

How to Answer the Question: Have You Ever Been Fired?

[Job seekers](#) often struggle with a termination. Take this example: “I’ve been working in the construction industry. Since the housing bust, business has dramatically declined. Recently, I had a disagreement with a co-worker and got [fired](#) over this trivial thing I never would have gotten fired for five years ago. What do I say about this?”

This client is not alone. We’ve all had positions that didn’t go as well as we had hoped. It could have been the company culture, maybe a lack of support made a job difficult, or it could have been something we did. Whatever the reason, it’s a tricky thing to talk about in an [interview](#), especially if your interviewer has insider information about the situation.

If you are in leadership, you have to be prepared. Your target company might be getting insider information through their networks. You have to assume they know something about what happened in your last role.

The interviewer’s job is to get you to reveal errors in judgment or performance – things they can use to weed you out so they can move on to the next candidate. Will you be “totally honest?” Show negativity or resentment? Be so nervous that you look like you’re hiding something?

Answering, ‘Have You Ever Been Fired?’

The ideas in this article will help you to avoid those mistakes, and will boost your confidence level dramatically. The best strategy to answering to “Have you ever been fired?” in an interview, is to prepare yourself, acknowledge the situation, and move on. Quickly. Here’s where to start:

Process Your Thoughts

In order to talk about what happened calmly, you need to examine the details of what occurred. Write down exactly what transpired, introspectively acknowledging your part in the events that led up to being let go. Perhaps the firing really was unfair, but to answer this question in an interview well, you need to take the time to process the events so that it doesn’t frazzle you when the question is asked.

To best prepare, deal with what makes you nervous before you go in. Wrestling with your darkest employment demons IN an interview will leave you sweating and stumbling over your words. In order not to blow it, be honest with yourself on paper about what happened, what your fears are, and talk things over with a friend. Then, make peace with yourself, and move on.

Talk To Your References

Talk to the people who are in your corner. Ask them what they will talk about if they are called by your target employer. Make sure they have a copy of your resume so that they can have a detailed reminder of your accomplishments.

Next, and this may be a hard one, but call the employer that let you go. Talk to your superior, and acknowledge your role in the termination. State that you have learned from the experience and that you hope to be more successful in your next position. Remind him that you are still looking for work, and ask what he might say about you if he were contacted.

This strategy takes a lot of guts, and it will speak directly to your ability to self-assess, make amends, and strive for improvement. Plus, it diminishes the chances of your previous employer bashing you to the new one.

Show How You Have Grown From The Experience

Determine what can you say to put a positive spin on things. What will make you look more desirable? Perhaps you should have realized sooner that the position was not a good match for your talents. Should have communicated better? Delegated more of your responsibilities?

Think through how your firing has actually turned you into a better leader. Focus on that when developing your answer.

Script Your Answer

To give the most confident response, you will need to write out what you are going to say and rehearse it. Here is a script you can modify with your details to get you through this question and onto the things you really want to talk about — your successes.

“I really enjoyed my work at the ABC Company and gained valuable experience from working there. I was able to improve sales and customer service. I developed a great team through my new hiring initiatives. It’s unfortunate that things didn’t work out because I enjoyed the work. But, I learned that to really be successful, I have to delegate more to my team. So, I took an online course on personality type so that I can better analyze what others’ preferences might be. I know I’ll put that to use. That is what attracted me to your company, you value...”

Then, turn the conversation back toward the new position and how your abilities match what is needed.

Of, course, if they don’t bring it up, you don’t need to volunteer that you were let go. And, NEVER lie or speak negatively about your previous boss, [co-workers](#), or company. Keep it positive and move it toward how it makes you a better candidate today.