



Answering the bad question

Tips to help you stay on message

Some interviews include a question or two that you don't want to answer or simply can't. What's a bad question?

- The answer is outside your expertise, department or job function.
- The question isn't germane to the conversation and presents a distraction from the key issue.
- The question is loaded and designed to be a setup.
- The question has nothing to do with the interview issue and you're not prepared to discuss the topic.
- You simply don't know the answer.

If you believe the point of granting an interview is to serve as a topical expert and field questions, every question seems like it deserves an answer. Ducking or declining a bad question might make people think we're not the expert after all, or maybe it looks like you're hiding something.

Don't fall for it. Always take a moment to consider every question.

Remember, the importance of granting an interview is to **get your message out**. You've come to say three or four things. If you find yourself saying anything else, each statement increases the odds that what you came to say won't make it into the story.

So, how do you redirect a bad question back to where you want it? Try bridging your way back to your own messaging.

- "That's a good question, but maybe a better question would be ... (a questions that relates back to one of your message), and the answer is (your message)."
- "We get that question a lot, but the heart of this issue is really about ..."
- "That's a great question, but I can't answer it because my job is (your mission statement) and our focus here is (back to your message)."
- "That's a good question. I don't have an answer for it, but I will get an answer and follow up. What we actually wanted to make sure people know today is..."