



CAREERS

REGISTER · SEARCH · LEARN | TorontoSun.com/Careers

To advertise call 416-947-3588 or 1-800-268-4309 • Editor Diane Janes diane.janes@sunmedia.ca 416-947-2328



Oddball interview questions

JOANNE RICHARD
Special to QMI Agency

Job candidates need to be on their toes. Oddball interview questions abound, according to glassdoor.com, which recently released its annual list of the weirdest interview questions out there.

How about this one: "If you were a box of cereal, what would you be and why?" Career coach Monica Wofford would be Captain Crunch. Her reasoning: "When one is actively seeking out leadership roles and enjoys leading, this would be a natural moniker to reflect the desire and interest in being the captain of a magnificent team."

Candidates should expect the unexpected — no canned or polished questions in some job interviews. "Oddball questions are designed to

determine creativity, critical thinking, ability to think on one's feet, and perhaps even communication skills," says Wofford, a leadership development expert at Contagious Companies.

The questions are not designed to trip people up or trick them. "The exact answers to crayon colours, tennis ball texture, and the colour of money are not as important as the way in which those answers are delivered," she says. "Is the candidate comfortable enough to say, 'I don't have a clue?' Do

they take a long time to devise an answer? Are they able to quickly put together an answer that makes sense?"

"Based on the job criteria and role, the ulterior motive behind these questions will vary, so giving some thought to the primary responsibility of the job ahead of time would be prudent and from that analysis, the right answer for you to offer will present itself," says Wofford.

Job candidates must be prepared for anything — any interview question is fair game, says Geoff Bagg,

"except for those which compromise, in fact or intention, anti-discrimination laws."

Oddball questions are intended to give the interviewer an idea of how a person thinks, says Bagg, CEO of The Bagg Group (bagg.com), a leading Canadian staffing agency. It can be difficult to get a sense of someone really quickly, especially if they come into the interview with a prepared script of well-rehearsed answers to standard questions.

"But throw them a curve ball and they'll have no option

but to toss out their script, shut down automatic pilot, and really think out what and how they'll answer," says Bagg, whose company has sent out tens of thousands of candidates for job interviews over the past 40 years, and has placed almost 60,000 people.

According to Bagg, today's hiring manager is under enormous pressure to find the right candidate. "A wrong hire is incredibly costly for a company's bottom line, and for the hiring manager's reputation. And a candidate can have all the right skills and still be the totally wrong fit for a particular team which has real measurable repercussions. So if you have an overwhelming lineup of candidates to interview, you hope that an oddball question can be a quick way to decide on fit"

joanne.richard@sunmedia.ca

TIPS FOR THE INTERVIEWEE

■ Don't fear the tough question. Interviewers really don't care about the answer, they are only asking the question to see how you think.

■ Never ridicule the question, or the person asking it. Never say, "What? Are you kidding me? That's such a stupid question."

■ Repeat the question, but put in the first person. It's a technique to buy you thinking time and it's also a way to move you from feeling defensive to reflective, says Bagg. "The question, 'What would you do if...?' is a high-pressure question. But change it to 'So, what would I do if ...' and you'll start thinking about it, without panicking."

■ Don't get flustered, get logical: They are far more interested in seeing how you arrived at the answer. "Think out loud about the steps you'd take to find it. What info would you need and where would you look for it? Who would you ask?"

■ Be forewarned, snarky retorts can and will be held against you. "Check your smart-alec attitude at the interview door. Instead, welcome the weird question as a creative challenge. After all, it's stimulating to be asked a truly unusual question. Not to mention, it'll give you a lot to talk about at dinner that night."

■ Body language speaks the truth. When asked if you're honest, you're likely not going to admit you're a liar but "experts in our business pick up a lot of info from non-verbal communication," says Bagg. Asking about whether you're honest, for example, is really an attempt to learn your values to see if you're in sync with the company that's interviewing you. "So tell the interviewer about your values — and be honest — because your tone of voice and body language can tell the real story."

— Courtesy of Geoff Bagg, of The Bagg Group



More oddball interview questions collected by glassdoor.com:

- If you were a pizza delivery man, how would you benefit from scissors?
- If you could sing one song on American Idol, what would it be?
- Do you believe in Big Foot?
- What is the funniest thing that has

happened to you recently?

- If you were 80 years old, what would you tell your children?
- If you were on an island and could only bring three things, what would you bring?
- Are you a hunter or a gatherer?
- How lucky are you and why?
- Have you ever been on a boat?