

Weed out applicants with 'silver bullet' interview question

Issue: Interviewers often have one pet question they use to test an applicant's quality.

Benefit: The right question can separate the contenders from the pretenders.

Action: Review this list of "favorite interview questions" from 20 HR professionals to find your new zinger.

Sometimes, they're straightforward. ("Tell me about yourself.") Sometimes, they're deep. ("If you were an animal, what kind would you be?") Sometimes, they're just plain weird. ("How do they make M&M's?")

Interview questions come in all flavors, but HR people and hiring managers usually have their favorites to help sort out the best candidates. More than 1,400 HR people recently answered an HRHero.com survey asking "What's your favorite interview question?" Here are some of the better answers:

1. What do you owe your employer? What does your employer owe you?
2. After you leave today, what would you like us to remember about you?
3. Give me a specific example of how you solved a problem.
4. What would be your most immediate contribution should we hire you?
5. Describe yourself in just three words.
6. Describe a boring day at your last job.
7. Who is your hero, and why?
8. During performance reviews, what areas have you been asked to improve?
9. How would your co-workers describe you?
10. If you could buy any skill you don't possess, what would it be and why?
11. If you were a relay-team captain, would you put yourself first, as a middleman or as the anchor? Why?
12. Tell me about any unpopular decisions and how you got others to accept your views.
13. Tell me what you know about our company and your impression of our Web site.
14. What have you done in the past year with your own time to make yourself a better person?
15. What can you do for us that no one else can?
16. What do you consider your top two or three accomplishments?
17. What has been your most (and least) favorite job? And why?
18. What's the most creative thing you have ever done?
19. What's the biggest mistake you've made on the job? And how did you handle it?
20. When could you start? (If he's currently employed and says "now," failure to give notice shows irresponsibility.)

Note: HRHero has made the full survey results available to HR Specialist readers for the next month. Find it at www.hrhero.com/survey/hiring_results.