

How to Answer the Interview Question: “What Is Your Greatest Accomplishment?”

“What is your greatest accomplishment?” is one of the most challenging behavioral questions you can be asked during a job interview.

As children, we are often taught to practice humility; to not show off in social situations because it is considered rude. Consequently, as adults, we often feel awkward discussing our achievements, even if we are asked about them directly. We subconsciously worry we are coming across as unlikeable or obnoxious.

Of course, in many situations, including at work, humility is a useful trait. But the entire purpose of a job interview is to convince your interviewer that you are the best person for the job. So, start embracing what makes you great.

This article will outline the purpose of behavioral interview questions, and help you understand what your interviewer is really looking for when they ask about your greatest achievement. It will then explain how to prepare your answer, and provide some sample answers to help you get started.

Why Interviewers Ask “What Is Your Greatest Accomplishment?”

Contrary to what your subconscious is trying to tell you, your interviewer isn't attempting to trick you into revealing arrogance when they ask the ‘greatest achievement’ [job interview](#) question. They just want to know what it is that makes you stand out from the crowd.

It is likely that the company received numerous, if not dozens of applications for the same job. Therefore, one of the purposes of the interview is to assess which candidates stand above the rest.

“What is your greatest accomplishment?” or “What is your greatest professional achievement?” is an example of a **behavioral interview question**, commonly used in interviews to assess skills and competencies through discussions about your past experiences.

Some other examples of behavioral questions include:

- “Tell me about a time you demonstrated leadership.”
- “Tell me about a time you failed.”
- “Describe a time you solved a difficult problem.”

“What is your greatest achievement?” and its similar variations are designed to evaluate:

- What you **value most** in life, how this can benefit the company and whether you are a good fit for the company’s culture.
- How you **view success** and whether this coincides with the company’s commercial goals.
- Whether you possess desired **soft skills** such as communication, leadership potential, teamwork, adaptability, creativity and problem-solving.
- Whether you have **ambition** and a drive to succeed. For example, if you had to fight hard for your greatest accomplishment.

How to Prepare Your Answer

As with all behavioral interview questions, it is crucial that you practice in advance.

The best way to describe your greatest accomplishment while only including relevant information is to use the **STAR technique**. The acronym works as follows:

- **S = Situation.** In what context did your greatest accomplishment occur?
- **T = Task.** What challenges did you face or what goal did you want to achieve?
- **A = Action.** What action did you take? What skills did you use?
- **R = Result.** What was the result? What did you learn from the experience? Why is this your greatest accomplishment?

Ideally, you should talk about a workplace accomplishment. However, you could refer to school, volunteering or even your hobbies, so long as you demonstrate transferable skills and prove you are the best person for the job.

'My greatest achievement' examples could include:

- Giving a great presentation at work.
- Beating sales targets.
- Training for and completing a marathon.
- Organizing a successful charity event.
- Mentoring a coworker or fellow student.

Once you have decided on your greatest achievement, use the five tips below to boost the content of your answer.

1. Think About Your Values and Best Qualities, and Try to Highlight Them

What does your greatest achievement say about what you value in life? How does this make you perfect for the job?

For example, you might have been named the top salesperson at your company last year. You consider this your greatest accomplishment because you value hard work and making people happy. You always come to work with a smile, you do your best to get to know your target customer and adapt your sales techniques to each customer's needs, and you make it your personal goal to go above and beyond the targets set for you.

This tells your interviewer that:

- You are passionate about customer service and you aim to exceed the expectations of your customers and employer.
- You are a hard worker, a positive and adaptable person, and you have excellent [communication skills](#).
- You are ambitious and thrive on quantifiable targets and results.

Consider working backwards to ensure you highlight your best qualities sufficiently.

2. Research the Job and Company

Think about the skills and qualities valued by the company and tailor your answer to demonstrate some of these.

The best way to start your research is to review the [job description](#), as it will list the skills necessary to fulfil the responsibilities of the job. You could also:

- Browse the company's website, blog and LinkedIn profile for previous projects, [achievements](#) and client testimonials.
- Read news articles about the company.
- Read online employee reviews of the company.

3. Be Honest

It is tempting to embellish the truth, or even lie, because you worry your greatest accomplishment is not good enough or you can't think of anything that qualifies.

Remember, your interviewer isn't expecting you to have eradicated world hunger. What qualifies as a 'greatest accomplishment' is subjective and personal to you.

So long as you can demonstrate skills and qualities that set you apart from other candidates, the interviewer will not mind which accomplishment you choose to discuss.

4. Be Specific

Your answer should be clear and detailed. Avoid using vague language such as, "I oversaw a project." Explain what the project entailed and what your role in it was.

5. Ensure Your Accomplishment Is Recent and Relevant

Learning to use a word processor on your computer might have been impressive several decades ago when typewriters were the norm. Today, almost every job candidate is expected to know how to type on a computer.

