

Weston Career Center



Washington University in St. Louis
OLIN BUSINESS SCHOOL

Interview Questions Guide

Prepared for exclusive use by
students of Olin Business School



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Note: In addition to the behavioral **Interview Questions Guide**, functional/technical supplemental questions are available from the Weston Career Center.

We **strongly recommend** that your interview preparation include a career advisor appointment, practice interview, and a thorough review of the following WCC resources: *Career Guide*, Vault Insider, Wall Street Oasis, Wetfeet, *Case in Point* Guide to Case Interviewing, etc.

General Questions

Top Ten Most Asked Questions

1. Walk me through your résumé.
2. Tell me about yourself.
3. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
4. If I were to ask your last manager to share your performance evaluation with me, in which areas would s/he tell me you excelled? In which areas would you need improvement?
5. What is the toughest (analytical) problem you faced? How did you solve it? What would you do differently?
6. What are your career goals five years from now?
7. Why do you want to work for our firm? OR Why should I hire you?
8. Tell me about a project in which you exercised a leadership role? What were the group dynamics? What were the successes, failures, key learnings? OR Give me a specific example of how you demonstrated initiative. What caused you to initiate this action? What were the results?
9. What has been your greatest success? What has been your greatest failure?
10. What other opportunities are you looking at?

Career Direction

- Did you get an offer from your summer employer? Why or why not? What other organizations are you talking to?
- What would you like to accomplish in the first 3-5 years on the job?
- What are your short- long-term goals and objectives? Have they changed since you have been at Olin? If so, how?
- How has your Olin experience prepared you for your career?

Corporate Assessment

Note: Be prepared for industry-specific questions, problems, hypothetical cases.

- How did you decide to seek a position with this company?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- Why do you want to work for us?
- Why are you interested in this industry? This particular company?
- What have you read about our company or our products lately, outside of regular recruiting material?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- Why is the lifestyle of this job right for you?
- How do you foresee the future of our industry? What action do you think industry leaders should take?
- How would you compare our firm (industry) with others you are interested in?

Education

- Describe your most rewarding business school (Olin) experience.
- Why did you select Washington University and/or Olin Business School?
- What led you to choose your academic concentration (i.e. major, Platform)?
- If you were planning to go in to business, why did you major in history (or some other non-business major) at the undergraduate level?
- Which subject in college or business school did you like best? Least OR Which subject was most challenging?
- Do you think your grades are a good indication of your academic achievement?
- What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
- Tell me about a favorite extracurricular activity.

Personal

- How do you keep abreast of current events?
- What do you do for fun?
- If you could have lunch with anyone living or dead, who would it be and why?
- What do you read?
- What excites you?
- Tell me about a time when you made a difference in someone else's life, what were the circumstances and what was the outcome.
- Why Olin (Washington University)? For *graduate students*: Why a MBA? Why MSF/MACC?
- What makes you want to be a _____ (position you are interviewing for)?
- What makes you think you will be successful in business?
- Tell me about your oral and written communication skills.
- Have you ever failed? What did you learn from it?
- How would you describe yourself? Are you a leader, entrepreneurial type, or creative? (Be prepared to give examples!)
- How competitive are you?
- How would a friend or professor who knows you well describe you?
- How well do you work independently? With others?
- How do you work under pressure?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
- What makes you a good investment?
- Why should I hire you?
- In what way do you think you can make a contribution to our company?
- What distinguishes you from other people I am interviewing today?
- What qualifications do you have that make you think you will be successful in your career?
- What do you want me to remember about you?

Work Experience

- What was your most significant work accomplishment?
- Tell me about a time when you had to analyze or interpret numerical or financial information.
- What did you learn from your work (or internship) experience?
- What are the attributes of an ideal job for you?
- Tell me about a boss you especially liked and why.
- How would your most recent boss describe you?
- What was your biggest work problem?
- What did you like least about your last job?
- You seem to have the analytical (financial, technical, interpersonal, etc.) skills. What makes you think you could handle the marketing (line management, leadership, etc.) requirements of the job?
- Give me an example of a good ad campaign (control program, mergers and acquisition plan, etc.) Tell me why it's good.
- Tell me about a recent experience where you had to persuade someone to accept your idea or proposal.
- Describe a situation in which you were able to build team spirit during a time of low morale.

Behavioral Questions

Bias For Action -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Reduces cycle time and bureaucracy; Demonstrates high energy; Sets priorities and seizes opportunities; Focuses upon speed; Demonstrates a sense of urgency to achieve important goals; Eliminates waste and unnecessary work.

- Describe your typical school day. What time does it start and end? What do you do to relax?
- Tell me about a situation in which you felt you acted too quickly and later regretted it. What caused it?
- Give me an example of when something needed to be done urgently and you postponed action on it. What were the results?
- How do you ensure that work you delegate gets done properly and on time?
- Give me a couple of examples of when you had to motivate your team to get a project or assignment completed. What did you do?
- Describe a couple of situations when you had to maintain a high level of enthusiasm when things were very difficult. How did you do it?
- Tell me about a situation in which you took action without anticipating the impact of that action upon other parts of the organization.
- Describe a couple of examples which required quick action. What made them so? What criteria did you apply in making those decisions?
- Tell me about the major challenges you have faced in your job or at school over the last year. What made them so?
- What have you found to be the most significant obstacles to getting people to take action? How have you handled these obstacles?
- What have you done to eliminate unnecessary or redundant work in past positions you have held?
- Describe a couple of opportunities which you capitalized upon and a couple you did not. What were the results?

Communications -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Demonstrates the skills necessary for effective expression in oral and written communications and observable in the interview.

- Give me an example of a time when you asked someone to complete a task and they did it incorrectly. What did this experience teach you?
- What are some of the most complex processes or ideas or technical information you have had to explain to other people?
- What kinds of writing have you done? Describe some examples. How did you approach it? Tell me about its content and the reactions you received.
- What kinds of reports are you currently working on that are most challenging and why?
- Describe one of your most successful oral presentations and what made it successful.
- What have you done to increase your effectiveness in making presentations? To what extent have you been successful?
- Tell me about one of the most difficult presentations you have had to make. Why was it difficult? How did it turn out?
- Give me an example of the most serious communication problem you've had. What did you do about it?
- What methods do you use to communicate with other people? How effective are they?
- Sometimes it's important to disagree with others to keep a mistake from being made. Tell me about a time when you were willing to disagree with another person in order to build a positive outcome.

Customer Focus -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Identifies customers and demonstrates that meeting their needs is first priority; Meets external and internal expectations; Promotes and maintains strong partnerships; Focuses work processes on customer satisfaction.

- Describe and example in which you had to meet a difficult customer need.
- Tell me about a time when your relationship with a key customer was unsatisfactory and what you did about it.
- In your current or previous position, who have been your customers? How did you determine and to what extent did you satisfy their expectations?
- At times we've all been unable to meet our customer's expectations. Describe a situation in which you were unable to do so. What did you do?

- What have you done to keep informed of your customer's objectives and priorities?
- What processes and methods have you used to keep your customers informed? How have they worked? How have they changed?
- Based upon your experience, what actions have you found most effective in building customer relationships? What hasn't worked and why?
- Describe the process and procedures you have put into place to improve the quality and timeliness of customer service.
- Tell me about a situation in which you had to inform a key customer of a serious problem and how you handled it.
- Relate for me how you have leveraged a customer relationship successfully. (*unsuccessfully*)
- Give me an example of the toughest customer relationship you have had to work with. What did you do? What were the results?

Functional/Technical Competency -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Displays function/technical competency.

- Describe a time when you were proud of your ability to use your skills in ___ (finance, marketing, operations, etc.) to solve a particularly difficult or challenging problem either at school or in a work assignment. What principles did you use, and what did you learn from the experience?
- Provide me with one or two examples of some of the most complex assignments or projects you've had. What made them so? What was your role? How did it turn out?
- Give me an example of a difficult problem you've had to deal with and how you gathered information and evaluated it. How did you identify the root cause of the problem?
- Explain how you solve problems. Give me a specific example.
- Tell me about one of the major plans you developed and had responsibility for accomplishing. Explain the scope, objectives, time frames, budgets and end results.

General Business Knowledge -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Knows the competition; Is familiar with strategies and tactics; Manages by fact; Demonstrates knowledge, interest, aptitude for business.

- What do you do to keep up with current and possible future trends and issues? Give me a couple of examples.
- Describe a situation where your strategy did not work well for you. Why? How did you handle it?

- What key (business) setbacks have you experienced? What did you learn from them?
- Give me a couple of examples of some calculated risks you have assumed. What were the results?
- How have you translated a strategy into action with your team?
- Describe a strategy you developed and your contingency plans.
- Tell me about your key strengths and how they are demonstrated in your track record.
- Give me a couple of examples of what you have done to prepare to deal with global business opportunities.

Innovation -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Promotes creativity and informed risk taking; Strives for technical and market leadership; Establishes process for continuous improvement.

- How have you developed imaginative solutions in the past? Describe a couple of examples.
- Think of a situation where old solutions didn't work. How did you deal with it?
- Give me a couple of examples of specific example of how you have encouraged and supported new ways of doing things.
- Cite some situations in which you had to introduce change and how you did it. What was successful and what was unsuccessful?
- Using a specific example, explain the criteria which you have used in evaluating risk.
- Tell me about some significant risks you have had to take and how they worked out. Also cite an example where it did not work out.

Integrity -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Is widely trusted; Takes ownership; Candid and forthcoming; Delivers on commitments.

- Give me a couple of examples of when you had to bend the rules to get the job done. Why was that?
- Describe a situation in which someone confided in you and you felt you had to break that confidence.
- Tell me about a situation in which you made a significant mistake and had to admit it to your boss or peers.
- What were a couple of instances in which you had to deliver bad news to someone? What worked? What didn't?

- We all have some areas we would like to improve upon. What are some of yours? What have you done?
- Describe a couple of examples in which you believe someone broke the unwritten rules of business. What was the impact? How did you deal with it?
- Tell me how you have attempted to build trust with your employees, peers and customers.
- What has been your toughest conflict you have had to deal with interpersonally on the job? What made it so and how did you deal with it?
- Describe a situation in which you promised more than you could deliver. How did you handle it?
- How have you handled providing feedback? What mechanism did you use (face to face, email, social media, etc.)? How often?
- Explain when you have had to take a stand at variance with management. How did you handle it? What were the results?
- Tell me about a time when you had to deliver on a commitment and found it extremely difficult. What did you do?

Interpersonal Skills -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Communicates effectively using multiple methods; Able to interact with people at different organizational levels; Able to focus on mutual goals; Persuasive; Able to deal with conflict.

- Give me an example in which you and a peer disagreed significantly. What caused it? What did you do?
- What are some ways you have used to put people at ease? When haven't they worked?
- Tell me about a major conflict you had with a peer or customer that you were unable to resolve successfully. Why were you unsuccessful? What did you learn?
- Tell me about an incident involving someone you had to deal with who was very difficult. How did it work out?
- Which bosses did you like and dislike working for? How did this impact your relationship?
- How would your peers and former co-workers describe their relationships with you? Why?
- Tell me about one or two actions you've taken to build working relationships on the job with someone you personally did not like.
- What do you see as your strength and areas for improvement in working with others?

Leadership/Initiative -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Gets ideas accepted; Guides a group towards a task accomplishment.

- How do you influence your boss? Give me an example.
- Tell me about some of the toughest groups you have had to get cooperation from. Did you have any formal authority? What did you do?
- How do you influence your peers? Provide me with some examples.
- Describe your leadership style. When does it work? When doesn't it work?
- What tends to be your approach in working with a group?
- What have you found to be the most significant obstacles to get people to take action? How have you handled these obstacles?
- Describe your effectiveness as a leader. What have you used as criteria?
- Describe one or two examples of ideas you were successful in getting accepted.

Performance -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Sets and achieves ambitious goals; Measures the right things; Drives for continuous improvement; Listens and responds; Provides feedback and recognizes achievement.

- What has been the most significant goal you have achieved? How did you achieve it? Were there other key goals you were unable to achieve? Why?
- In your past jobs (internships), how have you determined what needs improvement and how have you ensured it was addressed?
- Have you consistently delivered expected results? Please explain.
- Describe how your performance has been evaluated by your last two bosses. What did they identify as strengths and developmental opportunities?
- Tell me about some of the major challenges you have been confronted with in your job. Why were they challenges? What did you do about them?
- What have you done to recognize others' achievements?
- Tell me about a couple of the most difficult situations in which you had to give feedback.

Teamwork -

The recruiter is seeking to understand if the candidate: Initiates and supports meaningful team projects; Demonstrates trust in team members; Serves on teams; Celebrate successes.

- Tell me one of the most effective teams you worked on and what you contributed to its effectiveness.
- What techniques or approaches have you found helpful in dealing with turf issues on your team? Give me an example.
- Describe what actions you have taken to encourage teamwork.
- Tell me about some key issues that you have found which need to be addressed in building a team.
- Explain what you have done to build trust among team members.
- Provide me with a couple of examples of teams you have served on describing the kind, problems, challenges and results.
- When teams reporting to you have been successful, what actions have you taken?
- What have you found helpful in determining what is and is not suitable for a team project?
- Describe how you have monitored the progress of team assignments.
- How do you function in a group? Give examples of teamwork.
- What specific criteria have you applied in selecting members for a team project?
- Give me some examples of how you have supported teamwork.
- Tell me what you have found to be the major obstacles to effective teamwork.
- Describe your worst experience in working on a team. What did you take away from the experience?

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