

# Hitting the Target During a Personal Interview!

Included here is information from a number of sources, related to interviewing. The Interview Preparation Sheet (**in red font below, pages 7-13**) and the info in **red** should be very useful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

One of the best ways to separate yourself from the competition is to be prepared!

Ok, we made it to the interview, now what. First of all, you need to understand what the interview is all about. Your winning resume, and the way Ted Nelson and Associates presented your abilities, character and background have gained you entrée into the potential Employer's office. The interviewer has already reviewed your resume in detail, so they are intimately knowledgeable about the hard facts of your employment history and skills. The actual interview is a subtler, more subjective aspect of the job-hunting process. During the course of each interview each person you meet will be forming an opinion of you and gauging your compatibility with the needs of the organization and more importantly their ability to work with you within that role. Bottom line – **You're trying to make a good impression!!**

You need to be sincere, polite and enthusiastic about your knowledge of their company and the industry in order to secure the position. Your resume may well have shown examples of your skills as a team player, but now you need to convince them that you fit their team. In order to make the best impression you can you need to be prepared, know what to expect, and how to handle it if things don't go quite as you had planned.

### Preparation

Research the company:

- Check out the company website. Know about their history and growth over the years.
- Check out other company profiles through websites like Hoovers or Dun/Bradstreet.
- Look for relevant press releases in major newspapers or trade publications.
- Read through any notes you have surrounding the interviewers you will meet. Try to Understand their role within the organization and make sure you answer their questions With a bent toward their area of expertise.
- Re-read the job description so you can fit your background most effectively to their needs.
- Be ready with questions for each interviewer but focus on responsibility related issues not "what's in it for me" questions.

## **Presenting Yourself**

General Rules for Presenting yourself:

- Arrive early
- Bring extra copies of your resume, references, a notepad and pen.
- Be sure you know how to pronounce your interviewer's name correctly.
- Be polite to everyone you meet there. They all count.
- Be personable as well as professional.
- Do NOT chew gum, smoke, swear or use slang.
- Assume all questions are asked for a good reason and answer accordingly.
- Do not assume that your interviewer knows how to elicit the information he or she is looking for.
- Feel free to ask for clarification before answering a question.
- Take some time to formulate your answers before you speak.
- Answer all questions honestly, but in the best, most positive light.
- Do NOT bad mouth old employers.

Proper Attire:

- First Impressions are extremely important. The way you present yourself can be as important as what you say.
- For a woman: A suit or conservative dress is appropriate. Minimal amounts of jewelry and perfume. Stylish low heel shoes are best. For a plant interview, close-toed shoes are required.
- For a man: A conservative business suit, long-sleeved shirt and tie are still best for corporate interviews. For plant interviews, either business casual or (sometimes - rarely) a suit and tie could be appropriate.

**\*\* If you are unsure as to the attire you were planning to wear, please call me.\*\***

## **Some really good things to read and think about:**

These next few pages are some excellent articles to read prior to going on any interview. They were written by EXPERTS so they are very much worth heeding and applying to this interview.

### **A Guide to Behavioral Interviewing**

"Tell me about a time when you were on a team, and one of the members wasn't carrying his or her weight." If this is one of the leading questions in your job interview, you could be in for a behavioral interview. Based on the premise that the best way to predict future behavior is to determine past behavior, this style of interviewing is gaining wide acceptance among recruiters.

Today, more than ever, every hiring decision is critical. Behavioral interviewing is designed to minimize personal impressions that can affect the hiring decision. By focusing on the applicant's actions and behaviors, rather than subjective impressions that can sometimes be misleading, interviewers can make more accurate hiring decisions.

#### **Behavioral vs. Traditional Interviews**

If you have training or experience with traditional interviewing techniques, you may find the behavioral interview quite different in several ways. Instead of asking how you would behave in a particular situation, the interviewer will ask you to describe how you did behave. Expect the interviewer to question and probe (think of "peeling the layers from an onion"). The interviewer will ask you to provide details, and will not allow you to theorize or generalize about several events.

The interview will be a more structured process that will concentrate on areas that are important to the interviewer, rather than allowing you to concentrate on areas that you may feel are important. You may not get a chance to deliver any prepared stories. Most interviewers will be taking copious notes throughout the interview. The behavioral interviewer has been trained to objectively collect and evaluate information, and works from a profile of desired behaviors that are needed for success on the job. Because the behaviors a candidate has demonstrated in previous similar positions are likely to be repeated, you will be asked to share situations in which you may or may not have exhibited these behaviors. Your answers will be tested for accuracy and consistency.

If you are an entry-level candidate with no previous related experience, the interviewer will look for behaviors in situations similar to those of the target position: "Describe a major problem you have faced and how you dealt with it." "Give an example of when you had to work with your

hands to accomplish a task or project." "What class did you like the most? What did you like about it?"

Follow-up questions will test for consistency and determine if you exhibited the desired behavior in that situation:

"Can you give me an example?"

"What did you do?"

"What did you say?"

"What were you thinking?"

"How did you feel?"

"What was your role?"

"What was the result?"

You will notice an absence of such questions as, "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses."

### **How to Prepare for a Behavioral Interview**

Recall recent situations that show favorable behaviors or actions, especially involving course work, work experience, leadership, teamwork, initiative, planning, and customer service. Prepare short descriptions of each situation, be ready to give details if asked. Be sure each story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, i.e., be ready to describe the situation, your action, and the outcome or result. Be sure the outcome or result reflects positively on you (even if the result itself was not favorable). Be honest. Don't embellish or omit any part of the story. The interviewer will find out if your story is built on a weak foundation. Be specific. Don't generalize about several events; give a detailed accounting of one event.

A possible response for the question, "Tell me about a time when you were on a team and a member wasn't pulling his or her weight" might go as follows: "I had been assigned to a team to build a canoe out of concrete. One of our team members wasn't showing up for our lab sessions nor doing his assignments. I finally met with him in private, explained the frustration of the rest of the team, and asked if there was anything I could do to help. He told me he was preoccupied with another class that he wasn't passing, so I found someone to help him with the other course. He not only was able to spend more time on our project, but he was also grateful to me for helping him out. We finished our project on time, and got a 'B' on it."

The interviewer might then probe: "How did you feel when you confronted this person?" "Exactly what was the nature of the project?" "What was his responsibility as a team member?" "What was your role?" "At what point did you take it on yourself to confront him?" You can see it is important that you not make up or "shade" information, and why you should have a clear memory of the entire incident.

## **Don't Forget the Basics**

Instead of feeling anxious or threatened by the prospect of a behavioral interview, remember the essential difference between the traditional interview and the behavioral interview: The traditional interviewer may allow you to project what you might or should do in a given situation, whereas the behavioral interviewer is looking for past actions only. It will always be important to put your best foot forward and make a good impression on the interviewer with appropriate attire, good grooming, and a firm handshake and direct eye contact. There is no substitute for promptness, courtesy, preparation, enthusiasm, and a positive attitude.

## **General Overview**

Behavioral Interviewing, also referred to as Structured Behavioral Interviewing, is by design a more systematic and standardized process of evaluating job candidates than is typical of the "traditional" interview process. Its primary intent is to increase the success rate of an organization's in "good" hires and is, therefore, the form of interview being used more often by a wide variety of recruiting organizations. Behavioral interviewing is based on the "Behavioral Consistency Principle" which essentially states that the best predictor of future performance is past performance in a similar circumstance. Therefore, the questions that are asked of you will tend to focus on behavior, and attempt to evoke how you responded to a variety of specific personal and interpersonal situations and what results occurred from your actions.

## **"HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I'M BEING GIVEN A BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW?"**

It is quite possible that the interviewer may make you aware prior to the interview that you should expect a structured or competency-based interview. However, you shouldn't have much trouble identifying whether or not you're being given a behavioral interview even without prior information. If you hear questions that are asking you to describe or recount specific situations in which you carried out a job-relevant action, and are then asked to describe the consequence or result of your action, you know you're being behaviorally interviewed.

Behavioral interviews are designed to assess your "real" ability or skill level in functioning in any number of work related activities by delving into how you functioned in your past jobs or extracurricular activities. As with any sort of interview, there are a number of common behavioral "themes" or "performance dimensions" that most interviewers are likely to be interested in. These include (but are not limited to) leadership, interpersonal, communication, multi-tasking, management and cognitive skills, Transition ability (e.g., personal flexibility, tolerance for ambiguity), motivation, decisiveness and commitment. The kinds of inquiries you would hear from an interviewer might resemble the following:

- What do you estimate to be your biggest academic achievement at this point? What did you do to contribute to that achievement?
- Cite an example of when you were faced with an unpleasant task. How did you go about facing it?
- Give me the most recent example of a conflict you had with a coworker or a supervisor. How did you handle it?
- Describe a situation in which you had to use your communication skills in order to make an important point. How did you do it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to use a persuasive argument to help someone see things your way. How did you do it?

**Note that each of the above examples integrates three universal components of a good behavioral inquiry: a particular performance situation or task, an action on your part, and the consequences of your action.**

### **Preparation: Analyze Your Skills, Abilities and Qualities**

It is highly critical that you first do some preparation. For any given job interview, this should begin with an analysis on your part of what you believe to be the most important skills, abilities, and personal qualities needed to successfully fulfill the various responsibilities of the job.

Once identified, think carefully about any kind of "working" experience that you've ever had that required you to use these skills, what courses of action or strategies you used to accomplish the tasks, and what positive results came about from your diligence. It is often the case that an interviewer will seek a relatively high level of detail in your responses (e.g., the conversation you had, the mood of the person you were talking to, your specific thought processes at the time of action, etc.).

**The final key is preparation, you don't want to be trying to think of examples "on-the-spot" during the interview. Review your past and make some notes to help you recall your past successes during the interview. On the next page is a sheet formatted to help you recall and detail those successes.**

## Interview Preparation Worksheet

**Why this sheet is Critical:**

**#1 reason people blow interviews – during the pressure of an interview the first thing that shuts down is people's long term memory.**

**You lose 90% of the good examples you have of work you have done in the past. We need to make sure that does not happen.**

**REVIEWING YOUR PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS – Start with your most recent Employer – focus on the issues that will relate to this position.**

**Do the left column first.**

**Company:**

**Position:**

**List your accomplishments/achievements while working at this position:**

**Example:**

**Make the company money.**

**Save the company money.**

**Improve a process or procedure.**

**List the strategy, implementation and development processes you used to bring about these results:**

**Who did you get involved?**

**What hurdles did you have to overcome?**

**On time/On budget?**

**See worksheet on next page.**



Company:

Position:

List your accomplishments/achievements while working at this position:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, similar to standard notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

List the strategy, implementation and development processes you used to bring about these results:

[illegible]

Company:

Position:

List your accomplishments/achievements while working at this position:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

List the strategy, implementation and development processes you used to bring about these results:

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Company:

Position:

List your accomplishments/achievements while working at this position:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

List the strategy, implementation and development processes you used to bring about these results:

[illegible]

Company:

Position:

List your accomplishments/achievements while working at this position:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

List the strategy, implementation and development processes you used to bring about these results:

[illegible]

## INTERVIEWING PREPARATION TIPS!

**YOUR GOAL IS ALWAYS TO GET AN OFFER. ONCE YOU RECEIVE AN OFFER, YOU CAN DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO ACCEPT, SO KEEP YOUR ENTHUSIASM LEVEL UP AND PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD!**

1) **PREPARE, PREPARE, PREPARE!** It is always to your advantage to prepare well for each interview you go to. To prepare, we always recommend that you write down any and all interview questions you have ever been asked and any and all questions you anticipate being asked. Second, write out your answers. This helps commit your answers to memory and forces you to think out how you are going to answer the questions. (You will never think of everything, so the key is to prepare for the questions you would expect to be asked).

Be prepared to answer questions you are not expecting. When you are asked an unexpected question, take a deep breath before you answer and think about what you want to say. Then answer the question honestly and to the best of your ability. Remain calm and you will do fine.

Other preparation:

- Before the interview, write a list of questions you want to ask the interviewer, so they are fresh in your mind.
- Before the interview, write a list of all the positive things you feel you have to offer the company so they are fresh in your mind.

2) **GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW.** A good night's sleep will help ensure that you are alert and at your best for the interview.

3) **APPEARANCE.** Make sure you know what appropriate interviewing attire is. Make sure you are well groomed prior to the interview. Make sure your clothes are clean and pressed. If you need a haircut, get one. When you arrive at the company, stop in the nearest restroom and take one quick look at your appearance to make sure the wind had not blown your hair out of place. In a cement plant, dress wearing a clean version of what you wear while working in the plant. A suit and tie are only appropriate at a Corporate office, and then not always.

While companies do not make their hiring decisions based on appearance, I have known them to eliminate people from consideration due to inappropriate or slovenly appearances.

4) **SALARY.** The interview is not the place or the time to negotiate salary. If the company asks you about your salary, it is okay to tell them what you make because they already have that information. However, if they ask you how much money you want to change jobs, it is always in your best interest not to give them an amount. (Reason: Either you will give them an amount which is lower than what they would have offered you and you will end up getting a lower offer; or you will ask for too much and you will price yourself out of the job; or sometimes you will tell them an amount they would have offered anyway).

Our recommendation: Tell the company you have not thought about the money yet because you were more interested in learning about the position and the company, but that you are interested and will consider any reasonable offer and you know they will make a reasonable offer. (Which they will if they want to attract you). The key is to keep the door open.

5) **COVERING REASONS FOR LOOKING:** Going over reasons for leaving in your Interviews: One question a company will have for you is why you are wanting to make a career move. If you are working, and looking at a new opportunity, covering your reasons for looking are usually straight forward - Opportunity, Family, Location. Money can be a reason but it is best not focused on as it is a wrong emphasis. Money is covered in an interview, sometimes, and in the offer stage.

If you are out of work, the company is going to ask you why. Being fired, laid off, RIFed, is not uncommon, but it will require an explanation. I recommend a 3 tier answer to this. The first one addresses the reason why, covers it in a short statement or two. Sometimes this is enough. You might be asked to expand on the first statement. Another further explanation is needed, more info that again give more depth to the first. If this is not workable, you expand on this a third time, giving enough information to state what happened, enough detail to address their question. That is generally enough to satisfy a company's need to understand.

In talking about why you are looking, never be critical of the people / company you have worked for, no matter how true it might be. This is a negative and people see this attitude as you, no matter how true. Never be negative in your reasons for your leaving.

6) **BENEFITS.** Do not focus on the benefits package beyond what the company discusses with you at the interview. The interview is not the place to worry about the benefits the company has to offer. Reason: Your goal in the interview is to sell your background and skills so that you will get an offer. If the company makes an offer, we will make sure you get all the information on the benefit package you need to give them an answer.

7) **ENTHUSIASM.** Although you must have the required skills and background to be considered for a position, enthusiasm goes a long way. If a company has the choice of two equally qualified candidates, they will select the candidate who exhibits enthusiasm and interest!

8) **INTEREST.** At the conclusion of the interview, be sure to thank each person for the interview. If you like the position and would like to receive an offer, let them know you are interested. Employers like to hire people they think are interested in them.

**LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, CALL ME AFTER THE INTERVIEW AND TELL ME HOW IT WENT AND WHAT YOUR INTEREST LEVEL IS. I NEED TO KNOW THIS IN ORDER TO BEST BE ABLE TO REPRESENT YOUR INTERESTS.**

## **Explaining why you left your last position**

by Ted Nelson

The three tiers of explaining why you left your last position.

If you are changing jobs, one question that will be asked is why you are looking / what happened with your last position. If you are looking while you are still working, the easy explanation is to talk about your desire for advancement, to move back home, whatever your reason is.

If you are not working, then explaining what happened requires a slightly different approach. You need to explain what happened that you are unemployed. Your reason for looking can be explained at 3 different tiers. Each tier is an expanded level of explanation for why you left your company.

The first tier is to just state what happened, "I was laid off" or "the company eliminated my position."

If the company wants more of an explanation, then we hit the 2nd tier, basically more information but not everything. "My position was eliminated because the company felt they wanted to go a different direction than I was taking the plant.

If that raises another question from the company, you want to give a complete explanation, leaving out any negatives about your bosses or the company. "I was working towards addressing the constant equipment failures, spending time to put in a Predictive program and my boss was happier with not having that program in place. I might have pushed a bit hard on having a Predictive program going and we agreed that it was time for me to leave."

By the time you are finished, the interviewer should be satisfied with your answer.

Never bad-mouth the company. If your plant or company has a reputation, it is known within the Industry, so you don't have to explain too much.

I recommend practicing addressing the question of why you have left. Being polished is not the goal; the goal is to explain this well enough that the new company understands.

If you were fired, it is no different. People get fired all the time. While not fun, it is not a bad thing, mostly. Reasons for firing someone are infinite. People get fired for non-compliance: You are ordered to sign off on the safety of a plant issue, you can't and you get sacked. Or you had a Safety Violation and the company has a zero-tolerance policy. Or, Or, Or. Just apply the above 3 tier approach. By the third time everyone will understand.

Getting fired / quitting when you did not perform well in your position, same thing applies as above. You might be asking for another opportunity to do that position again, or you might also need to re-evaluate what your skill set really is, what you are really interested in being. Companies sometimes will put out their feelers to ask about you from their contacts, so if you really are not qualified, it will come out. Even here, use the above approach to sell your change of direction (if you are changing direction) and sell how what you did with your last company will help you in your next position.

## **Don't Talk Too Much**

**by Michael Neece, founder of Interview Mastery**

**Monster Contributing Writer**

The gift of gab can be something of a curse during an interview. You could end up talking your way right out of the job.

It's important to remember that interviewers are only human, and their attention tends to wane as you speak. Fully understanding this is critical to effectively communicating during any interview. Your response should be less than a minute and a half when an interviewer asks you to "tell me about yourself." Why? You'll have that interviewer's attention for just about 90 seconds.

The average interviewer's attention span looks something like this:

- As you begin speaking, the interviewer is listening with nearly full attention.
- After about 10 seconds, he begins listening with less intensity.
- After 60 seconds, his mind begins to wander and he's devoting less than half his attention to you. The interviewer starts asking questions about your response or begins formulating his next question.
- After you've been speaking for 90 seconds without interruption, the interviewer is barely listening at all.

An interviewer's attention level can be nearly impossible to detect, because most people are skilled at nodding their heads and saying "hmmm" while looking at you, all in an effort to disguise their wandering minds. The longer you speak without interruption, the less attention the listener is giving you. Hence, when you provide a long answer that builds to an important conclusion, often the interviewer is no longer listening.

This is particularly important when you respond to an interviewer's request to tell him about yourself, because there is just so much you can say on the subject, and you can't be sure what part of your background the interviewer is most interested in learning about.

### **Your Questions Are Key**

Near the end of your response, it's important to keep the interviewer engaged by asking questions.

Skilled interviewers will pose behavioral-event questions, asking you to describe specific examples of your experience. In these situations, your response can easily last much longer than 90 seconds. In such situations, interrupt yourself by asking the interviewer a question like, "Is this the level of detail you are looking for?" or "Is this the type of example you're interested in?"

This strategy helps to re-engage your listener and promotes two-way communication.

According to Kent Kirch, the global director of recruiting at Deloitte, interviewers are more impressed with your questions than any selling points you try to make. "What's really disappointing to an interviewer is at the end of an interview and I ask the candidate, 'Do you have any questions I can answer for you?' and he says, 'Nope, I think you answered them all,' and that's the end of it; it's just really frustrating," he says. "It all goes back to preparation, and [your questions] tell the interviewer you thought about this interview before you walked in the door."

Asking questions can also give you a strategic edge. "People love to talk about themselves," says Austin Cooke, the global recruitment director at Sapient. "So if you as a candidate can kind of get interviewers talking about themselves, you're one step up."

Your interview goals are to ensure you are understood and to make the best presentation of your talents. Engaging interviewers in two-way communication by asking questions helps you ensure they are listening while you deliver your response.

## **Six Interview Mistakes**

**by Michael Neece, founder of Interview Mastery**

**Monster Contributing Writer**

It's tough to avoid typical interview traps if you're unsure what they are. Here are a half dozen to watch out for.

### **1. Confusing an Interview with an Interrogation.**

Most candidates expect to be interrogated. An interrogation occurs when one person asks all the questions and the other gives the answers. An interview is a business conversation in which both people ask and respond to questions. Candidates who expect to be interrogated avoid asking questions, leaving the interviewer in the role of reluctant interrogator.

### **2. Making a So-Called Weakness Seem Positive.**

Interviewers frequently ask candidates, "What are your weaknesses?" Conventional interview wisdom dictates that you highlight a weakness like "I'm a perfectionist," and turn it into a positive. Interviewers are not impressed, because they've probably heard the same answer a hundred times. If you are asked this question, highlight a skill that you wish to improve upon and describe what you are doing to enhance your skill in this area. Interviewers don't care what your weaknesses are. They want to see how you handle the question and what your answer indicates about you.

### **3. Failing to Ask Questions.**

Every interview concludes with the interviewer asking if you have any questions. The worst thing to say is that you have no questions. Having no questions prepared indicates you are not interested and not prepared. Interviewers are more impressed by the questions you ask than the selling points you try to make. Before each interview, make a list of five questions you will ask. "I think a good question is, 'Can you tell me about your career?'" says Kent Kirch, director of global recruiting at Deloitte. "Everybody likes to talk about themselves, so you're probably pretty safe asking that question."

### **4. Researching the Company But Not Yourself.**

Candidates intellectually prepare by researching the company. Most job seekers do not research themselves by taking inventory of their experience, knowledge and skills. Formulating a talent inventory prepares you to immediately respond to any question about your experience. You must be prepared to discuss any part of your background. Creating your talent inventory refreshes your memory and helps you immediately remember experiences you would otherwise have forgotten during the interview.



## 5. Leaving Your Cell Phone On.

We may live in a wired, always-available society, but a ringing cell phone is not appropriate for an interview. Turn it off before you enter the company.

## 6. Waiting for a Call.

Time is your enemy after the interview. After you send a thank-you email and note to every interviewer, follow up a couple of days later with either a question or additional information. Contact the person who can hire you -- not the HR department. HR is famous for not returning calls. Additional information can be details about your talents, a recent competitor's press release or industry trends. Your intention is to keep everyone's memory of you fresh.

# **Interviewers' Pet Peeves** **by Carole Martin** **Monster Contributing Writer**

You sit facing the interviewer, feeling like things are moving along nicely when all of a sudden the interview takes a drastic turn for the worse. What just happened? You may have hit one of the interviewer's pet peeves, one of those things that automatically triggers a negative response.

Here are seven of the most common peeves provided by experienced interviewers, along with some tips on how to avoid them:

### 1. Smells: Too Much of a Good Smell Can Be Bad

Pat Riley, author of *Secrets of Breaking into Pharmaceutical Sales*, has a pet peeve story to relate: "Preparing for an interview is not like preparing for a date. I had one interview with a woman who doused herself with perfume (the same perfume my ex-girlfriend used to wear) right before stepping into the small interview booth. The perfume was overpowering and brought back bad memories."

### 2. Communication: Too Little Leaves Interviewers Exasperated

"My number one interviewing pet peeve is an applicant who won't talk," says Steve Jones, a manager of client services at a software company in Dallas. "I try to ask open-ended questions

and prod them for longer answers, but no luck. I've even mentioned to a few that I need more information so I can get an idea of where they're coming from -- still no luck. I always end the interview saying, 'Now it's your turn to ask questions,' and still no luck; they don't have any. Oh well -- next!"

"Help me out here," says Jones. "Come prepared to answer questions and talk about yourself."

### 3. Communication: Too Much Can Be Too Much

"Candidates who ramble are the ones who get to me," says Dotti Bousquet of Resource Group Staffing in West Hartford, Connecticut. "Last week, I was interviewing a candidate and asked her one question. The candidate talked and talked and talked for 45 minutes straight. I was unable to stop her. I had to say, 'Let's wrap this up,' and I stood up while she continued to talk. I walked to the door of the office and opened it. She left, but continued to talk while walking out the door."

The lesson? "Candidates should stay focused, and answer the question asked -- in less than two to three minutes," advises Bousquet.

### 4. Lack of Focus: Results in Losing the Interviewer

"Typically, candidates are simply too intimidated by the process," says Mark Fulop, project director for a large nonprofit agency. "Relating the answer given to one question back with another -- and asking clarifying or follow-up questions -- shows me that the candidate is confident and thinking about the whole picture instead of enduring an interrogation."

### 5. Averting Your Eyes: One Way to Avert an Offer

"People who do not make any eye contact during the entire interview" irritate Gwen Sobiech, an agency recruiter in West Hartford, Connecticut. "I realize some people are shy, but to never look at me once -- they look down, around, everywhere, but not at me for the entire interview. I find that extremely annoying. I also tend to distrust someone who will not look at me when I've asked a question."

If you are uncomfortable looking into someone's eyes, look at his "third eye," just above and between the person's two eyes.

### 6. Slang and Street Speak: Leave Them on the Street

"Poor communications skills really get to me," says Robert Fodge of Power Brokers in Dover, Delaware. "What I mean by this is not merely their language fluency, but more about the use of language. Slang words and street speak just don't have a place in most business environments."

Also, candidates who say 'um,' 'like' and 'uh' between every other word lose my attention very quickly."

## 7. Deception: Little Lies Leave a Big Impression

One major complaint among recruiters is when a candidate is not completely truthful; small lies are all too common in the world of recruitment. This includes not being completely forthcoming with relevant information, embellishing accomplishments, hiding jobs or leading the process on with no intention of ever following through. Building trust during the interview is key to getting an offer.

## Questioning the Interviewer

Even if you don't ask any questions during an interview, many interviewers will ask you if you have any questions at the end. How you respond will affect their evaluation of you. So be prepared to ask insightful questions about the organization.

- Making a list of any questions you have regarding the company is important (but it should contain only question you weren't able to find out through your own research or through us) this will help you identify if this is the right position for you.

Good topics to touch on include:

- The competitive environment in which the organization operates
- Executive management styles
- What obstacles the organization anticipates in meeting its goals
- How the organization's goals have changed over the past 3 years
- What obstacles were commonly met in reaching corporate goals
- What resources are available from the company and what must be found elsewhere to reach positive objectives.

Generally it is not recommended to ask about compensation or benefits. Questions in this area make you seem more interested in what they can do for you and less enthusiastic about the position. Also, make sure you ask at least some questions so you don't appear to passive in pursuing the opportunity.

## **BE INTERESTED**

The below has a lot of information that you will find helpful. I want to add a thought: In interviewing, BE INTERESTED. How do you do that? Ask Questions. Everyone loves to talk, if you get them started. Ask about the plant, the equipment, about them and what they do and what they expect – whatever for you is of interest. It does not matter if you are a quiet type or extroverted. Ask questions. Be interested.

## **TWENTY GOOD ANSWERS TO HELP YOU MASTER EVEN THE MOST GRUELING EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW**

Most people make two devastating mistakes when they are being questioned in an interview.

First, they fail to listen to the question. They proceed to annoy the interviewer either by answering a question that wasn't asked, or by giving out a lot of superfluous information.

Second, and more important, they attempt to answer questions with virtually no preparation. The glibbest person on earth, even the most skilled debater, cannot answer questions off the cuff without damaging the chances for success.

What follows are twenty questions that various surveys have indicated are asked most often, regardless of the job classification. Study them carefully, develop strong responses, and your candidacy will receive prime consideration.

- Why do you want to work here?

Because you have done your homework on this company, you know exactly why you want to work there. Just organize your reasons into several short, hard-hitting sentences like "You make the best product on the market today. Your management is farsighted enough to reinvest the company's profits so that you will soon be the leader in this category".

- Why should I hire you?

The interviewer does not want a lengthy regurgitation of your resume. They do not want a barrage of facts and figures. They are interested in testing your poise and confidence. So give a short, generalized summary like "I have the qualifications to do the job that needs to be done and my track record proves it".

- What interests you most about this position?

Give a truthful but brief answer like “The challenge” or “The future”, “The environment” or “The competitiveness”. This response will force the interviewer to ask you to explain, giving you yet another opportunity to demonstrate your profound knowledge of the company.

- Would you like to have your boss's job?

By all means, “Yes!”. Ambitious, hungry people are always preferred over those who would settle for a safe routine. If you sense that this answer may threaten your interviewer's security, you might add “when I am judge qualified” or “should an opening develop in several years”.

- Are you willing to go where the company sends you?

This is probably being asked because they intend to ship you off. If you answer “No”, you may not be hired. If you answer “Yes”, understand that once you are a trusted employee, you may not be able to exert any leverage to avoid those less desirable out-of-town assignments.

- What kind of decisions are most difficult for you?

Be human and admit that not everything comes easily. But be careful about what you do admit. “I find it difficult to decide which of two good employees must be let go”. Or “It is difficult for me to tell a client when he's running his business badly”.

- How do you feel about your progress to date?

Never apologize for yourself. “I think I've done well, but I need new challenges and opportunities”. This is a good time to drop hero stories. “No one in my company has advanced as fast as I have. I think you'll agree that I've accomplished quite a bit in the last five years”.

- How long will you stay with the company?

A reasonable response would be, “As long as I continue to learn and grow in my field”.

- Have you done the best work you are capable of doing?

This is best answered with some degree of self-effacement. “I would be lying if I told you I was perfect, but I have always tackled assignments with all my energy and talents”.

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?

To answer this question, make sure you know exactly what can or cannot be accomplished by the ideal candidate in your shoes. Too many job-hunters butcher this question because they have not done their homework and have no idea where their career will lead them. If you see yourself at another company, or in another department of the company you are interviewing with, then tread lightly. You can't afford to tell your interviewer that you think you'll be more successful than they.

- What training/qualifications do you have for a job like this?

Deliver a short, fact-filled summary of your two or three most important qualifications. "I have a background in accounting. I've demonstrated proven selling skills. I'm capable of handling several projects simultaneously".

- Have you ever hired or fired anyone?

You are being asked this question for two very important reasons. First, to determine whether you are capable of performing these duties. Second, to determine if your previous experience was at a high enough level to include hiring/firing responsibilities. If you have no experience, you must convince the interviewer that you can perform in these areas.

- How many people have you supervised?

Similar to the "hired/fired" question. The interviewer is trying to determine the depth of your experience. Do not exaggerate!

- Why do you want to change jobs?

This is one of the first questions interviewers ask. Be sure you are ready to answer if satisfactorily. If you are currently in a dead-end position, locked out of advancement opportunities, explain this. The interviewer will understand. If your job has become routine, void of learning experience, say so. If you feel your present employer is losing ground to competition through no fault of yours, the interviewer will also accept that. If you say that your salary is too low, you'll become suspect. If you say that you hate your boss, you might also end up hating the interviewer. If you say you are bored, they'll view you as just another job-hopper. Careful.

- Why were you out of work for so long?

If there is a time gap in your resume, be prepared to explain what you were doing during that time. If you don't satisfy the interviewer's curiosity, you won't get hired. Try to explain very positively what you learned or accomplished during the hiatus and the interviewer will warm to your candidacy. For example, "I took several courses to strengthen my skills in...", or "I used this time to re-examine my goals and reached this conclusion...". The interviewer must have a positive explanation.

- Why have you changed jobs so frequently?

This question is crucial. In fact, an unsatisfactory answer to this one is among the top reasons why candidates fail to get the jobs they want. Convince the interviewer that your job-hopping days are over. If you feel it was a mistake leaving previous jobs so soon, say so, and at the same time remind the interviewer that your performance was never in question. Honesty is appreciated. If something in your personal or business life has recently changed and would affect your future stability, come right out with the facts.

- How have you helped sales/profits/cost reductions?

Have your hero stories ready and be willing to prove that you have made significant contributions in one or more of these basic areas. Keep your explanations short and try to include specific dollar amounts.

- Why aren't you earning more at your age?

This is a current favorite which can frighten the wits out of an unsuspecting candidate. One of the following responses should cover your situation: "I have been willing to sacrifice short-term earnings in order to gain valuable experience" or "I have received (been promised) company stock (or other benefits) in lieu of a salary increase" or "I was reluctant to gain a reputation as a job-hopper, preferring instead to build my career on solid, long-term achievements".... These work.

- What are the reasons for your success?

It is best to keep this answer very general, permitting the interviewer to probe more deeply. Offer a short list of positive character traits that describe YOU. "I like to work hard". "I get along with all kinds of people and I know how to listen". Or "I pay close attention to detail, I know how to watch cost and I can keep difficult customers smiling".

- What kind of experience do you have for this job?

Summarize four or five key areas of experience which you know you can bring to your new job. Demonstrate how each one will help the interviewer's company solve their problems. For example, "My experience in new product introductions will be very helpful to your entire marketing effort", or "My industrial design background will strengthen your sales force capability in dealing with large clients".

At the end of your interview make sure you ask a closing question.

Such as:

Do you feel that there is anything in my background why I can't do the job?

Ask for the job offer or what would be the next step you need to take after answering any questions they may have. Your goal at any interview is to get the offer. After you get an offer, say thank you and give yourself time to think it over and negotiate, if needed, after you have considered it.

Also make sure after each interview you send your interviewer a short thank you note.

#### OUTLINE FOR THANK YOU NOTE AFTER INTERVIEW:

DATE

INTERVIEWER'S NAME & TITLE

COMPANY

STREET ADDRESS

CITY, STATE ZIP CODE

DEAR INTERVIEWER,

PARAGRAPH I. THANK THE INTERVIEWER FOR HIS TIME.

PARAGRAPH II. BRIEFLY STATE WHAT YOU LIKED ABOUT THE COMPANY. RESTATE WHY YOU WOULD BE QUALIFIED FOR THE POSITION (RESELL QUALIFICATIONS).

PARAGRAPH III. I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

SINCERELY,



## Common Job Interview Questions

By rehearsing interview questions, you'll become more familiar with your own qualifications and will be well prepared to demonstrate how you can benefit an employer.

Some examples:

- "Tell me about yourself."

Make a short, organized statement of your education and professional achievements and professional goals. Then, briefly describe your qualifications for the job and the contributions you could make to the organization.

- "Why do you want to work here?" or "What about our company interests you?"

Few questions are more important than these, so it is important to answer them clearly and with enthusiasm. Show the interviewer your interest in the company. Share what you learned about the job, the company and the industry through your own research. Talk about how your professional skills will benefit the company. Unless you work in sales, your answer should never be simply: "money." The interviewer will wonder if you really care about the job.

- "Why did you leave your last job?"

The interviewer may want to know if you had any problems on your last job. If you did not have any problems, simply give a reason, such as: relocated away from job; company went out of business; laid off; temporary job; no possibility of advancement; wanted a job better suited to your skills.

If you did have problems, be honest. Show that you can accept responsibility and learn from your mistakes. You should explain any problems you had (or still have) with an employer, but don't describe that employer in negative terms. Demonstrate that it was a learning experience that will not affect your future work.

- "What are your best skills?"

If you have sufficiently researched the organization, you should be able to imagine what skills the company values. List them, then give examples where you have demonstrated these skills.

- "What is your major weakness?"

Be positive; turn a weakness into a strength. For example, you might say: "I often worry too much over my work. Sometimes I work late to make sure the job is done well."

- "Do you prefer to work by yourself or with others?"

The ideal answer is one of flexibility. However, be honest. Give examples describing how you have worked in both situations.

- "What are your career goals?" or "What are your future plans?"

The interviewer wants to know if your plans and the company's goals are compatible. Let him know that you are ambitious enough to plan ahead. Talk about your desire to learn more and improve your performance, and be specific as possible about how you will meet the goals you have set for yourself.

- "What are your hobbies?" and "Do you play any sports?"

The interviewer may be looking for evidence of your job skills outside of your professional experience. For example, hobbies such as chess or bridge demonstrate analytical skills. Reading, music, and painting are creative hobbies. Individual sports show determination and stamina, while group sport activities may indicate you are comfortable working as part of a team.

Also, the interviewer might simply be curious as to whether you have a life outside of work. Employees who have creative or athletic outlets for their stress are often healthier, happier and more productive.

- "What salary are you expecting?"

You probably don't want to answer this one directly. Instead, deflect the question back to the interviewer by saying something like: "I don't know. What are you planning on paying the best candidate?" Let the employer make the first offer.

However, it is still important to know what the current salary range is for the profession. Find salary surveys at the library or on the Internet, and check the classifieds to see what comparable jobs in your area are paying. This information can help you negotiate compensation once the employer makes an offer.

- "What have I forgotten to ask?"

Use this as a chance to summarize your good characteristics and attributes and how they may be used to benefit the organization. Convince the interviewer that you understand the job requirements and that you can succeed.

Here are some other job interview questions you might want to rehearse.

#### Your Qualifications

- What can you do for us that someone else can't do?
- What qualifications do you have that relate to the position?
- What new skills or capabilities have you developed recently?
- Give me an example from a previous job where you've shown initiative.
- What have been your greatest accomplishments recently?
- What is important to you in a job?
- What motivates you in your work?
- What have you been doing since your last job?

- What qualities do you find important in a coworker?

#### Your Career Goals

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- How will you judge yourself successful? How will you achieve success?
- What type of position are you interested in?
- How will this job fit in your career plans?
- What do you expect from this job?
- Do you have a location preference?
- Can you travel?
- What hours can you work?
- When could you start?

#### Your Work Experience

- What have you learned from your past jobs?
- What were your biggest responsibilities?
- What specific skills acquired or used in previous jobs relate to this position?
- How does your previous experience relate to this position?
- What did you like most/least about your last job?
- Whom may we contact for references?

#### Your Education

- How do you think your education has prepared you for this position?
- What were your favorite classes/activities at school?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Do you plan to continue your education?

## **In Interviews, Honesty Is the Best Policy**

Job hunting is a cutthroat business, especially these days when work is scarce. But it still pays to stick to your ethical principles.

By BRUCE WEINSTEIN, PH.D.

It's graduation season, and this means it's time for job hunting. Joining the pool of applicants will be a lot of people who have been downsized, fired, or who found their previous employment to be less than satisfying. Whether you're a newbie or a seasoned veteran of the job search, it's helpful to get advice about the all-important but nerve-wracking experience known as the job interview.

Most of the articles on this topic are written from either the psychological or legal perspective. But ethics also is -- or should be -- a component of job interviews, and taking ethics seriously is beneficial not just for the employer but also for the applicant. Here's a look at the specific ways ethical behavior before and during an interview can lead to getting the job you want.

The art of the job interview seems to be mainly about strategy: how to get from point A (unemployment, underemployment, or otherwise unsatisfying employment) to point B (a good job). But there are lots of ways to get from A to B, and some are more ethical than others. You can lie on your résumé, exaggerate your accomplishments, or mislead a prospective employer about what you can do well. Taking the low road may lead to a job offer -- but at what cost?

If you have to become someone other than yourself, what does this say about your integrity? And what will happen to you, professionally as well as personally, if it comes to light that you lied to get the job?

Even if you are committed to being truthful, however, it is still possible to miss the main point of a job interview (and run the risk of being passed over). A job interview isn't about you. Or rather, it's not merely about you. It is about whether or not the company will benefit from hiring you. Ethics is about thinking beyond our own needs and desires, and applying the ethical principle of 'Make Things Better' in the context of a job interview means concentrating on how you will help the company. This can't be at the expense of other ethical principles, such as 'Respect Others,' which requires us to be truthful, and 'Do No Harm,' which asks us not to say or do things that will make things worse for others or ourselves.

Ethics thus lies at the core of any job interview. With this in mind, here are five guidelines that you can use to ace your next interview -- by taking the high road.

### **1. FOCUS ON WHAT YOU WILL BRING TO THE COMPANY.**

It never ceases to amaze me how many people respond to my own job offerings with an endless discussion of why the position will help them: "This job is perfect for me, because I need

something that will offer me flexibility." An employee should be concerned, first and foremost, with helping the company, not the other way around.

## 2. BE HONEST.

Few of us are good liars, and this is a good thing. When an interviewer asks you something to which you don't know the answer, it's much better to admit it than to pretend otherwise. Also, misrepresenting yourself on your résumé in any way is a big mistake, not just because it will come back to haunt you (since it may not), but simply because it's wrong.

## 3. WHEN IN DOUBT, DON'T.

The most fundamental ethical principle of all, Do No Harm, applies to how you treat yourself as well as others. Resist the impulse to say something that would make you look foolish, incompetent, or naive. If you're not sure about how something will be taken, leave it unsaid.

## 4. DON'T BADMOUTH YOUR PREVIOUS EMPLOYER.

Your prospective employer may ask you about previous jobs and why you left, or why you want to leave your current one. If a poor relationship with a boss or colleague was a contributing factor, it's better to say something like: "My supervisor and I didn't see eye to eye on a lot of projects," rather than "He was the biggest jerk I've ever worked for." Criticism at its best centers on what a person has done, not on who a person is.

Personal attacks make you look petty, and this could be a reason for you to be passed over for a position. Also bear in mind that professional circles can be small and tightly knit; it's entirely possible your interviewer knows your previous boss or colleagues. You don't want to acquire a reputation for being petty, vindictive, or tactless.

## 5. LOOK WITHIN.

This last rule is the most important. Before you even apply for a job, do some soul-searching, and find out what it is you're really looking for. To embrace a company's mission successfully you have to know what your own mission in life is, and why you want to devote considerable time and energy to that organization. Honesty applies not just to how you deal with your prospective employer; it also applies to how you deal with yourself.

Yes, it's a cutthroat world out there, and finding work is probably more difficult now than at any time in the past few years. But that's no reason to throw ethics out the window. In fact, I hope I've shown just the opposite -- that keeping ethics front and center is the best way to be successful.

Weinstein is the corporate consultant, author, and public speaker known as The Ethics Guy. He has appeared on numerous national TV shows and is the author of several books on ethics. His

Ask the Ethics Guy! column appears every other week on BusinessWeek.com's Managing channel.

## **Posted to LinkedIn by Bernard Marr March 31, 2014**

Even for the most fearless amongst us, job interviews can be nerve wracking. In order to give us the best chance of success we tend to prepare for many of the difficult questions we anticipate, questions like:

- Why should we hire you?
- What can you do for us that other candidates can't?
- What are your key strengths and weaknesses?

Of course, you can never predict how an interview will go and what questions you will get. You might get an interviewer who fires one tough question at you after the other, or one that turns the interview into a more comfortable, natural two-way conversation. Preparing, therefore is difficult. In most cases we practice the answers to a long list of possible questions. The problem is that this can leave you over-prepared and as a consequence your pre-conceived answers can come across a bit robotic.

From my experience, there are really only 3 questions you have to prepare for and you can link most of the interview questions back to these three. Preparing for these three questions also means you can answer most questions more naturally, simply by referring mentally back to your preparations for these three questions.

Basically, any interviewer wants to establish 3 key things:

1. Have you got the skills, expertise and experience to perform the job?
2. Are you enthusiastic and interested in the job and the company?
3. Will you fit into the team, culture and company?

However, during the job interview, the interviewer might use many different questions and angles to get to the answers. If the interviewer doesn't get what he or she wants from one question, they might ask them in different ways. Or they might probe from different angles to test for consistency in your answers.

Here is what's behind these 3 questions:

### 1. Have you got the skills, expertise and experience to perform the job?

Think about the key skills you might need for the job you have applied for and assess your own level of expertise and experience in that context. It makes sense to identify the more specific or technical skills that your potential employer might expect as well as some more generic skills such as being a good communicator, having good IT skills, being a team player, etc. Once you have prepared for this question it will help you answer many different interview questions without getting sidetracked into talking about things that are not relevant. Remember that you want to demonstrate that you are aware of the key skills, expertise and experience required to do the job and that you have what it takes to perform it. Always go back to the key skills, expertise and experience when answering scary (and sometimes silly) questions like:

- Tell me about yourself?
- What are your greatest strengths / weaknesses?
- What can you do for us that other candidates can't
- Why do you think you are right for this job?
- What do you think the main challenges will be?

### 2. Are you enthusiastic and interested in the job and the company?

Any potential employer wants to know that you are interested in the company and excited about the prospect of working there. You therefore want to demonstrate that you have researched the company, understand its strategy, current performance, structure, market position and products and that you can't wait to join them. For most, you will have done your homework before you even applied for the job, but if you haven't, then check out the "about us" section on their website and search for the latest strategy documents, annual reports, key statistics as well as the company history. Show that you know them and demonstrate your enthusiasm for the job and company. Here you might also want to think about your ambitions and how they fit into the company you have applied for. You can then use the insights for answering questions such as:

- What do you know about our company?
- What do you think our company is aiming to achieve?
- What do you know about our products and services?
- Why do you want to work for this company?
- Why do you think this job is right for you?
- What motivates you?

### 3. Will you fit into the team, culture and company?

This final key question is about your personality and your style and how you as a person fit into the team and culture of the company. Companies have different cultures, which translate into

different ways of behaving and working. It is important to make sure you fit in and don't feel like a fish out of water. In fact, it is important for the company as well as for you. Again, hopefully you will have done some research prior to applying for the job. Sometimes, it can be tricky to find detailed knowledge about the company culture, in which case you simply talk about your assumptions and why you feel you fit in. One relatively new website that offers a glance inside companies is Glassdoor. The site is still in it's infancy but provides a growing amount of data and information about what it is like to work for different companies. You want to map the culture of the company or the team you are planning to join and compare this to your personality traits, style and behaviors. Again, once you have done this you can use it to answer questions such as:

- How would you describe your work style?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How would your colleagues describe you?
- What makes you fit into our company?
- What makes you a good team member?
- If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

Of course, any interview is a two-way process. In the same way the interviewer wants to find out that you are right for the company, you need to assess whether the company is right for you.

Each of the questions can be turned around so that you can assess:

1. By joining this company, will I make best use of my skills and expertise and will they help me to grow them further?
  2. Is the company excited about having me work for them and will they give me the necessary support?
  3. Is the company culture the right fit for me so that I can flourish and be myself?
- If you ask relevant questions from your point of view then this will make the interview more balanced and create a more natural conversation.

## **A Few Last Reminders**

Line up your references in advance and verify that they will be good ones.

Follow up immediately with thank you emails to everyone that you interview with.

Your ultimate goal should be to go in there and make them want to give you an offer.



Remember an interview is not a fishing trip, trying to fish out information. If you go in with that approach often you will discover that you like all you hear about the company and opportunity, yet, you've been so focused on gathering information for yourself you have forgotten to sell your abilities and now it is too late to give them the impression of yourself you wanted.

The company will be anxious to know how you thought the interview went so it is important that we talk as soon as possible so that I can pass along your feedback to them. So call me as quick as you can...and a cell phone in the parking lot is not too soon.