longer-term objectives?***

***What are the most difficult aspects of the position?***

***For and with whom will I be working?***

***Was the last person in this position successful? If so describe what made him/her so. If not, why?***

**LISTEN!** The first two or three things the interviewer mentions are probably the most important even if not they are not the principal items on the job description. Compare your background and experience to these items.

General info:

*What is the projected department's/company's growth in the next 2 years?  
What is the philosophy on training and development here?*

**The Future:**

*If I perform well, what are the possible advancement opportunities?*

*Does this position historically have a high degree of promotability?*

*Where is the person who formerly held this position?*

*When would you need me to start?*

**INTERVIEW CONCLUSION**

If you are sincerely interested in the position, you should clearly communicate your feelings to the employer, perhaps by simply saying, ***"Based on everything I know about this opportunity, what I saw and heard today, this is something I know I can do and am very interested in."***

In parting, thank the people for their consideration; again state your interest and that you could make yourself available within a reasonable time frame.

**The farewell should also include a smile, direct eye contact, and a firm but gentle handshake.**

**Call your AMGI recruiter to provide feedback.....**

It is very important to convey your impressions of the position and the company. Let me know whether you are interested in the position or not and if there were questions you forgot to ask at the interview. If you have concerns, we need to address them *now*. Only after I get your feedback about the interview do I contact the employer for theirs. Then, I will follow-up with you regarding the employer's thoughts.

**THANK YOU NOTE**

Send a short note of appreciation to thank the hiring manager/interviewer for the opportunity to interview. Restate your interest in the position and the company, and why, as well as your ability to do the job. Be sure to mail/email it not later than the following day. This is a good way to keep your name current in the interviewer's mind.