Example Responses to the “What's your greatest weakness?” Question

Key points
When something negative is said, we all come up with images in our head about the down side to what is said. We cannot control the images that arise in people’s minds. As a result, you need to attempt to create positive images in people’s minds or remove any negative images associated with you.

Tips
- Keep your answer short and move on.
- Avoid anything negative.
- Come up with something that doesn’t appear that you took it out of a book.

Examples
Here are some examples. Please tweak these to fit you and your situation.

**Taking the initiative:**
Taking the initiative and then realizing that you need to step back and pull the entire group in and get everyone on the same page.

**Valuing differences:**
“People need to re-energize in different ways. It used to bother me when people were playing games on the computer or making personal phone calls. However, I realized that everyone is different. We all need to re-energize. Some people do this by playing computer games while others are able to re-energize by taking on another changing task. I now value people’s differences much more and realize that everyone is different.”

**Building in improvement time:**
“I have always had a lot on my plate and while I always make sure I do quality work, I never used to build in down time to evaluate my work or build in time for improvement. I now make sure I build in time to evaluate projects and get up to speed on things that will allow me to be more efficient and productive with what I do. This includes building in time for advanced software training."

**Getting clarification:**
“I used to assume that I knew what people wanted and I have realized that this is not always the best approach when handling assignments. I now take the time to check in and restate what my understanding is of the problem, issue, or assignment. This allows me to make sure we (my boss and I or my client and I or my group member and I) are on the same page. Most problems are due to communication problems and my goal has been to avoid any of these problems. This approach has been highly effective.”

**Getting frustrated:**
“I tend to get frustrated when a project carries on too long – longer than it should. As a result, I have learned to set deadlines and timelines so things get done in a timely and quality manner.”

**Getting frustrated #2:**
“I used to get frustrated when the work of other coworkers would negatively impact the progress on my projects. Now I understand that everyone has something unique to add to the projects and it is my job to offer to assist coworkers with challenges or barriers in order to expedite the overall progress on the project. I also realize that the input and involvement of others will make for a much better result down the line. If quality is important, I must tap into these contributions and find ways to get them in an expedited manner.”
**Having little patience:**

“I tend to be impatient with people who show no sense of urgency, especially when a project has a fairly tight deadline or when a client needs information quickly. I am very customer/client focused and I like to have things in my clients hands on time or even before they expect them.”

**Being weak at something and overcoming it:**

“I used to not be as strong at _____________________. However, I realized this and then went out to seek help and training to improve this skill. And, as a result, I now _____________________.”

[Try to pick something that is not core to the business or job. If it is core, make sure you have solid proof that you have advanced and overcome this weakness.]

“I didn’t have as much grasp of the technical issues related to ____________________ so I took classes and requested additional assignments to get up to speed on things within this area. I am always looking for ways to improve myself.”

“I have never worked for this organization so I have a lot to learn about it. However, I am a quick learner, I offer a new perspective, and I will bring a lot of energy to the position.”

“While I am very efficient, I would often delay getting up to speed on new software programs or changes. Now I make sure I build in time on my calendar on a quarterly or yearly basis to step back and receive training on computer updates and new programs. I try to continually update my skills.”

**Having a weakness that is not your fault:**

“I graduated from an excellent undergraduate program that is not as well known in the east/west.”

“My professional network is well established in Los Angeles, but I am looking to move to Florida to be closer to my family.”

**Being persistent:**

“When I’m faced with a problem or issue at work that can’t be easily solved, I used to stubbornly persist at trying to solve it to the point that I’m too focused to see the solution...With experience, I’ve learned to recognize when I’m beating my head up against a brick wall, and so I stop, take a walk or go do something else to clear my mind, and usually the solution comes to me.” [Persistence isn’t perceived as a flaw usually, but calling it stubbornness, in this context, helps pull it off as one. This example was taken from www.impactinterview.com/2009/01/how-to-answer-what-is-your-biggest-weakness-interview-question/]