

WHY ARE YOU LOOKING TO LEAVE YOUR CURRENT POSITION?



A member of the Wash U alumni community asks, "How much do I tell a prospective employer about why I am looking to leave my current position." As part of the interviewing process it is likely you will get this question. Dodging the question or having a true confessions moment are not good strategies.

Employers ask this question looking for examples that demonstrate your interpersonal and communication skills, how you handle conflict in the workplace and two qualities that are highly valued: loyalty and professionalism.

Employers value loyalty

Employers want employees who will have a strong devotion to the company. This does not mean that you will stay in a job forever. It does mean that while you are employed with them you do not make disparaging remarks about the company, share confidentialities outside of the workplace or talk about things that do not represent the company in the best light.

Employers look for signs of professionalism and maturity

Acting in a responsible and fair manner in all your personal and work activities, knowing how to handle yourself in situations are clear signs of your professionalism and maturity.

Relate your leaving to a skill, strength or quality

To answer *why are you looking to leave* question put the focus on you. Relate your leaving to a skill, strength or quality.

Here are some ways you can answer this type of question.

- I find myself bored with the work and I am looking for more challenges. This position appears to be a fit with my experience and one where I will be challenged.
- There isn't room for growth with my current employer and I'm ready to move on to a new challenge.
- I've decided that is not the direction I want to go in my career and my current employer has no opportunities in the direction I'd like to head.
- I am interested in a new challenge and an opportunity to use my skills and experience in a different capacity than I have in my current position.
- I am interested in a job with more responsibility, and I am very ready for a new challenge.
- This position seemed like an excellent match for my skills and experience and I am not able to fully utilize them in my present job.

Behavioral Interviews - same question different approach

In a behavioral interview the *why are you looking to leave* question might be asked differently. For example, the interview could ask : *Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How was it resolved?* This question recognizes that often when you are looking for another job it is because of a bad work situation. But asking it this way, the interview learns about your behavior. How you behaved in the past is the best predictor of future behavior.

A way to answer this question that demonstrates professionalism and maturity is to say*Yes, I have had conflicts in the past. Never major ones, but there have been disagreements that needed to be resolved. I've found that when conflict occurs, it helps to fully understand the other person's perspective, so I take time to listen to their point of view, then I seek to work out a collaborative solution.* Then give an example.