

How to talk about 5 common weaknesses in a job interview

If you've ever been to a job interview, there's a good chance you've been asked 'What's your greatest weakness?'

Many of us struggle to answer this and end up pointing to something that's not really a weakness, such as 'I'm a perfectionist' or 'I work too hard.' But it really pays to give a more honest and authentic answer.

"Hiring managers and recruiters ask the question 'What is your weakness?' to get a good grasp of whether you're self-aware and committed to ongoing professional and personal development," says Leah Lambart, a career coach at Relaunch Me. "No one wants to manage someone who thinks they're perfect, so it's always better to admit to weaknesses rather than pretending you don't have any."

Here, we look at how to have an open, genuine discussion about five common weaknesses – and how to prove you're working on them in a way that'll impress your interviewer.

1. **I have a fear of public speaking**

A lot of people offer this as a weakness, but phrasing it in a different way can help you talk about it more personally, Lambart says. For example, 'I haven't had great exposure to speaking in front of large groups, but this is something I'm committed to improving over time.'

"You could then offer examples of how you've already started working to overcome this weakness, such as volunteering to deliver training or speak at smaller group gatherings to build confidence," Lambart says. "Hiring managers are also impressed by things you may be doing outside of work to improve a weakness, such as reading professional or personal development books, listening to podcasts, or – in the case of public speaking – joining a group to develop public speaking skills."

2. **I lack confidence**

"Many people are more on the introverted side, and that's not a problem unless you're applying for a sales position that requires extensive networking and cold-calling," Lambart says. "However, often introverts who are also quite shy lack confidence in an interview and when they start in a new role." If this is you, Lambart recommends acknowledging "that you're more on the introvert side, as it shows that you're self-aware."

Lambart says you can then continue to explain how this may shape the way you

approach a new role by saying something like, 'I'm an introvert, which means that I may be a bit more reserved when I start in a new position. I may not contribute as much in team meetings at first as I tend to sit back and listen until I'm comfortable with the team and the subject matter.'

3. **I can be overly self-critical**

This is one way to describe 'perfectionist' tendencies more authentically. Lambart suggests saying something like, 'I have very high standards and put pressure on myself to deliver work of the highest quality. At times this means I can get stuck in the details and can also get frustrated when working with others who don't have the same set of standards.'

"It's then important to provide evidence of what you're doing to overcome this weakness in your current role, such as taking a step back to look at the big picture and recognising that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses that they bring to a team," she says.

4. **I have a hard time saying no**

Sometimes we overload ourselves by saying yes to every opportunity or request for help, out of a desire to be a team player or simply because we're passionate about our work. But Lambart says this "people-pleaser" mentality "can lead to burnout when you don't set boundaries."

If this sounds like you, talk about how you're aware of this need to set boundaries and what you're realistically capable of. You can then also talk about how you've taken measures to ensure that you're managing or setting more realistic expectations for yourself, your co-workers and your manager. "More senior candidates can also mention how they have worked on their delegating skills to manage their workload whilst also developing more junior staff," Lambart says.

5. **I can struggle to ask for help.**

Whether it comes from pride or an inability to let go of control, some of us can find it hard to admit when we need a hand at work. Being aware of this is one step, another is acknowledging it in an interview.

"You could provide an example of where you possibly went down the wrong path because you didn't ask for help or spent too much time on something for fear of appearing ignorant," Lambart says. "You could then explain what you learned from this situation and how you applied these learnings since that time."

Demonstrating that you're aware of your biggest weakness and that you're working to overcome it

shows strength, self-awareness and maturity – all positive attributes employers are looking for. Making sure you're prepared for this question can help you leave a great impression at your next interview.

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