# Aaron's Interview Cheat Sheet

## What Are We Assessing?

I've put together a list of characteristics that employers are often trying to assess, the questions they use to help evaluate those characteristics, and some questions you can ask during the interview, as well.

**Adaptability**
**Ambition/Drive**
**Analytical ability**
**Assertiveness**
**Characteristics/Traits**
**Communication Skill**
**Creativity**
**Education**
**Integrity**
**Interpersonal Skill**
**Job Performance**
**Judgment**
**Learning ability**
**Organizational Skill**
**Persistence**
**Persuasiveness**
**Planning skills**
**Preferred Work Style**
**Risk-Taking**
**Self Assessment**
**Strengths**
**Weaknesses**
**Work Ethic**

## Great Questions That I Use Often

Now that you know what your prospective employers will be looking for, here are some questions they might ask you to bring out that information:

- Can you tell me a little about yourself?
- What is the most difficult adjustment at work you have ever had to make?
- How would you describe your work style?
- If you had a dispute with a co-worker, how would you handle it?
- What factors most influence your willingness to take a risk?
- What examples can you give me that reflect your ability to apply good judgment in a challenging situation?
- What has been your experience in working as a part of a team?
- In your opinion, what are the advantages and disadvantages of working as a part of a team? Why?
- Give me an example of something you had to learn that was difficult.
- On a scale from 1-5 (one being the lowest) how do you rate your communication skills?
- If you found out that one of your co-workers was doing something dishonest, what would you do?
- What is your personal definition of success?
- What is your personal motto?
- What are your plans for self-improvement and personal development?
- How would you go about organizing yourself to accomplish goals?
- What is your process for establishing priorities?
- What is one thing about yourself that you would most like to change?
- Which of your personal characteristics do you feel enhances your effectiveness in communicating with others?
- Why do you think you are a good fit for this position?
- If you had an opportunity to develop a basic set of values and beliefs which would serve as a company's foundation for success, what would those be?
- If I had three people in here that you consider knowing you best, how would they describe you?
- What are one or two areas in which you think you could improve your performance?
- Of what accomplishments in your life are you most proud?

## More Questions to Consider

1. What do you want to do with your life?
2. Do you have work experience that you feel sets you up to be successful here?
3. How would you describe your ideal job?
4. What goals do you have in your career? How do you plan to achieve these goals?
5. How do you evaluate success?
6. Describe a situation in which you were successful.
7. What accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction in your life?
8. If you had to live your life over again, what would you change?
9. Would your rather work with information or with people?
10. Are you a team player?
11. What motivates you?
12. Why should I hire you?
13. Are you a goal-oriented person?
14. Tell me about some of your recent goals and what you did to achieve them.
15. What are your short-term goals?
16. What is your long-range objective?
17. Do you handle conflict well?
18. Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or supervisor? How did you resolve it?
19. What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
20. Do you handle pressure well?
21. What is your greatest strength?
22. What is your greatest weakness?
23. If I were to ask one of your former/current supervisor(s) to describe you, what would they say?
24. How has your education prepared you for this position?
25. How much training do you think you'll need to become a very productive and successful employee?
26. Why do you want to work in this industry?
27. How much money do you need to make to be happy? What kind of salary are you looking for?
28. What were the two most important decisions in your life?

## Self-Assessment Questions

1. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths/weaknesses?
2. Have you ever failed? What did you learn from it?
3. How would you describe yourself? Are you a leader, entrepreneurial type, or creative? (Be prepared to give examples!)
4. How competitive are you?
5. How would a friend who knows you well describe you?
6. How well do you work independently? With others?
7. How do you work under pressure?
8. What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction?
9. What makes you a good investment?

## Functionally-Specific Questions

1. How will you motivate yourself to do the tasks you are not excited for?
2. Tell me a joke.
3. Describe your analytical and interpersonal skills.
4. Do you have a high energy level?
5. Are you a good team player?
6. How have you developed your interpersonal skills?
7. Give me a specific example of a time you solved a problem creatively?
8. What is your biggest accomplishment?
9. Give an example of your approach to problem solving.
10. How would you describe your leadership style?
11. What are your goals?

# Competency Specific Questions

These are common behavior-based interview questions. The best way to practice for these questions is to write your answers out, using the STAR answering model (*Situation/Task, Action, Result*). The questions are divided by competency category. Italics indicates what kinds of behaviors would indicate evidence of the competency.

## BIAS FOR ACTION

*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 workday. 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 acted 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 act? 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?

## INTEGRITY

*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 clients/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, letter, 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?

## TEAMWORK

*Initiates and supports meaningful team projects; Demonstrates trust in team members; Serves on teams; Celebrates 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.
- 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?

## INNOVATION

*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 specific examples 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.

## PERFORMANCE

*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, how have you determined what needs improvement and how have you ensured it was addressed?
- Have you consistently delivered expected results? Please explain.
- Tell me about any major challenges you have been confronted with in your prior/current position(s). 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.

## COMMUNICATIONS

*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 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 its 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 to build a positive outcome.

## INTERPERSONAL SKLLS

*Communicates effectively using multiple methods; Able to interact with people at different 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 someone 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

*Getting 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 act? 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.