

Questions You Need to NAIL!

We are now in our sixth week and beginning to answer questions that you have asked for answers to. The first question we have was sent in within one hour of the first article going out. It made me feel great that I was getting instant feedback! These articles are for YOU!

I have had 4 more questions but would welcome any question you have to add. The question for this week...or questions are - Tell us about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision. How did you handle it? What was the outcome?

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This 3 part question is very typical in behaviour based interviewing. With the first question you are “*setting the scene*” for the accomplishment you are about to speak about. The second question is about *your actions* or what you specifically did about the situation. The third question helps the interviewer understand *what the outcome was*. In hearing all three of the questions answered together, the interviewer understands your depth of knowledge better, how you adapt to certain situations and whether you handled everything in a manner that would work in their organization.

To answer this effectively, it is important to remember that we all need to make unpopular decisions whether they are in our work or personal life. ***Making the decision is not the key factor but how you handle it is.***

As an example:

The situation could be that as a senior specialist in an organization you are leading a project with a number of people working in varying capacities. The project is approaching a critical deadline and you have one person who is not pulling their weight and in turn not allowing others to get their work done.

You could:

- A) Put the load on others to get the work done and just bypass this person to avoid confrontation.
- B) You could have an unfriendly conversation with the person, telling them to pick up the pace or even more unfriendly, do it in front of the project team.
- C) Speak to them in private, letting them know you are concerned that you aren't going to make a critical deadline and ask for a reason why they are behind...(at this point anything can come out!). If they don't have a good reason, you assertively advise them that they need to pick up the pace; giving them deadlines and letting them you will be monitoring them and will review their progress, reiterating that if they don't improve you will have to take it to your boss as he/she needs to know about the situation.

Now, before we go further, I hope you do not answer A or B in an interview... (and if you do respond to people like that...get help!). Answer C is the beginning of how you would specifically identify for the interviewer *how you handled the situation*.

Assuming, this person doesn't pick up their pace and you are in serious risk of missing the deadline; you need to take action for your own credibility.

Continuing with "C" could sound something like "After speaking to him/her the first time and monitoring the situation, I found it wasn't getting better. I addressed it with them again and was not given an understanding that the problem would be fixed. I knew I need to take it further and informed them that I was going to do that. I then met with my manager, advised them of the situation, how I had handled it and asked for their support in moving forward. I also went in with a plan of how we could proceed with the project ensuring we did not jeopardize the deadline."

To answer the third question – "*What was the outcome?*" The answer could be something like "My manager thanked for the input, agreed with my recommendation for moving forward, pulled the individual off the team and dealt with them from there. We made our deadline."

Your three responses would be all together. Try to keep your answer crisp and deliver it within approximately 2 minutes.

Having to do this is most definitely an unpopular decision and what an interviewer is looking for here is your leadership ability, your integrity level and do you follow the "*chain of command*".

In this example you are showing *integrity* by speaking to the person directly in private, monitoring, following up and advising them you were taking it forward.

You are also demonstrating *leadership* because leaders whether formal or informal need to make difficult decisions and reporting on someone is very difficult. Response C also shows you are considering the rest of the team, ensuring they can get their work done.

You are also demonstrating that you understand the "*chain of command*", ensuring your boss is kept informed but also coming to them with solutions...making their job easier.

While every situation is different, you will always win with ***Integrity!***

Next week we will cover "What was the toughest decision you've ever had to make?"

Take care,

Lotte