# Negative Interview Questions Guidelines

It is common in a professional interview to be asked a few negative interview questions. A recruiter often asks negative questions about your weaknesses or past job experiences because they are interested in how you represent yourself professionally in tough situations.

Listed below are several strategies to help you effectively answer negative interview questions:

- Keep a positive attitude and respond to the question constructively
- Explain your answer in a way that portrays a positive result
- Focus on behaviors rather than personality traits when responding to weaknesses
- Refrain from repeating the negative word, such as weakness, back to the recruiter
- Speak with respect while talking about past employers
- Avoid sounding angry, defensive or hostile in your response
- Take a moment to think; do not lie or make up a fake situation
- Demonstrate awareness of the negative situation and show you are working to improve or minimize the issue
- Take responsibility for a mistake, as employers are looking for accountability
- Use the STAR method (situation, task, action, and result) to be efficient and accurate with your responses

# Examples for responding to negative interview questions

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

A. An area in which I can improve is delegation. My natural leadership abilities often find me as the "lead" on a group project in classes, and I tend to assign people tasks and help to keep everyone on task. However, I tend to take it upon myself to do too many small pieces that should be split up among my classmates. Once I realized I was doing more work than the other people in my group, I reevaluated what I was doing. I quickly realized that if I distributed the tasks more equally, I could manage the project much more efficiently and actually accomplish more.

### Q. Describe a time when you were not satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?

A. I did not pass my first business stats test, which made me very unhappy. I wasn't going to let the first test set the trend for the rest of the semester. So, I arranged to meet with a tutor once a week in the Academic Resource Center on campus and I started studying somewhere other than my dorm room. My grades soon improved, and I went on to redeem myself on the next test.

#### O. Describe a situation when you dealt with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?

A. When I first began working at the YMCA, I was the youngest member of the staff. There was an older woman who really "knew the ropes" and when I first got there she barely acknowledged my presence. I discovered that she thought I was too young to successfully fulfill my duties. 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. After about two weeks she came up to me and told me how impressed she was with me. She apologized for ignoring me and took me under her wing sharing what she knew with me.

## Q. Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with.

A. As a Resident Advisor, there was another RA who often came to me to discuss her complaints and she 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 her, I knew I could not compromise my integrity or her residents' safety. I talked to her about the situation and told her that I would have to tell my supervisor, even though I knew she would be upset. 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.

#### Q. Tell me about a mistake you made in the past.

A. I work in an academic department at WMU, and every year the department hosts a large event for both students and employers. Employers come to speak to students about the industry they work in and what positions are open in their companies. It was my responsibility to bring several items from campus to the location of the event, and one of those items was the registration packets for employers. The packets included their nametags, schedules, parking passes, and more. It wasn't until employers arrived that I realized I forget them, so it was really hectic. I drove back to campus, got the packets, and found every employer who arrived before the packets were there and gave them their packets. I apologized to them for the inconvenience and to my boss as well. Now, I write a list of everything I need to bring to a meeting or an event, so I don't forget anything. I cross reference my list with what I gathered to double-check my work.



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