How to Answer Tough Interview Questions Cheat Sheet

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Introduction

Asking questions that get people to explain how they have tackled particular problems in the past are better than brainteasers for interviews, said Dave Denaro, vice president at Keystone Associates, which provides career coaching to executives. "You can probe for details to confirm the individual is being truthful," Denaro said. "-Asking how have you handled this problem before is better than asking how would you handle it, assuming the candidate has had at least some work experience."

Interviewers should try to get to the heart of the following questions,

- Can the candidate deliver what needs to be done in the job?
- Are they motivated to do it in this particular company?
- Do they fit the company culture and management style?

"Not every candidate is enough of a match in all three areas to warrant getting an offer, nor should a candidate accept a job offer if they think there is not enough of a match in all three areas," Denaro said.

Here are some tips for handling brain teaser interview questions.

Source: http://www.techrepublic.com/article/how-to-answer-tough-interview-questions-8-tips/?ftag=TRE684d531&bhid=12358734

1. Do your research.

Oftentimes, tech companies use the same type of brainteaser questions, so candidates can prepare for them ahead of time, Dinan said. Several brain teasers fall into similar categories, such as the "How Many [Things] Are There in [Location]?" question and the "How Many [Things] Could Fit in [Container]?" question.

You can also prepare to connect your response to any question to what the company is looking for in an employee.

2. Buy some time

Once an interviewer throws you a difficult question, you can buy some time with filler statements such as, "That's really interesting, I've never thought about it before," said Jen Teague, a small business staffing and onboarding coach. You can also ask to have a few minutes to fully evaluate the question.

You can also try and use humor to diffuse the tension of the situation, Teague said. "I'm a fan of humor, though the industry is not very humorous," she said. "Usually, I try to tell candidates when they are nervous to make light of it."

3. Clarify the question.

Listen closely to the question, and clarify the scenario before committing to a path to find an answer, Stokes said. "Clarification is one of the key points that needs to be make if you receive a curveball question so there is understanding on both sides," she added.

If you find you can reach an answer from a number of different angles, explain that to the interviewer, and describe each path, Stokes said.

4. Don't worry about finding the right answer

"At heart, these are thinking-style questions," Denaro said. "Often the interviewer is not looking for the absolute right answer, but rather how you think through the problem."

Often, these questions don't even have a right or wrong answer, Teague said. "You're not going to know how many jelly beans can fill the White House," she added. "They want to understand the way you think, and why your answer is the way it is. Giving any answer is the best way to go about it."

5. Show off your communication skills.

"The advice I give to handle this type of question is to verbalize your thought process as you answer the question," Denaro said. "In other words, say out loud the steps you are going through in your brain. If their thinking style matches your thinking style then they will like your answer."

No matter the question, being able to demonstrate soft skills such as active listening is crucial during an interview, Teague said. "Communication is really essential when interviewing, even when it comes to these kind of off-the-wall questions," she added. "Being able to talk it out and explain it in a rational manner is what's going to get you the position."

6. Use a whiteboard

If available, use a whiteboard or piece of paper to outline the problem and the different potential routes to an answer.

"You're able to use that as a tool to demonstrate the verbal, oral, and written problem solving," Stokes said.

7. Ask for feedback.

To determine if your thinking styles matches that of the company, Denaro advises asking the interviewer directly, "Is that how you would go about figuring this problem out?" after you've concluded your response. "Then you will know if your answer scored points, or if you need to ask a clarifying question and try again," he said.

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8. Follow up

If you aren't happy with the answer you came up with, it's a good idea to follow up with the interviewer later on, Stokes said. "If you're still thinking about the problem and want to demonstrate to the potential future employer that you have the answer, encourage the dialogue even after the interview, to say 'I've got another two angles to present,'" she said.

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