

PHARMACEUTICAL

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. What are your weaknesses?

This is the most dreaded question of all. Handle it by minimizing your weaknesses and emphasizing your strengths. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits: "I am always working on improving my communication skills to be a more effective presenter. —I recently joined Toastmasters, which I find very helpful."

2. Why should we hire you?

Summarize your experiences and education: "With five years' experience working as an outside sales rep and my proven record of increasing market share, I could make a big difference in your company. I'm confident I would be a great addition to your team."

3. What did you most enjoy about your last job?

Effective Answer: Of the many things that I enjoyed, I would say that the strategic aspects of my job most energized me. I liked setting concrete performance goals for myself and finding ways to meet them. I similarly enjoyed analyzing markets for trends and identifying which companies were potential customers. When I was a sales rep, my team and I developed a new approach to accounts that became a standard for the company. Strategizing gave my work a sense of tangible direction and accomplishment.

4. How would your colleagues or supervisor describe you?

Effective Answer: My supervisor and colleagues have described me as a dependable worker. My supervisor has appreciated that I prioritize tasks and manage my responsibilities so that she can rely on me. My bosses tell me I have a sixth sense for sales and I learn new information and procedures quickly. These skills account for my two promotions in three years. My boss was also impressed by how I was able to lead my team.

5. Why should we select you to fill the position over a candidate with prior pharmaceutical sales experience?

Answer the question this way. All pharmaceutical sales companies have different sales training programs. Some training programs are superior to others. As a sales trainee of your company, I will receive the best sales training. There will be no —bad habitsll to overcome. You should state —I will be taught to sell your way. The selling style that other experienced sales representatives have learned may not be compatible at all with - 2 - your company philosophy. This can create problems in the field with physicians and affect your company image in a negative fashion. That will not be a problem when you hire me. (Selling is just the ability to persuade others to do what you ask, mention instances where you were very successful at persuading others to see things your way and then act upon this new insight. You will find that you have actually been —sellingll most of your life. Some companies will not hire —experiencedll reps for the reason that we have listed above. They do not want to be faced with the problem of trying to change learned behavior that the company does not support.)

6. Tell me about a time when you were selected to be a leader and how did it turn out?

Can you lead by example? Can you influence other people? The interviewer is trying to determine whether you have the characteristics to be a pharmaceutical sales representative. Just think about a time when you lead a team in college or at work. In this example, you should have delegated the work and you should have motivated the people in the group to work together and to do so efficiently and effectively.

7. If a pharmaceutical sales company only sells “proprietary products” what does “proprietary products” refer to? —

Proprietary productsll simply means that they have produced and own the products that they promote. They are not licensees for the products. Licensees sell other peoples products under contract. (Examples: PDI, Innovex)

8. How do you get past the gatekeeper to the physician?

The gatekeeper is the person who allows you to see the physician. At most clinics and doctor offices, the gatekeeper is the receptionist. Sometimes, the gatekeeper can be a nurse, or the physician’s wife or office manager. Regardless of whom the gatekeeper is, this person is very important. You must develop and maintain a good relationship with this person. Always be kind and polite.

9. Why do you want to work here?

The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you've given this some thought and are not sending out resumes just because there is an opening. For example, "I've selected key companies whose mission statements are in line with my values, where I know I could be excited about what the company does, and this company is very high on my list of desirable choices."

10. What are your goals?

Sometimes it's best to talk about short term and intermediate goals rather than locking yourself into the distant future. For example, "My immediate goal is to get a job in a - 3 - growth-oriented pharmaceutical company. My long-term goals will depend on where the company goes. I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility."

11. Why did you leave (or why are you leaving) your job?

If you're unemployed, state your reason for leaving in a positive context: "I managed to survive two rounds of corporate downsizing, but the third round was a 20 percent reduction in the workforce, which included me." If you are employed, focus on what you want in your next job: "After two years, I made the decision to look for a company that is team-focused, where I can add my experience."

12. How does your education prepare you for a career in pharmaceutical sales?

Most any undergraduate college degree will easily lend itself to the pharmaceutical industry. The pharmaceutical industry is a union of science and business.

13. What experience do you have that would lend itself to pharmaceutical sales?

If you have experience selling a product or service, now is the time to sell the interviewer on how you performed. If you have no previous sales experience, describe times in the past that you have sold an idea, yourself, or a new way of doing things at your work or school. Sales experience is not essential for entering the pharmaceutical industry. If you conduct research, network with individuals in the profession, and convey your determination to be successful, you should be more desirable as a candidate than someone with sales experience.

14. What do you do when the physician tells you that your product is too expensive?

This is a common objection that some pharmaceutical sales reps hear. Cost is an objection that you will have to overcome. Your job is to change the physician's perception of the value of your product or lower the cost of your product. Since you will not have the authority to lower the price of your product, you must change their perception of your pharmaceutical product. First, you must acknowledge the physician's concern about the price. Second, gather some information about the physician's patients. Are most of his patients covered by prescription Insurance? Are they Medicare/Medicaid patients? Are they —cashll patients? You should then describe the benefits of your product based on the information that you know and have been given about the physician's patients and about your product. Prove that your product is a good value even though the price may be high. Gain agreement and ask for the physician for a commitment to prescribe your product. The physician must see the product as a good value regardless of the cost.

15. Do you know anything about computers?

You will almost certainly have to work on a computer from your home. Most pharmaceutical sales reps will be required to enter sales call information and other data. While you do not have to be an expert on a computer by any means, a basic working knowledge is extremely beneficial.

16. What do you feel your chances of succeeding in the pharmaceutical industry are?

Very good! You must believe in yourself. Refer to the research you have done on your personal strengths and traits. Tell them you are very comfortable with the information that you have learned about the pharmaceutical industry through the NAPSR. You know that you possess the qualities that successful pharmaceutical sales representatives possess. You are organized, self-motivated, competitive and efficient. Cite examples where you have sold goods, services, or yourself. Offer —proof sourcesll to confirm what you are telling the interviewer.

17. When were you most satisfied in your job?

The interviewer wants to know what motivates you. If you can relate an example of a job or project when you were excited, the interviewer will get an idea of your preferences. "I

was very satisfied in my last job, because I worked directly with the customers and their problems; that is an important part of the job for me."

18. What can you do for us that other candidates cannot?

What makes you unique? This will take an assessment of your experiences, skills and traits. Summarize concisely: "I have a unique combination of strong technical skills, and the ability to build strong customer relationships. This allows me to use my knowledge and break down information to be more user-friendly."

19. What are three positive things your last boss would say about you?

It's time to pull out your old performance appraisals and boss's quotes. This is a great way to brag about yourself through someone else's words: "My boss has told me that I am the best sales rep he has ever had. He knows he can rely on me, and he likes my sense of humor."

20. Do you know people who can vouch for your character or competence on the job?

Have your typed List of References with you. Give the interviewer a copy at this time and invite him or her to check your references. Mention that you are confident that they will be pleased with what these people will say about you.

21. Why did you choose the college major that you chose?

Think about this and how you can apply your coursework to a pharmaceutical sales career! Use the information that you have learned in the NAPSR's —Pharmaceutical Sales Training Manual to determine how you can apply what you have learned in your major or minor area of study to a pharmaceutical sales career.

22. You may be given a hypothetical situation and asked to "sell" the interviewer something.

If this happens, be sure you give features and benefits of a product which you have been asked to sell and then ask for a commitment! Features are qualities that the product has. Example: The copier has a 75 copy per minute speed with multiple paper trays. Benefits are examples of how the features will benefit the user of the pen. Example: The copier has a quick speed of 75 copies per minute which allows the customer to more efficiently copy, thus saving time and increasing productivity. You must then probe for acceptance to see if you have earned the right to ask for the business. Is there any reason why they wouldn't want to purchase the copier? If not,

then ask for a commitment to buy some copiers and ask how many they want to order today.

23. What salary are you seeking?

It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the range first. Prepare by knowing the going rate in your area, and your bottom line or walk-away point. One possible answer would be: "I am sure when the time comes, we can agree on a reasonable amount. In what range do you typically pay someone with my background?"

24. If you were an animal, which one would you want to be?

Interviewers use this type of psychological question to see if you can think quickly. If you answer "a bunny," you will make a soft, passive impression. If you answer "a lion," you will be seen as aggressive. What type of personality would it take to get the job done? What impression do you want to make?

25. How would you describe yourself?

Be ready to spend about two minutes answering this question. Begin wherever you feel comfortable: high school, college, or a prior position. This is your opportunity to speak logically and clearly about yourself—and to share a particular accomplishment or attribute that makes you a valuable employee.

26. Why do you want to work for our company?

Present the interviewer with the research you have done on their company. Point out what - 6 - you like about their pharmaceutical company and why. Let them know that you consider them a leader in their field and that you would be proud to work for such a respected pharmaceutical company.

27. Tell me about your biggest accomplishment.

Your response here is critical. Focus on your hard work, commitment to long hours or ability to work under pressure. Describe a recent challenge and how you were involved in the solution through working overtime, a leadership role or other contribution. Try to present an accomplishment you feel might apply to this new position.

28. Why do you want to change jobs?

Discussing major problems within the company, or sharing the fact that the company is being bought out or shut down, is acceptable. Never criticize a past employer or coworkers. A safe answer is that you feel you can no longer make a contribution because of extensive changes at the company.

29. What did you like / dislike about your last position?

Your answer will give the interviewer an idea of whether or not you are a good fit for this position. Avoid admitting that you didn't like working overtime or you had a conflict with the company's management team. Instead, put a positive spin on your answer by saying you enjoy challenges and growth opportunities.

30. In what ways are you qualified for this position?

Focus on a few requirements of the job and how you can meet these requirements through your particular skills and experience. Highlight your management experience, a technical skill or a personal success story.

31. Describe your most important strengths.

Identify five strengths you feel are most in line with the position for which you're interviewing (e.g., self-motivated, good listener, strong work ethic.) Describe each strength using a brief example of how you successfully applied that particular strength to a work situation.

32. Have you accomplished something you didn't think was possible?

This question will allow you to prove your integrity, work ethic or commitment to achieving a goal. Be prepared to give an example of how you accomplished a significant challenge without giving up. Is there a situation in the past in which you took the initiative? A motivated, results-oriented employee knows what to do without being told. Describe to the interviewer situations in which you exhibited a strong work ethic or creative abilities that helped you overcome a particularly challenging situation.

33. Outline for me, a day in the life of a pharmaceutical representative.

This is the time to mention what you have learned in our —Pharmaceutical Sales Training Manual —Chapter 2.

34. Can you take criticism?

You must show that you are able to take constructive criticism. Mention that you look at criticism as an opportunity to assess and evaluate yourself and your performance. The criticism can only help you improve your selling and your people skills. Show that you can take constructive criticism without getting personally involved.

35. Can you think of a situation during your career that was particularly embarrassing? How would you handle the same situation today?

Your answer will show that you are able to learn from past mistakes. Be honest about a particular failure, but be sure to talk positively about the lesson you learned from it.

36. One of our company's biggest challenges is how would you deal with this?

Begin by asking for more details before trying to answer this question. It's helpful to try to break the challenge into sub-challenges, in which you may have prior experience. Tell how you would deal with these areas, and try to summarize with the method you would use to solve the overall problem. This is a great opportunity to present your analytical and organizational skills.

37. Can you work under pressure?

You might be tempted to give a simple yes or no answer, but don't. It reveals nothing and you lose the opportunity to sell your skills and value profiles. Actually, this common question comes from an unskilled interviewer, because it is closed-ended. As such, it does not give you the chance to elaborate. Whenever you are asked this type of question, provide a brief yet comprehensive answer and seize the opportunity to sell yourself. For example, you could say: —Yes, I usually find it stimulating. However, I believe in planning and time management in order to reduce panic deadlines within my area of responsibility.

38. What are you looking for in your next job?

Avoid saying what you want the company to give you. You must say what you want in terms of what you can give to your employer. The key word in the following example is

—contribution! —My experience at the XYZ Corporation has shown me I have a talent for sales. This is demonstrated by my ability to make my sales quota for 18 straight months. I am looking for an opportunity to continue that kind of contribution to your company.!

39. Describe a difficult problem you've had to deal with.

This is a favorite tough question. It is designed to probe your professional profile; specifically, your analytical skills: —Well, I always follow a five-step format with a difficult problem. One, I stand back and examine the problem. Two, I recognize the problem as the symptom of other, perhaps hidden, factors. Three, I make a list of possible solutions to the problem. Four, I weigh both the consequences and cost of each solution, and determine the best solution. And five, I go to my boss, outline the problem, make my recommendation, and ask for my supervisor's advice and approval.!! Then give an example of a problem and your solution.

40. What have you done to enhance or further your sales skills knowledge?

List any sales experience you may have gained. You should discuss the value of the information contained in the NAPSR's Training Program. Make sure that the interviewer is aware of your technical knowledge of the pharmaceutical industry and inform that you have passed our examination. (You must pass the exam as employers can verify online if you have not.) You can also take classes at your local university to help you with —marketing!! and —sales!! Tell them what you have done to increase your knowledge.

41. What skills do you have that make you qualified for a pharmaceutical sales position?

Use the information that you have gathered from your strengths to help you answer this question. You should have an excellent list made already. Again you should discuss the knowledge that you have acquired from the NAPSR's Pharmaceutical Sales Training Manual.

42. Which job responsibility of the pharmaceutical sales representative do you believe you would enjoy the least?

The best answer would be to state that you truly believe that you will enjoy all aspects of a pharmaceutical sales position! If you can not honestly say that, you could say that

although you believe you would enjoy everything about the job, the paperwork (or something more insignificant) would probably be the least enjoyable.

43. What kind of experience do you have for this job?

This is a perfect opportunity to sell yourself, but before you do, be sure you know what is most critical to the interviewer. The interviewer is not just looking for a competent person; he or she is looking for someone who can contribute quickly to the current projects. When interviewing, companies invariably give everyone a broad picture of the job, but the person they hire will be a problem solver, someone who can contribute to the specific projects in the first six months. Only by asking will you identify the areas of your interviewer's greatest urgency and therefore interest. - 9 -

44. Have you ever been in situations involving difficult co-workers, tight deadlines or inadequate resources? How did you handle these situations?

This is where you can discuss effective management or sales skills and your ability to handle various challenges. Describe your most difficult task and the skills you used to deal with it, such as organizational and interpersonal skills, your perseverance and diplomacy.

45. What would you change about your career if given the opportunity?

Your answer to this question requires honesty. The interviewer wants to know if you'll be happy in the position, and whether you are motivated enough to make changes in order to get what you want out of your career.

46. What is "co-promotion" or "team selling" of products and explain why pharmaceutical sales companies "co-promote" products?

Co-promotion of products is very common in today's marketplace. Sometimes two and even three sales forces will promote the same pharmaceutical product. Each sales force may have different or even the same sales quotas. You will typically be given a list of physicians and your sales —partnersll in your territory will also be given a list. Your sales territory will overlap with your partnersll on some if not all of these physicians. The reason they want several people calling on the same physician is so that they will hear the sales message more often. Research has shown that the more the physician hears the message, the more likely the physician is to remember it and to buy into the message is a good one. Current data proves that pharmaceutical companies sell a

much greater amount of product doing it with this method. You should mention that —team selling is a great idea for the reasons that we have listed. Pharmaceutical companies want both of these qualities in a sales representative. You will need to coordinate visit times with your sales —partners. It doesn't work if everyone shows up on the same day or the same week at the same office. That would just irritate the physicians. You would also set up —in-services or —lunch and learn programs plus speaker programs and coordinate call schedules with your sales partners to set these or other special functions up for the physicians.

47. Describe a problem you have encountered in your current position?

The interviewer is looking for a solution to a problem and to see how you reacted. You must not only describe a problem, but also describe a solution to the problem. Example: —A problem in my current position was that we were unable to reach some of the deadlines of our department. I overcame this by placing a large calendar in the break room with our deadlines highlighted. It was a reminder to the other office members, which helped the entire department by employing team work and deadlines were then met.

48. Do you feel you are treated and compensated fairly at your present position?

Never complain about your present position, boss, employer, duties, work hours, coworkers, etc. The interviewer wants to know if you are a positive employee. Simply answer, 'Yes.'

49. What is your largest accomplishment in your present position?

If you have received any now is the time to mention them. Bring all documents of any recognition that you have been awarded, and present it to the interviewer. Describe a work or an educational situation that you resolved with favorable results, or a creative solution you used with a difficult customer. Although the question may be worded specifically to address your present position, expand your answer to include other jobs or to extracurricular or community accomplishments.

50. How do you feel about work guidelines, company regulations, structured reports, etc.?

Adhering to guidelines, regulations, bylaws and filling out report are necessary for all pharmaceutical reps. There are legal considerations in the pharmaceutical sales

industry. Let the employer know that you are aware that their company considers anything you say as a representative of the company to be a pharmaceutical company —claim. You also realize the importance of making company approved claims and following company guidelines.

51. Are you willing to relocate?

If you are, this can be very beneficial to you. If you are not, now is the time to say so. If you are not mobile, that will not usually eliminate you as a possible candidate for the open position. Most pharmaceutical companies prefer to hire local people because of their local ties.

52. How long would you stay with the company?

The interviewer might be thinking of offering you a job. But, employers are aware that the marketplace is such that new hires often do not stay with the company more than two years. Your reply might be: —I would really like to settle down with this company. As long as I am growing professionally, there is no reason for me to make a move.

53. Have you done the best work you are capable of doing?

Say —yes and the interviewer will think you're a has-been. As with all these questions, personalize your work history and include the essence of this reply: —I'm proud of my professional achievements to date, but I believe the best is yet to come. I am always - 11 - motivated to give my best efforts, and in any job there are always opportunities to contribute when one is alert.

54. How long would it take you to make a contribution to our company?

Again, be sure to qualify the question: In what area does the interviewer need rapid contributions? You are best advised to answer this question with a question: —That is an excellent question. To help me answer, what do you anticipate my responsibilities will be during the first six or seven months? You give yourself time to think while the interviewer concentrates on images of you working for the company. When your time comes to answer, start with: —Let's say I started on Monday the 17th. It will take me a few weeks to settle down and learn the ropes. I'll be earning my keep very quickly, but making a real contribution. Do you have a special project in mind you will want me to get involved with? This response could lead directly to a job offer, but if not, you already have the interviewer thinking of you as an employee.

55. What would you like to be doing five years from now?

The safest answer contains a desire to be regarded and a true professional and team player. As far as promotion, that depends on finding a manager with whom you can grow. Of course, you will ask what opportunities exist within the company before being any more specific: —From what I know and what you have told me about the growth here, it seems operations is where you need the effort and where I could contribute most toward the company's goals. ||

56. How much money do you want?

This is a knockout question: give the wrong answer, and you will immediately be eliminated. It is always a temptation to ask for the moon knowing you can come down, but that is a poor approach. Companies have strict salary ranges for every job, so giving an ill-considered answer can reduce your job-offer chances to zero. The solution? Try: —I'm making \$O . I'm interested in this opportunity and I will seriously consider any reasonable offer you care to make me. ||

57. Can you tell me about yourself?

Your answer to this question sets the tone for the rest of the interview. Focus is the key; avoid a rambling answer. The secret to success with this free-form question is to focus, script your answer and practice. Never try to "wing it." What do you want the interviewer to remember most about you? List five strengths you have that are pertinent to this job, whether those are experiences, traits or skills. Practice your script until you feel confident. Your script will help you stay on track, but don't memorize it -- you'll sound stiff. Instead, aim for a natural and conversational tone.

58. What can you offer us that other people cannot?

Effective Answer: I have a proven track record of exceeding my expectations and goals set for me. My pharmacology training from the NAPSR exemplifies my commitment to enter the field of pharmaceutical sales. Since I am organized and self-motivated, I will add value to the company without requiring much tending and supervision.

59. What about a pharmaceutical sales job attracts you? What is unattractive?

Effective Answer: As I evaluate my skills and goals, this job maximizes on both. I will be able to merge my knowledge of pharmacology while strategizing my territory to most effectively cover my physician clients. I imagine that there will be opportunity for increased responsibilities and challenges.

60. Have you won any sales awards? If so, what awards?

It's all right to tell them what you have accomplished. Your answer will have more impact if you supply them with proof of your accomplishments.

61. Why did you decide pharmaceutical sales would be the right career for you?

First tell them that you love selling and cite examples where you have done this even if you haven't been employed as a salesperson. Cite examples where you got someone to —buy in to your ideas, etc. That is selling! Mention that you have always been highly motivated, energetic, and enthusiastic. Successful sales people have all of these qualities and are creative and resourceful. Be prepared to cite examples where you displayed these behavioral characteristics.

62. Are you free to travel to other states for a week or more at a time?

Most pharmaceutical sales positions cover a local territory. However, you may need to travel to seminars and conferences. You will also have to attend training classes and company meetings. If this is a problem, you could be disqualified at this point. You need to think about how you will handle any possible problems you may have with travel and have a solution before you interview.

63. If we hire you, where do you see yourself in five years, fifteen years, etc.?

Have an outline of where you would like to be as an employee of their company. You may have listed five years of general field sales. Promotion to a District Sales Manager in year six would not be unreasonable. Maybe long terms you would expect to be a National Sales Manager.

64. What are your expectations from your employer?

You expect an exciting, challenging, rewarding pharmaceutical sales career opportunity with the best sales training available. You expect to be given all the sales aides and

materials available to help you perform your best. You expect the best management and - 13 - guidance to help you reach your goal of becoming a top performing pharmaceutical sales representative.

65. Do you know anything about computers?

You will almost certainly have to work on a company computer from your home. You will be required to enter sales call information and other data. While you do not have to be an expert on a computer by any means, a basic working knowledge is an asset.

66. What do you feel your chances of succeeding in the pharmaceutical industry are?

Excellent, of course! You must believe in yourself. Refer to the research you have done on your personal strengths. Tell them you are very comfortable with the information that you have learned about the pharmaceutical industry. You know that you possess the qualities that successful pharmaceutical sales representatives possess. Your business acumen is excellent. You are organized and efficient. Cite examples where you have sold tangible/intangible goods. Offer —proof sources to confirm what you are telling the interviewer.