

Interview questions often targeted at Financial Manager, Controller and Director level

1. Summarise the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the financial position of the company as you understand them.
2. We view the accounting/financial management functions in this position as more than tracking numbers, but more the analysis to reduce expenditure and increase income revenue. What experience do you have in using your accounting and financial management skills to identify waste and opportunity? What were the results of your efforts?
3. How have you increased revenues in the previous companies you have worked for?
4. How much success have you had with budgets you have developed or assisted in developing? Explain.
5. Can you give me an example where you improved the quality/timeliness of the financial information?
6. What are the most important policies and procedures in your philosophy to cash management?
7. When analysing your group budget, what would you be looking for?
8. Describe an instance when you had to work weekends or evenings to meet expectations and/or “fill the gap” from other employees and/or subordinates?
9. What types of reports would you like to review in your first month on the job and why?
10. What kind of regular meetings would you schedule with your division managers?
11. What experience do you have in team leadership? How would you describe your leadership style and how has it contributed to the success of the project/department? Talk through how you impacted the careers of the staff you mentored.
12. What do you want staff to tell you about their position in your first week on the job? After the first month?
13. How will you determine your expectations from your staff? At what point do you believe it is important to give staff a “review”?
14. How will you help staff change from a “This is how it is always done it” to new processes you implement?
15. How do you reward excellence, innovation, initiative, teamwork?
16. How many performance evaluations have you conducted in the last 12 months? How did your reports fare? How did you help them do well? What could you have done to help them perform at the highest level? Did you expand the team?
17. What is your commercial experience and how do you feel you could create impact in this role?

Commonly asked interview questions

1. What is it about this role/the company that motivated you to apply for this position?
2. Describe a situation where you facilitated a project that spanned across several departments/countries or functions. What challenges did you face and how did you overcome them?
3. Give me an example of an occasion when you found yourself with competing priorities - more to do than you could possibly get done. What did you do to resolve the situation? Would you do anything different now?
4. Why should I hire you?
5. What are your strongest abilities?
6. How do your skills relate to our needs?
7. Tell me something about yourself?



Commonly asked interview questions - Continued

8. What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
9. Where do you want to be in 5 years?
10. Why do you want to work for us?
11. Where did you grow up?
12. What does "success" mean to you?
13. What does failure mean to you?
14. What are your three major accomplishments?
15. What have you disliked in your past jobs?
16. What type of people do you enjoy working with?
17. What type of people frustrate you?
18. In the past year, what have you been dissatisfied about in your performance?
19. What is your ideal job?
20. What can you tell me about your past bosses?
21. Which is more important to you: money or the type of job?
22. What have you learned from your activities?
23. What two attributes are most important in your job?
24. What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
25. What have you done that you consider creative?
26. Who do you admire? Why?
27. What do you get passionate about?
28. Have you ever managed a conflict? How?
29. What concerns you about our company?

Ideas on how to handle difficult questions

1. You may be over-qualified for the position we have to offer. Strong companies need strong people. A growing, energetic company is rarely unable to use its people talents. Emphasise your interest in a long-term association, pointing out that the employer will get a faster return on investment because you have more experience than required.
2. What is your management style? "Open-door management" is best and you get the job done on time or inform your management.
3. Are you a good manager? Give an example. Why do you feel you have top managerial potential? Keep your answer focused on achievements and tasks; emphasise management skills - planning, organising, controlling, interpersonal, etc.
4. What do you look for when you recruit people? Skills, initiative, adaptability.
5. Have you ever fired anyone? If so, what were the reasons and how did you handle it? You have had experience with this and it worked out well.
6. What do you see as the most difficult part of being a manager? Getting things planned and done on time within the budget.
7. What do your subordinates think of you? Be honest and positive, they can easily check.
8. What is your biggest weakness as a manager? Be honest and end on a positive note, e.g. "I don't enjoy reprimanding people, so I try to begin with something positive first."

A sample of questions to consider asking the interviewers:

1. What are your company's strengths and how do you capitalise on them?
2. What are your company's weaknesses and how are you dealing with them?
3. What changes do you anticipate in the industry?
4. What risks will your company face due to industry changes?
5. How would you describe the business culture?
6. How have you strategically responded to the competition?
7. What legislation is pending that will affect the firm?
8. Where will the major sources of your business be in the next 5 years'?
9. How is worker performance measured and reviewed?
10. Do you have a mentor program? What formal training programs are in place?
11. What is the company's management style?
12. What challenges are facing the finance department currently? How is the business currently acting on them?
13. What are the key skills that you require for the role?
14. Describe my initial assignments?
15. How is this position likely to change in the next year to two year period?
16. From all the accountabilities on the job description, what duties are likely to take most time?

In summary:

If the role is of interest, **ALWAYS** re-confirm your enthusiasm for the job/company before you leave. Summarise how you believe your attributes/previous experience would be beneficial in making the role a success.

Clarify what stage the interview process is at, when the second interview will be and how many applicants are being considered. This will give you a time frame for how quickly a decision is likely and how many competitors you have for the role. On some occasions, the interview may tentatively give you the proposed dates for the next stage, so that you can make yourself available for them.

Leave a copy of testimonial or character reference with the interviewer before you leave, which creates a strong sales document on your behalf.

Above all, be yourself, empathise with the needs of the business, demonstrate good listening skills and close the interview with a confident smile.

If the interviewer asks what other opportunities you are considering, it can have positive results to communicate that you do have other interviews in the pipeline. Do not, though, give further details.

When asked what salary/package you are looking for, answer simply that you are open to a competitive offer and let us close the offer for you. This will ensure you are not under or over selling yourself. On your behalf, we will be doing the research for you in summary, a testimonial or character reference