

# “What are your weaknesses?”

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During an interview, with a recruiter or a potential employer, you will most certainly be asked what your weaknesses are. Although honesty is the only policy – interviews are not the place to highlight all your major flaws or to joke that you’re an ogre before your first cup of coffee! At the same time it is important to remember that if you pretend not to have any weaknesses the interviewer will think that you are conceited or that you have unrealistic ideas of your own performance and ability.

The way you handle this particular question could have a severe impact on your success at being called back for a second interview and ultimately being offered the job. It is important therefore to handle this situation properly.

## **Learn to recognize the question**

The first thing to remember is that the interviewer may not ask the question straight out. He could use any number of questions to elicit the information. For example:

“Tell me about a project that went badly?” or “What do you find most difficult/dislike the most about your current job?” or “What would your manager miss most about you? And what not?”

## **Prepare before the interview**

Before the interview you should prepare yourself for the types of questions you may have to answer. In response to this question you should be very careful about assassinating your character. Think about your strengths, focus on your strong points and then look honestly at the areas in which you could improve. Remember that one should see these as areas of development rather than faults or weaknesses.

Be aware of using examples of weaknesses that directly affect your ability to do the job you’re being interviewed for. If the weakness is not easily corrected then perhaps you should consider another position. Smaller issues that can be improved are the ones to use during an interview.

## **Answering the question**

Rather than just highlighting these areas of development it is far better to use an example of one that you are currently working on. For example, you might say that as a bookkeeper you believed that your computer literacy was not up to speed but that you have recently completed a Pastel accounting course and that you achieved 75%.

Show that you are actively working towards improving on these ‘weaker’ areas and the interviewer will be pleased with your initiative and commitment.

No-one is perfect and it is reasonable to expect that we all have areas in which we could improve. Admitting your areas of development shows that you are a realist and by showing that you have taken the time to work on improving yourself, you illustrate your dedication and commitment to upgrading yourself.

Remember that you should also use these questions as an opportunity to highlight your strengths. Once you’ve answered the question you could counter the ‘negative’ question with an answer that positively sells you. For example, you could say that as a bookkeeper who is experienced at handling manual accounts, you are able to double-check the results given by the computer program and therefore avoid any technical glitches that result in misrepresentation in the company accounts!