

How To Turn Negative Qualities Into Positives During An Interview

It's the interview question everyone dreads: What are your weaknesses? It's a tough one to answer well. You don't want to point out flaws that could prevent you from getting the job, but you don't want to give a generic response. You also can't avoid answering the question altogether, as much as you'd like to.

Instead, you should prepare ahead of time so you can answer this question well. With the right response, you can reframe your negatives into positives and show that you're willing to improve yourself in order to succeed. What employer wouldn't want a team member like that? Now, that's an easy question to answer.

Here some common weakness cited in interviews — and how to reframe them in the most favorable light possible.

Time management

Many professionals struggle with time management. If you find it challenging to complete your to-do list within the eight-hour workday, you can tell your potential employer this. Just make sure you follow that up by sharing the ways in which you're working to improve things.

Of course, this response is dependent upon the fact that you're taking those positive strides. There are plenty of methods to overcome your poor time-management skills. Pinpointing the most critical tasks of the day and tackling those first or keeping your workspace organized to avoid delays are two ways to do it. Implement a tactic and let your potential employer know — they'll be impressed by your efforts to change.

Shyness

Another con to point to — as long as your job doesn't depend on your charisma — your inherent shyness. It's not your fault you're timid, since everyone's personalities are programmed differently. However, in your line of work, it might be a flaw to be a bit shy, especially if your colleagues are all outspoken and confident.

It's easy to turn this one into a positive, though. Simply tell your interviewer that you've been taking strides to boost your self-esteem, which has made you more confident to speak up and step out of your shell. You can make friends as an introvert, of course, so long as you take things slow and bond with one person at a time. Learning how to do that will make you less shy and therefore more prepared for the job ahead.

Perfectionism

Another workplace weakness you might experience is the fact that you're never happy with the work you finish. Instead, you're incredibly critical of yourself and strive for perfection, although you never feel like you reach it. This is a routine answer to the question, and some interviewees might think they're good to stop with that answer. However, "I'm a perfectionist" doesn't entirely cut it.

Avoid the cliché by pointing to a specific obstacle that stems from your perfectionism rather than using it as a way to show off your attention to detail.

Let the interviewer know you're working on accepting the accomplishments and accolades you receive. Perfectionism might affect your self-esteem now, but you should note that you're improving it so you can be satisfied when you work hard on something and turn it in. You're good at what you do, after all, so you should be confident in it.

Procrastination

Procrastination varies slightly from time management. While the latter has to do with ordering your tasks so you complete what's important first, the former will have you putting off all your to-dos because you're not mentally prepared to begin. Although this seems like an insurmountable negative, there are ways to frame your response that will put you in a positive light.

Note that your greatest weakness is to procrastinate before springing into the explanation of how you're working to fix that. One way to break the habit is to divide a goal into actionable tasks so the entire project doesn't seem so daunting. Find the tools you need to overcome procrastination before the interview and point to how much they're helping you when this question rolls around.

Stress

It's natural to feel stress in the workplace. However, the feeling might be so strong within you that it's a weakness. This is especially true if your job is deadline-focused — date-related stress is something that can affect the work you do, as well as the way you interact with your coworkers. Don't let stress hold you back from attaining your goals. Instead, find ways for it to make you a better worker.

You can tell your boss how much stress you have experienced in the past and how you've come up with ways to battle the feeling. Do you exercise now? Do you give yourself breaks in your workday? Have you improved your time-management skills or lowered your perfectionist bar so you can easily turn things in? These are important to note, because they show that you stress because you care — but you also realize you're at your best when you're cool, calm and collected.

Answer the question well

In reframing these negatives as positives, you're sure to answer this tough interview question well. You'll avoid common mistakes, too — some people try to spin positive traits as negative ones, while others refuse to answer or don't have a response at the ready. Coming into your interview with a thoughtful, honest and smart answer will only improve your standing — and boost the chance that you'll be offered the job.

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