



**“The Interview Guys”
Present**

Jeff & Mike's
**Interview
Master Guide™**



PERFECT ANSWERS to
*over 110 of the most
common & toughest
traditional & behavioral
interview questions
you'll ever face.*

Plus More!

By Jeffrey Gillis and Mike Simpson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWARD

INTRODUCTION

SECTION ONE – BUILDING YOUR ONLINE TOOLBOX AND PERSONAL BRANDING

CHAPTER 1: PERSONAL BRANDING FOR YOUR JOB/CAREER

CHAPTER 2: MANAGING YOUR BRAND ONLINE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

CHAPTER 3: COMMON BRANDING MISTAKES

CHAPTER 4: PREPARING YOURSELF FOR AN EMPLOYER BACKGROUND CHECK

CHAPTER 5: STRATEGICALLY PLANNING YOUR JOB REFERENCES

CHAPTER 6: WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

SECTION TWO – BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

CHAPTER 7: THE DAYS AND WEEKS LEADING UP

CHAPTER 8: NERVES AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

CHAPTER 9: WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

SECTION THREE – DURING THE INTERVIEW

CHAPTER 10: TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

CHAPTER 11: WHEN AND HOW TO DISCUSS SALARY

CHAPTER 12: WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

SECTION FOUR – AFTER THE INTERVIEW

CHAPTER 13: SAYING THANK YOU

CHAPTER 14: THE SECOND INTERVIEW

CHAPTER 15: WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

SECTION FIVE – GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND WITH YOUR ANSWERS

CHAPTER 16: THE TAILORING METHOD

CHAPTER 17: TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 18: HOW TO ANSWER TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 19: HOW TO ANSWER BEHAVIORAL/COMPETENCY QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 20: HOW TO ANSWER SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 21: FLIPPING THE INTERVIEW: QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING YOUR INTERVIEWER

CHAPTER 22: WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

SECTION SIX – INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CHAPTER 23: THE TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 24: THE BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 25: OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER AND WRAPPING IT UP

FOREWORD

If you've made it this far, you are well on your way to securing an offer from your next job interview! Go ahead, now's the time to pat yourself on the back. You've accomplished a ton and should feel pretty darn good about how far you've come... You've taken control of your situation and rather than just be one of a million faceless drones trying to break into the corporate machine, you've decided to do more...be more! You've taken the first steps that won't just set yourself apart from your competitors but make sure employers sit up and take notice of you...for all the right reasons! Ultimately you're not just making positive changes in the way you interview for jobs, you're making positive steps towards securing those jobs!

Like we said, go ahead and pat yourself on the back, you deserve it...but it's not quite time to crack the bubbly and start toasting your future corner office and corporate job. Our journey is just beginning. Now is the time to take all of the knowledge and expertise that the Interview Guys have and reduce it into a condensed, manageable format within the framework of the questions and answers that you will be asked. Trust us! This sounds more difficult than it is. Actually, let us take that back. It WOULD be difficult...but only for someone who doesn't have us on their side helping them take this mountain of knowledge and condensing it down, helping you fit it all into easy to digest chunks of interview-nailing, job-getting, life-changing kick butt nuggets of awesomeness.

We're finally coming into the home stretch, which is where we show you how to really supercharge your entire interview by using targeted answers to questions you're most likely to encounter during an interview. Soon, you'll feel comfortable utilizing your organizations' various web properties (Company Website, Facebook, etc.) to uncover the Qualities and Multipliers (more on these later!) that are going to set you apart from your competition. Remember, this is the most important part of our Tailoring Method, and ultimately the technique that got us both where we are today. Through our YouTube channel, you may have seen a few examples of how you can infuse these Qualities into your answers in order to tailor your responses to the company you are interviewing with. In this guide, we're going to take your preparation a step further.

Remember back in school when you'd have to study for a huge test and the teacher would always tell you to study first? Well, think of your interview like that test...and we're the best study partners you've ever had. Not only do we know what questions are on the test, we'll give you the answers! And not just any answers. These answers show you exactly how the questions can be tailored to a specific company. We're the secret weapon you need to blow open the doors of opportunity. Forget waiting for it to knock...we're going in and taking you with us!

In this book we've compiled the most commonly asked questions that you might face, along with examples of Qualities and Multipliers that you can use to supercharge your responses. Remember, these are only examples that we use in order to demonstrate our method, so you will have to dig deep to find the Qualities and Multipliers that your company values. On top of that, each answer to each question we provide is just a suggested answer. Yes, they're awesome answers, with our proven methodology behind them helping to guide them towards being solid answers that potential employers will want to hear...but they're not the right answers...at least, not 100% right for you...that's where you come in. Take this as a guide and mold it to fit you. Don't memorize this book...first off, because that would just be strange and a little creepy...rather, use it to push you forward to the next level. Consider it a springboard or a trampoline...we're right there and we're giving you the spring you need to leap even higher in your interviews.

On top of all this knowledge we're dropping on you with our Q & A examples, we're also providing you with the most common DO's and DON'T's for each question, which should provide you with some additional insight and make answering the question much easier.

Remember, it's tailoring the interview to the company you are interviewing with that is the most important thing!

Good Luck!

Jeff & Mike

INTRODUCTION

The world of job interviews, much like the job market itself, has undergone a lot of changes in recent years. If you're reading this book, you may well be rolling your eyes right now and thinking, "Tell me about it! I've been out of work for sixteen months now and gone on half a dozen interviews and none of them have ever panned out."

You're right! It's a tough sell out there, and there are many unique features to today's job market that make it very different from the past. The market is shifting, and ensuring that you shift with it is the key to getting your dream job. Gone are the days of turning in your resume and sitting back, waiting for that life changing invitation to interview for your dream job to come to you.

Now before you start to panic, don't worry...as the market becomes increasingly digital and the competition for jobs grows tougher, take some comfort in the fact that no matter what...some things *never* change. No matter what the job market is like at the time you are reading this, there are a few things that always stay the same. Specifically, a person who approaches prospective employers and their representatives (that is, the hiring manager or interviewer) with answers that are tailored to their target company will always be ahead of the game...and well on their way out of the job market pool and into a long term employment situation.

We've written this book with the explicit goal of helping you become the *Perfect Candidate*, and by *Perfect Candidate* we mean the individual that has all the qualities that the company is looking for to fill the position they are offering.

How? Easy...by putting ourselves into the shoes of both the job seekers and the hiring managers. We've spent years researching the job market and examined all the ways it's changing as well as how it's staying the same. We've interviewed hundreds of job seekers as well as hiring managers and asked both sides what it takes to make someone succeed. We've poured over thousands of mock interview questions and refined countless resumes and cover letters. We've taken all the information we've gathered through this research and distilled it down, trimming away the fat and clarifying the confusion...until what we were left with was this...the *ultimate master guide*.

In this book we'll show you how to take yourself and your interview skills to the next level. Using our proven methodology (with a special emphasis on being prepared through knowing what kinds of questions today's interviewers are likely to ask you and the optimal answers to these often-difficult questions) we'll make sure you're not just prepared for your next interview, but that you've done everything you possibly can to become *exactly* who the hiring manager is looking for...the *Perfect Candidate*.

To make it easy on you we've broken it into six distinct sections:

SECTION ONE
BUILDING YOUR ONLINE TOOLBOX AND PERSONAL BRANDING

The first section of this book focuses on building your own interview toolbox. We'll walk you through what you need to do to establish your own personal brand. We'll help show you what you need to do to make sure your online presence is specifically tailored to not only represent who and what *you* are, but also maximized for the jobs you are interviewing for. We'll go over how to make sure what people find about you online is authentic, professional, and engaging. We'll also walk you through *why* this is so important and what it takes to stand out.

SECTION TWO
BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

In the second section of the book, we'll go over everything you need to know BEFORE you go in for your interview. This section is basically a general "how-to section" on job interviewing in today's job market. Of course, before you even walk into that interview, there are some key steps you should take to make sure that you're presenting the whole package and getting off on the right foot. We'll show you how to deal with those pesky pre-interview nerves. We'll even help you figure out what to wear and what to do (and NOT do).

SECTION THREE
DURING THE INTERVIEW

Now that you're ready for your interview, we'll help walk you through what to expect when it's time to finally face your interviewer and what you can do to make it as painless and professional as possible. We'll go over some of the basics of the interview process and includes valuable "Interview Tips" meant to take the stress out of sitting down with any hiring manager. On top of that, we'll cover some tough topics including when and how to discuss salary.

SECTION FOUR
AFTER THE INTERVIEW

In this section we'll wrap up everything we've covered so far and help you deal with what to do AFTER your interview. Do you call? Do you write? Do you send a gift basket or muffins?! Don't worry, we'll take you through all the steps, from saying goodbye to leaving a great impression and even what to do if you get called back for a second interview.

SECTION FIVE
GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND WITH YOUR ANSWERS

We like to call the third portion of the book "The Tailoring Method", because it is in this section that we introduce our Tailoring Method. In other words, this is where we show you how to answer an interview question, "Jeff & Mike style"! We also breakdown what a *Perfect Candidate* is, and introduce Qualities and Multipliers and show you exactly how to find them. Needless to say this section is a must read!

SECTION SIX INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The sixth and final portion of this book is the real meat and potatoes. Here we'll walk you through the different types of interview formats and what to expect from each. We'll also teach you about the different types of questions you might be asked at an interview and how to maximize your answers. We'll go over the ten most likely question an interviewer will ask you.

Once we're done with that, we'll throw every potential question a future employer might ask at you and then follow them up with example answers you can use to tailor your own perfect response. We'll show you what makes an answer a good one...and a not so good one. We'll use these as a way to show you how to tailor your own answers and experiences into nuggets of knowledge and information that help turn you from just another interview candidate into the missing piece of the company puzzle and help turn your interviewer into your future boss. Finally, we'll show you how to turn the tables on your interview and what questions you should ask. We'll even cover *why* asking questions as a job seeker can be just as important as answering them!

****TIPS AND TRICKS****

We've all heard of Life hacks... They're everywhere these days. Little tips and tricks meant to make everyday tasks easier. Wouldn't it be great if there were life hacks for job interviews?! An easy-to-read, easy-to-digest list of simple job interview tips and tricks to make walking into your next meeting easier?

We thought it was such a great idea that we've made sure to pop a few at the end of each section. They're there to quickly summarize the key points and give you a down and dirty refresher on the materials we've just covered...but be WARNED...these are just meant to be refreshers...do not rely on them alone! GO READ THOSE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS FIRST!

LET'S GETS STARTED!

Well, now that we've gone over what's in this book, are you ready to get started? Of course you are...but first we're going to take this opportunity right now to get a little touchy feely. Yeah, brace yourself, here we go. Ready? Okay. Here it is. Thank you for letting us go on this journey with you. The job market right now is a scary place and it's always nice to go with someone rather than go it alone, and we want you to know how much we appreciate that you've decided to make us your "Job Search Wingman."

Awww...group hug. Okay, that's enough. You're wrinkling my shirt...and no, that is NOT a tear. I have allergies.
Sheesh.

SECTION ONE

BUILDING YOUR ONLINE TOOLBOX AND PERSONAL BRANDING

Before we get too deep into this book and you get all caught up in all the amazingly valuable information contained within it, we want to take a quick moment to discuss the digital world and the impact it's having on modern day job searches.

As our world continues to embrace technology and job searches go digital, it's vital to make sure that not only are you aware of what's going on, but that you're front and center as well as on point for potential employers...and that means building your personal online toolbox.

Toolbox? Like an actual toolbox? With hammers and screwdrivers and things like that?

No, we're not being quite that literal, but like a real toolbox, your personal online toolbox *will* be used to help you build...but instead of building things like birdhouses and skyscrapers, this toolbox will help you build your online brand and ultimately your career.

My online brand?

We'll cover personal branding (don't worry, if you don't know what that is, we'll not only explain it, we'll walk you through it step by step), how to survive a background criminal check and how to prep your job references.

Just like the literal toolbox we discussed above, your own personal online branding toolbox is filled with the essentials...and we're going to detail exactly what each one is and what you need to do to make it work for you and ensure that what potential employers find online when they search for you is exactly what you want them to find.

CHAPTER 1

PERSONAL BRANDING FOR YOUR JOB/CAREERS

Quick question, when you hear the word *branding*, what's the first thing you think of?

Branding? Don't cowboys do that to cattle to make sure they're not rustled? You don't want me to actually brand myself...like with a hot poker..do you? I mean, I want a job...but let's not be crazy about this...

No no no! Of course we don't mean literally brand yourself...although to be honest, branding cattle is a great analogy for what we're going to teach you about here, but we promise, our way is much less painful.

It's true, cattle are branded in order to make sure they are easily identifiable. A good rancher can take a look at a cow that has been branded and instantly know who it belongs to. In much the same way, branding in the business world has become a quick way for a company to identify itself and its products among the competition.

Take a good look at what you're wearing. Odds are, you've got an article (or more) of clothing on with a logo on it. What are those logos? Is it an easily identifiable 'swoosh' on your shoes? Maybe it's the little embroidered alligator on the front of your shirt? How about your watch? Is there a logo on there?

Now look around you. What do you see? What's on that cardboard coffee cup you picked up this morning on your way into the office? I bet you it's a green mermaid! How about your technology? Is there an ever present glowing fruit logo on the back of your laptop?

Every one of these logos is a tiny visual representation of a much larger brand. Each one is distinct and unique, and in our consumer driven world, instantly recognizable. As soon as you see a familiar logo you make a mental connection to the larger company overall. You consciously (and often, unconsciously as well) make purchasing decisions based on your relationship to a company and their brand.

This is called corporate branding, and is the cornerstone of almost every successful corporation out there today. But what is corporate branding exactly? Corporate branding is the practice of promoting the overall brand name of a corporate entity (Nike, Tommy Hilfiger, Starbucks, etc.) rather than focusing on the specific products or services the corporation provides.

Sounds like fun, right? Why don't you get in on this branding action? Why should corporations have all the branding fun? What if you were to sit down and brand yourself?

In an increasingly difficult job market where there are thousands of qualified applicants vying for positions, it's time to stand out from the crowd. It's time to create the brand that is you!

Now before you rush off and design a logo and start slapping it onto everything, we need to make sure you understand exactly what branding is, and how to make it work for you...not against you.

Personal branding is a little less clear than corporate branding because it relies more on intangible concepts rather than physical products; however that doesn't mean it isn't any less important, especially in this day and age! When you build your personal brand, you're going to be taking your passions (what drives you), your key personal attributes and your strengths and rolling that all into a brief, clear, laser focused and targeted message that defines not only who you are, but how you're different from everyone else. It's a way of making sure that you clearly communicate to your target audience exactly who you are, what you stand for, what makes you unique, and what value you can offer.

To boil it down even further, personal branding takes how you present yourself to those around you and refines it, allowing you to strengthen and market those unique desirable qualities that make you...well, you!

So how does personal branding relate to your career? As we've already said (and will say again and again), the job market these days is tough. There are thousands of incredibly talented and qualified people applying to the same jobs you are...and the best way to get hired is to stand out for the right reasons. A carefully built and solid personal brand can generate a connection with a hiring manager that not only helps get you into the interview, but help make the decision to hire you an easy one. You want to build a brand that is true to you while at the same time attractive to both your current and prospective employers.

Right. Look, I get what you're saying, but I don't need personal branding. I'm amazing at what I do, my resume is killer and my cover letter is flawless.

Okay...that might be true...but let's slip into a quick little scenario...and we'll see just how important personal branding actually is.

Let's pretend you're a hiring manager with a media company. You've narrowed down the field of candidates from hundreds to the top 5. You've brought them all in, one at a time, and interviewed them. They're all great. They're qualified, eager, and each one seems like a good fit. So who do you hire? Now in our scenario, you're a good hiring manager, so rather than just randomly picking one and hoping for the best, you turn to the internet. You type in each

candidate's name and look at what pops up. The first two candidates have no social media presence at all. The third candidate has an extensive social media presence but it's all cat videos and recipes. The fourth candidate has a fairly impressive social media presence, but again, it's all very personal posts.

You're frustrated. You just want to find the right fit for the job, and although each candidate looks good on paper, there's just something...missing.

You type in the last candidate's name and hit enter with a sigh...and then gasp. Not only is their social media presence impressive, it's relevant to the job you're hiring for. Candidate 5 even has a blog they've started on their own which has a clear voice and direction.

Your heart pounds as you scroll through months of posts and entries, each more impressive than the last. Not only is the blog well done, but it's engaging and Candidate 5 has already built a solid following and interacts with readers regularly. Their twitter feed is funny, targeted and on point and ties back into the blog flawlessly. It's clear to see exactly who Candidate 5 is from their posts. You can get a sense of their personality, as well as what they value based off of what you're reading...and it's all perfect for the job you're trying to fill!

You throw a silent prayer of thanks heavenward as you reach for the phone. It's time to offer Candidate 5 the job.

See how having a solid personal brand can make or break you in this day and age? Having a good resume and cover letter is a great way to start, but if you really want to see your job searching (and job getting) go to the next level, it's time to start branding yourself...

Fine. I see what you're saying. You have a point. But branding is so hard! Major corporations have entire teams of professional brand managers working for them. How am I going to be able to pull that off?

First, take a deep breath and relax. We're here for you...and have we ever steered you wrong? Of course not! Believe it or not, personal branding isn't as hard as you might think. We're going to walk you through what branding is, why branding works, and how to get your own personal brand started. All you need to do is follow along.

By the time we get done with this, you'll be ready to not only declare yourself a brand, but you'll know what that brand is, what your strengths and weaknesses are, and have all the information you need to set up your own brand website.

Wait, my own website? Seriously? Why do I need a website?

Whoa there, Nelly. We're not there yet, but it is a good idea to plant the seeds now so you can start getting used to the concept. In this day and age it's increasingly necessary for individuals

in the job market to utilize online platforms and personal websites to help get the attention of hiring managers and companies they'd like to work with and for. More than ever these days hiring managers and employers are turning to the web to search for and recruit new talent. By not having your own website, you're shutting yourself off from this new and emerging job market. But don't worry. We're not to that step quite yet. We still have a ton of work to do figuring out just who you are.

This is so exciting! Okay, when do I get to start my own branding?

Well, how about right now?? Let's go!

The Three Stages of Personal Branding

There are three distinct stages to any modern job search/career where having well-crafted personal branding can play a huge role in helping advance you to the next level, and we're going to quickly explore each of them in turn.

Applying for jobs –

Having a solid resume and a good cover letter is a great start, but in a competitive market, it's easy to get lost in the shuffle. Hiring managers have mountains of resumes and cover letters to dig through and it's dangerously simple to end up at the bottom of a pile...forgotten. It's too easy to be one in a million. By using proper branding techniques and setting yourself apart from the crowd, you're not just making yourself memorable...you're also positioning yourself to be hired!

Interviewing for jobs –

Congratulations on making it this far, but don't rest on your laurels quite yet. Getting in the door is one thing...staying there is another! By having your personal branding already established, you're proving that not only do you want the job, but that you're doing the hard work it takes to get that job, and you're not even being paid for it...yet! An interview is a great way to get a general idea about an applicant, but one who has spent the time and done the work for personal branding brings more to the interview than just a copy of their resume.

Advancing in a job (or your career) –

You're a great employee. You work hard, you're always on time, and you're well respected by those you work with...but you want more! Rather than sit back and bask in the glory of what you've already accomplished, you're hard at work making sure your branding stays current and up to date. You never know who is going to look at your personal website and see what you're

up to. From internal promotions within your own company to outside opportunities with potential new employers, it's always a good idea to keep your branding current.

How to create your personal brand (or rebrand yourself)

Now that we've shown you just how important having a personal brand is to every stage of your career, it's time to talk about how to create that brand.

Set Goals –

The first thing you have to do is set some serious professional goals. Why start with that? Because goal setting is a great way to help you get a clear picture of what you ultimately want. It's also a way to look at what you're doing right now to achieve those goals, and help identify any distractions that might be blocking your path to the successes you want. Branding is more than just a slick personal website and some fancy business cards, it's also a huge mental game. You have to believe in the brand that is YOU and goal setting is a great way to kick start that mental shift. By identifying your goals, you're helping to program your subconscious mind and activate your mental focus to help you achieve those goals.

It's easy to feel stalled out and overwhelmed in today's fast-paced society. By writing down your goals, you're giving yourself a reason to move past being stuck in a rut. You've got an end-game to work towards...and sometimes that's all the motivation you need to go from jogging in place to sprinting towards your prize!

Make a List -

As you make your list of goals, ask yourself these questions. Where are you right now? Is it where you want to be? Is there something else you'd rather be doing career-wise? It can be as simple as a promotion in the company you're currently with to something so big as a complete career change. The important thing is to figure it out and write it down. Make a list. Break it down into categories. What do you want right now? How about in a year? Five years? Ten? Write them all down in chronological order, starting with the shortest term goals and ending with the longest term. Look at those goals and identify the common thread that runs through them all. This will help us as we focus on your brand later on.

Identify Obstacles -

Next, go through each goal and identify what obstacles you have to overcome before you can achieve them. What's standing between you and your dreams?

Identify What You Need -

Once you have that done, go through them again and this time, review each goal and determine what you need to make your goal become a reality. Is it a specific skill? A lack of knowledge? What do you need to achieve your goal? More training? Taking classes or even going back to school for an advanced degree? Remember, this is about branding YOU and that means investing in you as well. It's easier to take the time to do this work now than down the road when you've already established your brand but find yourself coming up short when you go to deliver on your promises.

Identify and Analyze Your Strengths -

This step is a little tougher than the goal list because it's going to require some serious introspection and reflection...as well as a little outside research and interaction with other people. For this step you need to write down what you think your strengths are. Next, ask your co-workers and your friends what they think your strengths are. You might be surprised what they have to say! This isn't just a fishing expedition for compliments. If they're honest (and you hope they will be!), they'll tell you things about yourself you might not know that can really help you out! You might write down that you consider yourself to be a great team member and your co-workers might see you as potential leadership material. You never know until you ask!

Personal Analysis -

Next you want to try to identify the qualities and characteristics you feel set you apart from others. Remember, we're branding you, so we need to figure out what it is that makes your brand better than your competitors. Go back to the list you got from your co-workers and friends and find your greatest strengths. Do you get comments from customers and/or clients? What have they said about you that is positive? Ask yourself: what am I beyond my job title? What am I most proud of? What is it that I bring to the table and that makes me unique at what I do?

The Brand That Is You – In 2 Sentences (or less!)

Now that we've gathered all this information, it's time to start turning it into the brand that is you and that starts with finding your personal branding statement! A personal branding statement is a 1-2 sentence statement that clearly tells people who you are and what you stand for. It's a quick way for people to know what it is that makes the brand that is you so important and unique and helps to clearly state what it is you represent.

Let's go back to our corporate brands we were looking at earlier. Most of them have mottos that are quick and easy ways to identify what the company is all about. Can you identify what companies we're talking about just by their branding below alone?

"Just do it."

“Be all you can be.”

“Finger lickin’ good.”

How did you do? Did you get them all right? Your branding statement has to do the same thing. Now, because you’re representing you and not a series of products, you can let your own personal branding statement be a little bit longer. Of course, if you can sum yourself up and everything you stand for into a short and sweet little sentence like the ones above, go for it!

Take a look at all the lists pulled together from your friends, coworkers and that you’ve done yourself. Pay special attention to your goals and your strengths. These will help you build your unique promise of value and shape your branding statement.

Now, in two sentences or less (one is just fine!), who are you (and remember, it’s who...not just what...which is just your title), what do you do and what makes you unique in what you do?

IT Specialist:

I am an award winning back-end developer who specializes in providing my clients with vibrant, dynamic tailor-made apps.

Educator:

I am a dedicated educator who strives to make learning approachable, rewardable and fun by stimulating the curiosity in all my students. My approach to education, which blends individual attention with interactive group activities, has increased student retention by over 30% and increased test results by 54%.

Career Coach:

As an Executive Career Coach who utilizes holistic insight and innovative tools for self – discovery, I inspire people every day and help them transform them from “stuck” on the corporate ladder into forward-focused leaders who are on their way to the top.

Go ahead, give it a try! In two sentences (or less) who are you and what do you stand for? Once you figure that out, write it down and then post it somewhere (preferably in several places) where you can see it every day. Remember, you are creating your brand and seeing it written down only helps to reinforce it.

Living Your Brand Every Day

The Clothes Make The Wo/Man-

A big part of your personal branding is taking it and making it yours, and that means working it into your everyday world. You have to live and breathe the brand that is you and that means from your head to your toes...including your wardrobe! Remember, if you're the brand, then how you look is a part of the "packaging."

****A quick note:** This section is all about what to wear every day. We go even further into the idea that you should dress for the job you want later on, especially for interviews in Chapter 7, but for now, this is a solid start and a great opportunity for you to take a long and critical look at what you have in your closet.

Think about how you dress every day. Is your packaging a reflection of your brand? Having your own personal 'dress code' is an easy way to help guide how others perceive you. First impressions are lasting ones and by always presenting a look that is consistent with your brand, you can help guarantee that the first impression is the right one.

Styling your wardrobe to reflect who you are doesn't mean you have to wear a 'uniform.' The key is to find a look that works for who you are, but is versatile enough to grow and mature just as you do.

Be aware of your accessories as well. Each and everything you put on and/or carry has to serve a purpose and that purpose is identifying who you are. If your brand is all about polish and professionalism, you might want to consider ditching your old high school backpack and investing in a quality briefcase. Are you branding yourself as a youth-oriented educator? A pinstripe suit might not be the best choice then.

Consider also the fit of what you're wearing. Well-made and tailored clothes will say just as much about you as will badly constructed and baggy clothing. And don't forget to buy an iron!

Get a Haircut! -

Along with what you wear, how you groom yourself is also important to your brand. Make sure to choose a hairstyle that fits your brand and don't be afraid to change it as often as you need to make it work with what you're projecting.

Proper personal grooming is also essential to building your brand. Make sure you're putting the best you out there you possibly can every day...from head to toe.

Remember, above all, be authentic in who and what you are in relation to your brand.

Business Cards -

Having business cards on you at all times is “job hunting 101”, but in the world of personal branding, it’s not enough to just have a piece of cardstock with your name on it. A business card is a quick and easy physical reminder of who you are that you can leave behind with anyone. You never know when a chance meeting can turn into a future job, or client.

Business cards are a cheap, easy and effective way to make yourself visible. The card should contain your picture, your personal brand statement, and your preferred contact information. You can have your cards either professionally designed (our suggestion) or design your own...as long as the information is correct and up to date and reflects you and your brand. Make sure you always keep a few extras in your wallet, purse, car —anywhere you can grab one in a hurry and pass your info along. In the event you find yourself sans card (gasp!) there are also several mobile phone apps that allow you to upload your designs and share them digitally.

Elevator Pitch –

Have you ever found yourself stuck in an elevator or at a party with someone you want to impress but know you only have a few seconds or minutes to get their attention and reel them in? Suddenly you’ve got a totally captive audience and the amount of time it takes to get to where you’re going to sell yourself to them! Make sure if you find yourself in this situation you’ve got a quick easy to say summary of who you are, what you’re doing and what you bring to the table! Basically you want to make sure that your elevator pitch is a clear and specific statement that not only summarizes you, but also your personal brand in under thirty seconds. Remember to include a variation on your personal branding statement!

Now that we’ve got the basics of how you *physically* represent your personal brand, let’s move into your *online* presence!

CHAPTER 2

MANAGING YOUR BRAND ONLINE VIA SOCIAL MEDIA

Hang on...before we go one step further, you need to do something...and you need to do it right now. Go to your computer and Google yourself (or Bing, or Yahoo, or whatever search engine you prefer...we don't care...as long as you DO IT!). Did you do it? Good! What came up? Is it stuff you're okay with being out there for everyone and anyone to see? Is it 'professional' or is it page after page of embarrassing photos?

This is your digital reputation, and if you're seeing it, that means anyone who searches for you is going to see it too...including hiring managers, recruiters, clients, your mom...the list goes on. Cleaning up your online presence can be a daunting task. There are plenty of websites out there that can help walk you through this process. You can even set up Google Alerts and have it send you a message whenever your name appears in a new search result in order to keep on top of what other people can see when they search your name.

While you're Googling yourself, take a look at how all your social media profiles might appear to a recruiter as well. Keeping things like your Twitter feed professional is a no-brainer, but what about those websites that just beg for oversharing and inappropriate content? Specifically, let's take a look at everybody's favorite website...Facebook.

FACEBOOK

As one of the largest social media sites in the world, Facebook is a great way to spread awareness about your brand. You have a massive potential audience and a range of easy to use tools like promoted ads and the ability to make pages right at your fingertips. Facebook lets you instantly share with anyone a whole range of information. The ability to connect your Facebook profile to other sharing platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and others makes it easy to find, post and spread things like your photos, your interactions with your friends and acquaintances, your ideas, opinions, likes, dislikes, what music you listen too, books you read, shows you watch—even causes you care about and charities you donate to. It's in many ways a digital snapshot of who you are...which is why you have to be so careful with what you post. Unfortunately, it's also full of potential job-hunting landmines as it's all too easy to let the lines between your personal life posts and professional life posts blur...

Using Facebook as part of your personal branding means keeping a vigilant and constant eye on it. No, you don't have to be logged in 24 hours a day waiting to see what people are posting to your page, but it does mean making sure you have some safeguards in place.

Of course, the easiest way to solve this problem is to simply set your profile to invisible for anyone who isn't your friend...but if you're planning on opening up your page and sharing who *you* are with potential hiring managers, make sure you do some serious house cleaning first.

Guilt by Association/The Friend List - Consider first your friends. If you're using your personal page to build your brand, think about surrounding yourself with people you'd like to work with and represent the image and professional culture you're hoping to promote. We're not saying get rid of Grandpa Rodger and his slightly inappropriate jokes or your best friend from high school who likes to get wasted on weekends and drunkenly post to your page...we're saying maybe it's a good idea to have two Facebook pages...one for you personally, and one for the public.

For the friends you do keep and cultivate, make sure to interact with them regularly. Update your professional contact list and make sure that you're weeding out anyone that might be contrary to the image you are promoting (again, consider two pages – one public and one private).

When you post, always be careful to ensure that you're posting quality content with your own personal approach or take on it. Just doing blanket reposts and links to other people's content might fill your page, but you'll miss out on the opportunity to make the information *yours*.

Drunk Words are Sober Thoughts - Speaking of public...the content you post should also reflect your brand. If you're putting yourself out there as a hard hitting team player who is enthusiastic about what you do, it's probably not a good idea to post things like company photos with captions like "Check out these idiots" and "can't wait for Friday and booze!" Know your audience...and who is potentially looking at what.

By Invitation Only – Like we said earlier, you should also take into consideration your privacy settings. Having your settings too high and restrictive will limit who can see what, potentially making it impossible for recruiters and/or hiring managers to see your work history, achievements, and education information. On the flip side, having your settings too low could open your profile up too far and let personal information that you might want to keep private out into the public.

So, what do you do? - Facebook is all about sharing and that means giving you an opportunity to do more than just list your job title. Many other websites will let you say what you do but don't give you much opportunity to explain in detail exactly what *what* is. When you fill out your work history, be sure to include a few key phrases and choice words that help illustrate what you do in a fun and engaging way. Remember, the goal is to stand out!

While you're at it, fill out your education history. Networking is a powerful tool and you never know which of your old high school buddies or soccer team mates from fifth grade grew up to be successful and is now looking for a new business partner (no, probably not the one that gets drunk every weekend and sends you blurry selfies...sorry.)

Tag! You're it – Turn off the option for other people to tag you in photos. Remember that drunk friend who sends you blurry selfies? Imagine if those selfies got a little—personal—and he tagged you in them. You miss the notification but the CEO from that company you're dying to work for gets more than he bargained for when he pulled up your page. Oh no!

By turning off the tagging option, you not only save yourself from incidents like this, you are also protecting yourself from spam, malicious attacks, and the misguided friends who just need to share with you a photo of their dog humping the mailman's leg...for the fiftieth time.

And while we're discussing photos, make sure that your profile pic is professional—and that it's a photo of you. Funny images are great for private pages, but nobody wants to hire a pug in a Christmas sweater. (Okay, a pug in a Christmas sweater is pretty funny...but no, we wouldn't hire him...at least not until we'd managed to get him in for a proper interview first.)

As the largest online social media platform in the world, it's no surprise that Facebook is the first place most people turn when trying to find out more about potential new hires, which is why, again, we're going to say...make sure what they find is the best representation of who you are as a future employee.

But what if you just *have* to keep your Facebook page incredibly personal and borderline inappropriate? What if there is no way in heck you're ever going to part with your personal page dedicated to your all night "My Little Pony pajama parties" and boozy Saturday morning brunch binges...potential employers be damned!?!

Hey, we're not here to judge, just help. To that end...set your profile settings as high as possible and curate a very small, very select list of friends with whom you share this page with. Then, take a moment to really think about where you'd like to work and who you'd like to be when you work that job...and start setting up a second, PUBLIC Facebook business page.

Hey, is this the website you guys told me we'd be building? Ooh! I am so excited!

Whoa, not quite. This is just for your Facebook presence and this is just so you can keep your private page private while still maintaining a public presence. This is in NO WAY a substitution or replacement for a full on website (much more on that later!)

This page should be considered a *Portal* page...a doorway which entices potential hiring managers to learn more about you and click through to your bigger, better personal website. Think of this as an appetizer and your actual webpage is the 3 course gourmet meal.

There are plenty of tutorials online that will walk you through setting up your Facebook business page. Just keep in mind who will be looking at this and why and make sure it's appropriate for the audience you are aiming for. Much like a targeted cover letter or resume, keep your online information targeted.

What about other social media sites? Now that we've cleaned up your Facebook page, let's look at other digital platforms you should be careful with.

LINKEDIN

As far as professional networking sites go, you can't beat LinkedIn. Recruiters use LinkedIn because of the ease of access to work and employment specific information it makes readily available. On top of that, it's the second largest social networking and largest career-based platform in the world, which means odds are, a good hiring manager is going to be looking at it at some point in your hiring process...and you want to make sure what they're seeing is top notch, right?

Think back to the last time you were on your LinkedIn profile page. How long ago was that? Is the information there up to date and correct? Is it relevant to the jobs you're applying to and interviewing for? Is there any chance that if you were in an interview and the hiring manager pulled up that page, that it would be relevant and optimized for the interview you're sitting in?

No?

Well, then, let's fix that too!

Photo Finish

The first thing you want to do is make sure it's current...starting with your profile photo. Profiles with photos are 14 times more likely to be viewed than profiles without...and if your photo is out of date, or isn't relevant, that can count against you. Again, we go back to our earlier pug example. Sure, it's cute, but it's not professional.

You're the Headliner!

Make sure your profile includes a solid headline summarizing who you are and what you're looking for (remember our 2 sentence branding exercise?) and a well thought out summary. Summaries over 40 words long are more likely to show up in search engine queries, so make sure that yours is long enough to be found, but not so long as to be boring. This isn't a good

place to start writing your novel. Keep your summary brief, relevant, and make sure to include specific key words to help you maximize your relevance to the job you're interviewing for.

Try to avoid using generic or vague buzzwords. Focus on you and your accomplishments as well as your talents rather than just throwing a bunch of words up you think will sound important. A quick no-brainer way to make sure your summary (and the rest of your profile overall) fits with what the company you're interviewing with is to do a little research on *their* LinkedIn page. Take a good look at their profile and do your best to include some of the characteristics that are common throughout in your own profile.

Check All the Boxes

Are you a volunteer? Passionate about what you do on the weekends? Make sure to include that as hiring managers will appreciate a well-rounded candidate. Always remember to maximize your research on the company and if there is something you enjoy that matches up with the company's charity, philanthropy, or pet project...be sure to include that as well!

Endorsements

One of the great features LinkedIn offers is the ability to endorse the skills and talents of others. It's like customer reviews and having positive ones from your peers and coworkers on your page will help you stand out as an expert in your field. Make sure they're real and not just fluffed up. The last thing you want to do is be hired for a job you can't actually do.

TWITTER

It's amazing how much information you can put into 140 characters! Because Twitter is so easy to update, it's a great way to keep your followers apprised of your every move. Use it wisely, though. Posting random bits of nonsense might seem like you're being productive, but it's far better to post a few posts a day. Keep your posts engaging, on topic and targeted. Go through your follow list carefully and remember to surround yourself with people you'd like to work with that reinforce your brand.

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There are many other social media platforms out there, including sites like Tumblr, Instagram, YouTube, Delicious, Digg, Reddit, Stumbleupon...the list continues to grow each and every day. Rather than devote the rest of this article to each and every one of them, we wanted to cover the three biggest. Just keep in mind, no matter the platform the rules are all generally the

same...your brand is a reflection of you and the best way to make sure potential employers are impressed with what they see is to make sure you're always putting your best foot, and face forward.

EMAIL

While you're cleaning up all your social media, it might be a good time to clean up your email address as well. Sure, Happybunny13@email.com was great in high school, but now that you're a professional, it might be time for your email to grow up as well. Consider getting a Gmail account as it works so seamlessly with Google and GTalk. Your email should be a clear reflection of who you are and make it easy for people to get in touch with you. Emails like firstname.lastname@gmail.com are easy to remember and are clean and professional. Keep Happybunny13 for your personal emails.

SOCIAL MEDIA COVER LETTER/RESUME

In situations where you're unable to meet your potential employer in person and hand off your paperwork to a real, living, breathing human (increasingly rare in this computer age) it's more important than ever to make sure that you're doing everything you can to avoid getting lost in the digital crowd. Submitting your resume blindly online can feel a bit like tossing it into a deep, dark, and seemingly bottomless hole. You hit send, cross your fingers, and then usually never hear anything back.

Resumes that are social media friendly are a great way to help attract hiring managers to you, rather than trying to work the equation the more traditional, other-way around.

Unfortunately, you'll still have to send your resume out and submit it blindly to different websites...at least in the beginning, but if you build up your own social media friendly resume and do it the right way, those blind submissions will become fewer and fewer.

The idea is to create a resume that contains not only your traditional work history elements, but also various multimedia elements, sharing options and integrated social networking feeds in such a way that the resume becomes not just a resume, but a billboard that reflects and advertises your personal brand. In essence, you want your social media resume to be so dynamic that it becomes easily accessible through searching, sharing and distributing. You want your social media resume to do three things for you:

1. **Accurately represent who you are as a brand.**
2. **Showcase your talents and abilities as well as what you're looking for in a job.**

3. Attract recruiters, hiring managers and work opportunities to you rather than you going out to them!

Posting your information on the above-mentioned social media sites is a great way to get started, but if you really want to blow recruiters and hiring managers out of the water and ensure your spot on their list of desirable new hires, you have to put your resume on its very own individual platform...*and that is where our next topic comes into play...*

PERSONAL WEBSITE (AND BLOG)

We've saved the biggest, and in many ways, most important part of your toolbox for last...the personal website. Your personal website is going to be your single biggest and best way to get the brand that is you out there for the world to see. Having your own webpage/website that you create and control means that you can personally guarantee that it is a 100% accurate reflection of your brand, beliefs and values. In essence, it is the most you branded thing out there, which is why you have to make sure you're very careful about how you set it up.

Having your own website means the only limit to what you can post is what you can think up. It's a platform for you to be able to showcase exactly who you are. You can build websites that allow you to post almost anything you can imagine.

Are you an aspiring journalist or newscaster? Why not post interviews and stories you've done with people in the past?

Are you an educator? Use your website to post tutorials and instructional videos detailing how you've done something or teaching people new skills.

Are you a blogger? Increase your views and followers by integrating podcasts and inviting your listeners to participate.

Are you a designer or artist? Why not put together a digital gallery highlighting your pieces?

Personal websites are also a great way to share what others think of you. Invite past clients and coworkers to submit testimonials for you. Having your past clients interact with you not only helps to build a reputation for your brand through honest feedback, but it also helps to spread awareness of who you are.

It might seem like a dirty psychological trick, but asking for client feedback is a great way to make someone feel personally invested in your company. People love to talk about themselves and share what they've done. If you've got a solid website that is engaging and encourages

interaction, you'll naturally increase your viewership. The more you get people involved, the more likely they are to share what you're doing with their friends, family and clients...and once those people are engaged, they can also share your site. It's a process that, if you cultivate it carefully and maintain your brand integrity, can increase your visibility exponentially over time. Of course, that also works in the negative as well which is why it's so important to make sure your interactions are positive. Remember, the best business is repeat business!

You can also expand your digital footprint by integrating your social media profiles into your website. By using badges and links, you can easily blend all your social media accounts into your personal website. This linking not only gives you a bigger area of influence, but helps people to find you as they link to and from your page from other sources and sites.

But what do I know about websites? I can't do this! This is too hard! Too much pressure! I'm so intimidated!

Are you starting to hyperventilate with fear at the thought of coding and building your own website? Don't worry! It's not as hard as you might think. In fact, there are plenty of site builder programs out there that take the hard work out of putting your info online and we're here to help you choose the one that is right for you and have even set up a [whole separate article for you on just what you need to do to get started](#)...in less than fifteen minutes!

Amazing!

[Click here to read more..](#)

CHAPTER 3

COMMON BRANDING MISTAKES

Now that we've covered the basics of personal branding, let's quickly touch on the most common personal branding mistakes to avoid.

Branding without Thinking –

The fastest way to fail at branding yourself is to rush into it and not put thought into each and every step. If you skip a step or blow through a process, you run the risk of missing a critical component of what makes you and your brand unique. The ultimate goal of branding is to end up doing what you love and getting paid to do it, but that takes a lot of time, a little bit of luck and some serious networking in the right direction. Rushing through your branding might mean you miss out on including a piece of information that could help get you where you want to be.

Branding out of Order –

It's tempting to jump straight into the online stuff, or to skip around and work this out of order, but trust us when we tell you we've put this into a specific order that is guaranteed to make your branding process smooth. If you rush into one part and overlook another, you might find yourself later on down the road wondering where you went wrong. It's hard to build a website all about you and your brand if you haven't finished clearly defining who you are!

Not Being Authentic About Who You Are -

And speaking of who you are...remember, nobody likes fakes! If you brand yourself as something you're not, you run the risk of being exposed as an imposter and losing the trust of those around you. A big part of branding is defining what you value as an individual and what you stand for. If you have a hard time committing to ideals or fulfilling your promises, your brand will seem hollow and cheap. That can make people see you as untrustworthy and false. Similarly, if your brand relies on opinions or convictions, make sure you really believe them before you start asking others to believe you.

Part Time Branding –

Creating and maintaining your personal brand isn't something you do part time. It isn't something you only work on once a month or so. It's something you have to be conscious of and aware of all the time. By working on your branding every day, you're ensuring that your information is current. Also, by ensuring that your branding is a part of your conscious thought process, you're much less likely to slip up and make a mistake online that might have consequences either immediately or down the road. Always think about every action you take and how that will affect your overall brand and your ability to achieve your goals. A single badly written blog or negative exchange on a public social media post might seem small, but when it comes to branding, no action is insignificant. It's far easier to avoid a mistake than have to clean up after one.

Quantity over Quality -

The idea is to make sure that your brand is not only authentic and engaging, but that everything you put out is quality. Whether we're talking about blog posts, Facebook updates, business cards and resumes distributed, sometimes more isn't better. Make sure you're putting thought and intention into everything you're doing. It's far more important to have one meaningful connection than hand out 100 business cards that all get thrown away.

Using Branding to Get Famous -

You're not a Kardashian, or a Hilton...at least not yet. You can't expect that branding yourself is going to lead automatically to internet stardom. Branding isn't about becoming rich and famous and getting your name out there, rather it's about making sure that you control what is out there. Branding is about making sure that people get to know the genuine, authentic you (see the above bullet "Not Being Authentic About Who You Are" if you need clarification).

Being Your Own Island-

Yes, personal branding is all about you, but at the same time it isn't. Building up your brand means reaching out to those around you for help, guidance, honest opinions, and support. Branding is all about networking and by reaching out to those around you that you admire and respect, you are also building up your own brand. Try to always surround yourself with people who believe in your brand and who are likeminded.

Not Taking Your Brand Online –

It's tempting to do just half of this branding process, especially if you have any hesitations about going online or have no experience building a personal website, but trust us when we say, you'll only be shooting yourself in the foot. We've said it before and we'll say it again, this is a digital world and the job market is moving from the back pages of the newspaper and word of mouth to smack dab in the middle of the internet...and if you're not there to be a part of it, you're going to get left in the dust.

Forgetting To See Where You Are -

Personal Branding is only as good as your exposure and network. You could have the most amazing personal website ever, but if nobody's looking at it, then it doesn't matter. A quick way to see how your brand is doing is to utilize online analytical tools. Not only will it give you a quick measure of how things are going, it can help you decide to focus on what is working and drop what isn't.

Fantasy Branding –

We all have that one photograph of ourselves that we immediately identify with as "our perfect look." You know the one...where your hair is flawless, your wardrobe was on point and you were just...rocking it. Unfortunately, that was 25 years ago and since that photo was taken, you've cut your hair, gained (or lost) weight, and well...gotten older. Make sure the photos on your website are *current* photos of you. Yes, it's okay to celebrate past victories in relation to your career and there are times when it's perfectly acceptable to share photos of those events, but do not use an outdated photo as your primary picture.

CHAPTER 4

PREPARING YOURSELF FOR AN EMPLOYER BACKGROUND CHECK

In life, everyone makes mistakes. There isn't a single person on this planet who hasn't done something at some point in their lives that they look back on and think "Aww man, what was I doing then?!" For some mistakes, it's a lesson learned and we move on. For others, well, the marks can be a little more permanent.

More and more jobs these days, regardless of what you're ultimately going to end up doing, require a background check. From education and medicine to office work and retail—employers across the board are requiring their applicants to undergo criminal and/or other types of background checks prior to hiring.

But why do they need to do a background check? I've never been in trouble in my life. This is ridiculous!

Before you get all huffy, stop and think for a moment. There are numerous reasons for these checks: employers run them to keep the workplace safe, to avoid negligible hiring claims, to ensure that the employee they are hiring really is the person they claim to be, and more.

You spend so much time preparing yourself for the job market by working on your resume, perfecting your personal brand and website, and practicing your interview techniques...prepping yourself for the possibility of a background check is just one more thing you should take care of as a matter of routine! Remember, you're the *Perfect Candidate*, and that means making sure every aspect of who you are has been carefully

There are ways to prepare for an employment background check, and, if done right, each one of them can improve your hiring chances considerably.

Okay, fine. I have to have a background check...but how do I prepare for that? I have no idea where to even start looking or what to do if I find anything!

Hey, first off, take a deep breath! We're here to point you in the right direction. Luckily, most of the information employers are digging for—criminal convictions, driving records, etc.—are things that you can look up on your own ahead of time.

Run a Criminal Background Check On Yourself.

Remember how we ran an internet search on ourselves in Chapter 2 to see what pops up in case an employer Googles your name? This is essentially the same thing, but instead of

searching for awkward photos of yourself drunk with your friends, we're looking for things that might pop up during a criminal background check.

You can pull up any number of websites that will be happy to run a quick search for you using your name, and many of them are free. While you might think you already know what an employer will see when they browse your criminal history—especially if you have never been convicted of a crime and have no criminal record—it's always a good idea to do this just in case.

Criminal records get “miscataloged” every day, and a background check can actually pull someone else's criminal record, especially if you have a name that is fairly common or is even just similar to someone else who has a record. As a result, running a criminal history check on yourself can help you spot any potential inaccuracies or problematic cross-overs on your criminal record before your employer sees them.

If you run a criminal background check on yourself, and see criminal history on your record that you didn't expect to see, then your next step is to correct the issue. *First things first, contact the courts to rectify any inaccurate information.*

Say your background check says you were convicted of assault, but you've never even been arrested. If this is the case, you need to get on the phone to the courthouse where the record in question was pulled. Politely explain the situation and inform the court that the information in your record is incorrect.

In some cases, you will be able to get the inaccuracies corrected with a simple phone call, written request, or in-person appearances. Other times, you might have to actually file a petition with the court. Either way, it's a hassle, but it's worth it to make sure your record actually reflects the life of innocence you've led.

But what if what you find is accurate?

Like we said earlier, everyone makes mistakes. If you have something from your past that could potentially be an issue to future employers, you can always try criminal record expungement.

On top of that, different states and counties have different laws pertaining to expungement. Your eligibility to have a crime removed from your record will depend on a number of factors—including the severity of the crime, the time elapsed since the conviction, and whether or not you have been charged with any other crimes.

Depending on your record, you might also need legal representation to appeal for expungement, and the process can be complicated. However, if you can make a valid claim for expunging your criminal record, it's worth jumping through the hoops and paying for the lawyer: having a clean record will automatically make you a more competitive applicant for most jobs.

Run a Past Employment/Job History Check On Yourself--

While we're on the topic of changing old records, let's take a look at your resume and work history. Background checks often search for more than just criminal history. For instance, your prospective employer may dig into your past to make sure that your work and educational history lines up with what you put on your resume and application.

Putting jobs you never held on your resume to look more impressive might seem like a great way to fill work gaps and make you look more experienced than you really are, but a quick background check is an easy way for potential employers to learn the truth.

Lying about a degree you don't have or a job you never held is obviously a no-no, but other more common resume fibs—like snazzying up your old job title, editing employment dates to remove gaps, and listing job responsibilities you never had—can be just as risky.

Another important factor to consider when dealing with a background check are your job references and past employers...both of whom may be contacted by potential employers as they run checks on you. Though many applicants don't consider it as such, the reference check actually is part of the background check.

When your prospective employer calls your old boss, supervisor, or mentor, they are looking to learn more about your skills, work ethic, overall job performance, and more.

Other Things to be Aware of --

Are you applying for a job where you have to do any sort of driving? Is the job you're interviewing for going to involve handling cash or credit accounts? Request a copy of your driving record and credit report! Driving record checks and credit report checks aren't standard for every job, but if you are going to be performing a job that involves finances or the operation of a motor vehicle, you should expect them.

And if you do expect them, it's a good idea to see what your records look like—just as you did with your social media, job and criminal history. That way, if there is an inaccurate reckless driving charge on your record, or if identity theft has left your credit in shambles, you can correct those issues before they create an uncomfortable situation in the interview room.

While you might not think of the background check as something that requires a lot of thought or preparation on your end, it can make or break your employment chances just like an interview can. As such, it's worth taking the time to think about the background check from a few different angles before you head off to your interview. After all, you want to do everything in your power to maximize your hiring chances, and that includes making sure your past looks as clean as it really is.

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGICALLY PLANNING YOUR JOB REFERENCES

Many jobs these days require job seekers to submit job references along with their applications, and depending on who you use, this can either hurt or help you.

Believe it or not, potential employers really do rely on job references when making hiring decisions, so it's a very good idea to make sure you're careful about who you're putting down when filling this information out!

The first thing you want to consider when coming up with a potential job reference is what an employer might ask them.

While it might be tempting to fill the section for job references out with friends and past co-workers who you know will say good things about you, that's actually a quick way to make sure you don't get the job! Many times future employers want to know more about you than just your general performance and salary. Some may want to know things like your ability to work in a team or your response to deadlines and pressure and your attendance record. Hearing from the guy who shared a cubicle with you that you were a scream at the holiday parties and were always good for a laugh might be funny for an employer to hear, but it's not going to make them want to hire you.

The best way to make sure you have stellar references is to know who is going to give you reviews that will help you and then put those individuals down as your references.

10 Questions A Potential Employer May Ask Your References

Here are ten questions employers typically ask. For the purposes of this chapter, we'll pretend your name is Joe Bob. (Hey, just go with it...)

1. **How long was Joe Bob employed with your company?**
2. **Can you describe Joe Bob's duties and responsibilities while at your company?**
3. **Did Joe Bob report directly to you? If he did, how was his communication with you?**
4. **Can you tell me why Joe Bob left your company?**
5. **Was Joe Bob responsible for others as well as himself? Was he in a management or oversight position?**
6. **Is Joe Bob a good team leader or team worker?**

7. **How are Joe Bob's organizational skills? Can he prioritize and schedule?**
8. **We are considering hiring Joe Bob to fill this position. Can you tell me if you feel he is qualified for this type of work or these responsibilities?**
9. **How was Joe Bob's attendance? Was he on time? Were his days productive?**
10. **Would you ever consider re-hiring Joe Bob should you have the chance?**

Okay, so a few of those questions were actually multiple questions, but you get the idea. Now your task is to go through these questions and see how your past employers might answer them and how their answers might affect your ability to get a job.

If you worked for company X and had a fabulous time there with your buddies but didn't have the best rapport with your boss, you might consider skipping him as your reference.

But what if my work history is spotty or non-existent??

If your work history is a little shaky, or you don't have tons to choose from, there are other options for references. You can include places you have volunteered at, Church organizations you have assisted with, and any other situation where you interacted with individuals at a professional level.

If you're just starting out in the job market and you haven't had any "bosses," you can still use professors, instructors, teachers or counsellors. Even past baby-sitting jobs can be used as references.

Prepare Your References Properly

After you decide who of your references would be best suited to champion you for the job you're dying to get, you need to first ask them if they would mind being a reference. Remember in Chapter 4 when we covered background checks? References are just an extension of the background check an employer will probably do on you and the last thing you want is to have it tank because you put down a bad reference! Things can get ugly fast if one of your references gets caught off guard with a call from a potential employer out of the blue!

Next you need to prepare your chosen references properly. Be sure they each have a copy of your resume and cover letter. These will help to remind them of your specific qualifications, skills, and accomplishments.

What if I just skip that section and provide hiring managers with reference letters instead?

Reference letters are pretty much a waste of time. The fact is potential employers want to TALK to your references. They want to hear in their voice how they feel about you. Employers don't put much stalk into reference letters because let's be honest, you pretty much know they are going to be filled with praise and little else.

Employers want to do some digging and really find out what your strengths and weaknesses are. They can find those things out much better by actually talking to your references.

As long as you choose and prepare your references properly, this fact shouldn't worry you.

The bottom line is, when putting together your list of job references, make sure that you have people that will give fair, unbiased, and hopefully favorable reviews of your work for them. And yes, we're going to say it again because we can't emphasize this enough: do NOT use only friends or family members. The last thing a future employer wants to do is spend an hour on the phone with your mother listening to her talk about your diaper rash when you were five.

That's what Christmas parties are for!

CHAPTER 6

WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

I know, I know. We've thrown a ton of stuff at you in this section, but trust us, it's all for a good reason. We've given you a ton of instructions and a ton of tools and now it's time for you to start figuring out who you are and putting that personal branding into action!

We suggest reading this whole section again...and maybe even a third time before you officially start your own branding process. Remember, personal branding isn't something you should rush into. It takes a lot of time to really hone in on who you are and what you stand for and making sure you're answering every question authentically will only help get you there. The goal is to zone in on the "you" (your brand) that most accurately represents who you are, what your goals are and showcases your strengths and unique qualities.

And as a reminder, when it comes time to build your own personal website, makes sure you put just as much effort into that as you have every other step. It can be daunting if you've never done it before, so don't forget, we've done all the hard work for you...we can actually show you how to do it in less than fifteen minutes! With our help, it might just be the easiest part of this whole process!

Once you've established your brand, you'll need to keep working to project a strong, authentic and consistent brand identity. Always remember that actions speak louder than words—be sure to follow through on the promises associated with your brand every day with everyone you encounter. For example, if you brand yourself as a hard-working and reliable person, coming in late or neglecting your work at your current job doesn't help to reinforce your brand image.

Also remember that as time goes on, things will change, including you. Your brand will need to be flexible as you move between various positions and career paths as well as life milestones and accomplishments, so don't be afraid to make changes to your brand as needed. Locking yourself into an ageing brand just because you're reluctant to change or too lazy to do the work it requires can be just as detrimental to your career as not branding at all.

Along with changes in your brand come changes in your goals. As you accomplish them, make sure to reexamine what's coming up next. Always celebrate and share your current victories, especially with those people who have helped you, but don't forget to also keep your long term goals in sight as well. It's important to not only assess your brand from time to time but to also reevaluate where you're ultimately headed. Some parts of your brand that were once relevant

may need to be updated; refreshing your brand identity can help you build new relationships and potentially continue to advance your career.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR ONLINE TOOLBOX AND PERSONAL BRANDING

- 1. A SOLID PERSONAL BRAND WILL HELP YOU STAND OUT:** It's a tough job market out there and the best way to stand out from the thousands of other qualified applicants is to ensure that you have invested in your own personal branding.
- 2. BREAK YOURSELF DOWN AND FIND YOUR CORE:** A solid brand is one that can be easily summed up in one or two sentences. Figure out who you are at your core and what you represent. Then, turn those sentences into your own personal branding statement and live it, every day.
- 3. REGULARLY GOOGLING YOURSELF IS A GOOD IDEA:** Part of good branding is making sure what people find on you is accurate and positive, which means keeping on top of what is posted online about you and by you. Don't forget that what you put online can be used against you. Think twice before you post anything including personal opinions, rants, and photos!
- 4. BUILD YOUR OWN WEBSITE:** Your online brand is only as good as the effort you put into it. Invest the time to build a professional looking website that clearly shows who you are and what you stand for. Make sure to keep it updated regularly and that the information is accurate and current.
- 5. KEEP YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE PROFESSIONAL:** Social media can be a tricky world to navigate no matter what you're job status is. It's important to keep your personal and professional lives separate online. Having two Facebook accounts, one for your friends and family, and one for your professional business contacts, can save you from any potentially awkward questions employers might have about your obsession with cats in legwarmers, politically incorrect friends...or worse.
- 6. MAKE SURE YOUR REFERENCES ARE SAYING THE RIGHT THINGS:** Prep your personal references and make sure they're up to date on what you are doing and what you need

them to do for you if a potential employer calls. Make sure you contact them before listing them as references and that you have their permission to pass on their information to hiring managers. Speaking of references...

7. **KEEP YOUR REFERENCES PROFESSIONAL:** Try to avoid using friends and family as your references. Sure, you might think it's a great idea and a sure-fire way to score some solid positive reviews, but trust us, eventually the truth will come out and no employer wants to hire someone they can't trust.
8. **CLEAN UP YOUR PAST:** Do some digging on yourself online before your potential employer does. Much like Googling yourself, running background checks will help ensure that you know what an employer will see when they look you up. If there are any discrepancies or issues, take care of them sooner rather than later.
9. **HONESTY IS ALWAYS THE BEST POLICY, ESPECIALLY ONLINE:** Don't pad your brand, website, cover letters, resumes or applications with information that is over-exaggerated, or worse...flat out false. Background checks are a part of almost every hiring process and it doesn't take much for an employer to find out if you're not being honest.
10. **BE ENGAGING, BE HONEST, BE YOU...EVERY DAY:** Branding isn't something you set and forget...it's something that you live and breathe every day. Make sure your branding is a part of who you are and that it accurately reflects you. Engage with your social media contacts every day. Keep your information up to date and accurate.

SECTION TWO

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW – GETTING READY

Okay, deep breath. You just got off the phone with a hiring manager at a company you're dying to work for and they want you to come in for an interview. Holy guacamole! This is huge!

You've built an amazing online presence, can sail through the toughest background checks, have a whole roster of solid personal references and done the homework to get in the door...and now they're asking you in for a face-to-face meeting.

Wow! You should be so proud of yourself!

You've come a long way and the fruits of your labors are starting to show. Now you just have to nail that interview, and then it's all smooth sailing after that! No sweat! Just swagger in there and grab a seat and let them see what they've been missing all this time...right?

Eeerp...not quite. Close, yes...but not quite right.

Yes, you're a lean-mean-job-gettin'-machine but we need to make sure you don't just look the part on paper...we need you to look the part in person too! That means you have to start preparing for your interview long before you get to the company door and meet your future employers face to face.

The sooner you get this stuff knocked out, the sooner you can settle into going over these example questions and answers and prepping your own responses. Don't leave this section to the last minute...get it done ASAP!

CHAPTER 7

THE DAYS AND WEEKS LEADING UP

Being the *Perfect Candidate* in person and online as well as on paper means putting in a little extra effort...and that effort should start as soon as you start looking for a job, not just when you get the call for an interview.

Yes, this means potentially changing habits you've built up over years, but not only will making these changes help you become the *Perfect Candidate*, they'll help you feel better in general overall...and that's a win-win in our books!

YOU ARE A MACHINE – TIME FOR A TUNEUP!

Taking care of you means taking care of the machine that is you. That means proper exercise, cutting back on caffeine, eating a healthy diet, and getting enough sleep. A healthy and well-rested body means a healthy and well-rested mind that is clear and better to handle whatever life might throw at you.

Let's start with the big one first. Stress and lack of sleep are little evil best friends. If you're under a lot of stress or dealing with high nerves, odds are you're not sleeping well... If you're up all night worrying about things then it's almost guaranteed that the next morning you'll wake up irritable and tired. Your mind is fuzzy and your reaction time is drastically reduced. That being said...

Go to sleep!

(No, not this second, unless you're reading this book late at night and it's past your bedtime. Then, yes, put us down...we'll still be here in the morning.) If it's not your bedtime yet, look at the clock. What time is it? Are you habitually a night owl? Are you someone who regularly gets a recommended 6-8 hours of sleep a night? If so, good for you... If not, well, the few days leading up to your interview might be a good place to start trying.

Why, you ask? Let me tell you!

A lack of sleep affects your ability to think critically and solve problems. It affects how you interact with people and how you deal with situations. If you're going through your day irritable and tired, then you're probably going to be experiencing even more stress. It's a vicious cycle!

Your ultimate goal with an interview is to give potential employers your absolute best face. Coming in haggard with a puffy face and red eyed from pulling an all-nighter isn't the first impression you want to give.

An employer wants to know you're willing to put in 110% and go that extra mile. They don't want, however, to see you immediately after doing it...at least not yet...and certainly not on someone else's project or worse yet, after a full 24 hour marathon playing GTA-5...yes, gamers, I'm talking to you...put down the headset...at least until after the interview. If you have to play to blow off stress, okay, but let's save the marathon smack downs for after the interview!

Stumbling into an interview exhausted and then muddling through their questions is not the way to win over your potential employer, regardless of how epic your gaming the night before was...and trust us when we say, there are very few employers who will look at your resume and say "Impressive, but what was your high score last night?"

CLEAN YOUR PLATE

Work in lean proteins like fish and poultry or soy products. These deliver long lasting energy, help to satisfy hunger, and also help to keep you mentally alert. Add in fresh fruits and veggies and some whole grains. Avoid heavy or overly rich foods that might have a negative impact on your digestive process. Nobody wants to go to an interview all clogged up...or worse yet, bloated and gassy!

Be aware also that certain foods can have a lingering effect, either through your breath or even in the pores of your skin. Skip the spicy stuff and save the big steak dinner for celebrating when you land the big job!

CLEAN OUT YOUR CLOSET

One of the things you absolutely **MUST DO** upon entering the job hunting market is take a good long look at your wardrobe...and make sure you do it *before* you start going on interviews!

We briefly touched on dressing for success in Section 1, Chapter X, when we talked about representing who you are by how you look. In this section, we're going to take that one step further and discuss what to wear when you go to your interview.

What you wear every day and what you wear to your interview are usually very different things. People are incredibly visual animals and what you wear when you first meet a person can directly influence their opinion of you...especially if you're trying to present as a pulled together professional. What you're interviewing for should factor into what you wear as well. Remember, it's always better to be overdressed than underdressed. Even if the environment you're going to be working in is casual, make sure to dress professionally. You can always relax when you get the job but right now is all about impressions.

In other words, when it comes to your job interview, it DOES matter how you dress and how you present yourself because your first impression is going to go a long way in determining how well you fit in with the company.

When you walk through that door, you want the hiring manager to look at you and see you not as just another person coming in for a job interview, but as the person they've been looking for all along. You want them to see you and think "Oh thank goodness. They're finally here!"

Sure, it's a bit of a psychological mind trick, but if you can dress like you are already a part of the company culture, odds are, the hiring manager will automatically see you this way before you even start the interview! You want the hiring manager to subconsciously (or hopefully consciously) visualize you as a part of the team already, and your appearance is the first thing they will analyze when making this consideration.

So think about this...

If you're applying for a job where you're expected to be a door-to-door Bible salesman, it might not be in your best interest to show up to your interview dressed like a dominatrix.

Now, this is an extreme example, but you get the picture.

You want to try and get a feel for the work environment and dress accordingly. Here are some categories of dress along with their corresponding industries:

Conservative: Corporations, financial institutions, accounting firms, law offices.

Business Casual: Sales, government agencies, education, retail, small companies, information tech, engineering, real estate.

Casual: Construction. Repair, landscaping, plumbing and any other job where you may get dirty (obviously). HOWEVER this doesn't mean come to the interview in dirty clothes.

Creative/Fashionable: Fashion, entertainment, graphic design, video game design, music.

What you need to do is figure out BEFORE YOU INTERVIEW which industry that you are interviewing in and the culture of the company (or even department/team) that you'll be working in and try to match up as best as possible.

So how do you figure out what to wear? Believe it or not, this is a pretty easy thing to do and can be done at the same time you do your initial research on the company and the culture there. The easiest way to find out how people dress at a certain company is to ask questions.

Do you have any contacts within the company? If so, ask them! What do people around the office wear every day? What did they wear for their interview?

It shouldn't be too hard for you to get a feel for what is standard and normal for your industry and role. Don't have an insider you can ask? No worries! Look it up online, there's a lot of info out there. It might take a bit of digging, but in the long run, it'll be worth the extra effort.

Speaking of effort, make sure you avoid these wardrobe malfunctions:

Wearing clothing that fits improperly. You don't look like a kid playing dress up in mommy or daddy's clothes or like you're slowly being eaten alive by your clothes!

Wearing clothing that is too revealing. It's great to "show off what you got," but there is a time and a place for this and the interview room is NOT the place. Error on the side of being overly conservative if anything!

Wearing clothing that is dirty or wrinkled. The dirty part should be a no-brainer. As for wrinkles, a quick one-over with an iron before you get dressed is always a good idea. If you don't have an iron, almost any dry-cleaner can press your clothes for you.

Wearing clothes that are flashy or over the top. You want to be remembered for your personality and your ability to answer the questions with aplomb and not because of your bright green suit!

Looking like a walking billboard. Avoid outfits with large logos or odd or inappropriate messages.

Clanking or jingling. Stay away from too much jewelry. Too many chains, necklaces or bangles can cause unnecessary noise (clanging together) and be a distraction.

Resist the urge to make large statements with your grooming choices. Again, know your audience! Dying your hair pink, painting your nails bright green and putting thirteen new facial piercings in is completely within your right, but it may not make you the most attractive candidate for the position. Of course, if you normally have pink hair and multiple piercings, it might be a good idea to stop and really think about the job you're applying for and why you're

applying for it. No one is asking you to completely "sell out" and to be something other than yourself. But here's the deal. There is a job. And if you want it...really want it, you might be expected to make some changes. If your level of desire for the job is not enough for you to make some minor changes to your appearance, than perhaps you should consider looking in an industry or for a position that has more relaxed standards.

At the end of the day, you want to become the hiring manager's *Perfect Candidate*, and the first impression you give will start you headed in that direction.

WORK IT OUT!

Finally, get in some exercise. It doesn't have to be a marathon, lifting event or a swim across the English Channel, but try and work in a good 20-30 minute walk. Take a couple of laps around the block or stroll down your favorite street. Getting your heart rate up will help clear your mind. It also releases endorphins (which make you happy) and a happy person is far more likely to get hired than a grump. Plus it's a great chance to mentally run through your mock-interview and practice your potential interview question responses!

BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW – 24 HOURS TO GO

Okay, so we've covered the weeks prepping for the interview, but what about the day before you interview?

GET CLEAN AND PRESSED

Twenty-four hours before your interview you should be focusing on you and making sure that you are the absolute best version of you that you can be. We've already covered what to eat and getting enough sleep, but we also need to make sure that you're dressed for success. By now you should have already gone through your wardrobe and made sure you have an appropriate outfit for an interview.

If not, now is definitely the time to do it. Your appearance is as important as anything you could say during the interview. First impressions are lasting impressions so make sure you're making the right ones. Try on your interview wardrobe BEFORE the interview. An interviewer is going to form an opinion of you the instant they see you simply based on how you look. And don't forget...nothing says professional quite like a clean well pressed suit.

PRINT AND PREP

You will want to print out a few copies of your resume and make sure to tuck them into a folder or a binder so they will stay crisp and unwrinkled. If you are going in for a group interview, be sure to print out one resume for each interviewer and add in a few extras just in case. Throw in some business cards as well. If you're in an interview that relies heavily on portfolios or visual examples, now is the time to go through yours and make sure it's presentation ready. It also looks good if you include a letter or two of recommendation.

While you're printing those out, use this time online to map out where you're going for the interview and check out the route to make sure you're familiar with it. Print out a map if you have to, or make sure to put the directions into your GPS. Make sure to write down any applicable phone numbers just in case (and ONLY just in case) something horrible goes wrong and you have to let them know you're going to be (gasp) late.

GET MOVING

Nerves are human nature and it's better to deal with them than try to pretend they don't exist. We'll go over how to really conquer them in depth in Chapter 8, but for now we'll just say the fastest way to get rid of those pre-interview jitters is to get moving. Hit the gym, but don't kill yourself. Hopefully by now you've worked in a regular exercise routine. Adding an extra 20 minutes to your run or an additional dance class the day before you interview can help banish your butterflies.

GET FED

The night before your big interview isn't the night to go out and eat your way through a huge, greasy rich meal. It's also not a night to try out that super spicy new plate or ask your server for extra garlic. Remember, what you put in your stomach is going to come out your pores so be sure to avoid anything that might come across as...pungent.

Prepping for an interview is a lot like an athlete prepping for a marathon. Keep in mind that you want to focus on foods that will satisfy you without weighing you down. Light pastas, lots of healthy greens and fresh fruits are a great way to go. Consider fish or chicken and make sure you're not experimenting with anything that might leave you with lingering stomach or intestinal issues the next morning. Also consider skipping the wine and alcohol.

GET TO BED EARLY...

...and go to sleep! We can't stress this enough! Going to your interview with puffy sleepy eyes or a brain fogged up isn't going to help you at all. You want to go in to the interview at the top of your game and that means getting some serious shut eye the night before. You want whoever is conducting your interview to look at you and see the perfect fit for the job they're offering, and it's hard if you can't even keep your eyes open or if you're so sleep deprived you're bouncing around like a cricket on crack.

COUNTDOWN: THE DAY OF YOUR INTERVIEW

Okay, Tiger! Today's the big day! Get up early enough that you're not rushed. Enjoy a solid hearty breakfast (within reason) and take your time making sure you look your best, but keep an eye on the clock at the same time. Plan for the worst and hope for the best is a good mantra to keep in mind when figuring out when to leave for an interview. To that end, **BE ON TIME!** No, actually, don't be on time...be early.

Try to arrive at least 15 minutes (but not more) early. It will give you time to catch your breath and get settled in. The extra time in the car can be used to practice your interview skills, meditate, or take that last reassuring phone call from your support team, spouse, child, parent, dog or whoever else is rooting for you.

The key is using that extra time wisely. Do not, I repeat, **DO NOT** go to the bar for a few shots of liquid courage. Also, skip the sugary drinks and steer clear of caffeine. The last thing you want are the jitters or a sugar crash.

If you **HAVE** to have something to drink, grab a bottle of water from the local café or quick mart/gas station. Put a roll of sugar free mints in your pocket or have a tiny tube of toothpaste or bottle of mouthwash in your glove box for a last minute freshen up. A spare stick of deodorant isn't a bad idea either.

PEN AND PAPER

Bring a small notebook and a pen with you. It's a good idea to take notes and write down any questions you might have. Rather than interrupting an interview to ask questions that might be answered later, save them for the end. It shows you were paying attention and prevents an employer from having to repeat him or herself half a dozen times.

NO PRESSURE!

When you get to the interview, take a deep breath and just be yourself. If all else fails, pull the classic move they tell everyone who has a case of nerves before going up in front of an audience. Imagine whoever is interviewing you is in their underwear...but please, don't laugh. They're probably imagining you in yours. Greet everyone you're interviewing with and remember his or her name! It will benefit you to be able to call on people by name and show employers that you pay attention to details. It also makes writing those follow up thank you notes much easier if you know who to address them to.

EYE TO EYE

When answering questions, be sure to address whoever asked you the question, but don't ignore the rest of the panel. Include each person as you answer. Make eye contact and remain engaged. Keep your answers thoughtful and intelligent and don't pile on BS. Refer to your interviewers by name as you answer. "Thank you Bob. I'm glad you asked that. My last job gave me the ability to address that very situation..."

Of course, all this is good information, but completely useless if you find yourself staring at your hiring manager wide eyed and totally tongue tied by your nerves! Luckily for you, our next chapter focuses on just what you need to conquer those jitters!

So dry those sweaty palms, swallow that lump of fear, and let's get to tackling those butterflies!

CHAPTER 8

NERVES AND HOW TO DEAL WITH THEM

Now that we've covered some of the basics of how to prep for an interview, let's go over the one thing guaranteed to bring even the most well prepared job seeker to their knees...**uncontrolled nerves**.

Of course you're nervous! Interviews can be scary things...but we're not here to tell you why you're nervous...no, our job is to teach you how to NOT be nervous...or at least not AS nervous as you are right now.

Before we go further, let us stop you and tell you right now...everyone gets nervous from time to time. Everyone. Nerves are a natural response to being in a new situation. Without them, our ancient ancestors wouldn't have lasted a heartbeat in a world a whole lot wilder than the one we're in now. No, we're no longer battling saber-toothed tigers, but if you're fairly new to interviewing, sitting down across the table from the hiring manager can seem to be just as scary.

The trick is learning to manage those nerves and to make them actually work for you...

Nerves are a good thing?

In a nutshell, yes.... A few nerves are actually a good thing...you definitely don't want to go in too cocky, but learning to harness that energy and channel it into enthusiasm can go a long way towards getting you the job...

First off, take a deep breath and remind yourself...everyone gets nervous. You're not the first person your hiring manager has interviewed who has been nervous...and you certainly won't be the last. Heck, at this point, they're used to seeing candidates who are less than perfectly composed. It comes with the territory. So don't think your accelerated heart beat is anything they haven't seen or heard before.

Of course, if you're hiding behind the door holding a chair out like a lion tamer and yelling "**Back, I say,**" well then, we might have deeper issues here...but that's for a different book (or therapy session). For those of you who aren't hiding behind the doors, but are still feeling that all too familiar sinking feeling in the pit of your stomachs at the mere thought of an interview, we're here to help.

First thing we want to do is try to *manage* that fear. Coming into an interview looking like you're one handshake away from a nervous breakdown won't do much to inspire confidence and you want the hiring manager to look at you and see a leader, not someone who is going to crumble the first time you're under pressure.

There are two critical points at which you can tackle your fear; before and during the interview.

The best part about getting an interview is (hopefully) you have a little bit of prep time to figure out what you need to do to get yourself under control...

Remember all that stuff we told you to do ahead of time in Chapter 7? Not only were you getting ready for your interview ahead of time, you were laying a solid foundation of preparation you can now use to help manage any butterflies you might find flitting around your stomach.

BLOW OFF SOME STEAM

We touched lightly on the subject of getting exercise several times already in this book but it so important, we're going to briefly discuss it again.

One of the absolute fastest ways to help burn off that nervous energy is through exercise. Not only does doing exercise give you a mental edge that will help you stay on top of all of the details needed for your interview, but it also releases endorphins in your system that will naturally help calm you down.

Find yourself as a jumpy sort of nervous individual? Hit the gym first. If you're a bottled up mass of excitement, try the treadmill or swim some laps. Need to slow down and really focus on yourself? Try some meditation or yoga. Just make sure whatever you do, you do it in moderation. The last thing you want to do is go to the interview so sore from a marathon exercise blowout the day before that you can't even shake hands, much less sit down. To that end, we strongly suggest skipping leg day.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Role play your interview. No, you're not psychic and we aren't either, so what you practice won't be 100% accurate but it will absolutely help if you can run through a simulated interview a few times before you actually do one.

Grab a friend or a family member and have them play the part of the interviewer. If you're interviewing with a company and you already have a friend that works there, even better! Buy them dinner and have them run you through what they went through. Then ask them if they have any advice for you and what you can do to make yourself really shine.

Make sure, as you're going through your practice interview answers, that you're not just reciting pre-memorized answers but *really* answering the questions. Running through what you might be asked more than once can give you the opportunity to figure out what you want to

say and how you want to say it. Remember, they're hiring you to be a real person, not a tape recorder. Practicing with a friend or family member will help ensure that when it's time for the real thing, you'll maintain your conversation tone and avoid the robot-like monotone delivery that comes with reciting memorized text.

CAN YOU SEE YOURSELF SUCCEEDING? OF COURSE!

Before you go to sleep (early, of course!), pre-visualize your interview one more time. Imagine yourself knocking it out of the ballpark and really sailing through it with no problems.

Go ahead and laugh if you want, but it's been proven that by imagining yourself in a positive light actually does help when it's time to do the real thing! Besides, this is YOUR imaginary interview, right?

Why not have a little fun?!

Seriously though. If you aren't familiar with visualization techniques, a simple Google search will give you lots of info to help you out.

GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO GET TO YOUR DESTINATION

Plan for little unexpected bumps in the road like traffic, finding parking, finding the right address, etc. The last thing you want to do is panic before you even get there because you can't figure out which building is the right one.

If you get to the interview early, great! Don't go in and try to bully your way to an earlier spot...take the time to focus and gather yourself.

AVOID ALCOHOL

Yes, we've said this before, but we're going to say it again: whatever you do, don't go to the bar and grab some liquid courage. **No. No. No. No.**

Sure, grabbing a stiff shot before your interview might seem like a quick way to blast through those nerves, but trust us when we tell you, it's not. Not only can it leave you fuzzy, but it's

also a diuretic and can overly dehydrate your body...which can lead to the dreaded dry mouth bad breath dilemma, among other unpleasant little side effects.

Plus, it's easy to turn that first drink into a second, or a third and before you know it, you've either completely missed your interview all together, or worse, you've shown up smelling like a seasick boozehound and slurred your way through what could have been the best opportunity in your entire life.

TIME TO FACE YOUR FEAR!

During the interview, you're bound to still feel some nerves. It's human nature. No matter how much you've prepared and practiced, you're bound to still have a slight flutter in your stomach...and its okay! Just don't let it overwhelm you.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

A quick and easy way to shut down those nerves and build up a burst of confidence is to raise your testosterone levels (and yes, this applies to both men *and* women).

Why? What does testosterone have to do with nerves?

Everything!

Men (and women) who have increased levels of testosterone in their systems also have increased feelings of confidence. They also have lower levels of cortisol, which has been directly linked to anxiety and an inability to deal well with stress.

Luckily for us all, changing the levels of both testosterone (good) and cortisol (bad) in your body is simple. In fact, your body already adjusts them both based on the situation you find yourself in. They are constantly fluctuating as a result of the social, physical and environmental cues that surround you every minute of every day.

So how do you take control of these levels and use them to your advantage? By striking a "Power Pose!"

Just before you go in to your interview, take one last moment to really gather yourself. If you can, try the "Power Pose" for about two minutes. We suggest starting out with the "Superman/Wonder Woman" pose. Put your hands on your hips and imagine yourself as either Superman or Wonder Woman. Now remember, I said imagine...this is just to help boost your confidence and elevate your ability to project power and calmness. Don't take it too far and zoom into the interview with your arms out like you're flying!

TAKE A QUICK (MENTAL) BREAK

Don't feel like posing? No worries, here are a few other ways you can relax before you go in.

Take twenty deep breaths (that rattle your diaphragm) before you go in for your interview. Deep, calm and steady breaths like this can work wonders in terms of achieving relaxation. Make sure you do the full twenty, and try to do them unobtrusively as you await the interview. Obviously, you don't want to be gasping in and audibly exhaling large quantities of air in front of people you are trying to impress.

Another way to unwind tense nerves is to visualize yourself somewhere relaxing. Picture yourself on a beach on a warm day, with nothing to do, no stress (your bills are all paid and you have money in the bank), with the ocean gently lapping in front of you and the sun warming your belly from overhead. Want to add another layer to this little fantasy? Try telling yourself that "this is just a practice interview to gain skills for the real interviews that are surely to come in the future." Or better yet, pretend like you've already gone on a million interviews and this is just one more to do before you get back to your Piña Coladas and hammock swings!

MUSCLE CONTROL

Still feeling tense? Use that to your advantage and make those muscles work for you. Tightening and loosening muscles (balling up your fists or tightening your calf muscles) can help if you take a few moments to notice how your muscles feel when they relax. Concentrate on that feeling. Making affirmations such as "I have a lot to offer and "I can do this" can be a big help. Self-talk that assures yourself that this is not the end of the world—there are and will be other opportunities—can help you gain some perspective that relaxes you.

****Side note:** While tightening and relaxing certain muscles in your body can help relieve stress, it's a good idea *not* to do this with your jaw and neck muscles as that can lead to a stress headache.

LET'S (NOT) DO THE JITTERBUG

While we're on the subject of posing and how you hold your body, let's take it one step further and look at how you hold yourself in the interview itself. Try to continue to keep your cool. Body language is the number one give away when it comes to revealing nerves. To that end, make sure you're in control. Give a firm handshake but don't break any fingers trying to over

squeeze. Alternately, try to avoid the limp fish handshake as well. Keep it simple, short, and strong.

Avoid any shifting, tapping with your hands, bouncing your legs, darting your eyes around, or any other dead giveaways of interview nerves. Try to sit up straight in your seat and don't slouch.

BANISH THE VERBAL SPEED DEMONS

Don't talk too fast. Take the time you need to answer the questions honestly and fully. This isn't a race to see how quickly you can get out. Keep in mind again that they called you! Let them get to know you...the real you!

If you find yourself speeding up, don't be afraid to stop to take a quick breath to gather your thoughts. Just be careful not to let the pause go on for too long, let's say, more than 5 seconds.

LISTEN!

At the same time...make sure you're listening! Listen to what the interviewer is saying as well as asking...it can provide valuable information about the job that might not have been included in the listing or any previous communications with the company. On top of that, if you're listening, it will help ensure that the questions you ask don't cover something the interviewer has already discussed with you. Nothing says "I'm not listening to you" quite like asking someone to go over something they've already told you.

Not only that, but listening generally means you aren't speaking, which gives you another opportunity to gather yourself in between questions and calm yourself down.

BE TRUE TO YOU!

Above all else, be yourself. This isn't the time to practice your radio voice or try to make yourself sound more important, more experienced, more educated, or more qualified than you really are. You want to get hired because they want the real you...not who you're pretending to be.

Your interview shouldn't feel like you are public speaking to a large crowd. Rather, you should be calm and collected and presenting the "version of you" that the hiring manager could, and should, expect to see if hired for the position.

GO WITH THE FLOW

Having trouble answering a question? Rather than blowing over it or ignoring it, try redirecting it. Let's say you get asked a question you have no experience with. Don't panic! Instead of freezing up like a bunny on the freeway with a semi bearing down on you, take a deep breath and find a way to redirect the question to something you do know about. If they ask you about something specific to the company, try to relate it to an experience or situation you've had outside the company and how you dealt with that.

STILL FEELING A LITTLE JITTERY?!? IT'S OKAY!

If you find that you're still feeling nervous during the interview, own up to it! It's okay to admit that you're a little shaky. If you start to stumble or find that you're having difficulty with a question, it's perfectly fine to let the interviewer know you're a little nervous.

This will not only make you appear more human, but will also let them know that you're owning up to being human and that can, in some ways, make you more appealing and relatable.

However, you want to be careful not to go overboard...

Here's the deal. If you are complete wreck, the hiring manager will have second thoughts about your ability to perform under stress if they hire you. In order to avoid that, make sure that you use all of the tips listed above to calm those nerves and work through it.

No matter what technique you choose to utilize for relaxation and nerve control, be careful not to go too far and relax yourself to the point where it seems as if you are sleepy or uninterested in the job (or worse—inebriated!). A little nervousness can give you an edginess that keeps you on your toes and helps ensure you're doing your best.

Above all else, take the time to prepare. More than any of the other tips combined, solid preparation will be the number one thing you can do to blast your interview nerves and nail your job interview. Who knows, the person interviewing you might be just as nervous as you are!

CHAPTER 9

WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

I know we've thrown a lot of information at you in these past few chapters. We've talked about building and maintaining your online presence and how to prepare for your interview. We've discussed making sure you're taking care of yourself physically and mentally as well as how to tackle your nerves...and we know, it's a TON of information to take in all at once.

Feel free to use this list as a quick reference or refresher but don't rely on it alone! Go read those previous chapters...you'll thank us later!

1. **START PREPPING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW BEFORE YOU EVEN GET ONE:** Being a *Perfect Candidate* means always being ready for whatever you might encounter on your job-seeking journey. Do your research. Learn everything you can about the company before you interview. Google it. Google the people that work there. Google the board of directors and learn everything you can about them, the company mission, and where it's headed. Build your blueprint, have your qualities and multipliers as well as your research on hand at all times.
2. **PREPPING FOR YOUR INTERVIEW MEANS TAKING CARE OF YOU:** You always want to make sure you're presenting your very best and that means taking care of yourself at all times. Getting enough sleep, exercise, and the right foods can help ensure that you're healthy and at the top of your game.
3. **FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE LASTING ONES, SO DRESS TO IMPRESS:** Clean out your closet and make sure you have interview appropriate attire. Be professional in the way you dress. Spend some time researching the corporate culture of the organization that is interviewing you and try to emulate that in the clothing choice you make. If this doesn't immediately give you an idea of what to wear, always lean toward overdressing rather than being underdressed. It will give the impression that you are a professional and are taking the opportunity seriously.
4. **PUT IN GOOD, GET GOOD OUT:** What you put into your body before an interview can control what comes out... Make sure you eat a well-balanced, sensible meal the night before you interview...and a good breakfast the morning of (and lunch, if there's time). Avoid things like junk food, spicy foods and alcohol. Try not to smoke before an interview or your clothes and breath will reek of chemicals that are offensive and toxic. This includes vaping!
5. **PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT!:** Role play your potential interview with a friend or family member before your actual interview. Go over potential questions you might be asked and figure out how to answer them. Not only will your answers sound more

professional when you go in, but you'll be less likely to be nervous as you'll already know what to expect!

6. **BRING EXTRA COPIES OF ALL YOUR MATERIALS:** Make sure you bring extra copies of your resume and business cards to hand out to your hiring managers. It's also a good idea to bring a pencil and a small pad of paper so you can write down any questions that might arise during your interview.
7. **GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO GET LOST:** Leave for your interview with plenty of time to get there and to cover any situations that might arise during your travels. Getting to your interview early means more time to relax and gives you a chance to review your notes.
8. **THE INTERVIEW STARTS THE MINUTE YOU WALK THROUGH THE BUILDING DOORS:** Be positive and polite the minute you enter the building. Don't be rude...which means no swearing, no gum-chewing, no slang, and no complaining—about anything, including the traffic you encountered on the way there. This is part of being positive too. Don't badmouth the last place you worked, your boss, or any of your co-workers there. Don't put yourself down either. Be positive. And definitely don't offer to arm-wrestle the interviewer (or interviewers) for the job.
9. **POSE YOUR WAY TO A BOOST OF CONFIDENCE:** Spend a few minutes before your interview mentally relaxing. Do your power posing to help increase your levels of testosterone and raise your feeling of confidence.
10. **IT'S OKAY TO BE NERVOUS, BUT DON'T PANIC:** Remember, this is about them...not you. They need reassurance as to why they should hire you. They want their fears assuaged. They want to know they are making the right choice. After all, they are taking a risk in hiring you, and every personnel manager has some horror stories he or she can tell about the Employee-from-Hell. You don't want to trigger those fears and open up those old wounds.

SECTION THREE

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Now that we've covered everything you need to know *before* you get to an interview, it's time to shift focus and start looking at what you need to know *during* that interview! Yes, this section might be a bit shorter than the others, but don't let that fool you...the information here is just as important!

In this section we'll cover the **different types of interviews** you might find yourself going on. We'll also look at the **pros** and **cons** of each one and how you can use that knowledge to your advantage.

Once we've covered the different types of interviews, we'll move into the nitty gritty of **salary negotiations**. We'll walk you through everything you need to know before you sit down with your hiring manager, including how and when to ask about your bottom line!

CHAPTER 10

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Okay, you're dressed, pressed, and ready to impress, and now it's time for the actual interview. You're there 15 minutes early, you've got your resumes and business cards and you're ready to rock and roll. The receptionist looks up and smiles at you and lets you know they're ready for you. Time to shine! You walk to the door, straighten your tie (or skirt) and open it and see...what?

A lot of people have no idea what to expect from their job interviews, and we're not just referring to answering the questions here. Do you know how many different types of interviews there are? A company has multiple ways they can get to know you, and as the *Perfect Candidate*, you have to be able to adapt to each one.

In this chapter we'll break them down for you so no matter what you see when that door swings open...you'll be ready.

Let's start with the easiest one first...

THE SCREENING INTERVIEW

When companies (especially the larger ones), are faced with the prospect of having a large applicant pool for a job posting, they often like to employ the screening interview as the first phase in their hiring process. This allows them to ensure that all of the candidates meet the minimum requirements for the position. In other words, it helps them determine if you have any qualities or characteristics that may disqualify you right off the bat! As harsh as it sounds, companies don't want waste their time giving an in person interview to a candidate that isn't the right fit. It's all about efficiency!

These interviews are typically done via the computer or a skilled human resources employee with the company who is able to quickly and accurately sort through the applications and make the necessary decisions.

So what does this mean for you? The key to success during a screening interview is clarity, accuracy and simplicity. You have to make sure the relevant information stand out so that it's easy to find and as clear as possible. This is not the time to be delving into great detail about your technical know-how or flashing your charming personality. Rather, this is the time you want to demonstrate you are capable of doing the job and that your skills satisfy the basic requirements for the position.

Let's take a look at how a screening interview is performed...

THE PHONE/WEBCAM/SKYPE INTERVIEW

Hey, we keep saying it, so it must be true! Technology is changing, and with it, the way business is done. Due to various constraints including time, space, and travel costs, it's often not feasible for a company to physically interview each candidate. By screening clients on the phone, the company is able to whittle down the list of potential candidates that they will ultimately bring in for a face-to-face interview. But no worries...it might be a little different talking to a video camera than a real flesh and blood person, but all the old rules still apply!

Okay, so it's a **phone interview**...

Great, right? Nothing like an interview for your dream job where you can lounge around in your pajamas!

Not so fast. Yes, it's true, your future boss might not need to know that you're on the other end of the line in your favorite Scooby Doo flannels, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't treat the phone interview as seriously, if not more seriously, than any other standard interview.

The downside to a phone interview for you is that you must solely rely on your verbal communication to sell yourself, which for all of you with charming personalities is a major disadvantage.

Many of us effectively use body language and gestures to get our point across, and this is very tough to do over the phone. However, there are ways that you can prepare for this in order to ensure that you are doing everything you can put yourself in the position to succeed.

Most importantly, do not proceed with the interview unless you feel absolutely ready! Make sure that you have been given a specific time for the interview so you can mentally prepare. If it is a cold call, agree to do the interview but request that the interviewer calls you back at a time that is convenient for both parties, even if it is just a few minutes after the official call. You don't want to be caught off guard and waste your only chance!

Now, before that phone rings...or you make that call, make sure you're not distracted. Turn off the TV. Let me repeat that. TURN OFF THE TV. Nobody wants to ask you about your past performances and work history and hear Sponge Bob in the background. Don't think putting it on mute is good enough either. People can tell if you're distracted and delaying your answers to a potential employer because you're reading the crawler at the bottom of CNN isn't going to score you any points.

Get comfortable, but don't get too comfortable.

Find a good spot to sit down and have all your prep materials nearby for easy access. Sit at the kitchen table or at a desk. Don't lie down. Don't slouch. Make sure distractions are not going to be an issue. If you're doing the interview at home and you're not alone, make sure everyone knows you're going to be busy for a bit and to give you some privacy. Put the dogs outside. Pop in a video for the kids. Have your spouse keep everyone calm. At the very least go into a room where you can shut the door and focus on the task at hand.

It helps to always have your resume, and more importantly, all of the research you have done on the company right by your side. After reading this guide, you should have the **Qualities** and **Multipliers** you have discovered written down in front of you (more on that in Section 5). It also helps to have several **success stories** at your fingertips.

Remember, they are looking for the *Perfect Candidate*, so be prepared to give that to them! Above all, be professional! Do you really want this job? Then act like it...even if they can't see you!

Everything we just said here about phone interviews goes for video conferencing and Skype interviews as well... It's best practice to treat the video conference interview like an in-person

interview, which means pay attention to your appearance, your body language and the dialogue between you and the interviewer just like you would if you were going in to meet this person in an office.

An interviewer who is viewing you on Skype or via videoconference expects that you will have found a quiet, clean area where the interview can be conducted without interruption. Again, I repeat, turn off the TV! Pay attention. Don't distract yourself or let others distract you. Dress the part. Speak slowly (but not too slowly!) and clearly, and sit up straight!

TIP: If you are interviewing on your laptop remember to look into your computer's camera (usually at the top of your screen). If you simply look at the interviewer on the screen, your "eyeline" can look a little off. You want to "look the interviewer in the eye".

THE PANEL INTERVIEW

The panel interview is an interview where you are called in to meet with a group of individuals from the same company who all take turns assessing you and interviewing you. Oh man, talk about nerves! You walk through that door into your interview and suddenly find yourself face to face with not one interviewer, but an entire group!

There are several reasons why a company may decide to go with a panel interview, but the biggest reason is to reduce the level of bias that one interviewer may have toward the potential candidate. It also ramps up the pressure a little bit on the candidate, allowing the interviewers to get a good feel into how the interviewee handles pressure and deals with authority. Don't panic! We can do this!

First off, maybe you got lucky and they warned you ahead of time this was going to be a panel interview. If they did, awesome! Try to find out beforehand just how many people are interviewing you, and, if possible their names. Do your research beforehand and look into the company and the job online to make sure you're going into the interview with as much information as possible. You might want to look up the people you're being interviewed by as well, but don't go overboard. It's nice to know that you and a potential employer went to the same college, but don't creep them out by revealing that you've been Facebook stalking them or that you're "PhotoShopped" yourself into the past five years-worth of company picnic pictures.

Also, be prepared for the panel to switch up on you before you get there. Just because you were told initially that Steve, Jason and Emily were going to interview you doesn't mean that Steve isn't going to have Paul cover for him because something else came up. But what if

you've been blindsided and the panel interview is a complete surprise? Don't worry...you can handle that too. You brought extra resumes, remember?

Just take a deep breath and do like we've already suggested. The most important tip to remember for this style of interview is that anyone in the room has the ability to ask you a question, so it is important that your focus and attention starts with them, but ultimately moves around to all of the members in the room. Eye contact in this setting is extremely important, so don't forget to make sure that you are doing this with each person (but don't stare too long or let your eyes bounce around too rapidly!).

GROUP INTERVIEW (MULTIPLE APPLICANTS)

Uh oh, you walk through the door and find out it's the dreaded multiple applicant interview. You're sitting in a room with five other applicants and you're all equally hungry for that one job. But don't worry, we're going to give you some sure fire tips to help ensure that you're not lost in the crowd and that you stand out...for all the right reasons.

The multiple applicant interview is a great way to help showcase your strengths in an environment more realistic to the day-to-day workings of a company than you'll find in a normal one on one Q&A session. More importantly, it lets the interviewer see what it might be like to have you working in a team setting. Employers love teamwork! It's the grease that makes any company run smoothly, and in a group interview, potential employers will be able to assess how well you can play with others. Your job now isn't just to show them how much you can bring to the table, but that you are good at working with others as well. A multiple applicant interview isn't the time to clam up and let others do all the talking, but it's also not the time to stand on the table, pound your chest and declare yourself Lord of the Flies.

Being a successful candidate in a group interview setting is showing that you can lead as well as follow. It's tempting when you're in a group situation to turn into one of two types of people, the *silent type* and the *chatty type*. Nailing a group interview means finding a balance between the two. You want to make sure that your voice is heard and that your ideas are getting out there, but you don't want to be the bully who runs everyone over. Don't just sit in the corner and wait to be called on, speak up...but don't dominate.

A good leader knows both when to speak and when to listen and a good team player can use their ideas to generate others to think, and can also learn from what others have to offer.

Show that you are original, but not that it's your way or no way.

Succeeding in a group interview is a lot like succeeding in Kindergarten. Remember all those rules they taught you way back then? Well, we might all be adults now, but the rules still apply!

Take turns when speaking. A group interview isn't a time to interrupt or shout your way to the top of the conversation pile.

Take the time to learn all your fellow group interviewee's names (if possible.) Not only will it show that you're a true team player, but it will make speaking with each other much easier if you can single individuals out for your ideas and comments. It also makes delegating tasks easier if you find yourself in a teambuilding exercise.

Being overly aggressive or competitive isn't going to make you look like the strongest candidate...instead you're going to come off as bossy and overbearing and those are *not* qualities a hiring manager usually wants to see in a potential candidate.

Remember to be respectful of not only the hiring managers, but of the candidates you are interviewing with as well. **Don't criticize their ideas or attack their points of view.**

At the same time, speak up. Don't fade into the background or play the passive card. A hiring manager isn't going to be impressed by you winning the "fewest words said during the interview" contest.

Above all, project confidence and utilize not only your speaking skills, but your listening skills as well!

THE SOLO INTERVIEW

Aah, much better. One on one has been the traditional method for interviewing since interviews were first invented. Generally speaking, your solo interview will be conducted by the person who is going to be your direct boss, so it goes without saying how crucial this stage is! The interviewer will have a predetermined set of characteristics or qualities that he or she is looking for, and this is your time to show them what you're made of. You got this. It's in the bag...or at least it will be once you finish reading this book and razzle-dazzle them with your skills and finesse at interviewing. Before you know it, you'll be trying to figure out just where your desk gets the best light when you arrange that future corner office space.

The best way to make sure you can accomplish this is to keep reading this book and follow the steps we've laid out for you.

IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING

Did you know that *when* you interview can be just as important as how well you do during your interview?

Hiring managers are incredibly busy individuals. On top of conducting interviews of potential employees, they're constantly reviewing applications, looking over cover letters and resumes and responding to emails. All this work means it's easy for you to get lost in the activity. Yes, you're the *Perfect Candidate*, but if you get any input into when your interview is scheduled, it never hurts to hedge your bets with some strategic planning.

Try to avoid scheduling your interview on Mondays or Fridays. Monday's are the days most people use to catch up on work left over from the week prior and everyone knows Fridays are spent looking forward to the weekend. This also applies to the first interview slot and last interview slot of any day during the week.

Try not to schedule an interview for just before or just after lunch. A hungry hiring manager is going to be watching the clock and a full one might be too sleepy to pay attention.

According to research, the best time for an interview is Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule... If the position is a high profile one and you know the demand is great, go ahead and try to get in as soon as possible. You don't want your amazing opportunity to slip through your fingers because you were waiting for the right slot to open up.

CHAPTER 11

WHEN AND HOW TO DISCUSS SALARY

People find themselves back in the job market looking for work for any multitude of reasons...from a lack of opportunities at an old position to a desire to relocate to a new

location. No matter the reason, there is one question that remains consistently on the mind of almost every job seeker everywhere...salary. Specifically:

How much money am I going to be paid to do the job I are interviewing for? More importantly, is that amount appropriate for the work I'm going to be doing and the skills I bring to the table?

All excellent questions!

In a perfect world we'd all be working at jobs we love making piles and piles of money and nobody would ever have to worry about negotiating salary. Unfortunately we don't and too often people end up taking jobs for a pay rate they're not happy with...and that can lead to resentment, anger, dissatisfaction with the job, and in some cases...poor performance which can ultimately lead to, well, no job!

When is the right time during your job interview to negotiate a salary? Luckily we're here to walk you through the right way to bring this up...and the wrong way.

Job Interview Salary Negotiation – The “Old School Method”

There are quite a few different schools of thought on this subject, with the majority siding with the “it's only okay to discuss it if the hiring manager brings it up first” rule...or as we like to call it, the “Old School” method.

In some cases the company may actually list the expected salary right in the original job posting...but what about for those positions when there is no prior indication as to how much you'll be paid?

Usually this discussion is brought up near the end of a successful interview. At this point the hiring manager has generally made up their mind as to whether or not they think you're a good fit for the job. You'll get a smile and a nod and they'll open with “Now, you'll start at \$X dollars an hour for your probationary period and then be eligible for a raise every year based on performance reviews.”

If you're lucky, what they're offering is exactly what you were expecting and everyone goes home happy.

Old School can be successful, if you're just starting out in your chosen field and don't have a lot of experience...or if you're the super lucky person I described above who gets exactly what they expected when they walked into that interview.

It's also the route people who might lack confidence in their skills will find the most comfortable to deal with.

We're here to tell you that, with the exception of the luckiest guy in the world who always gets what he wants, this method of just accepting whatever number the hiring manager starts with isn't necessarily the best way to go – and here's why –

As we've shown you already in this book and in our blogs, Interviews today are usually multi-step processes, starting with a screening or phone interview, moving to a video interview (sometimes), and often finishing up with multiple in-person interviews.

More often than not salary won't even come up until the final interview, which means you've jumped through all those hoops and invested all that time and energy only to find out at the very end that what they're offering and what you're expecting are two very different amounts.

For some people just the lure of having a job is enough for them to accept whatever number is thrown at them, even if it's much less than they were hoping for. That's fine for those people...but you are not one of them!

It's time to enroll in a "New School" way of dealing with your salary!

The "New School" Method

Here at TheInterviewGuys.com we strongly believe that you need to have confidence in yourself and your skills. You are the *Perfect Candidate* and that confidence needs to carry all the way through everything you do... including deciding how much you're worth.

Rather than just taking the job no matter what, you need to have an "executive mindset."

But what is the "executive mindset?" It's the mental switch you make between thinking like a *job-seeker* and more like a *professional* in their chosen field just looking for their next assignment.

Rather than being that individual who is so grateful for a job that you take whatever they throw at you, you want to be that person that the company is so eager to bring onboard that they work to make it work for you!

So how do you go from "seeker" to "professional?"

Easy.

Confidence.

First off, make sure it's genuine confidence. Like we've said time and time again...honesty is the best policy. Blowing up your ego and swaggering into an interview with an inflated sense of entitlement is going to get you either right back out the door and onto your butt or into a situation where you are vastly underqualified...and again...out the door on your butt.

You want to go in with a healthy level of self-awareness. Make sure you're in charge of the interview.

Hang on, take charge? As in I'm the one asking questions?

No! Not in charge in that sense! When we say we want you to be in charge of the interview, we mean you should be so comfortable in who you are and your skills that you know exactly how much you are worth. You're projecting a level of confidence that lets them know that they're dealing with someone who knows exactly who they are, what they can do, and what they deserve for that work.

Of course all this requires having a strategy that starts with knowing your value...and bringing it up yourself at exactly the right time.

So when should you start discussing the bottom line? Sooner is better than later. Don't wait until the very end... by then it's too late... But you also don't want to open your interview with a handshake and then leap directly into what you should expect to see in your bank account every two weeks!

Of course, with the different styles of interviews there are times to bring this subject up...and times to hold off...and we'll make sure you know exactly when *is* the right time.

Managing the Multi-Step Interview

As we've said before, there is absolutely no reason for you to continue with the interview if the salary for the position does not align with your expectations. It's really just a waste of everyone's time, which is why we recommend that you get to the heart of the matter before moving forward.

Therefore, the sweet spot for starting salary negotiations in a multiple level process is just before the second interview.

When they call you to bring you in for a second interview, it's your move. Open with a question, not a demand. This is a negotiation!

Let's do a little role playing! Pretend you killed it in your first phone or screening interview and things are going beautifully. The hiring manager has just called you and wants to schedule a second interview...this time in person.

You feel good about what you bring to the table as a skilled professional and where you see yourself going with the company if you're hired.

Now's the time to talk bottom line!

Hiring Manager: *We'd love to have you come in and meet with a few of our department heads and wanted to know if you were available later this week?*

You: *Is this a good time and are you the right person to have a salary conversation with?*

Smooth! You're asking...not demanding. And by including the word 'conversation' you're indicating that this is a give and take scenario.

What Did You Make In Your Last Position?

Hiring Manager: *Well, do you mind me asking you what you made at your previous job, XYZ Company?*

Uh oh! This question has the potential to derail your interview...especially if what you were making is far below what you want to be making. But what is so darn scary? Well, everybody knows that the moment you reveal your previous salary you have made it much more difficult for yourself to negotiate anything much better than that.

Many hiring managers will take your past salary and use that to decide how much they'll pay you. Instead of answering it directly, think like an executive and gently deflect/redirect.

Now this is where you need to have a little courage and more importantly, confidence in yourself...

You: *To be honest, I'm not sure that the salary I made in my last position is relevant with regard to this opportunity. It was a different position with different responsibilities, not to mention with a different company (with their own budgets and salary guidelines). More importantly, I am looking for a job that can compensate me fairly for my skills and experience.*

This answer actually satisfies several criteria. You're not answering directly and shooting down your ability to negotiate, and you're projecting confidence and showing that you know what you're worth.

Hiring Manager: *Well then, how much are you expecting to make at this job?*

Again, another potential roadblock...but not an impossible one. This one requires some research beforehand...but you're already a pro at that! Speaking of research, do it BEFORE you start discussing salary. It's always a good idea to determine how much other people have made doing the job you're applying for before you ever sit down with a hiring manager.

There are various websites out there that can give some general info, but they tend to lack the specificity needed for different regions, levels of experience, etc. A great place to get information would be from local recruiters or job-search consultants who may have familiarity with the company or the range for that position in your market. You can also try looking through job/career forums like Indeed.com or Glassdoor.com. On those sites you can find real people talking about salaries they have made in various positions/companies.

***You:** I'm focusing on roles in the \$60K range, so that's a good starting point. Is this a role in that range? If so, it makes sense for me to come back for a second interview.*

There you go! You've just let the manager know that you're knowledgeable about the job you're applying for, know how much it pays, and know how much you are worth doing that job! It also lets them know that you're serious about the job and also serious about not wasting anybody's time.

Want a variation on this answer? Try this one too:

***You:** "If it turns out that I'm the candidate you hire for this position, I'm sure we'd be able to reach a mutually agreeable salary as I'm willing to be flexible. Can you give me an idea as to what the budgeted salary range is?"*

The goal is to give an answer that allows room for back and forth but also protects you from being trapped in a lowball position you might never be able to fully crawl out of, no matter how long you're with the company.

But what if the hiring manager keeps asking you how much you're currently making and your ninja deflection skills are being thwarted at every turn?

Sigh

It's hard to not just blurt it out. I know. Honesty may be the best policy...but in the case of salary negotiations...silence is golden!

No, I don't mean sit in the chair and just stare at the hiring manager in defiance to the question...rather, follow these simple rules:

Don't lie. Don't tell them it's more/less than what you made in order to fit what you think the hiring manager is looking for. All you'll do is end up looking stupid in the long run and potentially really screwing up future possibilities.

Don't tell. Nope. Don't say a word about what you made. It's YOUR salary! You can firmly, but politely, refuse to answer.

You: My financial information is private, as I am sure yours is as well. If you aren't comfortable extending me an offer based on my experience and qualifications, I totally understand.

Any hiring manager who continues to press you for your past salary isn't really interested in hiring you based on your qualifications...rather they just want to protect their bottom line...and that's not someone you want to work for.

In a perfect world salary negotiations would be a painless and fair conversation, with everyone happy with what they're getting. Unfortunately, as we've pointed out time and time again, this isn't a perfect world and sometimes revealing your past salary can put you at a distinct disadvantage...especially if you were underpaid for the work you were doing.

Most employers will not hire you in at more than ten percent over your last salary, even if they love you. They feel that ten percent is enough of a pay bump to go from one job to another...and if you were underpaid at your last job, odds are that ten percent is still going to be less than you should be getting.

Remember, polite – but firm.

The “One-Shot” Interview

But what about a situation where you get just one shot at the interview process...as in “Come in right now and we'll talk and see if you're a good fit?”

One shot interviews are the time to break the rule about not discussing salaries within the first interview...which makes sense when you consider you only get, well, one interview.

The same rules apply here as they do to the multiple process interviews...be firm, be polite, be knowledgeable.

And again, if the numbers don't match what you're looking for, it's okay to negotiate...in the right context. Sometimes what you're offered is all they're willing to pay and there is no wiggle room. For example, most entry-level jobs will come with a well-known and firm starting salary. Certain industries follow this mantra as well. If this is the case for the position you are

interviewing for, don't come out swinging and flexing your negotiation skills. You're there to get the job, not squeeze more money out of them.

Salary And Your Job Application

Many applications these days include a section on past employment that actually asks you directly for your past salary amounts. So what do you do when you're faced with that empty box?

DO NOT LEAVE IT BLANK. NO!

Fill it in. Just don't fill in what you actually made.

But hang on, isn't that lying? You told me above that honesty was the best policy and to never ever lie!

Yes, technically...but we're not lying...at least not directly...because what you're going to fill it in with is the salary you're looking for *right now*. And you're going to put that amount in every box that asks for past salary. Every. Single. One.

Say your target salary is \$75,000 a year. Put that down. Go on. Put it in every box that has a spot for previous salary...even the box where you worked at your Dad's garage filing spark plug paperwork.

Then in the very first open comment box that allows you to free write or type in it, make sure you write "All salary figures reported on this application reflect my current salary target."

Nobody needs to know you made \$3.75 filing those spark plug forms. All they need to know is you're damn good at the job you're applying for now and you're worth \$75,000 a year to do it.

So why do it this way?

Remember, 99% of the automated applications that you fill out online are going to a machine that is going to scan them at a rate of one billion an hour (okay, might be exaggerating, but you get the picture) and the first thing they're going to kick out are applicants that don't fit the job they're hiring for.

At this point you're not lying...you're simply getting past the first gatekeeper (computer) so you can get the chance to sit down face to face with a real hiring manager and discuss just how awesome you are in person.

Putting Your Strategy to the Test

Whew! A lot to process, I know, but you're tough...you're a rock star...

No wait, you're better than that.

You've gone from being just another job-seeker to a true professional. And now, armed with the tools we've given you and a healthy dose of common sense (always a good thing to keep in mind) you're ready to take on any job search with a clear salary goal in mind and the ability to negotiate what you need.

Using the more passive "Old School" method might get you a job faster...but in the long run, is it really the right job for you?

Taking a stand and negotiating your worth might make you uncomfortable in the short run, but when you land the job of your dreams making what you truly deserve...well, that's the best feeling in the world!

CHAPTER 12

WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

Now that we've covered the types of interviews you might be asked to partake in, be sure to keep a few key pieces of advice in mind...

Be prepared for the possibility of multiple interviews. It is very common for this process to be made up of several steps. All you may get from a superlative effort is a chance at a second interview. For several reasons (including risk-reduction, retention, and cost effectiveness), many firms today are utilizing the multiple stage interview approach before taking the risk of hiring the wrong person.

Don't confide in anyone how tough it was or how confident you are that you sailed through it and are a shoo-in for the job. That person may report your behavior to the interviewer. Your best friend doesn't work here, so watch what you say and do, even in the cozy confines of the restroom or the elevator!

As for salary questions...it's always a good idea to make sure you approach that conversation from a point of knowledge. Do your research so you know beforehand what an appropriate range is for the job you're doing.

Time out *when* you're going to have that conversation, if possible. Too early in the interview process and you lose your ability to negotiate. Too late and you can find yourself locked into a rate you don't want or find you've wasted time and resources chasing a job beneath your rate.

TOP 10 TIPS DURING THE INTERVIEW

1. **KISS:** Keep It Simple (during your) Screening interview. Okay, our acronym doesn't exactly line up, but the core idea is solid. When you're doing a screening interview, make sure your answers are simple, coherent and solid. Remember, the key to a good screening interview is clarity, accuracy and simplicity.
2. **ALWAYS PLAY NICE:** Every part of the interview counts, from the time you arrive until the time you are safely out of earshot and out of sight. Be polite at all times. Maintain your level of professionalism until you have left the interview location completely. You never know who might be paying attention to the way you carry yourself before, during and even after the interview. (For example, hiring managers have been known to ask the receptionist how candidates behaved in the waiting room.)
3. **ASK FOR AN EARLY IN THE DAY INTERVIEW:** Try to schedule your interview slots for the first half of the day. Avoid Mondays and Fridays. The best day? According to research, shoot for 10:30 a.m. on Tuesdays for the sweet spot.
4. **PRETEND THEY CAN ALWAYS SEE YOU DURING A PHONE INTERVIEW:** Just because you're doing a phone interview doesn't mean you can let your attention wander. Turn

off any sources of distraction and pay attention to what the interviewer is saying. It's not going to do you any favors if the hiring manager can hear the television in the background or if they can tell you're more interested in something other than the interview.

5. **TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK:** Group interviews are all about how you interact in a team dynamic. It's your opportunity to show an interviewer how well you work with others. Be outspoken and make sure you show you know your stuff, but don't overpower the other candidates.
6. **THE NAME OF THE GAME IS NAMES:** Get to know the name of everyone who is interviewing you...and in a group interview situation, it's a good idea to learn the names of the people you're interviewing with as well. It will make communicating much easier as well as show you are a team player and motivated to make it work.
7. **KEEP IT CLASSY:** Walk in and walk out with dignity, and maintain it at every point in between. Wait until you've driven a couple of miles down the road before you pull over and cry in despair or get out of the car to jump up and down and cheer over how well you did.
8. **GO IN ARMED WITH YOUR BOTTOM LINE:** When it comes time for salary negotiations, make sure you've done your research. Have a solid range (both the high end and low end) for your job as well as what you'd be comfortable accepting.
9. **SAY LESS TO EARN MORE:** Letting an employer know too early in the game what your earning history is can make getting what you really want or deserve much harder. At the same time...
10. **DON'T WAIT UNTIL TOO LATE TO MAKE YOUR MOVE:** Make sure you have the salary discussion *before* you get too far into the interview process. The last thing you want is to get all the way to a job offer only to find out it's far less than what you expect or are willing to take.

SECTION FOUR

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

This book is primarily dedicated to what you need to do in order to nail the interview. We've covered everything you need to do leading up to the interview and what to do in the interview...but what about *after* the interview?

Hang on, after? You mean walking out the door at the end of a killer interview isn't the final step before I accept the amazing job offer I just know they're going to extend to me?

Not by a long shot! There are still a few more steps left you can take to help make sure your hiring manager sees you as the "Perfect Candidate" and help get you out of the job market and into a permanent position.

And what about follow up interviews and callbacks?!? More and more hiring managers are holding multiple rounds of interviews and we'll make sure you're ready for whatever they throw your way.

So settle in and get ready to explore what happens *after* you shake hands goodbye and walk out the door.

CHAPTER 13

SAYING THANK YOU

Imagine this...you've just had the best interview of your entire life.

Your cover letter and resume were the stuff of legends. Your suit was finely pressed, you had a nice spritz of your favorite scent on, and anyone within 10 miles could see that you were having the best hair day of your life.

And the real kicker?

You spent the two hours of your interview smashing questions out of the park like a juiced-up Barry Bonds. The hiring manager was so impressed with you that she actually paused the interview so she could bring in two more hiring managers, six supervisors, and the president of the company just to shake your hand. You're walking out of the building like a one person wrecking ball of awesome. The door behind you swings open, revealing the receptionist, tears of wonder and amazement in her eyes, staring at you in amazement like she just bumped into George Clooney at Walgreens.

Feels good, doesn't it?!

Well, unless you manage to wrangle a full on job offer out of that admiring crowd before you leave, your interview isn't actually over.

But hang on...I left the building. How is that possible?

Before you start strutting around town like Tom Cruise in Jerry Maguire yelling "Show me the money!" there's a crucial step that you need to complete if you're going to be the one that gets the job...

You need to send a thank you letter after your interview...

Does it actually make a difference? Is sending a well-crafted thank you really that important?

Absolutely. And here is why...

Sending a genuine thank you letter to the hiring manager who conducted your interview is a quick and easy way to make sure you are memorable. Remember, you're just one individual in a sea of job seekers and making sure you stand out for the right reasons can make all the difference in getting that job. On top of that, it shows your potential employer that you've got the initiative to go the extra step and also showcases your ability to follow through.

Most importantly...not sending a note WILL actually decrease your chance of getting the job. Data from countless studies and surveys shows that as many as 25% of hiring managers say they wouldn't hire someone who didn't send a post interview thank you letter or email.

Crazy right?

Based on that, it's pretty safe to say that not sending some sort of thank you note (either hand written or emailed...or both) after your interview is out of the question.

You have me convinced! I'm absolutely going to send a thank you note. How soon should I send it?

The first thing you have to remember is...do it sooner rather than later. Don't drag your feet or let too much time pass between your interview and sending your note.

Have you ever done something really nice for someone only to have them never acknowledge what you've done?

How did that make you feel? Frustrated? Used? Resentful?

Do you want to go out of your way for that person ever again?

Hiring managers are no different than the rest of us and can feel all those same emotions when it comes to people they've interviewed, especially if they've gone out of their way to fit you into their busy schedules. Keep in mind, in the corporate world, the timeline for hiring decisions is very short. So the sooner you send in a note letting them know you've appreciated their time...the better!

Do your best to deliver your job interview follow up email within 24 hours of your interview, and certainly no more than 48 hours after. Otherwise, you're basically saying that you had better things to do...not the best impression to give when you're trying to get hired.

I want to make sure I send a good thank you note. What should I write?

The first rule to follow is what not to write...as in a huge novel. This isn't the time to rewrite War & Peace. **Keep it short and sweet and straight to the point.** It's the quality of the words you choose, not the quantity that is going to make the difference here.

Try to tailor the note as much as possible to the company and position you interviewed for. In fact, the thank you note is a great way to revisit a specific issue you and your hiring manager discussed during the interview itself...or one you possibly discovered through your company research that you didn't get to touch on. It can help show your hiring manager that you really understood the needs of the position and company based on the conversation you had and that you're not only willing to tackle the challenge, but that you're already looking for solutions.

Adding some well-placed "extra value" to the thank-you card is often enough to put you over the top. A word of warning though. You better be 100% sure you know what you're talking about, because the "backfire potential" here is off the charts.

Be aware, however, that the thank you note isn't the time to simply re-list your qualifications and experience. The hiring manager has already read your resume a few times and discussed everything with you at length in the interview. By this point, she/he knows you inside and out. A letter that just rehashes who you are and your qualifications can make you look lazy and boring.

Speaking of boring...whatever you do...make sure your letter isn't a snoozer!

Imagine you were a hiring manager for a second. You interview ten different applicants for a position, and nearly all of them send you a thank you email with nearly the exact same messaging.

"Thanks for your time... I'm qualified for this position because... I want to work for you because..." and so on, and so on, and so on...

BLAAH...

It almost makes you feel bad for the hiring managers, doesn't it?

The point is, if you are going to be the only person out of all of the applicants to get the job offer, you really need to stand out from your competitors, and this is important from the time you submit your application all the way through the sending of your thank you letter.

So what can you do to stand out in your thank you email?

Drum roll, please...

Add a link to your [personal branding website](#)! Remember way back in Section 1 when we discussed personal branding? Now's another chance to direct the hiring manager to your page. You've already spent so much time making sure your website is perfect and represents who you really are...and that's exactly why you want to make sure you include it in your thank you note. By giving the hiring manager access to your site, you're essentially "extending the interview".

What does this mean?

It basically means it allows the hiring manager to continue to engage with you (and your "brand") long after the interview is over, making you exponentially more memorable and impressive than someone who doesn't have a personal website.

In other words, it acts as a small reminder to the hiring manager that if there are any remaining curiosities or unanswered questions left over after the interview, simply clicking the link will allow them to get everything they need from your website.

So where exactly does one put the link?

After you have thanked the interviewer for their time and briefly summarized your qualifications (and a subtle reminder of the value you will be adding to the organization), you can close with something like this:

"If you would like to learn a little more about me, my experience or accomplishments, I would love for you to take a quick a look at my personal website MikeSimpson.com."

It's really just as simple as that.

This leaves just one last question...

Should I send a hand written thank you letter or an emailed thank you letter?

The great debate rages on regarding "email thank-you's" and "hand-written thank-you's", with both styles having merit. It honestly depends on the industry you're in, the company you're interviewing with and the style of the hiring manager.

We suggest hedging your bets and sending one of each...

The average corporate executive gets over 120 emails per day, and if they're a hiring manager, many of the "thank-you" variety. So go the extra mile. Send the standard email and follow up 24-48 hours with a handwritten note.

Just don't get cute and send flowers or chocolates...

CHAPTER 14

THE SECOND INTERVIEW

You've just completed a phenomenal interview at your favorite company for a position you've dreamed about having...and you feel great! You're sure the job is yours...all they need to do is give you the call you've been waiting for your entire life.

But then the unexpected happens...you DO get a phone call...but it's not the call you were hoping for!

It's the hiring manager and he wants to know if you're available for a *second interview*!

A second interview?

You quickly stutter your acceptance and set the date and time, then hang up and stand in stunned silence.

Oh crap.

Now what?

Take a deep breath, turbo! This isn't good news...it's great news and we're gonna tell you how to knock this one out of the ball park too!

So, don't toss that tie quite yet...or put those high heels away for good...it's time to go back to work turning you into the *Perfect Candidate*...again!

Now you might be asking yourself, what exactly is a second interview? Did something go wrong in the first one? Weren't you good enough? What more could they possibly ask you that they didn't already ask you the first time?

First off, let's start with what a second interview really is.

Yes, it's what it sounds like...a second chance for the hiring manager to take a good look at you and decide if you're a good fit...but it's also so much more than just that!

It is, at its core, another opportunity for you to really show them that you're the best person for the job...you are the *Perfect Candidate*!

Odds are in your first interview you met with someone from human resources or a hiring manager and was probably more of a broad screening to weed out the last of the unsuitable candidates.

The second is the "big leagues" which means your second interview will probably be conducted by someone a little higher up...or even a LOT higher up.

You can almost guarantee that this interview will be much more in depth and very well might include introductions to other key members within the business including superiors, senior managers, and even possibly fellow teammates.

Think of the first interview as a first date. Everyone was on their best behavior and really trying to see if there was any chemistry.

A second interview is a bit more serious...think of it as a second date...on steroids.

Odds are you're going to be talking long term commitment and possibly meeting the parents...er, I mean higher ups!

No pressure!

So how do you prepare for this new level of scrutiny, intensity and yes, even fear?

By taking everything you've done so far and kicking it up another notch!

Let's start by going back in time and the phone call that started this all...the call for a second interview.

Don't just stutter and stammer through it. Take the time to make even this brief interaction work for you in the best possible way.

As you set up the interview, ask a few questions starting with getting a list of the name and role of the individual (or names and roles if it's to be a panel or group interview).

This is also a great time to really make sure that you know EXACTLY what job you are going in for.

Even if you think you already know, take the time to ask again...it's far better to ask twice than find out too late that you're wrong.

If you're going in for a position with a large department (let's say IT), get the exact title of the position you are now interviewing for. Not only will it help clear up any confusion on either end, it'll give you a laser tight focus to your prep!

But I didn't get a phone call...I got an email!

Even better!

Take the time drafting your response and make sure you hit the tasks we outlined above in your reply. Don't feel self-conscious about these steps...your goal is to be as prepared as possible and a good hiring manager will recognize this.

PLAN YOUR STRATEGY

Okay, the date and time are set. (Remember to keep your scheduling strategic and refer back to Chapter 10 for tips and tricks on *when* to set that interview appointment.)

You know exactly what you're interviewing with and who is doing the interviewing.

Congratulations, you've got everything you need to start really prepping!

Start with who is interviewing you. Time to do a little digging!

No, this isn't the time to hire a Private Detective or go all crazy stalker on them.

You want to impress them with your knowledge, not scare them!

A little personal information (gleaned through the company website or LinkedIn) is good for small talk, but don't go overboard.

Now is not the time to friend them on Facebook and send them Candy Crush requests. More than anything, focus on their role within the company and how you will fit into that puzzle as well.

To bring it back to the second date scenario, don't forget that this is a partnership which means you're going to want to make sure that not only are the company needs met, but yours are as well!

Now is the time to figure out beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is the right fit for you too.

This would be a great time to go back and re-read Chapter 11, "When and How to Discuss Salary" as well if it's a subject you haven't yet explored with your potential future employer.

While you're digging around gathering information on your potential interviewers, don't forget to brush up on the company information as well.

You should be able to articulate clearly not only what you know about the company but also how you would be a good fit with them.

You want to demonstrate genuine interest in the company and the best way to do that is to figure it out yourself first.

The most important thing to remember while doing your research is that you need to tailor the entire second interview to the company you are interviewing with (and the position you are

interviewing for). The best way to do this is to infuse your answers to the interview questions with Qualities that you have discovered through your research.

For a detailed explanation on how our Tailoring Method works, jump ahead to Section 5, Chapter 16 (but don't forget to come back and finish this section when you're done!)

If you have contacts within the company or know of any past or current employees, now is the time to reach out.

Ask them about the climate within the industry. Ask them what they liked about working there and what they didn't like.

Go ahead, you can even ask them about the people who are going to be conducting your interview...but be careful how you use this information!

If you're asking a former employee, make sure to keep in mind why they're a former employee (good and bad) and don't let personal opinions dictate your own ability to form impressions on your own.

Double and triple check your resume and print out multiple copies. If you're going in for a group interview, make sure to bring enough copies for everyone...and a few extras (just in case!)

Keep in mind that second interviews are when companies really drill down and get to know candidates.

They want to make sure you're a good fit and that the skills and knowledge you bring are also a good fit... and that means they're hyper-evaluating everything!

Knowing this, now is the time to really go back and brush up on any (or all) of the past chapters on how to prepare for an interview. Yeah, we know you've already done that when you were prepping for your first interview...but it certainly won't hurt you to do it again now too!

The biggest difference between first interview questions and second interview questions really lies in the type of question that you are asked.

Generally speaking, in the first interview the company will want to get a feel for the type of person you are, and the questions they ask will emulate that desire.

But in the second interview, you can expect there to be more specificity regarding the position itself as well as a bit more prodding to determine how well you will fit the culture of your potential new team.

Having said that, this is not set in stone.

Every company goes about the questions a little bit differently, so you really need to be prepared for any type of question in both the first and second interview.

Having fun yet?

One thing is for sure at this point in the game... employers are really trying to make sure you're the right guy or gal for the job, so expect that the interview questions they ask you this round are going to be tougher than the first round...but don't panic! You've done your research. You've got what it takes to have gotten this far and all you have to do at this point is be yourself and make sure that you're answering their questions honestly.

We've included an entire section at the end of this book that will help cover the potential questions you might face in a second interview. Make sure you go over these as well.

Once you're done with your second interview it's time to again assess where you are and what you want. Before you say goodbye, try to find out what the next step in the hiring process is.

Is there a third interview? If not, when should you expect a decision to be made and how do they let candidates know?

CHAPTER 15

WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

If everything goes so well that you're offered the job on the spot (congrats you lucky duck!!) it's perfectly ok to tell them you need to think before you accept.

If you're not offered the job on the spot, don't take it personally...rather take it as an opportunity to really think about the job.

Take into consideration how you felt about the people you met and the vibe you got from the company overall.

Now is the time to really evaluate how you feel about the company and the people who work there and how you'd feel working there as well.

Finally, don't forget to send everyone who interviewed you a thank you note (go back to Chapter 9 if you need a refresher!) Even if you ultimately decide not to take the job, or it's not offered to you, it's always better to leave on a positive note.

Besides, you never know when another opportunity will open up with the same company!

TOP 10 TIPS AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- 1. ALWAYS SAY THANK YOU:** Sending a thank you card after your interview is quick and easy way to make sure you're memorable. Be sure to send it within 24 hours of your interview.
- 2. KEEP IT PERSONAL:** Make sure you address your thank you note directly to who conducted your interview. Hopefully you managed to get that information prior to your interview and absolutely no later than *during* your interview.
- 3. USE YOUR THANK YOU TO COVER NEW GROUND:** Don't use your thank you card as an opportunity to relist everything in your resume. Use it to expand on a topic you touched on during your interview or a new bit of information you discovered during your research on the company.
- 4. DOUBLE YOUR FUN:** Sending both an emailed and handwritten thank you note is another way to make sure you stand out and remain memorable.
- 5. INCLUDE YOUR PERSONAL BRANDING LINK:** Your thank you card is a way to help extend the interview and make sure that you stay memorable to your hiring manager. Including the link to your [personal branding website](#) will give the interviewer the opportunity to learn even more about you (and remind them just how amazing you are!)
- 6. DON'T GET LAZY:** Just because you've already made it through the first round of interviews and you're now on your second (or third) interview, doesn't mean this is a chance to let your prep work slide. Keep up on your research and make sure you're approaching every interview like it's your first...and potentially last.
- 7. BRING COPIES OF YOUR STUFF...AGAIN:** Yes, you brought your business cards and resumes to your first interview, but there's always a chance whoever is interviewing you for the second time is someone new. Even if they're not, it's still a good idea to bring your materials with you again...just in case.

8. KEEP YOUR SECOND (AND THIRD) INTERVIEW APPOINTMENTS STRATEGIC:

Remember, always try to schedule your interviews for the first half of the day and that goes for follow up interviews as well. The sweet spot is always 10:30 a.m. on a Tuesday. Try to avoid interviews on Mondays or Fridays.

9. KNOW WHAT YOU WANT: Getting to your second (and subsequent) interviews means it's getting serious. Before you go too far down the rabbit hole, now is a good time to really examine the job and make sure it's one you're prepared to do if it's offered to you.

10. KNOW WHAT'S COMING NEXT: Is this interview the last one or are there more you should be preparing for? Finding out ahead of time what the next step is will save you anxiety as well as give you time to prepare if you need to.

SECTION 5

GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND WITH YOUR ANSWERS

In this next section we'll introduce you to our Tailoring Method and how to apply it to every step of your job seeking journey...not just the interview.

We'll also dig down and really explore the concept of the "*Perfect Candidate*," a term we've thrown around quite a bit but haven't really defined yet.

Most importantly, we'll finally introduce the most important pieces to the "interview question puzzle": **Qualities** and **Multipliers**.

Becoming the Perfect Candidate requires taking the initiative to go above and beyond the usual effort most job seekers put into finding work and this is the chapter where we really tell you exactly what you need to do and how to do it.

This section will also explain the different types of questions you'll be asked in an interview and help you figure out the best way to answer each kind. We've also provided example answers to make it easier for you to see exactly how what we're teaching you applies in real world situations.

Finally, we'll teach you how to turn the tables on your interviewer by giving you killer questions that you can ask *them!* That's right...you get to ask the questions!

Sound intriguing? Let's dive in!

CHAPTER 16

JEFF & MIKE'S TAILORING METHOD

By now, you've probably noticed that the Interview Guys do things a little differently than everyone else. Yes, we like to have fun with the interview process and often joke around to make things a little more exciting. Yes, we go against the grain and use [fun animated videos](#) as a learning tool as opposed to stuffy, boring camcorder videos set up in a career coach's office.

And most importantly, yes, *we get people jobs.*

So what is our secret?

How have we been able to help so many people succeed in a place where so many others have failed? Well, it's because we've learned one key concept that forms the foundation for everything we teach.

"It's not about you, it's about them."

You may *think* it is about you. You need that job. You need the money. Your teenage kid just bought a car you co-signed the loan for and then lost his job at the fast food place and has empty pockets. Your husband's been out of work for six months now. You still haven't paid off the credit cards from the last two holiday seasons, and there's a new one coming up. You think that might have been a termite you saw in the beams of your basement, supporting your gorgeous hardwood floors.

Still, it isn't about you.

Yes, all those things in the above paragraph are important...but until you get that job, and more importantly, that paycheck, **you have to approach your job search from the point of view of the employer.** You need to present yourself as **the solution to the hiring manager's problem, which is to get somebody who is qualified into the opening at the company, so that person**

can be part of solving the company's problems. Once you stop looking at your interview as the answer to **your** problems, and look at it as though you're there to solve your employer's problems, you go from being just another job seeker to a valuable asset to the company.

We've all been programmed to believe that the best thing one can do when doing a job interview is to summarize his/her past experiences and highlight his/her personal strengths and accomplishments. And when those strengths and experiences are better than those of the other applicants, it is often enough to get the interviewee the job.

But what if one applicant doesn't have a clear-cut advantage over the others? More importantly, what if those strengths and experiences aren't necessarily that important to the company who is conducting the interview?

This is the issue with the "old school" way of interviewing. You sit across the desk from a hiring manager going on and on about your accomplishments, thinking you are a perfect fit for the job, not knowing that a lot of what you're saying is completely irrelevant to the hiring manager.

It's not about you! It's about them!

The company knows exactly who they are going to hire, long before he or she ever goes into the interview room. They know who their *Perfect Candidate* is.

No, they obviously don't know the name of the **exact** individual they are going to hire, but take our word for it, they know the type of person that they want and more importantly, they know the strengths (or Qualities) that this person **MUST** possess.

Okay, so having said all of that, how does one position themselves as the type of person that this company wants to hire? How does one ensure that they are demonstrating that they have the qualities that the company puts so much value in?

How do you go from being just another job seeker to the *Perfect Candidate*?

For starters, point out ways you can be of value to the company: **how you can help them achieve their goals, based upon your past training and experience.** You'll get your reward if they hire you. But be more interested in them than you are in yourself. Be there for them.

I'm ready! I want to be the Perfect Candidate! All I need to know is...how???

By using our Tailoring Method of course!

By now it should be pretty clear that the company you are about to interview with already knows the type of person they want to hire...their *Perfect Candidate*.

Perfect Candidate (PC)

What is a *Perfect Candidate*? As we've already said, every company or organization has a certain type of person in mind when it comes to the position they are interviewing for. This person will usually need to have one or two (or more) specific Qualities that the organization believes in and/or puts a lot of emphasis on. When the organization is conducting interviews, they will normally select the person who best exemplifies the specific qualities they are looking for. This person is their *Perfect Candidate*.

We like to use a fun little math equation to show what makes up a PC...

$$PC = (A+Q)m$$

Aww, man. I thought I'd said goodbye to algebra years ago...and isn't this an interview book? Why do I need to know math for my interview?

Don't worry, this is the only equation you are going to see, and we promise that there won't be any numbers involved.

More than anything it's just a fun (yes, our idea of fun can be a bit questionable...haha) way to represent what makes up a *Perfect Candidate*. Don't worry. It'll make more sense after we break down the components.

A = Answer

Simply stated, the A in the equation refers to your answer to the question that the interviewer asks you.

In most cases, your answer will include a **Success Story** from your employment history; one that clearly demonstrates an example of you succeeding in your past jobs, or any other relevant scenarios.

And while we're discussing **Success Stories**, remember this: it's always a good idea to go into every interview armed with a few of these up your sleeve.

Why?

Here's the thing. Everybody experiences the moment when his or her mind draws a blank during an interview. For these instances, it helps to have a few Success Stories to fall back on.

At the very least, you can spin any uncomfortable silence into a positive by telling a story that demonstrates a success you had in the past.

For example a success story could be: **How you analyzed the annual budget and decided to make cutbacks in certain areas that led to more profit in the company the following year.**

Q = Qualities

Qualities are what make up the *Perfect Candidate*. These are generally different types of knowledge, skills or abilities that the company considers to be of the utmost importance. These are the things that you must reference or exemplify in the interview if you are going to set yourself apart from your competition.

As we said earlier, a hiring manager will have a set of Qualities in mind that their *Perfect Candidate* must have. It is your job to uncover what these Qualities are and demonstrate to the hiring manager that you possess them. We'll show you how to find these in the next chapter. We'll also show you how to answer a question by infusing Qualities into your answer.

Examples of Qualities include: Leadership, collaboration, persistence, innovation, vision etc..

m = multipliers

Multipliers act as the "icing on the cake" in your interview...they help supercharge or boost the impact of each of your answers. Multipliers are tidbits of information that you can bring up in your interview that the interviewer is not expecting you to know. Multipliers can include things like **special programs, initiatives or hosts special events** and any other unique thing that is tied to specific company you are interviewing for. The **m** acts as an exponent because it really increases your chance of being the *Perfect Candidate* exponentially!

By uncovering these multipliers, you're demonstrating to your potential employer your level of knowledge of the company and their culture, and that sort of digging really makes a statement about the amount of preparation you've done for your interview.

To take it a step further, Multipliers can really give the hiring manager the sense that you are already a member of the team!

Does that make sense? Let's just go over the general idea for those of us (Jeff included!) that feel like passing out whenever they see an equation. So now we have:

Perfect Candidate = (Answer + Quality) Multiplier

When a hiring manager asks you a question in the interview, they will be expecting you to respond. You have two options, A and B. You can either give them (A) a straight, literal answer that is your best attempt at giving them the information they need.

OR, you can (B) utilize our Tailoring Method by using the *Perfect Candidate* principal above, and answer your question by infusing your response with a Quality (A+Q) that you know that the company is looking for in their new hire and THEN put the icing on the cake by including a multiplier (m)!

Of course, we're always going to steer you towards going with option B.

The truth of the matter is, your competition won't stand a chance if they are just using the "old school" interview techniques.

"How do I find out the specific qualities that my company is looking for?"

This is the key. Because you can't simply guess which qualities you think the company might put a lot of value in. You have to know *exactly*. If you try to be clever and emphasize a quality that your target company doesn't care about, you're just going to sound like...well...let's just say that it's not going to help your cause.

In the next section, we'll show you how we identify which qualities your target company values, and at the same time, how to uncover the multipliers that will help kick your interview answers up a notch!

FINDING QUALITIES & MULTIPLIERS

Now that you know how powerful it can be to respond to interview questions by infusing the company's desired *Perfect Candidate* Qualities into your answers, the next step is to figure out what these Qualities and Multipliers are AND where they can be found.

As you can probably imagine, job interview preparation has evolved greatly alongside the growth of the internet. In the old days, the only way you could really get information on the position you were applying for was via the job description and by asking the company questions directly. Similarly, doing company research was pretty much limited to newspapers, the library archives of any corporate marketing materials (ex. financial reports, brochures, etc.) that one could get their hands on. Not exactly "top secret" information. Almost everyone walked into

the interview on an even playing field, because there simply wasn't the infrastructure for sharing information like there is today.

Lucky for us, times have changed. Information is more easily accessible than at any other time in our "labor history". The exponential growth of the internet has not only paved the way for an exponential growth in the amount of information at our fingertips, but also in a revolution in the connectivity between organizations and their prospective employees.

Black and white "Employee Handbooks" have been replaced with "Career Pages" accessed through a company's website. Using photos, videos and other interesting multimedia, organizations are now able to give prospective employees a glimpse into their culture, so that even before one walks into the interview room, he/she already has a good idea of what it will be like to work at the company.

But that's not all.

They also leave clues. What kind of clues? The kind of clues that are VERY interesting to the Interview Guys, and from now on, will be very interesting to you...beginning with a company's website.

The company website should be your very first stop when starting your research. This is where we'll really dig around for potential Qualities and Multipliers, the life-blood of our Tailoring Method and perhaps the most influential part of a successful job interview.

Really guys? Look for information on a company's website? Not exactly a revolutionary idea...

You know what? You'd be surprised how many of our students thought the same thing at the beginning.

But it's not just about gathering some background information on your company or simply studying their product line before heading into your interview. When we say that they are leaving clues on their website, we mean it. One of the absolute best places to discover the types of **qualities** that their *Perfect Candidate* needs to have can be found on their website, and this is how you do it.

Begin by navigating to the website of the company you are interviewing with. Once you reach the home page, it's important that you get a good feel for all of the general information that is available, including:

a. Company History

b. Sales or service they are providing

c. Location of offices, including Head Office

d. Any recent news items

e. Investor information and Financials

Now to recap, these are *JUST THE BASICS*. Nothing about learning this information will set you apart from your competitors, but you'll sure set yourself apart (the wrong way) if you don't know this stuff inside and out. The point is, you need to get a general feel for what the company does, where they do it, and any relevant current events or news stories that they may be mentioned in.

Having said that, take notice of any themes that jump out at you. We have found that occasionally, qualities and multipliers can be found amongst the general info, depending on how the company chooses to present themselves to the general public. For example, you may get a sense that **"giving back to the community"** is important to the company/organization based on their headlines or articles found on their home page. Take note of anything that the company is going out of their way to share!

2 – FINDING QUALITIES

Once you feel like you have a solid understanding of the general information, the next thing you need to do is "drill down" to get some more interview-focused information. This is where the **"Careers" page** usually comes in to play.

Most companies have a link, usually located at the bottom of the home page, which will take you directly to everything job-related. It can usually be found under headings such as **"About Us"** or **"Corporate Information"**, and amongst other links such as **"Investor Relations"** or **"Global Responsibility"**.

This should be the hub for your interview preparation, so give it a click! In almost all cases, the best place to find qualities and multipliers is on the Career Page or one of its sub-pages (ex. **"Our Culture"**, **"Upcoming Events"**, or **"In the Community"** tabs to name a few).

Why are Career Pages so great for finding Qualities & Multipliers? Well, because it is here that organizations really begin the process of sharing their beliefs for what makes up their *Perfect Candidate*. Why do they do this? The main reason is to attract the right kind of people. At IBM, they want to show the Qualities that make up an “IBMer” with hopes that they will attract similar candidates (and also weed out those that aren’t up to par.)

Similarly, a company works very hard to establish and identify their “culture” (the beliefs and behaviors that determine how a company's employees and management interact, usually reflected in things such as its dress code, work/life balance, employee benefits, hiring decisions, office setup, etc.) and the Career Page is an excellent medium for the organization to achieve this.

What does this mean for you, the interviewer? This is a *CRUCIAL* step. As we said earlier in this guide, you absolutely need to tailor your answers to the company you are interviewing with, and you do this by infusing your answers to their questions with Qualities and Multipliers.

Some of these very important elements can be easily found on the Career Page. Please see the example below.

This “Quality” was pulled from the “values” section on the IBM career page (<http://www.ibm.com/ibm/values/us/>)

Innovation that matters - for our company and for the world.

IBMers...

- are forward thinkers. We believe that the application of intelligence, reason and science can improve business, society and the human condition.
- love grand challenges, as well as everyday improvements. Whatever the problem or the context, every IBMer seeks ways to tackle it creatively — **to be an innovator.**
- strive to be first — in technology, in business, in responsible policy.
- take informed risks and champion new (sometimes unpopular) ideas.

You will notice that the company has hinted (even more than hinted, almost shouted!) how important it is for them to find innovators (You’ll notice that there are a few other Qualities listed as well that you could highlight i.e. Forward thinkers, people who love challenges and informed risk takers – for this example we chose “innovation” as the Quality to highlight).

It is clear that this organization values innovation, so therefore, it would be very powerful if you are able to demonstrate that you possess this Quality.

How do you do this?

By carefully choosing to infuse one of your answers with this quality. For example, see the tailored answer to the response below based on the Quality identified above:

Q: “It looks like you’ve been looking for a job for quite some time without much success...”

A: “I’ve been a little picky about the offers I’ve received because I want to find a company like this one where I will truly be able to add value. I’ve been focused on finding a company that is truly a leader in the area I’m passionate about: online innovation.”

Now keep this in mind. A company can reveal their desired *Perfect Candidate* Qualities in many different ways. You can find Qualities in videos. You can find them in articles or blog posts. You can find them on one of the different tabs on the Career Page. The point is, you really have to dig around to see what you can turn up. Trust us, it’s in your best interest!

In the Question and Answer portion of this book, we’ll show you many examples of how to tailor your responses to the company you are interviewing with using Qualities.

3 – MULTIPLIERS

The way you find Multipliers on a company’s website is not unlike searching for Qualities. The Career Page is certainly the place to get started. But whereas the Qualities the company desires in the *Perfect Candidate* seem to jump off the page at you (a lot of these companies like to boast after all...“We’re a company that really focuses on innovation and therefore we like to hire the top innovative minds available..”), the Multipliers are not something that will necessarily be as obvious. Why? Well, mainly because they don’t even know that Multipliers exist. Rather, they don’t expect you, the interviewee, to zone in on them and like a ninja use them as a secret weapon in your interview.

As we said before, Multipliers are like the “cherry on top” of your interview answer. This is where you really get to “flex your muscles” and show the interviewer that you have a deeper understanding of the company than your competitors. This is why it is important for you to focus on things like the company’s upcoming (or past) events, special programs that they offer or any outreach programs or initiatives that they support. Here’s a screenshot of a possible Multiplier taken from the IBM career page (<http://www.ibm.com/ibm/values/us/>).

IBMers value...

- Dedication to every client's success
- Innovation that matters—for our company and for the world
- Trust and personal responsibility in all relationships

A company based on Values

Enterprises built to endure stand on a foundation of core values. In 2003, we undertook the first disciplined reexamination of our Values in nearly 100 years.

 **Multiplier**

Through ValuesJam – an unprecedented 72-hour discussion on the global intranet – IBMers came together to define the essence of the company. The result? A set of core Values – defined by IBMers for IBMers – that shape everything we do and every choice we make on behalf of the company.

This shared set of Values helps guide our decisions, actions and behaviors and is at the core of our collective aspiration to be recognized as a great company.

Bringing up one of these things in your response really shows that you have done your research, but in reality, gives the hiring manager the feeling that you are “already one of them”. You bridge the gap between being a candidate and an employee by showing your level of comfort and understanding with the way the organization does things. Using the same question as above, see the new answer with the multiplier highlighted in orange:

Q: “It looks like you’ve been looking for a job for quite some time without much success...”

A: “I’ve been a little picky about the offers I’ve received because I want to find a company like this one where I will truly be able to add value. I’ve been focused on finding a company that is truly a leader in the area I’m passionate about: online innovation. In fact what drew my attention initially was the amazing “Values Jam” initiative you organized for all your employees (to come up with a new set of collective values), and how you were able to connect them all using your global intranet. I’ve bided my time to find the perfect fit, one that will allow me to work in an environment that prides itself on staying on the cutting edge. I’m glad didn’t take the first thing that came along as I would have missed out on this great opportunity.”

FINAL THOUGHT ON QUALITIES AND MULTIPLIERS

At the end of the day, finding Qualities and Multipliers on a company's website (and specifically, their career page) is not especially difficult. As long as you take the time to really explore the career page, making sure to "leave no stone unturned", you will be sure to find the Qualities and Multipliers you need to position yourself as the *Perfect Candidate*.

Now, here's the thing. The Company Website is not the only place that a company will reveal its Qualities and Multipliers. As you can imagine, the internet is a vast resource and savvy organizations today are using many different mediums to share information and connect with future employees. The company's other online properties can also be a treasure trove of Qualities and Multipliers and should be explored and studied as well!

If you are interested in learning about these tactics more in depth [check out the Interview Master System!](#)

CHAPTER 17

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The best way to prepare for an interview is to practice what you're going to say before you actually get put on the spot by your hiring manager...and the best way to figure that out is to hold "mock interviews" where you have a friend or family member ask you questions you might be asked during the interview.

At the end of this book we have an entire section dedicated to nothing but practice questions and answers and we'll get to those (we promise!) but before we do, we wanted to talk a little bit about the four different types of questions that a hiring manager is going to throw at you.

There are three types of interview questions you can expect to be asked:

1. **Traditional**
2. **Behavioral/ Competency**
3. **Situational**

It's important for you to not only understand the differences between each type but to also be able to identify them quickly because it will influence the way you answer them.

"Traditional" interview questions attempt to find out the kind of person you are while also exploring your professional attitudes, aptitudes, and qualifications. These are usually simple questions like "Which university did you attend?", "What is your highest level of education?" or "What were the responsibilities at your last job?"

"Behavioral/Competency" interview questions, on the other hand, are trickier. These kinds of questions are based on two key components: psychology, which says that the way you behaved in the past is going to predict the way you are going to behave in the future and skills: how well you know what you say you know in relationship to the job you are going to be asked to perform. Certain jobs require you to know what you're doing before you start and competency questions are meant to make sure of just that. An example of a behavior/competency question might be one in which an interviewer presents you with a very real problem and asks you to solve it using proven techniques that you would encounter during a normal work day. These questions are generally used to help weed out applicants who have overstated their abilities or knowledge...so again, we remind you...always be honest on your applications and resume! The last thing you want to do is get to an interview and be called out for over-exaggerating, or worse...lying.

“Situational” interview questions are similar to behavioral questions, but instead of asking you to relay a past experience and tell how you handled yourself in that situation, you’re presented with a hypothetical situation. Rather than being asked “Tell me about a time you...” the interviewer will start out with a more ambiguous prompt. “How would you handle..?” In essence, you’re given a situation and then asked how you would behave in that situation...

Now that we’ve gone over the different kinds of questions, let’s start breaking them down and seeing how they are similar...and different.

****NOTE:** This section is meant to be a quick overview of the different types of questions...we’ll explore exactly how to answer each type in the next chapters, but for now, this will give you a good idea of how to quickly identify each type.

BEHAVIORAL VS TRADITIONAL

The vast majority of time however, you will be faced with an interview made up of both traditional and behavioral interview questions, so let’s dig in a little deeper and compare these two.

A hiring manager uses Traditional Interview Questions to get a general sense of who you are as a person and what your qualifications for the position are.

Quite often, their goal is to explore your professional aptitudes, attitudes and qualifications by asking questions such as, **“What is your highest level of education?”** or **“What were your primary responsibilities at your last job?”**.

Pretty straight forward stuff.

Behavioral Questions, on the other hand, are a whole different ball of wax (and the nemesis of a large portion of the job seeking community).

With Behavioral Questions, the hiring manager is trying to determine how you will act on the job (the one you are currently interviewing for) by analyzing your past behaviors.

In other words, the way you behaved in the past is a predictor of how you will behave in the future. These questions usually begin with “Tell me about a time that...” or “Describe to me a situation when...”.

Behavioral questions can really catch you off guard if you are not used to them and have not prepared for them. They require a lot more thinking than traditional interview questions.

“When you were in retail did you work on a standard commission?” (a traditional-type

question) is a lot easier to answer than “Describe to me a time when you closed a sale based on superior customer service and exactly what skills you used” (a behavioral-type question).

Behavioral questions may at times seem more “touchy-feely” than traditional questions. They are more probing than standard interview questions; they may seem to be inviting you to open up and be more of a human personality to the interviewer.

There’s the rub. This is not a time to bare your soul.

Behavioral questions may even seem like trick questions, because they definitely require you to do some thinking and might even require some soul-searching—something you do not want to be doing in front of the interviewer while he or she silently clocks you and realizes you don’t know what the heck you are talking about. You really need to be prepared beforehand for behavioral-type questions. Fielding them on the fly is simply not an option—you may find yourself falling face-first into the turf.

You can easily be tripped up by the unexpected quality of behavior-type questions. You may not be able to think of anything and will look (and feel) like a fish out of water with its mouth gaping open if you are not prepared. Thinking “on your feet” in an interview setting, while it is sometimes necessary, is far too risky.

We’ll go over how to answer each type in more depth in the next chapters, but for now, this is a good overview.

SITUATIONAL

Now that we’ve gone over all that, let’s look at situational questions.

As we covered above, situational interview questions are somewhat similar to behavioral questions, but instead of asking you to relay a past experience and tell how you handled yourself in that situation, you’re presented with a hypothetical situation.

Rather than being asked “Tell me about a time you...” the interviewer will start out with a more ambiguous prompt. “How would you handle..?”

In essence, you’re given a situation and then asked how you would behave in that situation. In fact, it’s a bit like role-playing.

So why do interviewers ask situational questions?

Because they want to see how you really think...not just how well you memorize answers and spit them back on command!

Whereas traditional questions can have easily memorized answers and behavioral questions rely on experiences you've already had, situational questions demand that the interviewee utilize their analytical and problem-solving skills.

By giving a job seeker a hypothetical situation, the interviewer wants to see how they will react in the moment...with short notice and little preparation.

But how do I study for a test when I don't even know what the test is going to be on?

Oh come on, you didn't think we'd really send you in unprepared, right?!? Of course not! Notice we said little preparation...which means as a student of the Interview Guys...you should be more than prepared for anything, including situational questions!

As you can imagine, the nature of situational questions means that it can be easy to make mistakes...after all, when you don't know which scenario is coming down the pipe it's hard to ensure you are completely prepared.

CHAPTER 18

HOW TO ANSWER TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

As we said in the previous chapter, traditional interview questions are interview questions that attempt to find out the kind of person you are while also exploring your professional attitudes, aptitudes, and qualifications. These questions tend to be straight forward and focus more on your personality and allow an interviewer to get to know you. Because these questions are so straightforward, your answers should be just as straightforward and simple as well!

When answering traditional questions, keep your responses direct. Resist the urge to ramble or pad your answers with more information than is being asked for. Keep your answers conversational and on topic.

Because traditional questions are intended to help an interviewer get to know you better, you tend to run into them more often in the first interview. While you might be asked some traditional questions in later interviews, be prepared to encounter the bulk of them in your first round of interviews.

While it's always a good idea to prepare for these questions, having your answers memorized word for word will make your delivery come off as robotic and stilted. Remember, the interviewer is trying to get

to know you! Try to remain conversational in tone and draw in your interviewer with your tone...not your ability to spew forth a great amount of pre-memorized material.

Here is just a quick sampling of what you might encounter:

- **Why should we hire you?**
- **Tell me about yourself**
- **What are your strengths?**
- **What are your weaknesses?**
- **Where do you see yourself in five years?**
- **Why do you want to work for us?**
- **What do you know about the company?**
- **How would your coworkers describe you?**
- **How do you deal with pressure?**
- **How do you manage your time?**
- **Why did you leave your last job?**
- **What are your goals?**
- **How do you make decisions?**
- **Why is there a gap in your resume?**
- **How do you handle difficult customers?**

Later on in this book we'll go through and help you answer all of these questions, but for the sake of this chapter, we'll cover three. We'll take you through exactly how to tailor your answers (ooh, there's that word again...tailoring!) and what makes a good answer over a not so good answer.

SUCCESS STORIES

Every interview question should have a base. A stable foundation to build on. Over here at Interview Guys Headquarters, we like to refer to these foundational elements as **"success stories"**.

What is a success story?

A success story is an example from your past work experience that clearly demonstrates you succeeding in some way.

For example, a time that you solved a problem, excelled in a difficult situation or used a certain skill to get the job done.

Every time you go into a job interview, you should have several of these memorized so that you can use them to help formulate your answers to the interview questions.

For example, a success story might be:

How you analyzed the annual budget and decided to make cutbacks in certain areas that led to more profit in the company the following year

How you helped solve a dispute between two co-workers that allowed your team to work more efficiently and led to increased productivity

How you volunteered for the “culture committee” and were appointed lead, where you led the team to make changes to the office setup which improved workflow and overall efficiency

Hang on, does this mean I need to have a Success Story ready for every single interview question? What if I get asked 30 questions in my interview? Do I need 30 Success Stories!???

Whoa, take a deep breath! Yes, that’s a fair question...but don’t worry...we’ve got you covered.

Here’s the deal: Not all interview questions and answers will require you to go into the kind of depth where using a Success Story is completely mandatory.

As you prepare for your job interview and study the different commonly asked interview questions at the back of this book, you will see that certain questions will warrant an answer with a little more depth or back story.

But there will be other interview questions that are simpler and will only require a more literal, straightforward response. For example, “**What is your five-year plan?**” This question is forward looking and doesn’t necessarily require the support of a tale of success from your past. Another simple straight forward question would be, “ **Where did you go to college?**”

So use your discretion.

QUALITIES

As you know, we’ve mentioned a few times that every company has a list of knowledge, skills and abilities that their *Perfect Candidate* must have. We like to group these together into one category and call them **Qualities**.

Common qualities include the following:

leadership

collaboration

vision

persistence

innovation

influence

Everyone has Qualities. Everyone. We've all, at one time or another, done something that clearly exhibits one or more of the qualities in the above list...but it's not enough...not in today's job market.

Remember, you need to have the Qualities that your company puts a lot of value in...and you've already gone through and done your research in order to determine what those qualities are, right?

You should be "mining" the company's various web properties to look for these Qualities, and then infusing them (along with a supporting success story) into your interview answers.

Once you've figured out the Qualities that your company puts a lot of value in, you need to be able to show them that "YES!", you do have these Qualities.

The best way to do this is to choose success stories from your past that help highlight those Qualities.

Here's an example. Let's say that you discover through your research that your company puts huge value on the candidate being detail-oriented. Well, you need to go into your interview armed with a success story that demonstrates you being detailed-oriented. Pretty simple right?

Now, when it comes time to actually answering the question there is a little more to it than that, but don't worry, we're going to use three examples of questions that will clearly show you how to use a success story and Quality to answer the question perfectly.

3 EXAMPLES OF TYPICAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WITH SAMPLE ANSWERS

As we promised, we'll go over three traditional interview questions and show you exactly how to answer them using our tailoring method.

Beside each question is the Quality that the company values the most (which we discovered through our research done while preparing for the interview). In the answer to the question, you'll see that the Quality that we are trying to highlight in the answer is in **ORANGE**, and the success story that we are trying to use to help support the Quality is in **BLUE**. Make sense?

You'll also see that we've added a "trap" that people fall into in each question. Remember as we've said before, many interview questions have little traps, sometimes traps that are not so obvious, and you need to be able to identify and avoid them.

Once that's all done, we'll wrap the question up with a few "Do's and Don'ts" to remember when you go into the interview room.

1) WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST STRENGTH? (DESIRED QUALITY: VERSATILITY)

“As an architect at the small firm Big Building Inc., I had to learn all phases of running a business, from taking care of the IT work to visiting construction sites to doing accounts payable and receivable. I also passed the Architect Registration Exam in the 90th percentile of scores meaning I bring my architectural expertise, but I also have the entrepreneurial strength and spirit. Since your construction company is a start-up, I think that would add a lot of value. My experience shows that I excel when wearing a few different hats, even if one of them is a construction helmet.”

TRAP: Many people hear this question and take the opportunity to gloat about their accomplishments, losing sight of the fact that the ONLY important thing you need to do is highlight a strength that aligns with the company’s needs. Never has the importance of the Tailoring Method been so clear.

DO’ s

Highlight one of your strengths that you know the company puts a lot of value in

Use a story from your past to support the strength you are trying to demonstrate

Quantify your level achievement (“90th percentile of scores”)

DON’ T S

Don’t brag about your accomplishments

Don’t bring up strengths that aren’t relevant to the company you are interviewing with

Don’t make any claims you can’t support with hard facts.

2) HOW ARE YOU WITH TIME MANAGEMENT? (DESIRED QUALITY: EFFICIENCY)

“Working as a travel agent, I had to be excellent at time management, as I was expected to sell and coordinate packages of flights, lodging, car rentals, admission passes, and tickets. All of these items needed to be coordinated and documented efficiently in order to ensure that my clients’ vacation expectations were exceeded. One other aspect of this position that was time-related was the fact that time zones played such a big role in the process. I was able to factor these differences into my work and ultimately provide my clients with a high level of service. I’d say that this experience accurately demonstrates my proficiency with time management and I believe that I’m well prepared to manage similar tasks at your company.”

TRAP: Literally EVERYBODY who answers this question is going to say they are organized, and the hiring manager knows this. They expect you to provide cold hard data and examples when it comes to your claims, so don’t even think about claiming your organizational aptitude if you can’t back it up with facts.

DO’ s

Always support your statement with hard facts

The Quality desired is almost always “efficiency”, “organization”, or “time management”, so there should be no surprises

This is one interview question that you can be 100% prepared for because you know it is coming and what you can say to answer it perfectly

DON'T S

Don't make up any BS stories about being organized if you can't back it up. Remember, all it takes is one quick call to your old boss about your habits and your House of Cards can come tumbling down pretty quickly

This is a straight forward question. Don't get cute and try to weave in any extraneous Qualities that aren't relevant to your level of efficiency

There is NO excuse to not have this answer prepared perfectly prior to your interview. You know it's coming so make sure you have your success story ready.

3) Is there anything else I should know about you? (Desired Quality: Deals well with pressure)

“I didn't mention an interesting anecdote when I was the safety manager at SkyScraper Construction Co. I had just completed my CPR and First Aid courses, and a man on site suddenly went into cardiac arrest. My supervisor looked at me and said, ‘You're in charge of safety!’ I had practiced on a dummy but never on a live person. I knew I had to keep calm and simply do what I was taught. I revived him while others called 911. He later thanked me for saving his life. Although I don't anticipate such a thing happening often, the incident taught me that, no matter what happens, **keeping calm and putting one's training into motion** will often resolve a threatening situation. I think that was excellent training for an air traffic controller position, in addition to my FAA certification, of course.”

TRAP: You wouldn't believe how many people hear this question come out of the hiring manager's mouth and take it as an invitation to list off their hobbies and interests. Look. They've seen your resume and are well aware that you “enjoy hiking.” This is another opportunity for you to take control of the interview by zoning in on their desired quality and really hammering it home with a well-positioned success story.

DO' s

Turn the interview from an “interrogation” to a “conversation” by taking this opportunity to highlight one of the Qualities you've discovered in your research.

Keep a few success stories in your back pocket just for open-ended questions like these. They will really impress the hiring manager.

DON'T S

Don't EVER simply say, "No, I don't think so." Use the opportunity you've been given.

Don't ramble on and on. It's not an invitation to tell your life story.

Don't simply list off your hobbies and interests.

Okay, so by now, you should have a pretty good idea of how to apply our Tailoring Method to answering a typical job interview questions with ease.

Success stories (when needed)?

Check.

Discovered Qualities through detailed research?

Check.

Formula for answering any interview question perfectly?

You bet!

The main thing to remember is that "it's not about you, it's about them", so you should be answering every interview question with that in mind.

Remember to always find the qualities that your company is looking for in their perfect candidate and infuse them into your answers. And if the question warrants it, reference the Success Stories you have in your back pocket to help demonstrate you have that Quality.

Now, of course, this assumes that you know what questions you are going to be asked.

And that's the next step...

****SIDE NOTE:** A Quick Word of Warning! Don't make the same mistake that everyone makes.

Don't go to Google and punch in "best answers to interview questions" and on the first site that pops up, print off all the questions and answers and memorize them.

The internet, while making great strides, is still the Wild West at heart. There is a lot of bad information out there that can really have a negative effect on your interview preparation.

Now, let's move onto **BEHAVIORAL/COMPETENCY** questions!

CHAPTER 19

HOW TO ANSWER BEHAVIORAL/COMPETENCY QUESTIONS

Imagine you're sitting on a black folding chair in the middle of the hiring manager's office at your very next job interview.

You want this job. Bad.

You're eye to eye with the hiring manager...

The hiring manager takes a long pause and after what seems like an eternity finally leans forward and says:

"Tell me about a time when a group project you were working on failed...."

Uh oh. The dreaded **behavioral interview** question.

As we discussed in Chapter 16, a behavioral question (also known as STAR Interview Questions or behavior-based interview questions) is a question that aims at learning about your past "behaviors" in specific work situations.

How you have "behaved" in certain situations in the past will give them clues on how you'll behave in those same situations when working for them in the future.

Behavioral questions can be asked at any time, but are often asked as part of a second interview.

So, considering your future career aspirations may hinge on your answer...

What do you say?

Do you have a "success story" that highlights the exact qualities that particular company is looking for in an employee, and are you ready to talk about it smoothly?

Or are you sitting there dry-mouthed with a confused and rather silly look on your face as you try and come up with a stall tactic?

Don't worry! We're here for you! In this chapter we'll go over how to answer them as well as give you a few examples so you can see exactly what we're talking about.

We'll also go over:

- What you need to have prepared beforehand in order to answer them well
- How to come up with great "Success Stories"
- Common behavioral interview question examples
- The S.T.A.R. Method briefly explained
- How to answer behavioral interview questions using the S.T.A.R. Method
- In-depth example answer to a common question (color-coded and explained in detail)

Ok let's get cracking...

Wait, before we go any further...why do hiring managers insist on asking behavioral questions? (Don't they know job interviews are hard enough??

Hiring managers ask behavioral questions for a very specific reason.

They are trying to see if you possess specific qualities that they need for the particular position you are interviewing for.

Remember, as we've said before: "It's not about you, It's about them"

In other words, if they are looking for someone with good leadership qualities, they may ask you a behavioral question to see if your past behaviors demonstrate leadership.

An example of a behavioral question that is looking for you to demonstrate leadership qualities could be:

"Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a difficult project?"

So that begs the question, how can you demonstrate to the hiring manager that you can be a great leader?

The answer is: *With Success Stories*

A success story is a short story from your past that highlights a specific "quality" or "competency" that you possess.

Usually a success story revolves around a past work experience. However, for recent grads or those with little work experience a Success Story can be taken from other events in your life such as school clubs, athletic teams, volunteer work etc. The point is it must highlight the quality the company is looking for.

For example, let's go back to our leadership question: **“Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a difficult project?”**

In order to answer this well you obviously need to relate a success story from your past that shows you demonstrating leadership qualities.

The key is, you need to be prepared with your success story BEFORE you find yourself sitting on the hot seat faced with this question.

(Sitting there, humming and hawing awkwardly while you try and come with something is a surefire way for you to NOT get the job.)

Instead, you need to effortlessly pull out a success story that is perfect for the situation.

Here, let's try and answer that question using a success story:

Q: Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a difficult project?

I volunteered for (and was nominated the head of) a committee of 4 people tasked with investigating poor customer reviews. I analyzed reviews and discovered that customer wait times were the largest contributor to negative reviews. I then lead brainstorming situations with my team to find a solution. This solution was a change in workflow for mechanics. After implementing my suggestion, wait times dropped 18%.

Now don't forget, on its own this is not an answer to a behavioral interview question, but merely a success story to reference in your interview answer. You will want to frame your answer around this success story (more about this coming up below).

Wait, what you're telling me is that I have to have hundreds of these success stories ready and waiting to tackle any behavioral question they could throw at me!?? Sounds...terrible.

Hey, isn't that basically the same question you asked us in the last chapter when you were panicking and thinking we wanted you to have a hundred answers memorized to traditional questions? Remember what we said then? Take a deep breath...no need to panic...we've got you covered! Hey, we're here for you, right!?

Don't worry, there's a shortcut and a trick that will let you sidestep all that work and we will get into it in the next section.

HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT SUCCESS STORIES

Instead of slogging through trying to come up with a success story for every possible behavioral questions there are 2 things you can do instead:

1. *Only prepare success stories for the most common categories of behavioral questions.*
2. *Do some cutting edge company research in order to find out what specific qualities your company is looking for and then craft a few success stories that highlight those specific qualities.*

Much easier, right?

TIME SAVING TACTIC 1

Let's start by looking at the 5 categories of common behavioral questions.

The fact is, there are certain types of behavioral questions that are asked more often than others. By knowing these common types, you can prepare a success story to address each category.

1. **Teamwork oriented**
2. **Problem solving**
3. **Initiative/Leadership**
4. **Interpersonal Skills**
5. **Challenge/stress/pressure**

If you prepare a success story to cover each these 5 categories then you will be covering your bases pretty well and be saving yourself a lot of time in preparation.

You just need to be able tweak your success story to whatever question comes down the pipe.

For example, here's another example of a good success story that can be used when answering a problem solving type behavior based question.

"Facing low sales numbers for full season ticket packages and the possibility of many empty seats for the upcoming season, I developed, created and spearheaded the implementation of a new sales strategy, which allowed for the sale of smaller "game packs" as opposed to only "full season" ticket packages. This strategy directly increased overall sales by 44%."

Your task is to come up with one good success story for each of the common behavioral categories. You can look to the "problem solving" example above for inspiration.

TIME SAVING TACTIC 2

The next thing you'll want to do, is mine your job description to find qualities you know the company is looking for.

Grab the job description and go through it with a fine toothed comb and tease out any qualities that the company is highlighting and jot them down.

Do they bring up “collaboration” as a requisite competency for the position?

How about “problem solving”?

You’ll quickly notice that most job descriptions you come across will very clearly state the qualities the company is looking for in their “Perfect Candidate”.

So go ahead, grab the job description and do some detective work!

Ok, done?

Great! Now that you have a list of these qualities, you now know the types of behavioral questions you are most likely going to be asked and can craft your success stories accordingly!

Now that you have your success stories locked down it’s time we go through some actual examples of behavioral questions.

COMMON BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

“Describe a Situation Where You Disagreed With a Supervisor.”

“Tell me about a time you had a conflict at work.”

“Tell me about a situation where you had to solve a difficult problem.”

“Describe a project or idea (not necessarily your own) that was implemented primarily because of your efforts.”

“Do you feel you work well under pressure? If so, describe a time when you have done so...”

“Give me an example of a time when you motivated others.”

“Tell me about a time where you had to delegate tasks during a project”

“Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.”

“Tell me about a time when you missed an obvious solution to a problem.”

“Tell me about your proudest professional accomplishment.”

Can you see how these questions are all trying to find out how you behaved in the past in order to predict how you will behave in the future?

So now that you know that you have to use success stories and you have an idea of what a behavioral question looks like, how the heck to you actually answer them??

THE S.T.A.R. METHOD

Now that you know the importance of having your success stories planned out, you now need to understand how to use them in your interview answers.

The best way to organize your behavioral answers is to use the S.T.A.R. method (which is why behavioral interview questions are often referred to as STAR Interview Questions).

The STAR interview method gives you a simple framework to use when crafting your answers.

Here's what STAR stands for:

1. **Situation:** Open with a brief description of the Situation and context of the success story (who, what, where, when, how).
2. **Task:** Explain the Task you had to complete highlighting any specific challenges or constraint (eg deadlines, costs, other issues).
3. **Action:** Describe the specific Actions that you took to complete the task. These should highlight desirable traits without needing to state them (initiative, intelligence, dedication, leadership, understanding, etc.)
4. **Result:** Close with the result of your efforts. Include figures to quantify the result if possible.

HOW TO USE THE S.T.A.R. METHOD FOR BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Now let's bring everything we've gone over together and come up with a fantastic behavioral answer that will knock the hiring manager's socks off!

Ok let's go back to the leadership question we were dealing with earlier in this article:

“Tell me about a time when you took the lead on a difficult project?”

Let's answer this using the S.T.A.R. Method by including the Success Story from above. Remember to keep your answer succinct, yet detailed enough so you highlight the leadership qualities the company values.

A few years back I was working as a Service Advisor at car dealership. One morning in our department staff meeting the Service Manager announced that we had been

receiving an unacceptable amount of negative reviews for the service we had been providing our customers. His solution was to create a committee that would analyze the situation and put forth actionable improvements, and for this he asked for volunteers.

I had been looking for an opportunity to show that I was capable of taking on more responsibility, and being a person who enjoys working in group situations, I was the first to volunteer. My Service Manager was quick to make me the leader of the committee, which put me in the position of the leader of a group of 4 other people who were tasked to come up with a solution.

Over the next three weeks we analyzed each of the customer services reports and discovered that the vast majority of negative reviews were a result of lengthy wait times for customers. Knowing that we had to come up with a solution to decrease the amount of time our customers were left waiting, I then lead brainstorming sessions to find a way to fix the problem. We zoned in on changing the way our mechanics worked on each work order.

After implementing my suggestion, mechanics were able to focus mainly on their specializations, which meant they worked faster and more efficiently, which translated to wait times dropping by 18%. This was a situation that required me to manage 4 people and find a solution that created a positive outcome and solved a critical issue, which I believe I was able to do.

Now let's take that same answer and plug it into the S.T.A.R. breakdown so you can see exactly where it all falls into place.

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Hopefully this graphic helps makes it clear how the success story, the leadership quality and the STAR method all work together in a well-crafted answer.

Note the specificity of the Result in the example answer: "wait times dropped by 18%." It's always a great idea to demonstrate a clear and numbered result in your answer.

Ok so in summary you now know:

What behavioral questions are and why hiring managers ask them.

You also know that there are specific qualities or behaviors you have to show the hiring manager you possess through your well-crafted answer.

You know you need Success Stories and you know how to pick them.

You know the common behavioral interview question categories.

You know that you need to do some digging to find out exactly what qualities your specific company is looking for.

You also now know what the STAR method is and how to use it to craft a fantastic answer.

Now you should really be ready to tackle any behavioral question that comes your way.

In the next chapter we'll take an in-depth look at **SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS**. Let's go!

CHAPTER 20

HOW TO ANSWER SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

When I say the words "Role Playing," what are the first images that pop into your mind?

I bet you you're thinking about teenage boys crowded around a table tossing multi-sided dice and saying things like ***"My mage can kick your troll's butt any day."***

Right? (Lol maybe not, but you catch my drift)

But what if I told you that sometimes role playing creeps into the interview process as well?

Now, before you get all excited and break out your favorite 16-sided dice and dust off your robe and collection of elf ears, let me explain.

As we've gone over before, there are a multitude of different types of questions an interviewer can ask.

There are the usual **Traditional Job Interview Questions** (Why did you leave your last job? Explain the duties you had in your last position.), as well as the **Behavioral Interview Questions** (Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or achieve it.), and Second Interview Questions that tend to come up the further down the interview process you get.

But what about **Situational Interview** questions?

Situational interview questions are similar to behavioral questions, but instead of asking you to relay a past experience and tell how you handled yourself in that situation, you're presented with a hypothetical situation.

Rather than being asked *"Tell me about a time you..."* the interviewer will start out with a more ambiguous prompt. *"How would you handle..?"*

In essence, you're given a situation and then asked how you would behave in that situation...which as any good dungeon master knows...is the core of all role playing!

So why do interviewers ask situational questions?

Because they want to see how you really think...not just how well you memorize answers and spit them back on command!

Whereas traditional questions can have easily memorized answers and behavioral questions rely on experiences you've already had, situational questions demand that the interviewee utilize their analytical and problem-solving skills.

By giving a job seeker a hypothetical situation, the interviewer wants to see how they will react in the moment...with short notice and little preparation.

But how do I study for a test when I don't even know what the test is going to be on?

Oh come on, you didn't think we'd really send you in unprepared, right?!? Of course not! Notice we said *little* preparation...which means as a student of the Interview Guys...you should be more than prepared for anything, including situational questions!

COMMON SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTION MISTAKES

As you can imagine, the nature of situational questions means that it can be easy to make mistakes...after all, when you don't know which scenario is coming down the pipe it's hard to ensure you are completely prepared.

You can ensure that you don't trip up on a situational question by avoiding these common mistakes:

1) Winging It

A lot of job seekers think to themselves, "Well, if I have no idea what the scenario presented by the hiring manager is going to look like, there's no way that I can prepare for this type of question. So I'm just going to fly by the seat of my pants and hope I nail it."

Seems a little bird-brained, doesn't it? Believe it or not, this is very common.

So what am I supposed to do?

Practice, of course. Later on in this chapter we will give you some example situational questions. Get a good feel for what makes a good answer and what makes a bad answer, and spend some time crafting your answers to emulate the good examples below.

Sit down with a colleague of yours and ask them to come up with some situational interview questions that you can practice together. Be sure to adjust the format of the questions, the type of scenario, and the skill or ability that is the focus of the question. When you have finished answering, take a few minutes to discuss the answers together to make sure that your answer is in line with the good responses below.

2) Non-Tailored Responses

Basically, there are certain skills and abilities (which you already know we like to call Qualities) that every company puts a lot of value in when it comes to the ideal candidate for the position being hired for.

You basically need to demonstrate that you have these Qualities in order to get the job. Infusing these Qualities into your answer allows you to “tailor” the answer to the company you are interviewing with.

Answering a situational interview question with a general, non-tailored response is a missed opportunity.

Think of it this way. You KNOW the Qualities that the company puts a lot of value in, so you have to use this opportunity to show you have the Quality within the framework of the situational question.

In other words, respond to the question literally but infuse the Quality into your answer and show how you would use or demonstrate it throughout the proposed scenario.

3) Getting Off Topic

This is the most common mistake that job seekers make, and it makes sense.

Situational interview questions have the potential to make the interviewee nervous, because as I said before, they are harder to anticipate. And nervous people tend to ramble, especially when they don’t immediately know how to answer the question.

Ramblers tend to change the subject and go off on tangents, often not answering the original question. This can be the kiss of death, mainly because the hiring manager wants to see that you can think on your feet and make quick, dynamic decisions.

So what do I do?

Well, you can start by taking a deep breath.

It’s just a scenario. You’re not stupid. The answer to the question is often common sense.

However, one great way to break the ice and give yourself time to think is to ask questions.

Get more information...more specificity.

Not only will this give you time to cool down and prepare your answer, but it will also show the hiring manager that you are a critical thinker that methodically gathers information in order to make the correct decision (never a bad thing, unless of course, time is the most important variable in the question).

HOW TO ANSWER SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Preparing for situational questions should be just like preparing for any other type of question that might be thrown at you during an interview...through practice!

We've pulled together five sample questions for you to go over.

As you read these example questions, don't just figure out how you would answer them...dig deep through your own work history and see if you've already encountered similar situations.

If you have, take a hard look at them and really analyze them. Look for problems you encountered and how you solved them as well as what you learned from the situation overall.

Being asked a situational question and having to come up with an answer on the fly can be intimidating to someone who hasn't taken the time to practice their own answers...but for someone who has spent some time going through their past and analyzing potential problems and situations...it's not just a snap, it might just even be considered (gasp) fun!

5 EXAMPLES OF SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (WITH RIGHT AND WRONG ANSWERS)

As we said above, the hiring managers are looking to see if you possess a number of skills when they ask you situational questions.

They want to see if you can be analytical about the situation and how you apply your own past experiences and problem solving skills to the questions.

That means there are both right and wrong ways to answer these questions.

Below are five examples of potential situational questions. We've gone through and given you two answers for each, the incorrect answer and the correct answer.

Q: You're working on a project with a tight deadline but you find that you're unable to complete your section because your coworkers and your supervisor are unavailable to answer a few key questions. How do you deal with the situation?

INCORRECT:

"Hey, if they're not there, there's nothing I can do about it. If I'm responsible enough to be working on the project with the idea that I'm holding up my end to get us to deadline on time, then I would expect them to do the same.

If I can't reach them and they can't help me in the way that they are supposed to help me, then forget them!

Guess that means an early night for me! I've been meaning to go to the local comic book shop on my way home and pick up some new "Alchemy, the Congregating" for ages and now that the rest of my team is off slacking...this is my chance!"

Whoa! Slow your (multi-sided dice) roll there!

Interviewers ask situational questions like these because the interviewer wants to know how you would handle a problem that might actually arise if you're hired for the job.

Most of their questions are based off potentially real situations and the last thing you want to do is give them a reason to fire you before they even hire you!

If your response includes any sort of passing off the task to another individual in order to absolve yourself of responsibility or as an excuse to cut out early from work...well, good luck.

CORRECT:

"This is a tough one. The first thing I would do is really sit back for a moment and assess the situation. I would look at the project overall and see if there was a way for me to perhaps redirect my focus onto other areas I could work on by myself without their assistance and postpone the parts I need help on until they were again available. If that isn't a possibility, then I would make sure to exhaust every avenue I have at my disposal to try to get in contact with them.

I actually ran into a similar situation on a project a few years ago where I needed to get some specific answers to a problem before I was able to move forward to the next step. Unfortunately my co-worker who had the answers was in an area where I was unable to reach him in time. I managed to continue working on sections that didn't require his input and by the time I was done with those, he was back in range and able to answer my questions.

Not only did we make our deadline, but by getting the other sections done first, we were able to focus all our attention on the final segment and really bring it together in a way that exceeded our clients expectations. It was a real win! Staying calm and focused and making sure I was doing everything within my power to make the project a success gave me the ability to figure out how to work around the situation successfully."

Q: You've been assigned a major project and are halfway through when you realize that you've made a mistake that requires you to go back to the beginning to fix it. How do you handle that while still trying to make your deadline?

INCORRECT:

"First off I don't make mistakes, so I have no idea why you're even asking me this question. Secondly, if there's a mistake...it must have come from whoever gave me the task in the first place...so I'd start there. If they're not willing to double check their work, why should I have to do it? As for deadlines...it wasn't my mistake, so it's not my problem. You want me, you can wait for me."

Nobody is perfect. If you put yourself in the hero role in every scenario and make it sound as though you were the reason that things were ever done correctly in your past jobs and that you expect that to continue in all your future situational scenarios, it's going to ring some warning bells.

CORRECT:

"The first thing I would do is stop whatever I am doing on the project and really investigate the mistake. Is it small enough that I can correct it without losing time? If so, I make sure that I rectify the situation immediately and move forward.

If it's a mistake that requires a full reworking of the problem and the solution is going to force me to come close or even miss my deadline, I would make sure to immediately inform my supervisors and let them know what is going on. Ideally it would be a situation where I could adjust my work accordingly and, if needed, put in the extra time to make the deadline without compromising the rest of the project.

If the mistake is a result of my work, as painful as it might be, I have to come clean. If nothing else, it can provide a learning opportunity for any other people I might be working with who are in similar situations or dealing with similar scenarios.

I was actually working one of my first jobs just out of college and ran into a situation just like this..."

Part of a situational scenario question is analyzing the problem and coming up with solutions, but that also means applying what you've learned from the past...and that means what you've learned from past mistakes. Like I said, nobody's perfect. Not to mention answering the question this way (and yes, we made it extreme to prove a point) just makes you look like an ass.

Q: You're a team leader. What would you do if the work of one of your subordinate team members was not up to expectations?

INCORRECT:

"I don't tolerate dead weight. If someone isn't pulling their fair share, then it's not right they take up my valuable time or my team's time. If it's not something we can fix easily, then maybe it's time that person look for another team to drag down. I'm a winner and I only work with winner."

Do you know who Machiavelli is?

If yes, then +10 to you. If not, here is a crash course: Machiavelli was a famous Italian philosopher who wrote the book on how to be a leader. Unfortunately his tactics were a little less than gentle and some of his solutions to leadership problems were brutal.

If all your answers are centered around ways you'd dismantle the company and take over leadership positions through intimidation, torture and execution...you might try switching your job search circles from blue collar to mercenary.

CORRECT:

“As a team leader, it’s my responsibility to keep the team moving forward and progressing through our tasks. If I have a member who is not living up to expectations, I would first try to investigate why the individual is having a problem and whether it is something I can help solve.

The first step is to determine if the problem is personal or professional. If it’s professional, then it’s my job as the leader to try to help the individual get the assistance they need to bring them up to the level the rest of the team is delivering at and expecting.

If it’s a personal problem, I would keep an eye on that person and make sure that it doesn’t continue to affect the professional work they’re doing. If it is a situation which requires time away and the company can afford to let them go for a while, I would encourage them to deal with the problem and then come back ready to rejoin the team.

If it’s a situation where they need to take more time than the company can allow, I would try to suggest that the individual solve the problem on their own in such a way that it doesn’t continue to affect the rest of the team.

I encountered a similar situation with a co-worker at my last job when...”

Remember, a situational scenario question is an opportunity to again demonstrate good teamwork skills and leadership qualities that don’t devolve into small dictatorships, no matter how tempting all that power can be.

Q: You have reason to believe that a co-worker is preparing to divulge company secrets to a rival corporation. These secrets have the potential to really damage the company. How would you deal with this situation?

INCORRECT:

“I gotta get concrete proof, baby! This is an amazing opportunity to monetize my position and I’m taking full advantage of it! If my co-worker is selling secrets I want in on that action...but only if the amount they’re getting paid is more than the amount I can collect as a bounty from the company for turning them in. Either way, I’m covering my own butt and making sure my information goes to the highest bidder. I wonder if I could leverage this into a new corner office or a serious bonus?”

Uh wow. For the first time I’m actually speechless at our own scenario. I don’t think I need to tell you just how wrong this answer is. Wow.

CORRECT:

“The first thing I need to do is stop and really look at the situation. Are my suspicions based on actual proof or are these unsubstantiated allegations? If I don’t have actual proof or hard evidence and am relying on suspicion, then I would approach my co-worker privately with my concerns. There are times

when personal emotions cloud people's minds and can lead them to say things that they might not actually mean and which might be misconstrued as something more than just venting.

I would approach the conversation as a dialogue rather than a lecture and make sure I hear from them exactly what is going on. I would much rather confront the individual one-on-one and discuss the situation in private with them than run to superiors with nothing more than suspicions. Crying wolf in a situation like this could potentially ruin not only my co-worker's career but my own as well.

If I have hard proof of my co-worker's intent to divulge information, then it's absolutely imperative that I make sure my supervisor is aware of what is going on. As uncomfortable and difficult as it might be to turn in a co-worker, professional ethics are very important to me. If I don't let the company know, I could be guilty of withholding information, which could have long term ramifications for me both professionally and legally.

At my last job we actually had an employee who would joke about just this thing..."

Remember, companies value teamwork and an employee who can handle a situation like this with grace and dignity is worth their weight in gold. You're not a cop (at least not in this scenario) and it's not up to you to do anything more than what is in the answer above.

Q: How would you handle a customer who isn't happy with your service even though you've done nothing wrong and they're actually the ones who have made the mistake?

INCORRECT:

"Whoever said the customer is always right should be taken out into the street and kicked repeatedly with soccer cleats! The customer is hardly ever right and most of the time they're so wrong, it's funny!"

Even if the customer is wrong in the scenario, it's not your job to tell the hiring manager that. They don't want to hear you go on and on about unrealistic customer expectations, rather, they want to hear how you're going to solve the problem.

CORRECT:

"No matter what they're unhappy about, it's my job to make sure that they're treated with respect, and the best way to demonstrate that respect is to listen attentively to their concerns. Ideally I'd like to make sure that I'm addressing the problem in such a way that I'm not missing any opportunities to turn what has started out as a negative experience for our customer into a positive experience.

My goal is to ensure customer satisfaction, but I am also aware that there are individuals who will never be satisfied. If it's a situation where I have tried my absolute best and done everything in my power to solve the situation in a way that maintains both my integrity and the integrity of the company, and I'm still not having any success with the client, I would then involve my superior as a last resort.

I encountered a situation just like this when I worked retail one summer. We had a customer who was notorious for being difficult...”

The hiring manager wants to know you’re up to the task of handling a situation like this should it arise. They want to know that you’re level headed and can handle the customer with professional grace, even if that customer becomes rude, arrogant, or demanding. And remember, you’re not going to win every customer over...

So there you have it. Five solid questions for you to practice your own situational answers on.

Of course, these are just example answers and you should build on them using your own words. And yes, the point of the wrong answers is to get you to laugh a little bit...but more than that, we want you to really sit down and think about how you would handle each scenario and turn that into your own answer.

As you can see, we’ve left the prompt for the second part unfinished (except for the first one...we threw you a bone on that one!) because we want you to take that opportunity to fill in your own blanks.

The prompts are a way for you to take each situational scenario and expand on it by including a little bit of your own real world experience as a solid example of just how you’ve already faced a similar situation and how you handled it.

By taking these questions, practicing answering them and applying your own real world experiences at the end as solid examples, you’ll be better prepared for that moment when your hiring manger looks at you across the table and says to you, “So, ready for a little role play exercise?”

No dice needed!

CHAPTER 21

FLIPPING THE INTERVIEW: QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING YOUR INTERVIEWER

Have you ever been on a horrible date where the person you are out with spent the whole time talking about themselves without ever asking you a single question?

Ugh, sounds miserable, right?

Would you want to see that person again? Probably not. Who would want to spend any more precious time with someone who was so self-involved?

Dating is a two way street and the goal is to learn as much as you can about your potential partner through a give and take approach to dialogue.

Did you know a job interview is a lot like a date?

You're kidding, right? Does this mean I have to start bringing flowers and chocolates with me as well as copies of my resume?

No. As charming as that might seem, we don't recommend that approach at all. In fact, leave the flowers and chocolates at home for your sweetie.

What you should bring with you are questions to ask at the end of an interview!

Wait...questions? Aren't they interviewing me?

Yes, they are...but like any good date, shouldn't you try to learn a little bit more about the position and company before you decide to accept the job if they offer it to you? Of course! How else are you going to find out if it really is a job you want to do?

PREPARING GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING AN INTERVIEW

You can learn a lot about an open position through the basic application process, but to really get the down and dirty about what will be expected of you, you need to make sure you prepare good questions to ask in an interview as well.

Isn't that awkward? I mean, are hiring managers okay with me asking for more details?

Are you kidding?!? Asking the hiring manager questions *is* like bringing flowers and chocolates with you. Not only are you getting more information about the job, you're showing the interviewer that you genuinely care about the position, the company, and your role should you get hired.

Imagine this...*you're a hiring manager* and you've just had a potential candidate interview with you. Their answers to your questions are pretty solid and you're wrapping up the interview.

"So," you say, giving the eager young candidate a smile. *"Any questions for me?"*

The candidate clears their throat, nervous. You can tell by the look in their eye all they want to do is get out of there. *"No,"* they stammer. *"I'm good. Thank you!"*

You shake hands and they leave. You sigh in disappointment. Such a missed opportunity. Maybe the next one will have some questions for you.

WHY DO HIRING MANAGERS WANT YOU TO ASK QUESTIONS?

Why is not asking questions at the end of the interview a missed opportunity and why are hiring managers disappointed when interviewees don't ask questions?

Because asking questions not only gets you vital information about the job you're interviewing for, it also shows that you're willing to go the extra mile to get that information...especially if you not only come in with well thought out questions...but tailor those questions as well!

Remember, the ultimate goal is always to be the *Perfect Candidate* and that means doing a little extra work before you even get to the interview. By asking the right questions, you are turning the table on the interviewer and taking control of the room.

While this might seem at first like a bad idea, it's actually a brilliant move.

When you ask tailored questions, you're showing the hiring manager that you're willing to do what it takes to get the job.

Psychologically, you're proving to the hiring manager that you're a go-getter and go-getters get hired!

Speaking of psychology, what does a hiring manager think of someone who doesn't ask questions?

Remember our little mock scenario above where our candidate seemed eager to wrap up the interview and get out of there? That can make a hiring manager reluctant to extend the offer of a job.

Who wants to hire someone who seems like they're more interested in running away than investing a little more time into finding out what the job is really all about?

On top of that, most hiring managers expect candidates to have questions. Not having questions makes you appear lazy, unmotivated, and unprepared...exactly the opposite of someone they want to hire.

Okay, you've convinced me. I'm going to ask questions...tons of questions! I'm going to be the best question asking potential hire ever!

Ha ha, slow down there turbo! We love the enthusiasm but before you start charging ahead with “What’s your favorite color” and “If you could be any superhero on the planet, who would you be,” we need to give you a bit more information.

The key to being a good question “asker” is to make sure you’re asking the right questions.

CHOOSING THE BEST QUESTIONS TO ASK IN AN INTERVIEW

Right questions?

Absolutely. You want to make sure the questions you’re asking are targeted and fall into specific categories.

Like favorite animals and if they were stranded on an island, who would they want to be stranded with?

No. Serious job related questions...questions that can ultimately make or break your desire to accept the job should it be offered.

Questions that cover every aspect of both the job and the company...and help to ensure that the decision you make to take or leave the position is a 100% educated one.

What if you are offered the job but don’t realize until you start that it’s awful? Nobody wants to do a job they hate or work in a place where they’re miserable...and the fastest way to make sure you end up in work hell is to NOT ask questions.

Nooo!

Remember, this is a lot like dating and you need to know what you’re getting yourself into. So, put on your thinking cap and sharpen your pencil...it’s time to get started.

WHAT QUESTIONS SHOULD YOU BE ASKING?

As we said earlier, there are specific categories you want to stick to when thinking about questions to ask an interviewer.

THE JOB

What are you getting hired to do? Sure, you know what the job posting said, but is there anything about the position you’re trying to get that wasn’t in the posting? What are you going to be doing exactly? How long will you be doing that job and will the job evolve as you continue to work there?

THE REQUIREMENTS

Speaking of doing a job, are you fully prepared to start if you are hired? Is there anything you need to know in order to do the job? Is there any special training or any classes you're going to be required to take if you're hired?

THE EXPECTATIONS

How you do your job is also equally important...and what they expect from you as you do it! The best way to meet the goals of your employer is to know up front what they are. What do they expect from someone who is hired for this position? How do they evaluate that performance? Are there reviews?

THE COMPANY

By the way, who are you actually working for? Not just your supervisor, but the company overall. Yes, you should already have a good base of knowledge...you got that information during your fact finding and research phase of the job hunt...but there are things you can't get from research that can only come from someone on the inside...and the hiring manager is a great resource!

Don't forget, no job is a final job...you're always on the hunt for that next step in your career...and now is the time to ask if this job is going to be the next step forward for you. Speaking of moving forward, is this a job with room for growth and advancement?

THE PEOPLE

How about your fellow co-workers? What about the people that make up the roster of employees? Who are you going to be working with? Are you working with a team? If so, now is the time to ask serious questions about who you're going to be spending your time with. The best job in the world can easily turn into the worst job if you find out you can't stand the people you're assigned to.

THE ATMOSPHERE

Another important consideration to keep in mind is the culture of the company you are going to work for. What kind of place is it? Are you going to be expected to be 100% buttoned-up and professional at all times or does the company allow a more relaxed approach to work? Is it a suit and tie sort of place or are employees allowed to be a little more casual?

THE WAITING GAME

Now what? If you've completed the interview and it all feels right, how long should you expect to wait before hearing about the position? Are there further steps that need to be completed?

CHOOSING THE BEST QUESTIONS TO ASK IN AN INTERVIEW

Now that we have the categories outlined, we can start really drilling down with these questions to ask the interviewer. Yes, we sort of roughed out quite a few when we described the categories, but those are general questions. The questions you want to ask are going to be specific...researched...and tailored!

But you just gave me seven categories! If I ask a question out of each category it's going to take forever! I'm sure the hiring manager is going to get sick of me long before I get a chance to go through all my questions... Or worse, what if my questions are dumb and the hiring manager thinks I'm an idiot? Nobody wants to hire an idiot!

First off, take a deep breath and relax. We promise, the hiring manager isn't going to get tired of you...and we already established the fact that you're more likely to look like an idiot for not asking questions...but yes, that is a lot of categories to cover...which is why making sure you're asking the right questions is so important.

How do I know which questions are the right questions to be asking?

Ahh, so glad you asked! The easiest way to figure out which questions to ask at an interview is to start out by asking them before you get to the interview.

As you're preparing for your interview and doing your research on the job and the company, make sure you're also taking notes about things you'd like to ask about. Remember too that the best questions are the ones that lead to discussion and back and forth between you and the interviewer.

Try to avoid any question that has a simple yes or no answer, but at the same time, don't make your questions so broad that they confuse the interviewer...or worse...stump them.

This is an opportunity to mine for knowledge, not show off or make the hiring manager feel stupid or confused. To keep going back to the dating analogy, you want to ask questions that get you both talking...and give you the opportunity to learn.

So how many questions should I be asking? Is there a magic number? 3? 10? 25?

You should prepare at least four to five solid questions...more is acceptable, of course (exercise your best judgment here...let's not go overboard!), but less can lead you down a dark path.

Why?

Pay attention...this is very important! Because odds are some of your questions might be answered during the course of the interview and if you haven't prepared enough, you run the risk of ending up at the end with nothing left to ask...and we've already covered how that looks.

Okay, I'm ready...let's get started!

Before you run off and begin writing down your questions, remember...tailor, tailor, tailor! Just like you've tailored all your responses so far, tailoring your questions only helps to reinforce the idea that you're the perfect candidate!

How do you do this? The same way you do for traditional and behavioral questions. Do your research. Find Qualities, and infuse them into your questions to ask.

Here's an example of a question to ask with a Quality (leadership) infused:

"In my past role I was leaned on heavily to provide leadership to a team of individuals, which I felt was an area that I succeeded in. What are the main responsibilities I would have that would require an elite level of leadership and could you see my past experience as a team leader benefiting me?"

Wow! If I were a hiring manager, I would be blown away by this question. The candidate is proving that they really care about the job and making sure they're able to do their absolute best if they were hired.

****QUICK DISCLAIMER ABOUT "OVER TAILORING:"** It's important to make sure you tailor your questions, but don't worry about tailoring all of them. Some questions can be straight forward and simple...but keep in mind that the tailoring proves you're going the extra mile. Keep that in mind...and again, use your best judgement!

14 GREAT EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWER

We've prepared 14 solid example questions for you to help kick start your creative juices as well as included why they're good questions to ask in an interview.

Of course, as always, these are example questions meant to help you write your own.

In order to prove to the hiring manager that you're the *Perfect Candidate*, make sure you use these questions as inspiration for your own...don't just take them word for word from here. Remember...go the extra mile!

— THE JOB —

1. "Can you tell me exactly what I would be expected to do if I were hired for this position? "

This question helps to make sure you know exactly what you're going to be doing and what is expected of you. This is a great way to make sure there are no nasty surprises waiting for you when you start. Having your job explicitly laid out for you not only allows you to know what you're signing up to do, but can also help you decide if you are not only willing to do the work...but also able!

2. "Can you walk me through a typical day here at Company X?"

Having the day laid out for you from beginning to end is a smart way to get a quick overview of what is expected of you outside the job description. I was hired for a job once where all the employees were expected to participate in a group physical activity before starting our day.

Had I not asked about a typical day I would have been completely unprepared for my first day and unable to participate. Not a great way to start out a new job!

— THE REQUIREMENTS —

3. "If I were hired for this position, would I be going through any training prior to actually starting the work?"

This is a great question to ask...especially if you are concerned about your ability to do the job. With the right training, an employee can quickly be brought up to company speed. If no training is offered and you're not sure you know enough to do the job...this would also be a great time to get clarification on that.

4. "How will I be trained?"

Again, you want to make sure you're going into the job with your eyes wide open. Training could be as simple as watching a video or reading a brochure or it could be a much more thorough and in-depth process. The point is, you want to know before you go.

— THE EXPECTATIONS —

5. "What are the performance expectations for this position? Will that expectation change the longer I am doing the job?"

This is a two part question...but knowledge is power and the more you have, the better off you are! You want to make sure you and your employer establish early on what they expect from you performance wise and not just for the immediate future. If this is a job you plan on sticking with for a period of time, make sure early on that you know what they want you to do and if that will change over time.

6. "Is there an employee performance review process? How often does that occur and can you walk me through a typical one?"

Again, a two part question but this information is absolutely critical...especially if the results of those reviews impacts your ability to advance either your career or your position within the company.

— THE COMPANY —

7. "Where do you see the company in five years? 10?"

This question is important because not only will it give you a sense of how stable your job might be, but the job you take today should always be in line with your long term career goals. The last thing you want to do is take a job that won't benefit you in the long run or help advance you towards the next step on your career path. Finding out early on where the company is headed in the long term can help you plan your own trajectory.

8. "Can you tell me what the career paths are for this department and what sort of advancements I could work towards?"

This question can give you a solid idea of the mobility within the company. Again, as we've said over and over again, the ultimate goal of any job you take is to help advance you on your career path and the last thing you want to do is take a dead end job with no hope of ever moving forward or growing.

— THE PEOPLE —

9. "Will I be working with a team and if I am, can you tell me a little about each of them?"

This question is a MUST! The last thing you want to do is get stuck with a bunch of people you can't stand. Finding out early on if you're going to be working with a good team or a horrible team can make your decision process an easy one.

10. "Can you tell me about my direct supervisor? Is there anything I should know about working with them that will make my integration a smooth process?"

Another two-parter, but again, you're showing that you're serious about doing what it takes to not only get the job, but do the job right. It's also a great way to get a bit of information about your supervisor. Like the rest of the people you're going to work with...if it's not a good match, then it might not be the job you want to take.

— THE ATMOSPHERE —

11. "Can you tell me what you love the most about working here?"

This is information you need to know! The last thing you want to do is to work somewhere where you're miserable and a good way to get a feel for that is to ask the hiring manager what it is that keeps them coming in day after day.

12. "How would you describe the working environment here? Is work done in a collaborative style or are employees more independent?"

This is a question that is going to not only give you a good heads up on what you are potentially walking into as far as atmosphere goes, but also lets you know what the expectations are for your own performance. Again, two-parter, but the information you're going to get in return is pure gold.

— THE WAITING GAME —

13. "What are the next steps in the interview process?"

This is not only a question you can ask to show you're interested in where the hiring process is going to go next, it's also a great way for you to get some reassurance. Nobody likes waiting to hear back from a company and getting nothing...at least this way you're prepped for how the process will continue and what to expect...and when.

14. "Is there anything else I can provide you with that would be helpful or questions I can answer?"

This isn't so much a fact finding question as it is one last opportunity to let the interviewer make sure they've covered all their bases. Brownie points!

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

So there you have it...not only do you now know why you should have good questions to ask during an interview, you also know how to ask them and what to ask them.

Make sure you take the same amount of time to prep these as you spend on the rest of your interview prep and above all, be yourself, be genuine, be the *Perfect Candidate*...

CHAPTER 22

WRAPPING IT ALL UP/TOP 10 TIPS

So there you have it...the three types of interview questions you're most likely to run into and how to answer them. Of course there's no guarantee that you won't get an interviewer who wants to think outside the box and throw you a question out of left field.

In that instance, just remember to keep your tailoring in mind and your STAR method to bring it back around to the qualities and multipliers that you know the company is looking for.

On top of that, we looked at the questions *you* should be asking your interviewer.

TOP 10 TIPS FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. ARE YOU MOCKING ME?:** Knowing ahead of time the different types of interview questions and how to answer them will make it easier for you to focus during your interview and the best way to prepare is to hold mock interviews. Have a friend or family member help you out with a mock interview where you can practice your answers before you get to the actual interview.
- 2. FOCUS:** One common complaint most hiring managers have is that many job seekers aren't focused in their answers. Your goal is to provide an answer to an interview question that is concise, targeted, and clear. Trust us when we say you won't win any awards for the longest answer.
- 3. DO YOUR RESEARCH AHEAD OF TIME:** Go into your interview already knowing what Qualities and Multipliers you need to become the *Perfect Candidate*. Don't rely on winging it to get you the job.
- 4. BE CONVERSATIONAL:** While preparing ahead of time is invaluable and we can't say enough good about holding your own mock interviews, try not to let your answers sound memorized. The idea is to build rapport with your interviewer and if they think you're just parroting back your answers, they'll have a hard time figuring out who the *real* you is.

5. **ANSWER THE QUESTION:** It's easy to get flustered in an interview. Before you answer a question, make sure you actually understand what's being asked. There's not many things that feel worse than spending 5 minutes answering a question only to find out you totally missed the point of the actual question itself. If you're not sure what's being asked...make sure to get clarification. It's better to ask than assume...
6. **HAVE SUCCESS STORIES:** Having a handful of solid success stories in your back pocket to use as examples in your answers is an excellent way to showcase your skills and knowledge to an interviewer. Not only are you letting them know your past achievements, but by bringing them around to the Qualities the company has (you did your research, remember!) your stories will help underline why you're the *Perfect Candidate!*
7. **TAILOR YOUR ANSWERS:** Make sure you're incorporating qualities and multipliers into every answer.
8. **USE THE STAR METHOD:** Not only will it help you answer the more difficult behavioral and competency questions easily, but it will make your answers more streamlined and targeted.
9. **HYPOTHETICALLY KEEP IT REAL:** Situational questions deal in hypotheticals. "What would you do..." but your questions should be grounded in past success stories. Use real examples of past situations to answer hypothetical questions to show that you have the skills and knowledge already in your job-seeking arsenal!
10. **TURN THE TABLES:** Remember, the interview process is like a date...you and your interviewer are both getting to know each other and figure out if you're a good fit. Asking well thought out intelligent questions not only makes you look good, it allows you to figure out if you really want the job!

Alright, now on to the questions & answers!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Whew! We finally made it to the end of the book...and let's be honest...it's this section that's really going to help make you shine in your interview.

Yes, every single chapter up to this point has been important, but if our book was a person...this portion would be the backbone. It's the core that everything else builds on. It's what's going to help hold every other part together and give you the solid center you need to not just do well in an interview...but really shine as the *"Perfect Candidate!"*

One of the biggest benefits that comes from having this book in your job search arsenal is the fact that we're here to help prepare you for almost anything you might encounter during an interview...and that includes these example questions and answers...

You may not be able to think of anything and will look (and feel) like a fish out of water with its mouth gaping open if you are not prepared. Thinking "on your feet" in an interview setting, while it is sometimes necessary, is far too risky.

Look at politicians and other public figures like celebrities. Because so much depends on their image, almost everything they say is carefully scripted. They practice everything from the words they will use to the inflection they put in their voice, to the expression they will have on their faces, even down to the gestures they make with their hands. They prepare "statements"; they rarely speak entirely off the cuff. You have to be ready on all these fronts too (without seeming unnatural about it) or else you may blurt something out that makes you look bad or say one thing with your mouth and quite another with your facial expression or body language.

Prattling happily on, flattered by the interviewer's interest, you may give too much information:

"It's interesting you asked about a time I had to supervise other people and how I handled it. Now that I think about it, I was considering taking a course in supervision after I got my second warning at Techrow that some of my jokes bordered on harassment."

Uh-oh.

That's why we're here—not to make you into a phony, but to give you a heads up on the kinds of questions you may encounter during interviews and to help you craft some model answers

and get you thinking about how you can tailor your responses using your own experiences into winning frameworks.

We'll also show you some big "no-no's" to look out for.

We'll outline example questions and leave in some blank spots where you can fit in your own experiences and skills. We'll give you clues as to what the interviewer is really getting at with his or her question and how to successfully navigate the dimly lit waters. And most importantly, we'll also give you hints and guidance as to what *not* to say.

Remember our general principle to apply in ANY interviewing situation: "it's not about you, it's about them." If you don't learn anything else from this book, this mantra will help you quite a bit.

As we said, we're going to give you special training in being prepared for questions, but we'll also provide you with everything else you will need to secure a job offer from your next interview!

As you'll see in the examples we provide for you in these following chapters, we've highlighted the Qualities in each answer in **BLUE**. You should now be familiar with what Qualities are and their importance in the tailoring process.

Also be on the lookout for Multipliers. These are extra bits of info that supercharge your answer. They will be highlighted in **ORANGE**. Remember, these answers are just guidelines. You will be creating your own Tailored and Targeted answers in the PC Generator section of the course.

Each question will also have a "**DO**" and "**DON'T**" section that explores in depth what you should be aware of when faced with that particular question.

Now before you run off with this section and start memorizing it we'd like to interject yet another word of warning. Remember, each situation is different, just like every job interview is different...these are possible questions with suggested answers...**NOT THE MAGIC KEY TO THE DOOR OF ALL KNOWLEDGE OR THE PILL TO SWALLOW TO BECOME THE MASTER OF ALL INTERVIEWS.**

Yes, this book is good...really good. Amazing, in fact. Super-duper awesome amazing good...but it's still just a tool.

It's up to YOU to make this book work for you and that means taking the time to really read through these Q&A's and then tailor them to fit your experiences and situations. Don't just

memorize these and then spit them back like some sort of suit wearing corporate parrot. You want to be hired for YOU... Okay, enough warning...on to the questions and answers!

THE TRADITIONAL QUESTIONS

“Tell Me About Yourself...”

Oh man, did you hear that? That almost silent “click” that echoed through the room when that question was asked? Did the ground under your seat just quiver a bit, as though something underneath you is...moving? That’s because the question, **“Tell me more about yourself,”** isn’t technically just a question...it’s actually a trap door right under your feet and as soon as they utter those fateful words, “Tell me...” the safety comes off and now you’re standing (or sitting) over a 50 foot pit that ends in a whirlpool of sharks with laser beams on their heads.

This question is the mother of all traditional interview questions. It’s especially important to be prepared for this one, as not only is it almost guaranteed to be asked, but your response can greatly influence the outcome of the interview. What is a hiring manager trying to get at when he or she asks such a question? Do they really want to know all about you? Your deepest, darkest secrets? Your hidden ambitions? The fact that you might be wearing a suit but underneath it all you’re still rocking your Superman Underroos?

Short answer: no.

The interviewer is looking for you to present yourself as someone who can fulfill exactly what they’re looking for. Their “Perfect Candidate”.

There are a couple ways to answer this but we’ve found that the best way to answer this is by providing a short and concise story that highlights some of your past work accomplishments and shows that you possess the Qualities they’re looking for...and remember, this is a job interview, not an appointment with your psychologist...so keep it business related.

Need some inspiration? Here’s a good answer you can use to help guide your own response and help put that safety back on that trap door.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I think the best way to do that would be to tell you about the time I was faced with a pretty disastrous situation while managing at xyz company. Our company's web application project was stuck in the mud & moving ahead at a snail's pace, mainly because of constant "meetings" that accomplished little. Meetings were the norm at the company but I really felt like they were hurting us so I came up with a solution I thought would help and then had our great team build it. It was an "Intranet Chat" program that allowed us to communicate, share ideas and plan our next moves with ease. It was a big hit with everyone because not only did it help productivity but it led to great bonding throughout our division. I bring this little story up because I think it highlights 2 things I pride myself on: [working well with others](#) and [thinking outside the box.](#)”

DO:

- ✓ Qualities: works well with others, outside the box thinking.
- ✓ Focus on the strengths you have that they are looking for.
- ✓ Keep it succinct and to the point.
- ✓ Keep it focused on your work accomplishments. They're not asking about personal situations. Remember, save those confessions for the shrink's couch...not the interview office.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't start out like Charles Dickens's famous novel David Copperfield did, with Chapter 1: "I Am Born." In this particular example, to talk about yourself is not an invitation to travel down every avenue leading out of Memory Lane.
- ✗ Don't digress.
- ✗ Don't go off on tangents.
- ✗ Don't talk excessively about educational or work experience that is not related to the job at hand.
- ✗ Don't recount in any detail more than the last ten years of your work experience.

“Why Should I Hire You?”

Another common traditional interview question is “**Why should I hire you over anyone else? What makes you unique?**” This may be prefaced by a few remarks by the interviewer that they have a lot of wonderfully qualified people interested in the job, which can be a downer. Don't let it get you, though. Speak right up. The hiring manager is looking for an excuse to hire you and it's up to you to give it to them! Chances are he or she really does have plenty of applicants and is sincerely interested in finding a way out of his or her dilemma: how to find someone who will be able to do the work and fit in well with the company long term.

Be the solution to the hiring manager's problem. Come up with something targeted but memorable about you that will make you stand out from the other applicants...but don't be too memorable. You want to stand out because you're amazing, not because you told the interviewer that you're not only the perfect employee, but in the event of the zombie apocalypse, you always utilize the double-tap method and you've watched every episode of MacGyver 20 times, so you're confident in your post

apocalyptic survival skills and know if it happens at work, your floor will survive because of your skills. Rather, try something more along these lines:

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I feel uniquely suited to work here at Ridell because of your law firm’s wonderful record as far as **social responsibility** goes. I know from reading about Ridell that it means a lot to your firm, and it does to me too. As you see on my resume, I’ve done a lot of **volunteer and charitable work**, and it seems to me that the pro bono work your lawyers do in underprivileged neighborhoods is just incredible. There are so many law firms where the lawyers only do pro bono work for already established clients. Of course, my experience at Plusson and Carra law firm, which covers family law too, prepares me professionally as well, as does the fact that I was editor of the law journal at my university.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Socially responsible
- ✓ Show you know some significant details about the company and their general practices because you have researched the firm and are prepared.
- ✓ Interviewers are looking for a “good fit” as well as professional competence. A “good fit” generally means they want someone who will get along with others at the firm and blend in.
- ✓ Your research on a firm before going to the interview might be able to give you keys as to how best you could “fit in” with the culture of the corporation. The interviewee has shown in this example that he or she would fit well into the culture of the firm.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t just say “You should hire me over anyone else because I’m the best,” or look vague and say, “I’m sure there’s a lot of stiff competition every bit as qualified as I am” and look distressed and downhearted.
- ✗ Don’t brag or make big promises, but give a concrete example of work you have done that is related to the work of the firm, stated confidently.
- ✗ Even a repeat of credentials and experience can do well in answering this question.

“Are You A People Person Or A Lone Wolf?”

Are you a people person or a lone wolf? Why would a hiring manager care whether you are an introvert or an extrovert? The job may call for one or the other; clearly, if you are interviewing for sales work or management of others, you’d better be a people person. If the job itself does not tip you off as to which type—introvert or extrovert—would suit the position best, aim for the golden mean, the middle ground, just to show you are well balanced.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As a sound engineering technician, I often have headphones on my ears, which has the potential to hinder conversation with others, but also means I have to be listening for the slightest sound. This has developed the independent side of my character. At the same time, I often have to set up and operate the electrical equipment for broadcasts, so I have a lot of conversations with others and I have to work cooperatively to make sure a production comes off well, which means being in touch with everyone on the job. I’d say **I’m a balance of the two.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Versatility
- ✓ Most jobs include working with others to some extent; yet some also require lone concentration, like the one in the example. If the job requires a lot of concentrated isolation, it is good to amplify the “lone wolf” self, using words like “independent.”
- ✓ It is always good to note that you enjoy people and consider human interaction important.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t imply that you have a hard time working with others, prefer to be alone, or are such a people person you can’t stand your own company for more than five minutes at a time.
- ✗ Avoid the extremes of one side or the other of the extroversion and introversion scales.

“How Do You Manage Your Time?”

How are you at time management? Well, hopefully you’ve shown up to your interview early and already proven to a small degree that you’re reliable. The last thing you want to do is to show up late and then be faced with this question.

Most responsibilities in adult life call for good time management skills; the job you are applying for may be in particular need of someone who can make a schedule and stick to it. If so, the hiring manager has to know that you can do that. However, a deeper underlying motive on the part of the hiring manager may be to be reassured that you will not be a clock-watcher, a time-waster, or someone who shows up and does the minimum before gratefully rushing home to his or her “real life.” Show that you care about doing a good job and putting in the time and effort necessary to do so.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Working as a travel agent, I had to be excellent at time management, as I was expected to sell and coordinate packages of flights, lodging, car rentals, admission passes, and tickets. All of these items needed to be coordinated and documented **efficiently** in order to ensure that my clients’ vacation expectations were exceeded. One other aspect of this position that was time-related was the fact that time zones played such a big role in the process. I was able to factor these differences into my work and ultimately provide my clients with a high level of service. **I noticed that at XYZ company (the company you’re interviewing for) you’ve instituted a customer appreciation program to really accelerate customer loyalty. I think this is a great idea because it shows you clearly understand that just because**

working efficiently is important that doesn't mean customer interaction and customer bonding needs to be sacrificed.

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Efficiency, Time Management skill.
- ✓ Multiplier: The customer appreciation program.
- ✓ Notice how the question is basically asking about a Quality directly.
- ✓ Although it is a general question, the interviewee has related it directly to his previous work experience and has shown how the training he had on that job translated into skills that he or she will use in the next job.

DON'T:

- ✗ Never answer questions like this with an unfounded self-endorsement such as, "I'm good at time management," accompanied by a shrug! You have to prove it with an example, preferably from your previous work experience that shows you have mastered the skill.
- ✗ Back up any claims you make with concrete examples.

“Do You Consider Yourself Well Organized?”

Do you consider yourself well organized? Similar to the question about time management, this hiring manager wants to make sure you are not going to be slacking off on the job, sitting in a sea of confusion, and not taking control of your work destiny and schedule. They also want to make sure you're organized but not inflexible. Someone who is so hyper organized that they lose the ability to function if their carefully structured world is slightly off angle is just as hard to deal with as the opposite end of the spectrum. The key to any question like this is to try to stay in the middle just enough to prove that you're a team player, but organized enough to also be able to step into a leadership position and oversee the tasks and make sure everything that needs to get done is done properly.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Yes. As an interior designer, I know that the first principle of an eye-opening, impactful display is to group objects with like objects. This principle of organization serves me well all the way down to organizing my alphabetical files of photo subjects. I've always believed that form and function need to work together, and that rooms and spaces should be organized as to be both beautiful and functional. I will bring these **organizational skills** to the table here as a window dresser. I have also found that by sharing these skills with my coworkers, we've managed to structure a photo database together that works well for us all. It allows us to upload our files from the main server into one large database rather than parceling them off on our own individual computers. By doing it this way we've managed to turn our individual collections of photo subjects into a massive database we can all draw from. This **saves us time and money** as we can quickly go through and pull photos that we might otherwise not realize we own and helps prevent us from having to purchase them from an online stock photography company.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Organization, efficiency and saving the company both time and money.
- ✓ Hiring managers want people who are well organized. Always answer in the affirmative.
- ✓ Give an example that you can tie in with the work at hand.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't say, "No, but my day-timer works wonders for me" or "No, I believe a messy desk really is a sign of genius." It is all right to explain how you learned to be more organized, through a program or the use of technology, but make sure you answer this one in the affirmative and back it up with genuine job experience.

“Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?”

Uh oh. Remember that trap door we diffused with the “Tell me about yourself” question? Well, they just clicked off the safety on that trap door again. This question is another loaded one, and how you answer it can easily determine if the interview continues, or if it's at an end...and your hopes for a job with the company at an end as well.

You really need to be well prepared for this next one because it can send up red flags to any interviewer or hiring manager: **Why did you leave your last job?** This is important for the interviewer to know. He or she is concerned about any bad partings in your past that may indicate a future bad parting with this company because of habits or attitudes you may not have corrected for. That's why it's important to cast any departures in the best possible light and to note any lessons learned during the experience.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“It became clear to me after several years that my promotion possibilities were limited and that I was at a plateau that was not going to change. I see that your firm has several women in senior management, and I admire your **commitment to diversity** and fairness. **In fact, one of the reasons I became so passionate about working here is because I discovered your “workplace standards initiative”. I've never come across a firm that has done so much for creating such a welcoming and diverse work environment and I'd like to contribute in any way I can.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Recognizes the importance of diversity
- ✓ Multiplier: The workplace standards initiative
- ✓ This sample answer slips in a compliment to the new firm while not getting too negative about the old firm. While the fact that the interviewer hit the “glass ceiling” is implied, the interviewee does not complain or accuse. She stays Positive.
- ✓ Try to make the reasons for your departure as positive as possible, even if your departure wasn't.
- ✓ If you were fired, try to soften it by saying you were asked to resign: “I was asked to resign after a project went awry on my watch.” If asked to explain further, you can say something like, “While there were many factors involved in why the project experienced so many complexities, I have thoroughly examined my role in it and realized that I needed more project management

skills. I have recently gained certification in project management from my local community college, and I think the whole process has been a great learning experience.”

- ✓ Show you are a responsible person. This answer directly above shows that the interviewee is a responsible person. He or she assumes responsibility by saying it happened “on my watch” and “I have thoroughly examined my role” and has taken action to correct a perceived weakness.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't be negative. At least be neutral. Leaving a place of employment is often accompanied by negative feelings. The important thing is not to say bad things about your last job or any of the people in it. You don't want the hiring manager to be thinking, “Hmm, I wonder what he/she will say about me if things go south between us!”
- ✗ Blaming others or saying negative things about them appears to be an avoidance of responsibility and speaking ill of others always has the potential to come back against you. No matter how big you think the world is, the reality is, people talk...a lot. Better to give them something positive to talk about than something negative that can bite you in the tail down the road. Always be the bigger person.

“What Is Your Greatest Weakness?”

Okay, Superman...this isn't the time to blubber about your aversion to kryptonite or pretend you're Popeye and talk about how if you don't get your spinach the world could come to an end. The question **What is your greatest weakness** is a serious question that requires some serious answers...but not necessarily the answers you're thinking of. The reason hiring managers ask this question is because they want to know how self-aware you are. We all have weaknesses...but when we acknowledge those weaknesses and turn them into positives that work for us, it shows adaptability as well as insight into our characters...two very desirable traits! They also want to know if you have a flaw that fits a pattern in people who left the position in the past. The hiring manager may even drop you a hint somewhere along the line (not necessarily while discussing this question) such as “Extroverts tend to be dissatisfied in our research department because they have to spend so much time alone at the computer screen.” That's why it's wise to play it safe on this one.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I have a tendency to finish an article 99% and then find my energy flagging for that last 1%. I've learned a few tricks for dealing with that, however. For example, when I'm writing an article, I know that the last paragraph is one of the most important in the piece. There are times when I know ahead where I want the article to go **and I'll actually start with the last paragraph first and work towards it.** In other instances, when I know I'm starting to slow down a bit, **I'll take a break before tackling the last paragraph, rather than trying to finish all at once.** I know I need that extra burst of energy and mental clarity that a break can give me in order to give the last paragraph punch. I'm sure your people here at GlobalScan Encyclopedia know how important a strong concluding paragraph is, as it often summarizes the whole article. **I pride myself on dealing with any problem that I face strategically..”**

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Problem solver
- ✓ Turn a weakness into a strength.
- ✓ Show that you are aware of your weakness and what you have done to overcome it.
- ✓ Make sure you let them know that your “weakness” (which they will perceive as a strength if you phrase it right) never gets in the way of your job performance, and that you are correcting for it in a responsible way.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't pretend to be Superman or Superwoman: “My greatest weakness is that I don't have any!”
- ✗ Don't be blatantly obvious or pandering: “I work until two in the morning every single night and then I show up again at dawn, ready to work. I don't want to sleep, I love my work so much, but my doctor tells me this is a weakness.”
- ✗ In the same way you don't want to blatantly pander, you don't want to be foolishly honest either by revealing a glaring weakness that will raise their scalps: “I have a tendency to drink too much at lunch and I'm fuzzy all afternoon,” or “I'm hard to work with. Numerous people have said I'm impossible to please.” Don't talk about things you are still having a hard time conquering. Talk about things you have already overcome.

“How Would Your Friends Describe You?”

You may be caught off guard when an interviewer suddenly turns to the non-work side of your life and asks, **How would your friends describe you?** Catching you a little off guard could very well be the hiring manager's intention. He or she is trying to get a read on who you really are when you are “out of uniform.” Don't reveal too much.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I think my friends would describe me as a dedicated person who keeps his commitments. I am honest and attentive and consider myself a good listener. For the most part, I'd like to think that my friends would say that they **can always count on me to try to do the right thing**. When my best friend was in the hospital for lung cancer surgery last year, I spent every evening at the hospital during visiting hours because we had pledged to one another as kids that we would always stick together. On weekends, I helped take care of his yard.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Dependable.
- ✓ If possible try to mention character qualities that help the interviewer make a mental leap to how you would behave professionally, even though the question is framed in a personal way.
- ✓ This interviewee has shown that he is indeed “dedicated” by giving a clear example of what he did to demonstrate that quality. Going “every evening” and “on weekends” showed that he

honored working hours (he was dedicated to his company) but also worked hard to honor his word to his friend.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't say anything unprofessional, like: "They know I like to party hard on weekends" or "They know I'll always drop everything if they need to cry on my shoulder" or "I'm told I'm a lot of fun at get-togethers." Be to the Point, which is to impress your Professionalism on the interviewer.
- ✘ Don't say anything that makes you seem strange or unbalanced, like "I don't really have any friends" or "I don't socialize much. I'm either working or asleep, that's it."

“What Are Your Goals?”

What are your goals? People who set goals are the same people who achieve more and those are the people hiring managers want on their team. If you set goals and accomplish them, it shows that you're concerned about the future. Someone who has no goals will never grow on their own. People who don't set goals are the ones who are comfortable letting the world around them dictate their direction and growth...both qualities which are great, if you're a plant. But you're not! Think big! Be honest, but don't be cocky. Don't tell the hiring manager your goal is to have their job in a year...but make sure that you let them know that you're interested in growth and advancement, and that you're willing to do the work that it takes.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I'd like to work for a company where I can add value to the enterprise and where there is a chance for an ambitious and diligent person to advance the company's goals as well as my own. I notice that PrepTutor is expanding to accept more Chinese students through your **“Asia-Connect”** program. My parents emigrated here from Hong Kong, and I speak Mandarin. I'd love to help Chinese young people assimilate through language—**it's been a goal of mine for some time to serve the immigrant community. I see it not only as a way to reach out and increase our visibility within this vibrant community, but a way to expand our ability to communicate with potential customers and business contacts both here locally and eventually globally as well.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Goal driven.
- ✓ Multiplier: the Asia-Connect program.
- ✓ Phrases like “ambitious and diligent” and “advance the company's goals as well as my own” show that you are willing to work to add value to the company in a way that encompasses your own goals.
- ✓ This answer, taken from a real interview situation, brought out key points of the applicant's qualifications that tally with the company's needs and goals.

- ✓ The applicant has done some research on the company and thought beforehand about how his or her particular skills can add value to the direction the company is going in.
- ✓ The applicant has thought about and set goals—important abilities in the working world.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't be overly ambitious in stating your goals. "I'd like to be president of this company someday" is attainable but somewhat unrealistic at this stage of the game! So is "I'd like to be sitting where you're sitting, interviewing people and making them sweat."
- ✗ On the other side of the coin, don't be wishy-washy, as in "Goals? I really don't have any."
- ✗ Don't be self-centered: "Goals? Pay down my debts some, I guess. That's why I'm looking for a job." Being to the Point always means relating yourself, your experience, and your mindset to the company's needs and desires.

“What Are You Doing to Achieve Your Goals?”

What are you doing to achieve your goals? Like we said in the above question, people who set goals are the same people who achieve more and those are the people hiring managers want on their team...however, setting a million goals for yourself but then never accomplishing anything beyond that doesn't do anyone any good. Your hiring manager wants to know if you're an actual go-getter, or just a dreamer who's great at making impossible lists.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Growing up I always wanted to travel to Europe and see where my family was originally from. During my sophomore year of college I learned about an exchange program that actually took me right to the heart of where my family ancestry was from. The program specialized in international law as well as business and I knew it was a once in a lifetime opportunity. By working afterschool as well as weekends, I was able to make enough money to go on the trip. Not only was it the trip of a lifetime, but it introduced me to an **entirely new way of looking at business on a global scale**. When I came home, not only had my dreams to travel been fulfilled, but I knew that my next goal would be my degree in international business, a goal I quickly met when I graduated top of my class. **Each new experience has encouraged me to reach further with my goals and each goal met has opened a door and helped me set the next goal**. In fact, getting a job here would be another major step in my goal process. I know that **the company has been planning on expanding into the international market** and I know that my experiences overseas as well as my degree can help to make that transition smoother.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Goal driven with the ability to not only visualize the goal, but execute and achieve.
- ✓ Multiplier: International expansion plans.
- ✓ Being eager to help the company grow in a new way or direction shows that you are willing not only to work to add value to the company in a way that encompasses your own goals but that you bring skills and talents to the table that will help them achieve their goal as well.
- ✓ The applicant has done some research on the company and thought beforehand about how his or her particular skills can add value to the direction the company is going in.
- ✓ The applicant has thought about and set goals—important abilities in the working world.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't brag or make your goals seem out of touch with the company or are ridiculous, half-baked or incomplete. "I really wanted to be the first person to climb Mt. Everest with a pack of Chihuahuas as my only support. So far I've raised over \$50 online and I train every weekend by running the stadium stairs at the local community college for two hours. It should only be five more years and I'll finally be ready to make that climb!"
- ✘ On the other side of the coin, don't be wishy-washy, as in "Goals? I really don't have any."
- ✘ Don't be self-centered: "I set a new goal every Friday night to bring home the best looking person at the bar. So far I'm scoring a perfect 100% on nothing but perfect 10's...if you get what I mean!"
- ✘ Being to the Point always means relating yourself, your experience, and your mindset to the company's needs and desires.

“How Do You Make Decisions?”

How do you make decisions? Since every situation and position in life requires us to make decisions, the hiring manager wants to know your facility in this important skill so you can be trusted on the job, particularly if the job requires lots of responsibility.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I use several different means to reduce the risk of decision-making, including cost-benefit analyses, as well as a decision-making model that lays out the problem, options, alternatives, and consequences. Furthermore, I always try to analyze the pros and cons of making a decision. For the most difficult decisions, though, I usually consult company values. For example, the business I worked for last made custom-tailored men's dress shirts. Profits were great, and business was growing. When they were struggling about a decision to expand their offerings beyond that, I reminded them that their values were to give **excellent customer experience through superlative service** and products, which they couldn't do as well if they were expanding beyond their capacity. The CEO expressed to me that he was grateful that I kept them from compromising their mission statement and that they were growing at a manageable and profitable rate."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Customer service oriented.
- ✓ This person has shown that she is aware of decision-making models and employs them; she is also aware that decisions involve a certain amount of risk management. When push comes to shove, the person says, she goes back to the company's values (usually expressed in a mission statement and the general atmosphere of the company). Such an aware person, who is able to back up her decision-making prowess with an example, seems deserving of a good decision—to hire her!

DON'T:

- ✘ Clearly, you don't want to say you "leave things up to chance, like a coin toss".

- ✗ Don't shrug and say, "It depends on the decision to be made" or show lack of responsibility by saying something like "I usually leave all that to the higher-ups."
- ✗ Don't come to an interview without being armed and ready with decision-making models or preferably examples of successful decisions you have made.

“What Do You Do In Your Spare Time?”

What do you do in your spare time? By lobbing this seemingly “soft” question at you, the interviewer is trying to sound out how well you will fit in with the company and its goals.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I exercise to work on fitness and to manage stress and I enjoy reading magazines related to the trade. One of my biggest passions however is community beautification. I actually created and lead a group in my district that makes it their mission to create THE most beautiful neighborhood in town. So far we've gone on to plant over 400 trees and even got permission from city hall to create a small park to replace an ugly unused lot in the area. **I love organizing, inspiring and working together** with my neighbors to make our neighborhood a better place to live.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Leadership
- ✓ The hiring manager isn't really interested in your personal life; he or she probably just wants to know if you are a balanced person with a lot of diverse interests and activities. Employers respond well to a person who works on fitness and manages stress well (fewer problems with healthcare and insurance).
- ✓ Hobbies and pastimes that relate to the job at hand are especially important, e.g. reading magazines related to the trade. If a hobby like building model airplanes relates to honing your fine motor skills, which relate to the job, it is good to mention that and verbally tie it to the job you are applying for.
- ✓ Staying abreast on current events is almost always a plus, as it means you may be alert to changes affecting your industry.
- ✓ Learning another language—especially one that is spoken by large numbers of people in the world—shows you are a lifelong learner, and many companies are interested in bilingual speakers in our global era.
- ✓ Mentioning family and friends last—even though they may be first in your heart—is strategic. Spare time activities should mostly be relatable to the company, and family is at times considered a tricky issue, especially for women. It's not fair or right, but it is reality.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't name hobbies or pastimes that are utterly irrelevant to the job. The interviewer isn't asking this question because he or she is dynamically interested in your spare time habits.

- ✘ Don't shrug and come up with a blank or a negative either: "I'm your typical couch potato. When I'm not at work I'm watching TV." Most employers appreciate well-rounded, multi-tasking people.

"Is There Anything Else I Should Know About You?"

Is there anything else I should know about you? The interviewer is giving you a chance to make a good impression, while at the same time, searching for any disqualifying factors that may come up. Be honest, but let's keep skeletons in the closet where they belong. Everyone makes mistakes in their past or does things on their own time, but unless your mistakes are going to affect the company, keep them to yourself. Instead, find something about you that is interesting and can be used to relate another strength to your potential employer. Don't talk about the fact that you like to dress up like Marilyn Monroe and sing karaoke on weekends, or that Emma Stone has a restraining order against you...keep it positive and keep it business.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I didn't mention an interesting anecdote when I was the safety manager at SkyScraper Construction Co. I had just completed my CPR and First Aid courses, and a man on site suddenly went into cardiac arrest. My supervisor looked at me and said, 'You're in charge of safety!' I had practiced on a dummy but never on a live person. I knew I had to **keep calm and simply do what I was taught**. I revived him while others called 911. He later thanked me for saving his life. Although I don't anticipate such a thing happening often, the incident taught me that, no matter what happens, **keeping calm and putting one's training into motion will often resolve a threatening situation**. I think that was excellent training for an air traffic controller position, in addition to my FAA certification, of course."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Ability to remain calm under pressure
- ✓ A memorable closing story which casts you in a favorable light will stay with the interviewer long after you leave. Of course, you cannot and should not make something up, but think of a time when you acted well under pressure, especially if the job calls for it (which many jobs do).
- ✓ Relate any answers to this question to the job to be done.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't shrug helplessly as if you hadn't a clue.
- ✘ Don't answer with a flat out "No."
- ✘ It is not a time to spill your guts though, e.g. "Well, yes, I was arrested a couple times when I was in my early teens. It's sealed up in my juvenile records, but I thought you might want to know anyway." Remember, if it isn't going to come up in any way shape or form unless you bring it up personally...then don't bring it up at all.

“What Is Your Biggest Strength?”

Besides “Tell me about yourself,” this next question is probably the most commonly asked. Forewarned is forearmed: be prepared to discuss this next one. Think of several strengths that you have and as always, be to the point, be honest, and be business. Try to relate those strengths to the job at hand when the interviewer asks: **What is your greatest strength?** He or she is interested in knowing how your greatest perceived strength is such that it can benefit the company.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As a self-employed architect, **I had to learn all phases of running a business**, from taking care of the IT work to visiting construction sites to doing accounts payable and receivable. I passed the Architect Registration Exam in the 90th percentile of scores meaning I bring my architectural expertise, but I also have the **entrepreneurial strength and spirit**. Since your construction company is a start-up, I think that would add a lot of value. **I don’t mind wearing a few different hats**, even if one of them is a construction helmet.”

DO:

- ✓ Qualities: Self starter, self reliant and versatile
- ✓ This interviewee has successfully tied her experience to the needs and desires of the company, which is a start-up and will need diverse and experienced candidates.
- ✓ She also “got it”, in that she is an expert in her field and is certified at a high rating, but also has expressed her willingness to roll up her sleeves and do the multi-tasking that is often called for in a start-up.
- ✓ She keyed her answer to be to the Point: her greatest strength related to how well she will do at the job being offered.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t brag when talking about your greatest strength.
- ✗ Don’t come up blank and clueless.
- ✗ Don’t make claims that you can’t illustrate with a brief example or fact.
- ✗ Don’t be overly modest but don’t claim to be Superman or Superwoman either.
- ✗ Don’t name a strength that is irrelevant to the job at hand.

“Why Are You Interested In This Job?”

Why are you interested in this job? The interviewer may want to know whether you are going to be a team player or how well you have tried to understand the company’s needs. Are you here just for a

paycheck or do you see yourself becoming an integral part of the company and growing along with it? Nobody wants to hire a long term employee only to find out later they've got a temp hire mentality...especially if the job requires extensive training or an investment in you on the part of the company.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"The main reason I want to work for Barrett, Fortis and Keller is that your firm aligns perfectly with why I became a lawyer in the first place: to make sure there was **someone championing ethical standards in this field**. As a lawyer, we often walk the fine line between winning a case and doing the right thing which is why I admire the way you have managed to balance ethics and winning so successfully."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Ethical
- ✓ The interviewee relates previous job experience and skills to the reason he or she is interested in the company, at the same time showing knowledge of the company's position in the industry. It is likely that the interviewer will not only feel kindly toward the interviewee, who is modestly asking for an entry-level job at this august company, but toward the interviewee's old company, which had the good sense to recognize how great the interviewer's company is?
- ✓ Allow for human nature. Everyone likes recognition and praise.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't say something self-centered, like "Because you offer more pay for an entry-level position than the next guy" or "Because I wanted to cut down on my commuting time to and from my old job." Remember, it's not about you. It's about the company and their needs.

“What Was The Last Book You Read?”

What was the last book you read? The hiring manager wants to see if your intellectual and entertainment interests reflect those of a responsible person. Remember to be honest and don't just name off the first book you think of because you heard it on Oprah's book list. The last thing you want to do is to lie about a book you've never read and find out that your interviewer has read it and wants to discuss it. Also, be careful about what book you decide to go with...50 Shades of Gray may be popular, but is that the book you want your interviewer to identify you with?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I've been reading Cloud Atlas. It has six different narratives that are not obviously related. I like to look for the connections between seemingly unrelated things and solve puzzles, so the book really engaged

me. That’s why I turned to being a paralegal: **I love doing research and finding precedents related to a case at hand**, and I’d love to work at your law firm doing just that.”

DO:

- ✓ Qualities: Detail oriented, lateral thinking
- ✓ The applicant successfully related this seemingly soft question to a hard skill she possesses: doing legal research and drawing correlations between cases.
- ✓ She was Prepared. She saw a connection between her chosen profession and her choice of literature, and she helped the interviewer see that connection too.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t go searching in your memory for the last book you read, showing you weren’t prepared for this question.
- ✗ Don’t say, “I don’t read books” or name one that has no relation to the discussion at hand. Remember, every minute in an interview is an opportunity to firmly impress upon the interviewer the message that you are uniquely qualified for this job.
- ✗ Don’t cite a strange, revolting, or controversial book.

“What Are Your Favorite Websites?”

What are your favorite websites? This may reflect a hiring manager’s concern that you will abuse Internet privileges while on the job (many, many people do). He or she likely wants to know if your choices are targeted, intelligent, and informative about the task at hand.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I visit ArtInfo.com and Arts&Smarts.com to keep up with the latest artists, collectors, and exhibitions. I think that knowledge will serve me well working in the bookstore here at the New Metro Modern Art Museum, whether I am shelving books or assisting customers in finding what they are looking for.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Creativity
- ✓ This person shows that he or she is informed as to what websites relate to the job and cares enough about the work to keep abreast of the industry.
- ✓ The person shows that he or she will be a good “fit” with the employer.

DON'T:

- ✗ It should probably go without saying, but steer clear of mentioning any sites that may be considered offensive or inappropriate. Similarly, try not to reveal any personal or religious beliefs via the websites you frequent.

“Are You Willing To Travel?”

Answer this question honestly: **Are you willing to travel?** This is generally a pretty straight-up question. Some tricky interviewers may be trying to get at how much you are willing to sacrifice for the job. Being willing to bet the farm on it may not necessarily get you the job with such, though. Treat this question as a face value inquiry...and be honest. Saying yes because you think that's the answer that will get you the job is fine if it's true, but if you're someone with obligations at home (pets, family, other jobs, etc) and being offered a job that requires a lot of travel puts you into situations that make it difficult on you or your work, then it's not worth it.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Yes, I am willing to travel. As an IT consultant who has had many government contracts, I've been to all kinds of far-flung places, from Asia to Europe to the Middle East. My wife and I have arranged our lives so that the kids are always cared for. We live in the midst of a network of close friends and family members. **We're well prepared for any necessity for travel.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Work flexibility
- ✓ This applicant has successfully reassured the interviewer on the main reason why people don't want to travel: family concerns and responsibilities. If the job calls for travel, a person like this appears to be a wonderful bet on the part of the hiring manager.

However, if you really don't want to travel, this is the time to say so.

“My understanding was that for the branch manager position, travel was to be limited to the tri-city area. I am certainly willing to travel within that radius. Can you give me an idea of how much travel outside of that area, if any, would be called for?”

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't wince, bite your lip, and say yes if you don't mean it, hoping the problem will go away. It won't. If they are asking the question, they probably have some travel in mind.
- ✗ Don't miss this opportunity to get honest and useful information related to the amount of travel that will actually be involved.

Don't say yes or no until that point is made clear.

“Are You Willing To Relocate?”

Once again, it is best to be prepared and also to be honest if they throw this one at you: **Are you willing to relocate?** The hiring manager may be thinking of a position for you at a new location they are in the midst of opening or may think that you'd be a better suited somewhere other than the advertised location.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Yes. I have no close family in the immediate vicinity and I rent a townhouse, which is in a desirable location and which I can easily sublet. I noticed that your company had branches in different states and even different countries, and I applied for the job knowing that **relocation was a distinct possibility.**”

Or:

“My understanding was that there were openings only at this branch and also at the branch in Kevington. My husband and I have considered moving to Kevington, and we would do so if that were the opening I was offered. **I would be happy to work at either of the branches.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Work flexibility
- ✓ As in the previous question regarding travel, make sure you are willing to relocate and can do so without a lot of hassle.
- ✓ Research beforehand will tell you whether the job might require relocating. If you are not willing to relocate, say so up front, unless you are so desperate that you know you and yours would jump at the chance as long as you get a job.
- ✓ The second answer kept things positive by not saying no directly, but by offering a willingness to consider two alternatives.
- ✓ It's okay to seek clarification from the hiring manager about potential relocations.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't over-promise. If you are not willing to relocate, don't volunteer to!
- ✗ Likewise, if your spouse would be unwilling to relocate, don't say you would be in the hopes of convincing him or her later.
- ✗ If it would be difficult to relocate your children due to school, activity or friend commitments you may want to reconsider.
- ✗ Don't promise them the world and put your whole family on the line for the company and then not be able to deliver.

“Do You Work Well Under Pressure?”

Do you work well under pressure? All jobs have varying degrees of pressure that are put on their employees and asking you how you perform lets a potential employer know what to expect when the heat is on. Granted, if you're working in a rocking chair factory as a rocker tester, your level of stress will be a little different than someone on the bomb squad diffusing explosives...but either way, it's in the company's best interest to know ahead of time just how well you handle yourself when it counts.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I originally got my CDL license to drive city buses. There is so much going on in a city—you have to look out for lane changes, changing signals, pedestrians, and be ready to pull over at a moment's notice when a passenger rings the bell too late. There's traffic, of course, and people talking on their cell phones on the bus. I never had a single accident. **I think city bus driving prepared me pretty well for the pressures of driving a suburban school bus for the unified school district.**"

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Works well under pressure. The interviewee has answered the question and also managed to slip in some nice information about her certification and qualifications, while describing success at a stressful and complex job.
- ✓ Inspire confidence in the hiring manager, who may know that the job you are applying for is a stressful one.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't just say, "Yes, I work well under pressure" or "Yes" and let it go at that.
- ✗ Don't say, "No." Most jobs involve some pressure, and employers will want to know that you will not cave in when the going gets tough. Remember, you're coming in to work on a team, and no boss wants to hire someone that, at the first sign of pressure, cracks like the sugar crust on a flan and has to be carried by the rest of the team.

"Why Is There A Gap In Your Resume?"

This is a question that can make your palms sweat, but will go down a lot easier if you are prepared: **Why is there a gap here in your resume?** What were you doing during that time? Too often unexplained resume gaps can raise red flags in hiring managers' minds, so it's up to you to turn this white space into a positive.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"When I decided to make the career leap from the public to the private sector, I took some time to get my Master's in mathematics. **I had a Bachelor's in statistics, but I thought a Master's in mathematics would be a more versatile degree.** On the section of my resume dealing with education, you will see my Master's degree award and the date. It's two years from the time of my last government job."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Willingness to further education.(This can apply to jobs that require further on the job training)
- ✓ If there are gaps on your resume, be prepared to explain them. They will most likely come up.
- ✓ The best way to deal with gaps in your resume is to show how you were improving your game during that time. If you did volunteer work or got more education or worked at a job you never mentioned on your resume because it was a “stopgap” job, by all means tell them what you were doing.
- ✓ The strongest answers show that you were doing something to improve your skills and usefulness in the job market.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't say you needed some time off from your last nightmarish job to recover.
- ✗ Don't say you were so depressed from being fired from a job that you sat around the living room for months at a time, blankly staring at the TV screen.
- ✗ Try to avoid revealing any personal issues you may have been dealing with (i.e. alcoholism, mental issues, etc.)

“Why Are You Leaving Your Current Job?”

“Why are you leaving your current job” can be a tough question if you’re currently employed and actively seeking outside employment. This can be a red flag to employers. Nobody wants to hire someone that they feel is just waiting for the next big thing or who looks like they’re eager to job hop as soon as another opportunity comes along. Also be aware that if you’re interviewing for jobs and are currently employed, there’s a good chance your interviewers could call your current employers for references or to ask about your role and work there.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I wouldn’t plan on leaving the great company I work for if I weren’t so excited about the opportunity your company presents here. **I understand that you are opening up some South American markets,** and since I grew up in Brazil, I feel that I am uniquely qualified to help the people in the marketing department understand the language and culture in that country, which has one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. **I feel that an in depth understanding of the market is key to crafting marketing messages that match your potential customers perfectly. This is the best way to create lifelong customers that become raving fans and is something I’m very passionate about helping your company achieve.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Marketing understanding
- ✓ Multiplier: The fact that they are opening markets in South America. This answer scores well because it is positive about the company being left and dynamically enthusiastic about the company to come.

- ✓ The applicant doesn't let her enthusiasm overshadow the fact that she is extremely qualified for the position, which she does by remembering to outline her experience with the Brazilian culture.

DON'T:

- ✗ Never make a negative statement.
- ✗ Don't begin to whine and complain about your old job, extolling the virtues of this new one (which you have never yet tried).
- ✗ Don't say, "It's time for a career switch and I'd like to try my hand at the job you are offering" or "I'm tired of doing the same old thing." Give a pointed, Positive reason for why you want to head off in a new direction.

“What Salary Are You Expecting In This Position?”

What kind of a salary are you looking for? The hiring manager wants to know whether your salary expectations align with how much the company has allotted for the position as well as how well it aligns with current market standards. This is the time you want to show that you've done your research and looked into salaries at comparable levels. Don't lowball yourself in the hopes that you get a job and then end up resenting the work you're doing for cheaper than you deserve. At the same time, be reasonable and don't ask for the top tier.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I would expect the salary to be in the median range for a radiologist within this area—between \$60,000 and \$70,000."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Not much chance to inject a quality here
- ✓ Be prepared to answer this question. Know the median salary range for the kind of position you are seeking and offer a range. Check out Glassdoor.com, Salary.com or Indeed.com. If, however, you are not comfortable with the lower number in the range, phrase it so that you say something like "The median salary for a radiologist is about \$67,000, so I would expect something along those lines."

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't be unprepared for this question or you are going to look foolish.
- ✗ Don't look blank and say, "Oh, about a hundred thousand," or become squeamish and ask for less than the industry standard in the hopes of outbidding your competitors for the job. If you don't know the median salary range for the position you seek, research beforehand what you can reasonably request. (The above-named figures come from the U.S. Bureau of Labor's Occupational Handbook, which is readily available online. This handbook can give you a ballpark

figure for national averages, but you may want to check out state and local averages as well so that you don't low-ball or high-ball too much.)

“Can You Start Right Away?”

Can you start right away? The hiring manager may ask this question because the company needs someone right away, but if you can convince them you're worth waiting for, they may be willing to do that too. A particularly Machiavellian hiring manager might be trying to ferret out how you treat employers you are planning to leave.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Out of respect to my current employer, I'd like to give the standard two weeks' notice. I would like to help them find and prepare my replacement, though, as I took a lot of pride in my work and I would like to pass it on responsibly. On top of that I believe one of my strengths is **my ability to train and teach others complicated tasks**. I think this is why my employer is pretty keen on me staying the full two weeks to facilitate the transfer. I would do that as a courtesy to any employer regardless. However, I might be able to arrange to work part-time there for the next two weeks and be available to you on a part-time basis as well.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Teaching and training skills
- ✓ If you are responsible to your current employer, the interviewer can be sure you will be responsible to them.
- ✓ If you are unemployed, of course, you can start right away.
- ✓ The hiring manager may be trying to work out whether you are currently employed or unemployed. Make sure your answer coincides with what you have on your resume!

DON'T:

- ✗ Do not say, if you are unemployed, that you wanted to take a little more time off to finish any non-work related tasks you might be working on.
- ✗ Don't say something self-focused like, “If I don't give two weeks' notice I won't get my severance package.”
- ✗ Don't say, “I was hoping to collect unemployment for another two weeks while I take the motorcycle trip I've always wanted to.”

“Are You A Self Starter?”

Are you a self-starter? Hiring managers are looking for people with initiative and drive, and if you're going for a higher level position, the last thing you want is to have them think you're someone who has to be constantly babysat and directed. Self motivation and knowing what needs to be done next shows leadership skills and initiative and helps to reassure a hiring manager that you're someone who isn't just willing to work but someone who, when faced with a lull or completion of a task, won't just sit around and ask what's next but will know to jump forward and start the ball rolling again.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"Yes, I am a self-starter. **I take pride in setting challenging yet achievable work goals, working out action steps, and constructing a calendar to achieve them, which I meticulously check each day to make sure I am on target.** As a technical writer, I had to break the task of writing a manual down into research, rafting, writing, editing, and revising—all within the publisher's time frame. I would expect to do the same here at The Paper's Edge Publications."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Self-starter (You may get several questions which are asking about a particular Quality point blank. Pretty straightforward just be sure to have specific examples of how you possess that Quality.)
- ✓ Relate this general question to specific ways in which you self-start, including examples from relevant work experience. Connect your self-starting qualities to the job at hand.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't just say, "Yes, I'm a self-starter" and throw your hands wide in puzzlement as to how to prove it to the interviewer.
- ✗ Don't say, "No, I work best when surrounded by the encouragement and support of multiple colleagues" or you'll scare the hiring manager off. He or she wants to know how motivated you will be on the job.
- ✗ Don't say "No" to this question.

"What Are Your Qualifications For This Position?"

What are your qualifications for this position? Hmm, I can hear you already... "What? Hang on, what sort of question is that? Come on, you turned in a resume, right? Why can't whoever is interviewing you read the dang paper and see what my qualifications are? Are they lazy? Illiterate? Just plain dumb?!" Hang on...before you get your Superman Underroos all in a bunch of **self-righteous** angst, it might just be as simple as the hiring manager wanting to hear your qualifications in your own words to see if there is anything about you that stands out beyond the written list of qualifications and experience. A resume is intended to be a brief look at your work history and there are times when you have experiences beyond what's on that little piece of paper. Now is the time to discuss those as well!

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As you can see by my resume, I completed my Associate’s degree in dental hygiene at Besell Community College, and I worked for two years as a dental hygienist at the Mountain View Hospital’s voluntary residency program for dental students. I also volunteered with our municipality in their free dental program for children from lower-income families under the age of eighteen during my senior year in high school. **I loved volunteering and was excited to learn about your “community dental outreach program!” It’s something I’d love to be a part of as I’m quite familiar with this type of work.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: None used in this case
- ✓ Multiplier: Community dental outreach program
- ✓ The person has succinctly listed his or her educational and work experience, and voluntary qualifications in the field. An answer like this is well rehearsed and very much to the Point.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't ramble.
- ✗ Don't talk about unrelated work experience unless you can tie it in somehow.
- ✗ Don't describe irrelevant things like the décor of the last office you worked in. Stay to the Point.

“Why Have You Had So Many Jobs Over The Span Of Just A Few Years?”

Why have you had so many jobs over the span of just a few years? Similar to the question about gaps in your resume, the hiring manager probably wants to know if you are a flight risk. Most companies don't want to go to the time, trouble, and expense of recruiting, hiring, and training someone only to have that person leave suddenly. The best thing to do in a situation like this is to point out the way the jobs are all interconnected. More than anything the manager is looking for reassurance that you're interested in a long haul position, not a temporary hire situation.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As a consultant, I work on a project-by-project basis. The different jobs you see on my resume represent different projects I have sold to clients and worked on. However, I am interested in a more permanent position now, and I think you can see that my various projects in the healthcare industry as well as my experience in selling my consulting services will stand me in good stead in pharmaceutical sales. One of the reasons I feel I was so successful selling my services was **because I created a real bond with each and every one of my clients which in turn led to a lot of repeat business.** I look forward to bringing that same approach here.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Customer interaction and selling skills

- ✓ This person has given a good reason for some hopping around from job to job.
- ✓ If you can't give as good a reason as the above, explain that you have been searching for your niche and feel more directed now.
- ✓ Try to relate the skills and experience you picked up at your various jobs to the job at hand.
- ✓ Emphasize that you are ready to settle down now.
- ✓ Emphasize the positive—a variety of experience in a variety of settings has made you versatile and has given you great flexibility.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't try to deflect the question by making jokes or being funny.
- ✗ Don't mumble something about never being able to be satisfied.
- ✗ Don't say, "Yes, I have a propensity to get myself fired. I think my bosses feel threatened by me when they see that I'm better at their jobs than they are."

“Don't You Think You Are Overqualified For This Job?”

Don't you think you are overqualified for this job? The hiring manager may be wondering if you will be bored or will easily leave the company if something better comes along. By phrasing it this way, they are intentionally trying to put you in a defensive position. They want to make sure that you're really there for the right reasons and that you're truly interested in sticking with the company.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Actually, this job presents some unique differences from the experiences I have had that I will look at as exciting challenges. For example, even though I was a veterinarian's assistant, I was not able to interact with the animals outside of a clinical setting. Working at this shelter as an animal care person will give me more hands-on experience with frightened, perhaps abused animals in need of care, which is really where my heart lies. I've volunteered at animal shelters before and loved it. **On top of that I'm excited to get the chance to work and collaborate with a team which I feel is one of my real strengths.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Collaboration
- ✓ Sometimes the word “overqualified” means that the hiring manager is afraid you are going to want more money than the company is willing to spend or that you'll be in a job you quickly grow bored with. A veterinary assistant, to use the above example, makes more money than

does an animal care person, and the hiring manager might fear the applicant will expect the higher salary.

- ✓ Emphasize that a job like this is what you really want.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't say, "Yeah, but just try getting a job in my field in this economy!" or "I'm so desperate at this point I'll take anything," or "Yes, but my self-esteem is so low, I always aim for the bottom."
- ✗ Don't say, "So? That's to your advantage, isn't it?"

“Why Were You Let Go From Your Last Job?”

Take a deep breath before you answer this one: **Why were you let go from your last job?** Clearly, the hiring manager wants to know if there is anything about you that means you will be a less than optimal employee at this job. As much as you might want to bash your last boss, or unload about how badly you were treated or the unfairness of the whole situation, this is NOT the time. This isn't your shrink or your bff or even Joe the bartender down at your local watering-hole. This is an interview for a job and you have to remember to keep it positive and spin it in your favor. Above all, DO NOT BASH YOUR LAST JOB OR EMPLOYER...it's too easy to speak negatively about an experience but all it does is make you look bitter and unprofessional.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Although the company was downsizing because of budget concerns, I examined myself to see if there was any way I could have survived the cuts, and I asked my supervisor to advise me on that. He said that my department was a little too specialized in today's bad economy because a company has to be 'lean and mean.' I wish I had seen that coming and found ways to cut our department's budget before it had to be cut out entirely and people let go as well. I was not the only one who was let go. Actually I'm excited to have this opportunity with your company as the position involves a lot of cooperation with different departments. **I love working with others and solving problems by trading ideas.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Working well with others and looking for alternatives to problems
- ✓ Standing up for one's self in a reasonable way is effective.
- ✓ Words like “downsizing” and “budget cuts” and “bad economy” are good defenses if they are true and are the reasons for departure from the job.
- ✓ The interviewee has shown a willingness to self-reflect and to seek advice on the reasons for being let go and has realized how she might have done a course correction. However, the last sentence of the answer reinforces that the basic problem was a downsizing.

DON'T:

- ✘ If you really were at fault, don't hide it. Chalk it up to learning the hard way and explain how you have course-corrected since but don't turn this into a sob story or tear-fest. Again, this is a job interview, not your psychiatrist's office.
- ✘ Don't say lay the blame on the company or the staff and make negative comments about them specifically.

Try to answer honestly with a calm demeanor. If you are lying, your body language will give you away!

“Are You Good At Making Decisions?”

Would you say you are good at making decisions? The position the interviewer is authorized to fill may require a lot of decision-making and he or she needs to discover whether you have this skill.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I do think I'm good at making decisions, yes. Although I believe there's a right way and a wrong way to make decisions. No one has a crystal ball, although we've all wished for one at one point. That's why I try to never make a decision out of emotion, such as anger, frustration, or fear. If I am feeling a strong emotion, I will put off the decision until I can see things with my head rather than my heart. Deciding to close the doors on my small business, for instance, before we accrued enough debt to have to consider bankruptcy, meant **I had to let go of my emotional attachment to the firm and make a decision based on numbers alone.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Analytical thinking
- ✓ Give a responsible answer that shows you know something about decision-making.
- ✓ Show that you have made some difficult decisions.
- ✓ Back up your claims to be a good decision-maker with an example of a responsible decision and how you made it.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't answer with a simple “Yes.” Give a work-related example.
- ✘ Don't answer with a simple “No.”

“Do You Think Co-workers Should Date One Another?”

Do you think co-workers should date one another? The hiring manager may simply be trying to discern whether you have or are aware of professional standards.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I think co-worker relationships should always be characterized by the utmost in professionalism. It seems to me that things work out best when there is a strong separation between professionalism and getting personal. I don’t see how the objectivity and impartiality needed for professionalism can be maintained otherwise. Although there may be exceptions between highly responsible parties, I would say that on the whole office romances detract from a company’s ability to achieve its goals and tasks. **Staying organized and on course with a proper plan is the way I get things done** and I feel like romance can sometimes derail that.”

DO:

- ✓ Qualities: Goal setting and organizational skills
- ✓ This is a safe answer. In most occupations, co-worker dating is frowned upon. Of course, some people have met and married as co-workers and behaved responsibly all along. . The applicant has used strong, positive words that the interviewer will associate with him or her, especially “professionalism,” and “a company’s ability to achieve its goals and tasks,” showing that these things means something to him or her.
- ✓ This answer helps to characterize the applicant as someone who sees the company’s welfare as being the top priority at work.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t use negative or judgmental language about people who date someone else on the job.
- ✗ Don’t recount a tawdry affair that destroyed business relations at the last place you worked.
- ✗ Don’t gossip or lose your dignity.

“How Do You Handle Difficult Customers?”

How do you handle difficult customers? Some positions require direct contact with customers, and the interviewer wants to know how you will handle the more difficult ones. Remember, no business is built without customers...and any potential employer wants to know how you are going to handle dealing with the less than pleasant ones. Hiring someone who potentially drives away the customers that help keep the business in business is...well, bad business!

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As far as I am concerned, the customer is always right, even if he or she is wrong. I’m sure you occasionally have dissatisfied customers here at this auto parts store; **I noticed your unconditional satisfaction guarantee posted on the wall.** At the auto parts store I worked in before, we gave refunds whenever there was a complaint, even if it didn’t seem justified. We always said we were sorry if the customer was unhappy, even if we had done everything we could to please them. **I’ve found that just listening to an irate customer makes a big difference, and it often helps to keep them coming back, because it builds customer loyalty.** I think it’s better to lose a little money on a refund than to lose your reputation, because bad word-of-mouth really gets around.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Customer skills
- ✓ Multiplier: Bringing up the satisfaction guarantee sign
- ✓ The interviewee has given a responsible answer relating previous job experiences to the job he or she is interviewing for, including information about the company itself.
- ✓ The interviewee has shown a high awareness of the importance of customer service and linked it to the new company’s stated policy.
- ✓ The interviewer is clearly trying to understand if the interviewee has good customer service skills and must be reassured on that point.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t bad mouth customers or launch into a horror story about Customers-from-Hell.
- ✗ Don’t say, “You know how stupid people can be, but you’ve got to give in to them anyway if you still want their business.”

“What Do You Know About Our Company? Competitors?”

What do you know about our company? Competitors? Your interviewer wants to know if you’ve done your homework on the company or if this is just one more interview in a long list of interviews you’re doing just to get a job.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As someone who’s always been interested in the bio-tech field, I’ve watched your company with interest for years. From the first Scientific Discovery magazine I picked up that detailed the breakthrough your company had with genetically diverse strains of E.Coli to the most recent advances in water purification systems you’ve pioneered in Somalia, I’ve watched as the company has grown from a small offshoot of the larger Pharmacorp to its own independent and thriving rebirth as MedTech. Reading about your CEO’s start as a lab tech and seeing where he is now helped give me the direction I needed to complete my own **degree in research and development.** **I know that MedTech has a**

humanitarian branch and that it is competing with BioGen to be the first company to be able to bring clean solar energy water purifiers to third world communities and I hope that I might be able to contribute to that process. I'd love nothing more than to be a part of yet another great discovery by MedTech that not only changes the scientific world, but helps improve lives as well."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Research and development
- ✓ Multiplier: Humanitarian outreach
- ✓ The interviewee has shown that not only do they know about the company, but that they've been following it for a number of years and are aware of not only the company's successes, but also their outreach and charitable programs.
- ✓ The interviewee has shown a high awareness of the company's humanitarian projects and a desire to participate in them as well.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't just rattle off information you got from the brochure you picked up from the front guard gate on your way in or recite commercials.
- ✗ Don't throw your hands in the air and say "Well, you guys do scientific stuff, right?"
- ✗ Don't bring up company failures or unfavorable comparisons to their competition. "Well, I know you guys are getting your butts kicked by XYZ Corp, so you might as well hire me because you couldn't do much worse than you already are."

“How Do You Feel You Can Contribute To the Company?”

In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company? Your interviewer wants to know that you're more than just a warm body sitting in a desk collecting a paycheck. If you're interviewing for an upper level position this is especially important as they will expect you to bring something to the table beyond a pulse.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I'm hoping that if I'm hired I'll be able to really get involved with the animation segment of your educational programming. Although my **degree is in screenwriting**, I spent three summers working as a tutor and have experience with the National Common Core Standards. As you know our educational system is moving towards a standardized system utilizing the Common Cores and I know my past work in this area will not only make my writing more targeted, but I'll be able to work hand in hand with your education specialists to make sure that we're hitting all the benchmarks we need to in order to be considered for both state and national distribution within the classrooms.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Degree in screenwriting.
- ✓ Multiplier: Educational program.
- ✓ Do talk about skills and qualities you might not have listed on your resume, especially if they can benefit the company.
- ✓ This person shows that not only do they have the degree required for the job but that they've researched the company as well as what is happening in the country that might impact the direction the company is moving towards. By telling the interviewer that they bring not only their writing ability to the table, but also skills and knowledge about the educational aspect as well as knowledge related to new emerging national standards, they are indicating that if they are hired, they will be able to hit the ground running without requiring more training.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't point at yourself and say "I'm bringing this...what more do you want?"
- ✗ Don't shrug and be vague. "I'll bring whatever you need me to bring. You know, stuff? Want me to bring cookies on Fridays? I can totally do that."

“What Did You Like Best/Least About Your Previous Job?”

What did you like best/least about your previous job? This question has the potential to be a serious trap. Answer very carefully and remember to keep it positive. This isn't the time to bitch about a co-worker who made your life miserable or brag about the awesome parties your boss would throw where you'd all get drunk and photocopy your butts. Remember, you want to be hired and your priority is to keep it professional and positive.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"It's always easy for people to tell you what they didn't like about something, so I'd rather focus on what I did like about my previous job. Working for a big company like SprawlMart meant having to deal with a wide variety of customers from all different walks of life. I grew up in a small town in Wyoming so moving to Los Angeles and working there for SprawlMart was definitely a culture shock, but one I quickly grew to love. Because of SprawlMart's location and the diversity of the neighborhood it was in, I was able to meet and interact with people I would never have had an opportunity to even see in my smaller town. My job entailed working at the customer service desk and helping customers with their returns. I loved it because not only did I get to talk with new people every day but I was also able to help make sure their shopping experience with Sprawl Mart was ultimately positive, no matter why they came in to return or exchange an item. Of course dealing with customers who are unhappy with their products can lead to the occasional tense moment, but I found that **by listening to the customers as well as being open to new and different points of view made it possible for me to deal with even the most difficult cases.** By being aware of our differences as well as our similarities, I was able to find common ground in almost every situation. Through my work there I was able to make friends and connections I never would have even dreamed possible. **In fact, it was your community outreach program that first caught my eye when I started looking for a job. I am excited to be a part of a**

company that believes so passionately in community involvement and I look forward to the opportunity to use the skills I learned at SprawlMart here as well.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Customer service
- ✓ Multiplier: Community Outreach Program
- ✓ Do look for the positive before you talk about the negative.
- ✓ This person’s refusal to speak negatively about their past job clearly reflects positively on them.
- ✓ They took what could potentially have been an opportunity to slam their previous employer and instead spun it in such a way that a difficult job was turned into a positive learning experience.
- ✓ This person has also shown that their interest in the company is more than just in obtaining a job. By mentioning the community outreach, it shows that the individual has not only done their company research, but that they are eager to get involved.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t use this question as an opportunity to complain about your past job or former employer/employees.
- ✗ If you go the positive route and talk about what you liked best, don’t put the past job into such a lofty position that the current employer is left wondering why you left/quit/got fired/are no longer working there and what the odds are of you leaving a job with a new company if the old company asked you back.

“How Would Your Last Boss Describe You? What Would They Have To Say About You?”

What would your last boss say about you? Again, keep your answers positive. Hopefully you’re leaving your old job on a good note and your boss will have nothing but good things to say about you!

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Working at PortaCon was an amazing experience and a lot of that was because of my boss, John Winner. He was a tough boss in that he had very high standards, but those standards were meant to push us beyond our comfort zones and reach for the best, not just “good enough.” What I loved the most was how he challenged me to look at things in ways I might never have before allowed me to explore new ways of solving old problems. I would like to think that if asked, **he would tell you that I am passionate about what I do and although I can be stubborn at times that it comes from a place of loyalty to the company and a desire to put forth the best possible product I can.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Commitment to quality

- ✓ Do be honest...but at the same time, be cautious about what you say. Remember, make it positive.
- ✓ This person is self aware enough to admit that they are stubborn but although that might be seen in some circles as negative, that it was due to their desire to ensure that the company produces products of the highest quality.
- ✓ This answer lets the interviewer know that the interviewee is an individual who takes their job very seriously and that they demand a high level from not only themselves, but those around them.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't give an unfavorable answer like "Well, I don't know for sure, but I'd bet he'd tell you I can out-drink a fish, out-swear a sailor, and out-wrestle a bear."
- ✗ Your answer doesn't have to be epic or include multiple ways you saved the company or helped prevent some huge disaster. It can be as simple as "He would tell you I'm always punctual." Or, "No matter how bad the day, I try to always have a smile for everyone who walks past my desk."

“Have You Ever Been Fired Or Forced To Resign? What Have You Learned From Your Mistakes?”

Have you ever been fired or forced to resign? What have you learned from your mistakes? This can be another difficult question to answer...but once again, keep it positive.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“When I was in college I was working at a clothing boutique selling high end designer label clothing. It was one of my first jobs and I have to confess I wasn't entirely sure of what I was doing, but I was trying my hardest. My boss was a very difficult person who demanded a level from me that I wasn't able to meet, not because of lack of desire, but because of lack of experience and training. Ultimately she let me go and hired someone with more experience. It was disappointing not only to lose the job, but to know that I had been willing to learn if someone had only been willing to teach. That experience has taught me that sometimes an employee who is struggling isn't struggling because they don't care or don't want the work, but because there might be gaps in their knowledge. At my last position I was responsible for several other individuals, one of whom seemed to always be a step behind the rest of the team. Rather than firing them, I pulled them aside and we discovered that they had been promoted from another department but never given the necessary training and that they had been struggling and essentially learning on the job as they went. **We worked out a schedule where we could meet up and go over the materials together and now rather than slowing down the team, they're leading it.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Leadership and teamwork

- ✓ Do be honest. If you were fired, tell the truth. If it was because of a mistake you made, own up to it, but then tell them how you've learned from it.
- ✓ This person took a negative experience at one job and then used it to recognize potential issues with current coworkers. Rather than firing them, they used their knowledge to approach that worker and discover a solution together.
- ✓ This answer lets the interviewer know that the interviewee is an individual who sees the company as a team.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about a negative situation that reflects badly on yourself or your past employer.
- ✗ Even if you've never been fired or forced to resign, you may have had to deal with a difficult situation at work, a reduction in pay, or removal from a project...use that.

“Are You A Competitive Person? How Do You Deal With Others That Are Competitive?”

Are you a competitive person? How do you deal with others that are competitive? Your interviewer wants to know if you have drive and a desire to continue to improve yourself and your role within the company in a healthy and constructive way.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I would absolutely consider myself competitive, but never at the cost of those I'm competing against or the projects that I'm working on. I used to work for a company that would encourage different departments to participate in friendly competition in an effort to get us to think outside the box and come up with creative solutions to problems. We were given tasks to complete and a time limit that was specifically designed to be too short for us to complete the task. Once the time limit was reached, we were all told to stop our work and actually exchange our results and progress with the other team and then we'd both work on the opposite project for the remainder of the time. In that way we were competing, but still working cooperatively. It led us to not only try new things, but gave us the opportunity to see how others approached similar problems in different ways. **I know that you also have an inter-departmental challenge program like that here and I'm excited to get back into a little healthy competition with coworkers.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Not much chance to inject a quality here.
- ✓ Multiplier: Inter-departmental challenge program
- ✓ This answer lets the interviewer know that they are not only team players, but that their competitiveness is healthy and constructive.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't turn competitiveness into something where if you don't win, you won't play.
- ✘ Don't relay stories where your competitiveness ended up hurting yourself or someone else.

“Describe Your Ideal Work Environment.”

What would you consider an ideal work environment? Your potential employer wants to know if you're a good fit for the existing dynamics or if fitting you in is going to be a challenge.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I really enjoy collaborative environments and like to encourage my coworkers to utilize each other when it comes to working on problems or tasks together. I worked for a company for a time that fostered a community feeling within our workspaces by encouraging open door policies and group events aimed at helping us to learn about each other on a deeper level beyond just working together in the same space. We discovered that although we were all assigned specific tasks, we all had talents and skills that lent themselves to tasks others were working on. By encouraging us to share knowledge and ideas, we were able to work through our own tasks much faster and it gave everyone a sense of purpose and empowerment knowing that they were able to help out others as well as themselves. The nicest part about this open door policy was, although it was a little more unstructured than a typical office environment, we were all respectful of each other's time and space and I found that the office was actually much calmer and more conducive to work than a typical office full of closed doors. I have always said two heads are better than one and I really would like to continue to work with a company that feels the same way. **A company that encourages the employees to work together and inspire one another as well as celebrate their successes together is one I find the greatest satisfaction working with. In fact, it's that very same collaborative open door policy you have here that really helped solidify my decision to apply here.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Collaboration and teamwork
- ✓ Multiplier: Collaborative open door policy
- ✓ This person has demonstrated through this answer that they are a team player who believes in collaboration but still insists on pulling their own weight.
- ✓ By indicating that they are aware that the company has a similar policy, they show that they have done their research and that they are not only open to this style of working, but that they are eager to become a full participant.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't talk about how you can only work if you are surrounded by total silence and four walls. If you're going into an environment where you're expected to work with others, being an introvert might not be the best fit.
- ✘ On the flip side, don't talk about how you have to have your work environment just so and if anything is out of place, you can't function. Working with others means being adaptable and

someone who can't go with the flow or adjust to whatever environment they will be working in could mean the difference between hiring and not hiring you.

“Tell Me What You Think Makes A Good Leader and Give Me an Example of a Time When You Had To Show Good Leadership Skills.”

Tell Me What You Think Makes A Good Leader and Give Me an Example of a Time When You Had To Show Good Leadership Skills. The interviewer wants to know if you have what it takes to guide others and inspire them to work with you, not against you. They also want to make sure that they're hiring someone who knows how to lead as well as follow and not just someone who is power hungry.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“To me a truly good leader is one who doesn't just orders his troops to follow him but actually inspires them to do so. Anyone can issue an order, but it takes a true leader to get people to willingly follow them. A great leader not only has vision but knows how to execute it by maximizing the strengths of those he is leading. Prior to my entrance into the corporate world, I spent four years in the United States Navy working in the Engineering Department onboard an aircraft carrier. Being in a military environment you learn a lot about leadership and what sets a good one apart from a bad one. We were lucky in that my division was led by a Chief who not only placed high expectations on us, but on himself as well. There was never a time when I felt he was issuing us orders he himself would not follow if the roles were reversed. He showed me that being a leader meant not just leading, but knowing how to follow as well, and that a good leader learns from those around him. On multiple occasions when situations got tough, he would roll up his sleeves and get to work right alongside the rest of us without a word of complaint. Rather than leading through force or authority, he led by example and I know I speak for all my shipmates when I say there was nobody else we would have rather followed into any battle. Since that time, I've tried to emulate his leadership skills in my own work situations. **As a leader of several teams at my last job, I never asked my coworkers to do a job I would not be able or willing to do myself.** In fact on one evening we had a critical piece of communication equipment go down on us and our then supervisor was no help. Rather than guide us, he panicked and went home, literally leaving us behind, holding the pieces. I knew that if we left the equipment as it was and just waited for tech assistance from an outside repair facility, that the company could potentially lose both money and customers. I rallied five of my best guys and we spent the night breaking down the equipment and rebuilding it. Although we weren't able to fix it 100%, we got it operational again and were able to limp it along until proper repairs could be made. Our efforts helped prevent a huge financial loss. As a result, my supervisor was transferred to another department and I was promoted to his position.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Ability to solve problems and save the company money
- ✓ This employee shows through their answer that just because things get difficult, doesn't mean they back off or let others do the dirty work.
- ✓ Being a good leader means inspiring others to follow you and work with you. A leader is nothing without a good team behind them and by being willing to lead by example, this employee shows that they can maintain a strong group dynamic and get things done.
- ✓ Do talk about how you've led things before. Even if it's not in a corporate setting... Do you lead a student group? Do you run a charity or spend time coordinating volunteers?

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how you think leadership is all about authority and power. Nobody wants to deal with an out of control egomaniac.
- ✗ Don't say that your ultimate goal for a leader is to direct the work but not actually participate or do any yourself.

“How Do You Handle Delegating Tasks?”

How Do You Handle Delegating Tasks? The employer wants to know if you can run a team efficiently or if you're prone to playing favorites or handing out unbalanced workloads.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“When I'm in charge of delegating tasks, the first thing I do is examine the individuals I'm delegating to. **I like to make sure that I delegate tasks based on individual abilities and strengths.** If I have someone who is strong in one area but not in another, I try to make sure that the tasks they get reflect those strengths. In situations where I know someone is weaker in one area, I like to pair them up with someone who can help strengthen that area. Once I get that done, I then create a task sheet that breaks down the work and the deadlines we're expected to meet. Then it's a matter of checking in with each person individually and as a team to make sure I'm answering their questions and that they're on task. We do progress reports on Mondays and Fridays and if anyone's struggling, we come together as a team to address the problems and help find solutions.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Delegation and ability to recognize skills
- ✓ This employee shows through their answer that they know their employees well enough to recognize where their strengths and weaknesses are and adjust accordingly. This shows that they not only care about the company and the work they produce, but about the individuals they are leading as well.
- ✓ Do talk about how you've delegated tasks before and how you've determined why you delegated the way you did.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't talk about how you assign jobs based on who you like more or less. A company is not a place to play favorites and assigning tasks based on your personal feelings won't get you far.

“What Do You Bring to the Table That No One Else Can?”

What Do You Bring to the Table That No One Else Can? This is a sneaky way of rewording the old phrase “What have you got that nobody else has?” Your potential employer wants to know what sets you apart from the rest of the people who are applying and what your edge might be over the masses.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I bring enthusiasm, drive, passion, and most importantly, real world experience. I know many of my fellow applicants are coming fresh from school and training but because I'm older, I can draw not only my training, but the skills and experiences I've gained through my day to day interactions with customers. Role playing scenarios and text book guides are all excellent when it comes to learning about negotiations and how to handle customers, but no class can give you the training that comes from actually doing the job in a real world situation. **My three years working at TeleConnect in the customer service department and then later in the sales department helped expose me to just about every type of customer care there is...and helped me learn how to deal with each situation and how to turn a negative customer experience into a positive one.** I worked with customers who were ready to cancel their service and walk away, and it was up to me to work out a solution that made everyone happy. I also worked with customers who were having the best day of their lives because they were able to hook up their internet and see their grandchildren for the first time via webcams. I was truly sorry when TeleConnect downsized and I was let go, because I do miss that day to day interaction with customers...both good and bad...and I am so excited by the prospect of coming to work for you here at BroadTech. I know through my work with TeleConnect that your service department has an excellent reputation. In fact, when we found out TeleConnect was actually doing away with their public services and focusing only on the private sector, I sent many of my former customers over to you guys because I knew they'd get the professional treatment and service they had come to expect with us. I'm hoping that by working here, I'll be able to reconnect with some of them and continue to provide the same service and support that I did before.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Real world experience and hands on training
- ✓ The interviewee may be a little older than the average applicant for the position, but age should never be a final deciding factor in hiring. Someone who comes equipped with not only the training but also real world experience and skills is a valuable employee to have.
- ✓ By referencing the sales and service department and indicating that they have already sent customers to BroadTech, it's evident that the interviewee truly believes in giving good customer support and that they are willing to go above and beyond the normal call of duty to ensure that their customers are happy with their service...no matter who is providing it.
- ✓ Do talk about what you bring that nobody else has. Hey, they asked for it...give it to them!

- ✓ Do make sure to highlight skills you have that might not be the usual skills, you never know what might help set you apart.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't say "Well, you don't have to pay me as much as another employee who's younger because I can supplement my paycheck with Social Security."
- ✗ Don't hide your experiences or training, even if they're in a totally different sector. A good employee tells their interviewer about all their work training and skills. A GREAT employee tells an interviewer how that training and those skills will benefit the company.

“What Accomplishment are you The Most proud of?”

What Accomplishment Are You The Most proud Of? The interviewer wants to know what you've done in the past that you feel is really impressive or had the greatest positive impact. They're also listening to hear how you describe this accomplishment because, depending on what story or example you relate, they want to know if you're someone who takes all the credit, or if you're truly a team player.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I think my biggest accomplishment so far would have to be getting selected to participate in the A.P.T.C. Training Program. It's a very difficult program to get into and although they have over 2000 applicants each year, they only select twelve actual students. The entire process is about three months long and involves multiple levels, including an application, essay questions, and a six hour written exam, a group interview and finally a panel interview with the heads of the program. I knew that if I was going to get in, that I couldn't do it alone. The first thing I did was contact everyone I knew who had been in the program and asked if they would be willing to mentor me. I was incredibly lucky that my friend Dan said yes...to a point. He said he would be more than willing to help me but that he refused to give me any of the answers. He would guide and suggest, but that anything I said or did had to come from me directly. I agreed with him 100% because the last thing I wanted to do was to get into the program because they thought I was someone else.

I wrote all my essays myself and filled out the entire application alone. When I was done with a section, I would send it to Dan for critiques. He would give me suggestions and ideas on ways to make them more dynamic, but never once did he say "No, write this...not that." Every word on my applications was from me alone.

Finally after I had made it through the tests and the essays and the application and had moved onto the group and final panel interview sections, Dan spent hours grilling me on things I should know if I was

going to succeed in the program. He never gave me the answers. If I couldn't answer his questions, it was up to me to find it out myself. It was ridiculously tough, and at times incredibly frustrating but it was also something I wanted to see all the way to the end, not just for myself at this point, but for Dan as well.

When I got my acceptance letter, I was ecstatic. Not only had I made it in, but I had done it on my first try...something that is almost unheard of. Of course, I not only told Dan the good news, but made sure to do it over a huge steak dinner. He'd earned it! Now, five years later, I'm a proud member of the guild and am able to call Dan not only friend, but equal as well. **Through this experience I learned that being a good teacher means not giving someone all the answers to the questions, but giving them the tools they need to discover the answers on their own. It's this very philosophy that guides me as I lead my own teams today. In fact, when I saw that your company has a mentorship program, I was immediately excited. I know how big of an impact Dan had on my life and career and I'd like to be able to pass that experience on to others."**

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Leadership, teacher and training skills
- ✓ Multiplier: Mentorship program
- ✓ The interviewee is obviously proud of their accomplishment, but rather than take all the credit, acknowledges that they are aware they couldn't do it alone. Although we all wish at times that we were Superman, the truth is, many great accomplishments are done with others, and a good leader is one who can recognize the work and worth of others.
- ✓ Do talk about things you're genuinely proud of. This is your chance to brag a bit. Even if your accomplishment isn't work related, you should still talk about it. Sometimes accomplishments that are academic, service or charity related have just as much impact on an interviewer as someone who singlehandedly saved their past corporation from folding. The key is to figure out how to make it relate. In this case, the mentorship program.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't brag about an accomplishment that could be considered tasteless, off color, or just downright useless. "Well, me and Jim-Bob have quite a reputation down at the local bar for being able to put down the most shots of Tabasco in the shortest amount of time."
- ✗ Don't make up an accomplishment just to make you sound better or embellish one to be bigger than it is. Sometimes even the smallest accomplishments can be just as hard won and rewarding as the big ones.

"Do You Take Direction Well?"

Do you take direction well? This one is pretty much a no-brainer. Your employer wants to know if you're someone they can direct and lead or if you're someone they are going to have to fight with every

step of the way. If you're too bullheaded and independent to work in a team, you might want to take a good hard look at the job you're applying for.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I like taking direction because I know that it means that I'm essentially getting blueprints from my boss on how he wants something accomplished. I know some people can get frustrated when given too many directions, but to me, it's a bit like having the recipe card for a really elaborate desert. With step by step directions that are specific and precise, I recognize that it's not always a comment about my ability to complete the task or that they question my skills, but rather it's a method that has been proven to be the most efficient and cost effective and that by following these steps, I'm ensuring that everything I create is identical in quality and craftsmanship. Now, don't get me wrong...as much as I enjoy step by step directions, I know at times that things are a little more harried and directions might end up being short and sweet. I love those challenges as well because they allow me to find my own solutions and in some cases, improve on previous methods. Of course, if I have any questions or concerns, I always come back for clarification. I'd rather step away for more direction than plug ahead and end up having to start completely over."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Ability to follow directions
- ✓ The interviewee is open minded enough to take directions without getting offended by someone being overly descriptive but confident enough in their skills to be comfortable taking the lead when things aren't as clearly defined.
- ✓ Understand that there are multiple levels of direction taking and explain your level of comfort with each.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't compare taking directions to being micro-managed.
- ✗ Don't give the impression of being high maintenance or difficult to manage because you have difficulty taking directions from others.

"What Frustrates You At Work?"

What frustrates you at work? Your employer wants to know if you're someone who is normally calm and rational or if you've got a hair trigger and a temper. Everyone gets frustrated at work from time to time, but an employer won't want to hire someone who is consistently frustrated, bothered, angry, or loses their cool at the least thing.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"Inefficiency is probably the thing that frustrates me the most at work. I like when things run smoothly and when we're all working together towards a common goal. When something isn't moving right, or

there are too many redundancies that serve no purpose beyond generating excess paperwork, I can feel myself starting to get frustrated. **The key is to keep your cool and look for solutions** rather than let it eat you up. I had a job once where my boss insisted that every report we produced had to be in a binder, which made sense, until you realized that we had ten different departments and were all producing multiple reports, and packaging them in the exact same binders. When it would come time for a meeting, my boss would be sitting at his desk surrounded by these identical binders. It would sometimes take five minutes for him to find the specific departmental binder that he wanted so he could talk about the issues of the day. We spent many Monday morning meetings sitting around the table watching him open and close binder after binder trying to find the one he wanted. Finally, because I knew it was wasting both time and money, I wrote up a proposal suggesting that each department be color coded. I researched a distribution company and found that not only could we get enough binders in different colors to make each department unique, but that if we ordered them in large enough quantities, we could get them at almost half the cost of the regular plain black binders. I took my proposal to my boss and presented it to him in such a way that it came across as time and money saving rather than as an attack on his inability to find the right binder for our meetings. He was so impressed that we implemented the change immediately, much to my relief...and my co-workers. Now our meetings are much smoother and each department binder is easily identifiable just by color.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Efficient problem solver/diplomatic
- ✓ The interviewee was clearly frustrated by their boss but rather than sitting back and just letting their anger grow, they did something proactive in a professional and thoughtful manner.
- ✓ By identifying the problem and coming up with a creative solution, this employee is clearly someone who thinks outside the box.
- ✓ Additionally, by presenting the solution in such a way that the boss is spared the embarrassment of being called out for being inefficient, the employee reveals that they are conscious of other’s feelings.
- ✓ Do be honest about your frustrations but for each one, make sure you have a solution or a way you’ve dealt with it that is creative, and productive.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t turn this into a bitch fest about everything that pissed you off about your last job, from the dirty coffee maker to the drinking fountain that never worked.
- ✗ Don’t make it personal. If you had a beef with another employee, don’t name names, and certainly don’t make it a huge deal. If you have to mention it, keep it vague and general, but also try to make it positive.

“How Far Are You Willing to Go to Get What you Want?”

How far are you willing to go to get what you want? Basically your interviewer is asking, “How ruthless are you?” Before you go off the deep end and start reciting passages from “Lord of the Flies,” take a deep breath and think about how you want to answer this question.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Wow. That’s a tough one. In this day and age it seems like everywhere we turn there are stories about individuals and how they’ve succeeded at the expense of others. I believe wholeheartedly in working hard to get what you want and that there are times when you have to stick to your guns and make sure you’re protecting yourself, but I also don’t like the idea of my success coming at the expense of someone else. The best answer I can give you is **I’m willing to give you my very best at all times because I expect nothing less from myself, or my coworkers. One of the things that attracted me to your company in the first place was your solid review system for employees. I like the fact that you have evaluations every six months and that promotions are awarded not based off of longevity but performance and production.** To me that’s incentive to do my best every day and if I’m doing that, then there’s no need to resort to anything beyond honest hard work to get ahead.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Honest hard worker
- ✓ Multiplier: Employee review program
- ✓ The interviewee is a team player who believes in honest hard work over dirty tricks and underhanded methods. Although it may seem at times like those methods get results, they also get noticed for the wrong reasons and rather than rewarding them, most employees who use these tricks find they’re out the door.
- ✓ Do be willing to go the extra mile.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t smile and run your finger across your throat and say “Whatever it takes.”
- ✗ Don’t start doing your favorite moments from “Survivor” or talk about how you singlehandedly got your entire IT department fired so you could take over and create your own little cyber kingdom.
- ✗ An employer wants a well oiled machine and an employee who is constantly working to undermine those around them can be an emotional, financial, and moral drain. We’re not saying it doesn’t happen...it does, and it’s unfortunate...but you should always strive to rise above that behavior.

“Is There A Reason You Didn’t Finish College?”

Is there a reason you didn’t finish college? The interviewer wants to know why you started college but didn’t finish. Was it for personal reasons? Financial? Are there clues in your answer that may lead them to think that perhaps you’re someone who starts lots of big projects but never really finishes?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“When I went to college I was 18 and it was my first time away from home. I went out of state and being suddenly faced with all that freedom was liberating and I found myself enjoying it just a little too much. I actually made it through my junior year and was on track to graduate on time when I was involved in a car accident. I was injured pretty badly and had to drop out for a semester and have surgery. During my recovery time I reflected on what I was doing and how I was doing and I realized that although I was close to graduating, I really hadn’t applied myself and that what I was lacking was focus and maturity. Rather than return to school and rush through, I dropped out and joined the military. I spent four years travelling the world, gaining perspective as well as the maturity I felt I was lacking, and learning a work ethic that I am proud to say I stick to even today. Now I’ve been honorably discharged and have my GI Bill. **I’ve been actively looking at a number of schools with programs that align with what I would like to do with my future and I am looking forward to completing my degree. I know that your company participates in the Educational Partners program and if I’m hired, it’s something I would like to participate in. I’m excited to work with a company that values education so much as I know now, in hindsight, just how important that college degree really is.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Willingness to further education both at the university level and on the job training
- ✓ Multiplier: Educational Partners Program
- ✓ The interviewee is someone who recognized their own weakness and rather than just going ahead and finishing their schooling, decided to hold off and wait until they were more mature. This type of self reflection and recognition is valuable to an employer because it means the employee is self aware enough to know their own strengths and weaknesses and work with them rather than against them.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t tell your interviewer it was because the frat parties were more fun than physics class.
- ✗ Don’t get defensive. If you weren’t able to finish due to personal or financial reasons, talk to your potential employer. Many companies now utilize education partnerships and can help you pay for that degree. Some even offer financial incentives for employees who continue their educations. It never hurts to ask!

“How Would You Define a Failure?”

How would you define a failure? Your interviewer wants to know what your perspective is on failure and what standards you hold yourself up to.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“To me the ultimate definition of failure is never even trying. Every mistake is a learning opportunity and every success is just more reason to continue. Without “failures” we wouldn’t have things like Post-It Notes and Silly Putty, which if you ask me definitely aren’t failures at all. If I’m working on something and it’s not turning out like I want or I find that I’m not meeting the requirements or deadline that I’ve anticipated, then I consider it a setback, but not a failure. **I take what I’ve done, learn from it, and apply it to the next project.** True failure is just stopping and never moving forward again. To me that’s not an option.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Persistence
- ✓ Do be positive.
- ✓ Failure truly is just a matter of perspective and what one person considers a failure might be someone else’s learning experience.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t make it personal. This is about work, not you. Nobody wants to hire Debbie Doom and Gloom or Emo Emmett. “Everything I’ve done has been a failure, I’m just one big disappointment in life.”
- ✗ Don’t talk about failures in a negative way or list all the ways you or your past jobs have failed. Problem solving is a quality employers look for and if all you’re listing are failures and things you walked away from, it will look like you’re lacking that skill all together.

“We Are A Fast Moving Company And Things Are Always Changing. How Will You Fit In With This Kind Of Environment?”

We are a fast moving company and things are always changing. How will you fit in with this kind of environment? Your interviewer wants reassurance that you’re someone who can go with the flow and think quickly on their feet. In a job where things are constantly changing and people are wearing multiple hats, employers don’t want to be stuck with someone who can’t adapt quickly and think on their feet.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I was working at a small start-up company specializing in animation. Because we were so brand new, each employee was required to bring in their own laptops and every employee was tasked with multiple roles within the company. One of my many jobs was to act as the office IT department and be on hand to assist anyone who might have issues with their computers. On several occasions I was called away

from the office to deal with other situations and issues that were not IT related but were still required of me by the company. During one of those times, we had an incident in which office productivity was reduced because of an issue with a computer that was critical to a project. I was contacted via my phone and together with the employee, we worked through the issue. The problem was solved for the time being, but I wasn't happy with how it was handled. **Rather than find myself in that situation again, I did some research new and emerging technology and found a software program that, once installed, would act as a remote access point for me on any computer within the office. Now when I'm out on a call I'm never more than a mouse click away from any of the other computers serving the company** and when an issue arises, it's a simple matter of me logging in remotely and fixing the problem for the employee by directly accessing their system via this software. It wasn't easy at first getting everyone on board with the new software upgrade, but once the programs were loaded and we were able to show how easy it was for me to fix any problem, you could feel the sense of relief in the room. Now I'm not tied to the office and I can take care of my other jobs as they arise knowing that no matter what, I'm still able to offer support and help to my coworkers back at our home base.

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Creative problem solver/Innovation
- ✓ Do show that you're flexible and can think on your feet.
- ✓ Do demonstrate through examples that you're someone that is adaptable and isn't thrown by change.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how change makes you nervous or uncomfortable.
- ✗ Don't be so set in your ways that you can't handle deviations from routine or that you'll melt down if things don't go exactly to plan.

“Are You Someone Who Takes Risks Or Are You Someone Who Prefers To Play It Safe?”

Are you someone who takes risks or are you someone who prefers to play it safe? Your interviewer is trying to figure out if you're someone they have to keep an eye on or if you're someone they can rely on to remain steady and constant. You don't want to be perceived as a loose cannon but then again you also don't want to give the impression of being so safe that you're adverse to change or new ideas. Middle of the road is your best bet here.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I prefer the term ‘calculated risk taker.’ **I believe that taking certain risks can open doors that might otherwise never be open, but I also believe in examining the situation closely before making any final**

decisions. Every action has a consequence and until I know what all the possibilities might be, I prefer to hold off on any rash or quick decisions. I was with a company for a period of time and our boss was one of those people who is always interested in getting the next great technological product. A new phone was coming out and he was eager to make sure every one of his employees had one. They were from a new company that had never before released a phone and I was wary. We rely so heavily on the ability to maintain communication between employees that any disruption would be disastrous to our productivity and bottom line. My boss was adamant about us getting the new phones and replacing our old ones which was not only a huge process, but expensive as well. I know from experience in the past that newly emerging technology can sometimes be a little buggy at first so I suggested that we wait a few weeks and see how the phones were reviewed by other companies using them before we jumped onboard. It was a hard sell but he eventually listened to me and we waited...and good thing too! The operating software that the new phones used was problematic from the start and there were reports of people not only unable to make and receive calls, but entire phonebooks and contact lists being wiped out by glitches and software updates. Had we switched without doing our research and waiting to see how the phones handled real world use, we could have potentially been facing a huge technological disaster. Instead, we just had to suffer through two more months of ugly old phones. Of course, while the drama with the new phones was unfolding, I found time to do some research and found us a much better alternative that was not only reliable but much more affordable. We made the switch and haven't lost a single phone contact due to software glitches yet."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Analytical thinker
- ✓ Do remain open to new ideas and challenges
- ✓ Do explore all options before jumping in.
- ✓ The interviewee demonstrated here that they have learned from past experiences with technology that sometimes the shiniest and the newest isn't always the best. By waiting and seeing how things actually worked, they were able to not only avoid a company-wide disaster but help upgrade all the phones and save money at the same time.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how you live your life by the motto "Jump, then look."
- ✗ Don't be so risk adverse that you're one step away from wrapping yourself in bubble wrap and staying home.

“It Looks Like You Have Been Working For The Same Company For Ten Years. How Do You Think You Are Going To Adjust To A New Corporate Culture?”

It looks like you have been working for the same company for ten years. How do you think you are going to adjust to a new corporate culture? The interviewer wants to know that you're okay with

change and that you can handle the culture shock that might come with a big switch. They also might be experiencing some hesitation, unsure if you were at your old job for so long because you were happy or just lacked motivation.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I loved my job with WingNut Programs” and I was sorry when they closed down. Yes, I was there for ten years, but one of the best parts about working there was the fact that what you were hired for wasn’t always the job you ended up doing the entire time. They encouraged us to explore all aspects of the company and try on multiple hats through their Interdepartmental Exchange Program. **While I was there I was able to work in several departments and in multiple different roles. Each one gave me a new perspective and set of skills and each time I moved up I was sent to training programs that helped to expand my knowledge base.** Even though I was technically a “WingNut” employee for ten years, I was able to work first as a programmer, then as a designer, and finally as a supervisor. **When I first applied here I was excited to see that your company fosters a similar program and I’m excited by the idea that I will be able to continue to learn new and exciting jobs while still remaining within the company itself.”**

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Adaptability and flexibility
- ✓ Multiplier: Interdepartmental Exchange Programs
- ✓ Do remain open to new ideas and challenges
- ✓ Do explore other possibilities within the company for furthering your education and experience and broadening your skill set.
- ✓ The interviewee demonstrated here that even though they were at the same company for 10 years, they were hardly stagnant. By expressing a desire to work in multiple departments and different roles, they’re showing that they are open to change and that they are motivated to move beyond what they are currently doing...while still remaining loyal to the company.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t talk about how you just did the same job for 10 years because hey, it was easy and it was a paycheck.
- ✗ Don’t show a lack of motivation or desire by shrugging your shoulders and saying “Hey, status quo. Who am I to fight it?” Nobody wants to hire a slug.

“What Skills Do You Feel You Need To Be Able To Advance In Your Career?”

What skills do you feel you need to be able to advance in your career? The interviewer wants to know if you’re introspective enough to realize that no matter what level you’re at now, you can always be improving. If you’re happy with the status quo and don’t feel like changing, that can demonstrate to the employer that you’re not motivated and might be outdated before they know it.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Information technology is an incredibly exciting career right now as new advances and programs are being released every day. **I know that remaining competitive means staying up on all these changes through research and education which is why I make sure to spend time every day reading up on all the sites and feeds listing new emerging technology. I’ve also taken classes at the local community college on the weekends to help keep my edge and ensure that when I’m presented with a problem or a question by one of our customers, that I have the answers they need.** Taking these classes has been great because not only am I learning, but I’ve run into several of your current employees who tell me that the Gen-Nine company believes continuing education as well and that they are there because Gen-Nine encourages them to take these courses. I’ve even heard rumor that there is a library here in the building that regularly stocks all the most recent tech publications and that there are guest speakers that come through and do live demonstrations of those same products. **I’m hoping if I’m hired, that I’ll be able to participate in the Gen-Nine continuing education program as well.”**

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Willingness to further education
- ✓ Multiplier: Continuing Education Program
- ✓ Do always try to improve your knowledge about your area and express interest in further training.
- ✓ Do explore other possibilities within the company for furthering your education and experience and broadening your skill set.
- ✓ The interviewee demonstrated here that they are already self motivated to remain up to date on all the technology they are expected to work with and that they would like to continue that with the company as well.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't assume that you're at the top of your game already. There's always something new to learn.
- ✗ Don't show a lack of motivation or desire by stating that you're happy where you are so why would you want to advance? “Promotions mean more responsibilities and more responsibilities means more work. Why would I want that?”

“What Would You Say To Your Boss If He Told You To Do Something That Was Wrong, And You Knew That If You Did It There Would Be Severe Consequences?”

What would you say to your boss if he told you to do something that was wrong, and you knew that if you did it there would be severe consequences? Are you willing to stand up to your boss even if it

means getting in trouble or are you willing to capitulate and do whatever you're told? This one is a tricky one...so answer carefully...but truthfully.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“If I were asked to do something that I knew was wrong, my first thought would be that it’s a situation where for one reason or another, the person asking me to do this task is unaware of why it is wrong. In that case, I would try to explain why it was wrong and my issue with having to carry out their order.

I would sincerely hope that it would simply be a case of misunderstanding or a lack of information that could easily be explained and the situation either dropped or solved through a different avenue. In the event that my reasoning and explanation did not dissuade my boss from their current course of actions, I would then make sure that they were fully aware of the consequences should I continue as ordered. If it’s a situation where as a result of my actions I or anyone else could be put in physical harm or the consequences could be considered bad enough, I would try to reason with them again.

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Tact and diplomacy
- ✓ Do express that you know the difference between right and wrong and that just because a superior asks you to do something, doesn't mean you automatically ignore common sense.
- ✓ Do show that you're an independent thinker and not so in lockstep that you're willing to do whatever just to keep the boss happy but that you're also conscious of the fact that not everyone has all the answers and that sometimes people miss things.
- ✓ The interviewee demonstrated here that they are willing to be rational and reasonable when approaching a superior, but do it in such a way as to remain positive and educational rather than confrontational or disrespectful.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't call your superior stupid or belittle them.
- ✗ Don't show a lack of respect for their position and go around or over them to their supervisors without first trying to reason with them. If it's a situation where bodily harm or damage to property could result from their decision and they still refuse to change their course of action, then it is perfectly acceptable to speak to their superiors.

“How Would You React To Unwarranted Criticism By Your Boss?”

How would you react to unwarranted criticism by your boss? Are you defensive? Do your hackles go up when you're faced with criticism you don't deserve? How do you handle it? Do you let it roll off or do you blow up?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I was in a situation once where my direct supervisor was overseeing a large number of employees. We were all assigned to multiple tasks and there were days when things were a little chaotic due to the amount of work we were doing and the time we had to do it in. There was another employee there who bore a striking resemblance to me and on multiple occasions we were mistaken for each other. On one occasion she had a personal situation come up that resulted in her missing work for a few days. Her work fell behind and we were all scrambling to pick up her slack. On one of those days I was rushing off to complete a task and my supervisor stopped me in the middle of the crowded room. She spent several minutes telling me that my recent performance was not up to standards and that my absence had forced the rest of the employees to do extra work. Her criticisms were harsh and I knew that she had me confused with the other employee, but **rather than correct her in front of the rest of the team and potentially embarrass her, I let her finish. Then, after she had gone back into her office, I approached her and explained the situation calmly and clearly.** She was horrified when she realized what she had done and apologized profusely. I told her that I understood and she thanked me for not correcting her in front of everyone else. She also said she was amazed that I hadn’t corrected her and had instead taken her lecture with dignity. She promised that she would make sure to never confuse us again. Luckily the issue resolved itself as the very next day the other employee quit.

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Tact, understanding, respect for authority
- ✓ Do stand up for yourself when the situation warrants it but be tactful and respectful
- ✓ Do know that sometimes mistakes are made but show that you can handle them with grace and dignity
- ✓ The interviewee showed respect for her boss by not correcting her in public and by approaching her privately to explain the situation.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't call your superior stupid or belittle them.
- ✗ Don't show a lack of respect for their position by calling them out in public.
- ✗ Don't react with anger or blow up.

“What Is It Your Current Job Isn’t Offering You That You’re Trying To Find With A New Job?”

What is it your current job isn’t offering you that you’re trying to find with a new job? This is secret code for “Why are you leaving your current job and what’s to say you won’t ditch us the same way down the road if we hire you?”

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Although I love working for “AppleTree” we’re a small company and I know that I’ve reached the top of my career path with them. I’ve spoken with my boss and he’s happy with the way things are and has no plans to increase either our customer base or our overall size. I work with several phenomenal other employees who are also unable to advance to any position higher than the one they are in right now so

long as I remain. **I want to continue to grow and challenge myself professionally** and I know that I'm not going to get those opportunities so long as I remain with "AppleTree." By leaving, I'm not only going to be moving onto a position that will allow for future growth and give me the opportunity to take my career up to the next level, but it will give one of my other coworkers the opportunity to move up as well."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Initiative, ambition
- ✓ Do be polite and positive about your past or current job but don't lie
- ✓ This person has clearly thought about their future and realized that their potential is being underutilized and that it's time for a change.
- ✓ By explaining the situation like they have, this person has revealed that they have ambition and a desire to continue to improve and that being good isn't good enough...all qualities potential employers like. On top of that, their reason for leaving the job is solid and is far more reasonable than "Eh, I want a change of pace," or "I really like the fact that this place has a cafeteria. Our old place just had vending machines."

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't point out all the reasons your current job sucks and why you're so happy to finally be getting out of that dump.
- ✗ Don't speak badly of your old boss or bring up reasons to leave that have absolutely nothing to do with bettering yourself or the company.

"How Do You Handle Having To Do The Parts of Your Job That You Don't Like?"

How Do You Handle Having To Do The Parts of Your Job That You Don't Like? No job is perfect and a potential employer wants to know how you react to those tasks that are less than fun. Do you moan and groan and roll your eyes or do you suck it up and get it done and over with?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"Every job has those tasks that nobody really wants to do, but I've found that **by organizing my day and my week and putting those things at the top of my list, I can knock them out quickly and spend the rest of my time focusing on things I do enjoy doing.**"

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Prioritization, organization
- ✓ Do talk about how you get them done...Don't talk about how much you hate doing them.
- ✓ This person answered the question quickly, clearly and concisely without going into detail or talking about how horrible these tasks are. By getting them done early in their day and week, they've demonstrated that they understand they have to be done, and it's better to get them over quickly rather than letting it drag out until it's all piled up and they're miserable.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't use this as an opportunity to talk about how much you hate those tasks or how stupid they are.
- ✘ Don't complain about how you have to do these miserable tasks and then ask "Why do I have to do them anyway? Isn't that what interns are for?"

“What Is Your Idea Of A Professional Relationship Between Coworkers Or A Supervisor And A Subordinate?”

What is your idea of a professional relationship between coworkers or a supervisor and a subordinate? The interviewer wants to know if you're mature enough to handle a working relationship with your coworkers or if you're someone they will have to keep an eye on. This question is often linked to questions regarding office romances and personal relationships. Remember, keep it professional..always professional. You're there to do a job, not find a love match.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“To me the best working relationships are ones built on mutual respect and communication. When I first start working with new people I try to immediately establish open dialogue and trust. I like knowing what expectations are and what I can do to make our relationship successful. As we continue to work together it's inevitable that we also bring in personal aspects including discussions about life outside work and our families, but as long as those topics don't get in the way of company business or detract from the task at hand, I think they can actually strengthen working relationships. I insist on maintaining a level of **professionalism** in all my business relationships and expect the same in return. As long as business is the priority and boundaries are clearly defined, I think having a more friendly relationship is fine. In fact, although I am sad to be leaving my last job, I consider my boss to be more than just my boss. As my mentor and guide, he has helped to shape me into the person I am today and I know that my continued success has a lot to do with his advice and encouragement. As a result of his involvement in my own life, I am eager to become involved with mentorship programs as well and I know that your company offers several different types, including several for underprivileged children. I look forward to the possibility of becoming involved with that project should I end up working here.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Professionalism
- ✓ Multiplier: Company Mentorship Program
- ✓ Do talk about how you're relationships with your peers and supervisors has shaped your career and helped you.
- ✓ Do keep it professional and positive.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't dish dirt about office romances you've either had yourself or heard about with others. This isn't Jerry Springer.
- ✘ Don't grin and say "I love professional relationships, especially with all the good looking new hires."

“What Would It Take To Get You To Go The Extra Mile On A Job?”

What would it take to get you to go the extra mile on a job? Are you willing to put in extra effort or are you a “good is good enough” kind of worker? Do you self regulate or do you need to be micro-managed?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I am driven by success and love the feeling of accomplishment that comes not only from delivering a product, but over-delivering as well. Rather than waiting for an outside push to do more, I prefer **to self-motivate**. I love the sense of satisfaction I get when I deliver something I know is incredible. Being proud of the work I do keeps me constantly pushing myself to the next level and I know that with every goal I reach, I'm setting a new one beyond that for the next time.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Self-motivated
- ✓ Do talk about your successes and how you've gone above and beyond
- ✓ Do keep it realistic

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't over-promise or you'll set yourself up for immediate failure.
- ✘ Don't equate incentives with financial rewards...although they may be presented to you, make this about improving the company...not your paycheck.

“Define Your Version Of Success. Based On Your Definition, How Successful Would You Consider Yourself So Far?”

Define your version of success. Based on your definition, how successful would you consider yourself so far? Your interviewer wants to know more about you and your goals. Are you someone who sets goals and then achieves them? Remember to keep your answer related to your job.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“To me success is more than just winning. It’s seeing a project through from concept to finalization as well as achieving goals. I believe **goal setting** is the easiest way to create opportunities for success and I like setting both short term and long term ones for myself in my business and personal life. Checking off those lists makes me realize that I’m not just marking time, but that I’m accomplishing things. The satisfaction that comes with marking off the small goals always brightens my day but what I really look forward to are the big milestones that help me get closer to my long term goals.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Goal setting
- ✓ Do talk about your goals, both those you’ve met already and those you’re working towards
- ✓ Do keep them business related

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t make your goals about personal things like losing weight or meeting the right person.
- ✗ Don’t relate goals to your interviewer that are all about promotions and increased paychecks.

“What Is The Best Thing You’ve Ever Done? What Is The Best Thing That Has Ever Happened To You?”

Again this is an opportunity to reinforce goal setting and achievement in a business setting. Keep it professional. This isn’t a time to talk about your goal to lose weight or achieve some other personal goal unless it specifically relates to improving yourself professionally as well as personally.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“What I consider to be my absolute best achievement was going back to school after fifteen years off and completing my degree. When I first went to college I wasn’t in a position mentally to really take advantage of the opportunities I was being presented and I slacked off. When I was put on academic probation for poor grades I realized that I wasn’t just wasting time and money, but that I was potentially jeopardizing my future as well, so I took time off to mature and get real world experience. I joined the military and traveled the world, getting not only experience but also earning my GI Bill as well. When I was discharged, I knew I was ready to give my education another crack. My maturity allowed me to focus and the GI Bill helped me pay for school without having to take on outside obligations that might distract me from my goal. By maintaining my **focus**, I was able to complete my degree in Information Technology and graduate in the top 10% of my class. I realize now just how important a good education is and although I’ve graduated, I think continuing education is vital in this day and age. I’m taking extension courses on the weekends to help ensure that I stay current with new advances and technologies and stay ahead of the curve in my industry. I know that your company also encourages education and offers **company sponsored classes and lectures** and classes and I’m excited by the prospect of being able to take advantage of those opportunities in the future.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Focused
- ✓ Multiplier: Company sponsored classes and lectures
- ✓ Do talk about your goals, both those you’ve met already and those you’re working towards

- ✓ Do keep them business related or at the very least, bring them around to relate to your professional goals as well.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't make your goals ridiculous or unrelated to business.
- ✗ Don't relate goals to your interviewer that are purely materialistic. Showing personal growth and development goes much further with an interviewer than the fact that you were able to pay cash for your new 52 inch flat-screen TV after you won the beer pong tournament at the local bar.

“Be Honest. What Do You Really Want To Do With The Rest Of Your Life? Where Do You See Yourself In 5 Years? 10 Years?”

Be honest. What do you really want to do with the rest of your life? Where do you see yourself in 5 years? 10 years? This one is a sneaky one. Don't be tempted to say “I may be in finance but what I really feel I should be doing is touring the world as a rock star.” Keep it realistic and business related. What your interviewer is looking for is someone who is grounded and has goals that are achievable and make sure to keep them relatable to the job you're applying for now.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I know that the next five years are going to bring huge changes in technology and advances in science and I want to be a part of those changes. I'd like increased responsibilities that also bring opportunities to not only use my talents but learn new skills as well. Within five years I'd really like to be able to move into a supervisor position and in ten I'd like to see ideas that I've helped conceptualize and shape become a reality. I would hope that my time spent and **dedication** to whatever I am doing is considered valuable and that my desire to continually improve and succeed is encouraged. I would like to grow along with the company I'm working with and I look forward to not just a job, but a long and satisfying career.

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Dedication
- ✓ Do talk about where you'd like to go within the company
- ✓ Do talk about how you want to improve yourself and how you see yourself growing with the company and that you see it as a long term situation, not a temp hire or a momentary pause in your career as you leapfrog to something better.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how you want to be somewhere totally different in 5 years

- ✘ Don't make your goals about somewhere other than the company, even if your plans are different. They want to hire someone with the idea that they will be retaining them, not replacing them in just a few years.

“This Job Requires Certain Skills And Experience I Don't See On Your Resume. How Are You Going To Make Sure That You Acquire These Skills So You'll Be Able To Do The Job?”

This job requires certain skills and experience I don't see on your resume. How are you going to make sure that you acquire these skills so you'll be able to do the job? It's a tough job market out there and we're living in a fast world where new technologies and methodologies are emerging every day. Staying current means having to adapt and change and in some cases, go back to school for further training. The employer wants to know if they hire you, are you willing to put in the extra work it might take to fill in the gaps they perceive are in your skill set?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I pride myself on not only my ability to adapt and learn quickly, but I'm also committed to constantly increasing my knowledge base. I am fully prepared to commit any additional time I need to make sure that I am not only up on all my training but I've also already arranged to have a friend who is fluent in the software I need for this job to tutor me on evenings and weekends. I'm also enrolled in a programmer class through the extension learning program and will be done with it and fully certified by the end of the month. Once those are complete, I plan on staying current through refresher courses and by subscribing to the trades and publications that highlight our software and operating systems.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Desire to continue their education, expand their knowledge base
- ✓ Do be open to expanding your knowledge base through classes and courses
- ✓ This person has already anticipated this question and has solved the problem by making sure they are taking care of it already through extension courses and tutoring. This shows not only initiative but also self-awareness to their shortcomings and a desire to improve themselves for the better of the company.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't lie or bluff your way into the job by overstating your skills or qualifications. If you can't do the work, they're probably not going to keep you.
- ✗ Don't say "Well, if you really wanted me to work here, you'd make sure I got that education."

"If We Offer You The Job, How Long Will You Stay Here?"

If we offer you the job, how long will you stay here? They want to know if you're seriously going to commit to the company or if they're just one more lily-pad on your job hopping adventures. Interviewing, hiring new employees, and training are all expensive and no employer wants to invest in someone they think is going to skip off before they get a chance to recoup their costs.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"Growth on both a personal and professional level, job satisfaction, and the ability to remain challenged are all very important to me when it comes to my career and I am happy to stay in a situation where those needs are met for as long as they are being met. I fully believe in reciprocal investment between a company and an employee and I am looking forward to a long and mutually beneficial working relationship with "Dyna-Pharm."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Loyalty and ambition within the corporate structure
- ✓ Do be willing to commit within reason...if they're willing to commit to hiring you, they would like reassurance that you are committed to working for them.
- ✓ Be honest about your desires. A job where you're not happy is a job where you're not performing and a company can't afford to have dead weight...and it's not healthy for you either.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't over-exaggerate. "Hell, I'll be here so long they'll probably find me dead at my desk at ninety."
- ✗ Don't make your accepting their job offer contingent upon a list of ridiculous demands.

“Coworkers and Competition. How Do You Deal With That?”

Coworkers and competition. How do you deal with that? Secret code: Are you competitive? Are you too competitive? Are you someone who enjoys a challenge or are you someone who hates to lose?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I think a little coworker competitiveness is healthy, as long as it’s kept in check and remains strictly professional. One of my first jobs was selling magazine subscriptions during my summers in high school. My boss set up an office pool where the person that sold the most subscriptions got a weekend pass to the amusement park. I love roller coasters so I was gung-ho to get that pass. The problem was, my best friend Jake worked there too...and he loved roller coasters almost as much as I did. We were both determined to win that pass so we both hit the streets like nobody’s business. Every evening we’d trudge back to the office and tally up our sales. We had a huge board set up in the back of the room and for every subscription we sold, we’d mark off a box. Our boss would count up our sales and then mark off those boxes one at a time. It was agonizing! Finally it came down to the last week and we were neck and neck. The competition was so fierce that we’d take our bikes and ride miles each day, trying to find customers the other hadn’t already managed to get to.

The very last day of the competition we brought back our last sales receipts. We waited breathlessly while our boss counted our totals. Finally he walked over and started crossing off boxes. First I was ahead, then Jake, then me... Finally our boss covered up his work so we couldn’t see until he was ready to reveal the big winner. When he finally backed up and let us look I was ecstatic. I’d won by one sale! I was so excited, until I turned and saw Jake. He looked so bummed out. We’d both worked hard all summer and the competition had been so much fun, but now it was over and I’d won. Our boss laughed and then handed Jake a second pass. Apparently there had been two all along! Our competitive spirit had driven us both so hard that we’d managed to sell more subscriptions in that summer than had been sold any summer before and rather than have us slack off by thinking we’d both get a pass, our boss held one back and forced us to duke it out in sales.

I learned that summer that healthy competition, done in a fun and friendly manner, can help push you to do amazing things and that with the right incentive, you can do almost anything you set your mind to.

To this day I enjoy and encourage light competition between employees. I think it encourages us all to push beyond our comfort zones and reach just a little bit further than we normally would.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Team work
- ✓ Do have fun and engage in healthy competition, but keep it within reason.
- ✓ Do push yourself beyond your comfort zone and be willing to try new things.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t be “that guy.” “If you don’t win, don’t come home!”
- ✗ Employers don’t want to hire someone they think is so competitive that they border on cut-throat.

“Have You Ever Had To Utilize Resources From Another Department In Your Company In Order To Complete A Project?”

Have you ever had to utilize resources from another department in your company in order to complete a project? Employers want to know that you’re not only a good team player, but that you work well across a multitude of departmental platforms. If you’re looking at a position where you’re managing a group of people or an entire department, odds are you will have to interact with other departments. Employers want to hire people who can work with a dynamic range of individuals.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“One of my last projects was coordinating a video production for the university system. I was hired to help produce a four segment video that would welcome new freshman to the university and walk them through the process of registration and enrolling in their first semester’s classes. The first three segments dealt with campus life and all the programs that were being offered and the fourth showed them how to deal with registration and the online process. **In order to showcase all the different departments, I had to contact their respective chairs individually and coordinate with them as well as with my film team.** We managed to not only get everyone on board, but during my time working with them, discovered that the animation department was actively looking for projects to work on. We collaborated and they helped to produce an animation segment that not only tied the four segments together, but also showcased the amazing talent of the students. Once the video was completed and put online, it streamlined the registration process, making it 30% more efficient for the registrar’s office. On top of that, the animation department used the video as a showcase piece for their students and several have gone on to prestigious internships as a result.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Coordination and collaboration, video production.
- ✓ Do reach out to other departments beyond your own...you never know who you’ll find or what they can offer!

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t take advantage of the situation and use the different departments to your own selfish advantages.
- ✗ Don’t isolate yourself or develop an elitist mentality against different departments.

“How Do You Present Ideas To A Group Of People With Varying Needs And Personalities?”

How do you present ideas to a group of people with varying needs and personalities? Are you able to talk to a wide variety of people from different backgrounds and specialties? Are you dynamic enough to be a leader or are you a wet dishrag? Ultimately, how are your communication skills?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“A few weeks ago I flew to Washington D.C. to participate in an educator workshop aimed at streamlining lesson plans based on STEM concepts. As a screenwriter, I don’t normally participate in education workshops, much less in writing lesson plans for STEM concepts, but as the writer for a web series that revolves around these educational benchmarks, my producer thought it would be helpful to have me along. When I got there, I was informed that I was going to be leading a discussion about how I used entertainment to teach students complicated scientific and mathematical concepts. Although this was an area I was well versed in, I was going to be presenting to a group of educators...not my normal Hollywood lecture crowd. I was nervous, because I thought “Who knows more about education than teachers, and why would they want to listen to me talk about what they already do every day?” **I knew that in order to reach them and be able to talk to them about concepts they understood and dealt with on a regular basis, I would have to learn everything I could as fast as I could about their teaching style.** I did some research both online and by placing phone calls to my friends back home who were also teachers. With my research in hand and my friends guidance, I shaped my lecture to fit my audience by discussing topics I knew they were interested in and by cutting out confusing Film Industry only language. When it finally came time to give my lecture, I was relaxed because I was prepared. It went really well and when I was done I had a teacher come up and tell me how much she’d enjoyed it. She confessed that at first she and her fellow teachers were hesitant to come because they were afraid that I wouldn’t address their issues and would talk about things they couldn’t relate to, but they said my talk was informative, fun and above all...entertainingly educational!”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Public speaking, flexibility
- ✓ Do recognize that different people have different needs and tailor your material appropriately.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t take advantage of the situation and use the different departments to your own selfish advantages.
- ✗ Don’t isolate yourself or develop an elitist mentality against different departments.

“What Happens If Someone Doesn’t Agree With You Or Your Ideas? Are You Open To

Compromise Or Are You A “My Way Or The Highway” Type?”

What happens if someone doesn't agree with you or your ideas? Are you open to compromise or are you a “My way or the highway” type? Are you a team player or a lone wolf? Are you willing to see things from other points of view or are you always right no matter what? An employer wants to know how you'll react to other people's ideas and suggestions.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As a member of a team, I know that our strength lies in our ability to work together and that includes brainstorming and planning. When we're presented with a task or a problem, I've found the best way to make it work is for us to first all start on the problem individually. Then, after we've had a chance to really examine it, we all come back together as a group and present our findings and ideas for solutions. There are times when others see things in ways I never even considered. **I know that by being open to new ideas and suggestions, we not only come up with creative solutions, but manage to knock out most of the flaws and problems before we ever get to the actual implementation stage...saving time and money, not to mention frustration.**”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Teamwork
- ✓ Do recognize that different people have different needs and ways of seeing things
- ✓ Do talk about times when your point of view has changed because someone has see something you might have missed.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how your ideas are usually the only good ones and you're only in a team because you have to be.
- ✗ Don't be that person that employers hesitate to hire because they know you'll ultimately throw off the dynamics of a group because you're unwilling to listen to anyone but yourself.

“Work Can Be Stressful? What Do You Do To Deal With Stress In The Workplace?”

Work can be stressful? What do you do to deal with stress? Every job has its moments when the heat is on, the time is running out, and the project is due. Employers want to know how you'll react to these stresses and if you can keep it together or if you're a time-bomb just waiting to explode.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Stress is a fact of life, but it’s how you deal with it that really matters. I’ve found that the easiest way to deal with stress is to prevent it in the first place. To that end, **I make lists every day and track my progress through projects. This helps me ensure that I’m on track and that things aren’t being forgotten or piling up.** Even with the lists, stress can still happen and I’ve found that when it just gets to be too much, the best thing I can do is take five minutes and step away for some fresh air. Sometimes just taking that break is all I need to work through whatever is holding me up and I can come back fresh and finish. No matter how bad it gets, though, you can’t let it come out on those around you. There will be days when I feel like it’s all just too much but as long as I keep a calm face and manage to laugh at myself a little bit when it’s all done, it’s a lot easier.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Prioritization and organization
- ✓ Do be honest about what you do when you stress but go in with a plan. Make sure you acknowledge that you do stress (trust us, we all do...don’t lie and say you don’t...they’ll know it’s a lie.)
- ✓ Do talk about the ways you manage your stress and how you keep it from affecting those you work with.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t say “When I get stressed I just have to be alone or I’ll freak.”
- ✗ Don’t talk about how stress makes you lash out at coworkers. If it does, maybe you should talk to someone other than the interviewer about it and find a way to manage it better.

BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Here are some examples of behavioral-type questions an interviewer might ask that would call for the STAR approach to telling a short little story. Remember that a STAR story describes the Situation, the Task, Action or Actions taken, and the Results. As in the previous section, we will show possible answers, our “DO’s” as to why the model answers work, and give you hints as to what the interviewer is really trying to get at. We will also show you hints as to what you should not say, what we call “DON’T’s.” These are slips, mistakes, and pratfalls that you should avoid at all costs. Remember that behavioral-type questions usually invite a story by the way they are phrased: “Describe,” “Recount,” “Tell me about,” etcetera.

Each question gives sample answers that may or may not be relevant to the industry you work in, want to work in, or have worked in, so you will have to adapt them. Some will remind you of work you would like to do, but you must remember to Plug ‘N Play your own work experience into the scenarios. The examples are just that: examples of how to do it. Like a tennis coach, we can show you how to do it, but we can’t actually be inside your swing.

Here is the first question:

“Describe a situation in which you persuaded others to see things your way on a sensitive point.”

The hiring manager is most likely trying to discern your people skills, which include the power of persuasion on issues that may be touchy.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I was part of a writers’ group for a non-profit that was producing a character education curriculum for schools. Some of the people in the group wanted to include overtly political messages in the introduction to the books, as they felt the president of the United States at the time had implemented educational reforms that were not helpful to the classroom. Although I was not a senior member of the group, I had a voice, and I took the time to point out that we wanted to reach as broad an audience as possible. I appealed to the things all people share in common, no matter their politics—**teaching** children to be honest, capable, trustworthy, full of integrity, etcetera. Most teachers and parents would agree with those goals, no matter what their political beliefs. The group responded when I urged them to take a less partisan approach in order to reach the broadest possible audience. I carried the day, and a publisher picked up our book and said they were willing to publish and promote it because of our even-handed approach.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: teaching
- ✓ This answer tells the interviewer that the applicant is articulate, committed, and courageous enough to speak up.
- ✓ The applicant is clearly persuasive and has people skills.
- ✓ The applicant has demonstrated that in at least one work-related instance, she has brought about good results through her communication skills.

DON'T:

- ✗ Do not put the people you persuaded or their opinions down to the interviewer in anyway, for example: "Those zealots couldn't even see beyond their own opinionated noses."
- ✗ Don't go off into defending your position in the interview. State it and show the results.
- ✗ Don't give too much information.

“Give Me An Example Of A Problem You Faced On The Job And How You Resolved It.”

Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job and how you resolved it. The employer wants to know that you can think for yourself and that you're a problem solver.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I was hired by a video production company to rewrite a script that had already been shot. They were very unhappy with the product they had ended up with and were hoping there was a way to salvage what they had already done while incorporating in the new material I was expected to write. I sat down with the producer and discovered that a large chunk of what had been shot was visually stunning, but had no audio...rendering it essentially useless from a story telling point of view. Rather than telling them to scrap all the footage, I restructured the story in such a way that the main character was able to narrate over this footage, allowing us to utilize their previous work. My simple rewrite solution to their problem ended up saving the production company the cost of doing a huge reshoot. These changes also gave them a new direction to move with the storyline which ultimately allowed them to secure funding from a large and powerful sponsor who loved what we had done. **I take great pride in being able to come up with smart and economical solutions to seemingly impossible problems.**"

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Problem solving
- ✓ Do take a moment to brag a bit. This is your time to show off your problem solving skills, but don't go overboard.
- ✓ This person took what could have been an expensive problem and turned it into a new and exciting avenue for the company. Rather than starting over from scratch they looked at the materials they had on hand and came up with a creative solution that helped save the company money, time, resources and enabled them to secure new sponsorship with the retooled product.

- ✓ This answer lets the interviewer know that the interviewee is an individual who thinks outside the box and is a creative problem solver.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't worry about having to have a story about how you singlehandedly saved the entire company. A problem can be as simple as figuring out the best way to park cars so employees who have to share tandem spaces can work out their schedules.
- ✗ Don't over exaggerate or blow things out of proportion to make yours self look like the hero.
- ✗ Don't take credit for something you didn't actually do.

“Tell Me About A Time You Set A Goal and Achieved It. How Did You Accomplish It And What Did It Teach You? ”

Tell me about a time you set a goal and achieved it. How did you accomplish it and what did it teach you? Your employer wants to make sure you can prioritize and achieve a goal once you recognize it and that you have not only the vision to set a goal, but the follow through to complete it.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“While working for the education company I was at prior to this, we had a client who wanted what seemed like an impossible amount of work done in an impossibly short window of time. Rather than tell them no and risk losing them as a client, I knew that we could meet that goal, but only if we worked together as a team instead of individuals. The client needed two hundred educational worksheets including lessons and standards based on national benchmarks. Each worksheet also had to have graphics and illustrations to help the students grasp the concepts behind the lessons. Rather than assigning the worksheets in chunks and relying on people to complete them from start to finish, **I broke my team into an assembly line based on each person’s individual strengths and talents.** We had two writers, one graphic designer, and one person who did nothing but finalize the layout and proof each one for quality control. By breaking it all into manageable chunks and working together, we were able to deliver all two hundred worksheets within the deadline.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Problem solving and teamwork/leadership
- ✓ Do a little bragging but don't over exaggerate.
- ✓ This person took a potentially overwhelming task and broke it into manageable chunks. By assigning tasks based on skills, this individual also demonstrates an awareness of the problem as well as awareness of coworker abilities.
- ✓ This answer lets the interviewer know that the interviewee is an individual who thinks outside the box and is a creative problem solver.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't talk about goals unless you can bring them around to connect to something within the company.
- ✘ Talking about losing 30 pounds to fit into your high school cheerleading uniform might be an admirable goal, but unless you can tie it back to the company or business somehow, don't waste their time.
- ✘ Don't brag about goals that make you look foolish or incompetent. "We had a contest at work to see who could eat the most donuts at one time. It took serious training, but I'm up to three dozen now and there's no stopping me!"

Don't take credit for something you didn't actually do.

“Tell me about a time you were able to successfully get a job done even when you were working with a person you had conflicts with.”

The hiring manager is most likely trying to gauge your professionalism and perseverance as well as your cooperative skills.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“A senior member of our steering committee tended to take apart my reports in front of the committee. He had a Ph.D. from Harvard and he was extremely smart, but his behavior hurt and angered me. Since one of my co-workers on the steering committee got along well with this senior member, I took him aside and asked him for an objective appraisal of the situation. I was surprised when he told me that I had to learn to take criticism better, and that although the senior member's manner was harsh, some of his criticisms were justified. I started working harder on my reports to improve them. Soon the senior member was telling me that my reports were improving and criticizing me less, but when he did criticize me, I took careful notes and applied the criticism to my work, which showed steady improvement. I definitely had to **persevere** and develop a thicker skin, and I now see criticism as an incentive to improve.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: perseverance
- ✓ The person took a cooperative approach to problem solving. He or she did not seek “allies” to band together against the senior member.
- ✓ He or she sought objective input and brought about objective results—hallmarks of professionalism.
- ✓ Is an employee who uses criticism to improve his or her performance a desirable employee? Definitely! He or she perseveres through negative feedback to find a way to get the job done effectively.

DON'T:

- ✗ Never go negative.
- ✗ Never put the person you had conflicts with down. Always be Positive and draw out a Positive result from a negative situation.

“Describe a difficult decision you’ve had to make in your business life and how you went about doing it.”

The hiring manager is trying to sound you out as to how well equipped you are to solve problems and bring about positive results when you are caught between a rock and a hard place. The job you are applying for may involve lots of options to be weighed and an ability to discern trade-offs.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Our small business had fallen behind in our mortgage payments on the property we used to produce our products, which were business signs. We were also behind on a substantial bank loan. We didn’t want to let anyone go. Finally, we asked everyone to take a 20% pay cut, and we made it clear that the reason we were asking was so that we could stay in business and keep them employed. We, the owners, took a 40% pay cut, and we let everyone know that we were doing that. Our employees appreciated our honesty, and they tried to help us succeed. Our doors stayed open for another five years, at which time we were able to pay our debts, sell the business at a good profit, and give the employees lots of notice that we were closing our doors. I believe that this situation exemplified my ability to be **decisive** and make decisions that would benefit the company as a whole. Deciding to ask the employees to make those sacrifices was a tough but necessary decision.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: decisiveness
- ✓ This description of a difficult decision shows responsibility and business acumen as well as a concern for the employees of the company.
- ✓ These are character strengths that will carry over well into any kind of job.
- ✓ A compromise wherein there were trade-offs showcases the applicant’s ability to find workable solutions to knotty problems.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t wax on and on about how soul-wrenching the difficult decision was.
- ✗ Don’t go back and forth over all the options you had and how you went back and forth between them at the time.
- ✗ Don’t show yourself as someone who makes ruthless and heartless business decisions.

“Give Me An Example Of When You Resigned From A Company And Why.”

The hiring manager wants to know what kinds of situations might trigger you to part from a company. He or she wants to know if any resignations that occurred were understandable and justified, and whether your resignation will be averted at this company if they hire you.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“The founder, owner, and CEO of the company had created a position for me as part of the branding of her unique dolls, once she knew my qualifications. For several years, she exempted me from the verbal ‘dressing downs’ she would sometimes give to staff members during meetings. This seemed to be her style of commanding a better work performance. It was always uncomfortable to listen to, but I did not realize how bad it was to be on the receiving end until finally she went for me in one staff meeting, dressing me down in front of the assembled staff. I tendered my resignation about a month after the ‘dressing down.’ I wanted to go someplace where I was a better fit with the management style. I work best with someone who uses a more positive style of giving feedback and performance evaluations to employees; I think that is more motivating of good performance. In my opinion, positive reinforcement is a key to successful **team building**, and I could not continue on in this role if this criteria was not met. I love the **Friendly Reminder Program** you have in place that encourages employees to settle their differences behind closed doors. If I had the benefit of a program like this at my last job, the end result might have been different.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: team building
- ✓ Multiplier: Friendly Reminder Program
- ✓ The person stops short of negatively criticizing the person too much by chalking it up to a matter of “style,” using the word twice.
- ✓ She makes it clear that she was not a good “fit” with this management style, which is why she resigned, rather than badmouthing the boss.
- ✓ Anyone listening can easily conclude that the previous boss was not acting professionally and that therefore the applicant was justified in resigning. The person does not come out and say that—she simply says that style is not motivating to her and lets the interviewer draw the obvious conclusion.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't dump on someone at your previous place of work. When we have resigned from a position, we were clearly dissatisfied, maybe for good reasons. However, it is always important to stay Positive. You don't want the hiring manager wondering what you will say about this place of business if you leave.
- ✗ Don't become too confidential with the interviewer about the faults of others at previous places of employment.
- ✗ Don't be too critical. Most of us can remember a friendship or business relationship that started out with a cozy chat about how awful others are. Most of those friendships and relationships end up badly themselves, because the people in them tend to be critical of others.

“Describe Your Style In Dealing With Irate Customers.”

The hiring manager wants to know what kind of customer service ethic and skills you have.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Well, studies show that an irate customer can be made into a loyal customer if his or her needs are satisfied. One of our mobile phone service customers was beside herself with rage. I listened to her vent about her difficulty and I quickly got her file up on the computer. In my opinion, this situation required an **even-keeled approach** instead of a negative reaction. It was clear she had been given a defective phone; she’d taken it back to the service center twice and it had stopped working again as soon as she took it home. I could see from the warehouse reports that the model had major screen problems, and when I checked her phone records I saw that, on her family plan, she had hardly texted at all in comparison to her other family members over the last few months, which indicated to me that her phone was not functioning well. I told her that it was understandable why she was upset and that it was our fault. I asked her what we could do to make her feel better. She said, of course, she wanted a functional phone. She also didn’t want to have to pay her full phone bill for a phone she had barely used for several months, so I immediately gave her a hundred-dollar credit on her next bill. I assured her that a new cell phone would be sent to her home within a day. When she took the satisfaction survey at the end of the phone call, she gave me the highest possible marks! I believe that I would have scored very high on your **Customer Service All Star Rating** if a similar situation arose at your organization.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: even-keeled attitude/approach
- ✓ Multiplier: Customer Service All Star Rating
- ✓ Most hiring managers and people in business realize that customer service is extremely important. The customer is “always right.” Depending on the job you are applying for, customer service skills may be front and center or they may be more peripheral, but they are always important.
- ✓ This person demonstrated the ability to stay calm; her technical proficiency and willingness to listen enabled her to see that the customer had a valid point. She did the homework needed to check the records, and she admitted the company’s errors and shortcomings. Then she made up for the shortfall and won a customer back and had something quantifiable to prove it.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t be negative, even talking about a customer or client who behaved badly. Be Professional.
- ✗ Don’t put the customer down or make the customer seem like a monster and you the peerless knight in shining armor. Do show how cooperation and people skills solved the problem and even enhanced a customer relationship.

“Tell Me About A Time When You Made A Mistake That Affected A Client Adversely And How You Coped With It.”

Related to customer service, the hiring manager is trying to discern how you will deal with the inevitable mistakes that occur on any job, especially when it jeopardizes a relationship with a client.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“We had a large and complicated rush order, assembling a large number of kits to be shipped out immediately. We were in the midst of several other large and important orders as well, but a client had wanted his to be a priority, and we were anxious to gain his business. I worked over the weekend along with the assembly team, but in any rush job, it’s almost inevitable that some mistakes are made, and in the final shipment some kits were imperfect. The customer complained. I had an honest discussion with my supervisor about how hard the team had tried to cover our bases for this customer as well as to be responsible for the other important jobs we were doing, but I owned up to the fact that some omissions were made, and I took responsibility for that. The solution for this problem really required an **outside of the box** approach. I stayed late two nights that week to put together a special shipment to the client, and I made sure that every replacement kit was perfect. We gave him a substantial break on the price, at my recommendation, and we also let him keep the defective kits so that he could use some of their components. We retained him as a customer, and he became one of our significant accounts.” 92

DO:

- ✓ Quality: thinking outside of the box
- ✓ The hiring manager knows how important customer service is and wants to see how adept at it you are.
- ✓ Prove it by showing how you took responsibility for a mistake and made up for it.
- ✓ Own up to the error without making yourself seem incompetent (you can see from the example that there were reasons why the errors were made) and describe what you did to correct any errors and what the results of your customer service skills were.

DON'T:

- ✗ Never be negative. Don’t paint a portrait of the client as Frankenstein or the Customer-from-Hell.
- ✗ Don’t use slang terms to describe the customer like “this jerk” or “this idiotic client.”

“Describe A Time When You Went Beyond Your Job Description To Save Your Company Time And Money.”

The hiring manager is secretly hoping that you will be the type of employee who will occasionally go above and beyond the call of duty to show loyalty to the company's welfare.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I was a clerk at a catalog and online clothing outlet. While I was not responsible for the catalog of our products, I was, of course, aware of its contents. Right before it was sent out for printing, I noticed that one of our main products—a bestseller—was not pictured or listed in the catalog. I reported this to my immediate supervisor, who was appalled to discover the omission. She reported to the CEO, who immediately called a halt to the printing process. He sought me out and told me it was an excellent call, saving the company thousands of dollars in reprinting costs, as it was crucial that our main product be advertised in the catalog. I believe this demonstrates my ability **for creating new efficiencies** and finding a better way of doing things. "Good call," he told me, and I was promoted soon after that from clerk to phone center salesperson."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: efficiency/deficiency identification
- ✓ Companies want responsible employees, and this question is asked to see if you are one.
- ✓ Going beyond your job description in a responsible way shows you care about the company and are not just limiting yourself to the narrow parameters of what you do and don't feel responsible for. Answering this question well shows that you are an employee who is invested in the company's success.
- ✓ Although this person was a clerk, she knew the company's products well enough to spot a glaring error in the company's catalog which no one else had caught, so she has shown she is alert.
- ✓ She was also confident enough in her own abilities to report it to her supervisor.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't shrug and say you never go beyond your job description.
- ✗ Don't say anything that implies that you tend to avoid responsibility or would not be confident enough to report a time- and money-costing problem to a company.
- ✗ Don't say anything that implies that you don't feel responsible for the wellbeing of your workplace, like "I leave all that to the accountants. As long as I get paid, I figure it's the company's responsibility to cut costs."

“Tell Me About A Time When You Used Research Or Fact-Finding Skills To Contribute To The Solution Of A Problem.”

The job may call for people who are keyed in to the information age and can come up with innovative solutions: people who think "outside the box."

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I was really worried about the company’s financial status, as I knew they were really struggling to make ends meet. I also knew that some legal action was pending against them in the courts and that if they didn’t respond in time they would lose by default. Somehow management just couldn’t stay on top of this, so on my lunch hour I did some **research** into the city’s court records. Sure enough, I found that a suit had been filed and the company only had a short time to respond. I presented my findings to the boss, who immediately called his lawyer. We dodged a bullet that could have cost of us plenty in a default judgment if we had not responded in time.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: research expertise
- ✓ The hiring manager wants to know if you have initiative, if you can dig a little deeper into a situation to find the answers, if you are caring and detail-oriented, and willing to go the extra mile for the company’s benefit.
- ✓ Use an example that illustrates all these qualities.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t brag.
- ✗ Don’t insult the managers or mention their shortcomings.
- ✗ Don’t give yourself more credit than you deserve.
- ✗ Don’t say anything that shows a lack of curiosity or a reluctance to keep learning and growing.

“Describe A Time When You Had Several Projects Due At Around The Same Time And Had To Postpone One In Order To Do The Others On Time And The Process You Used To Determine Which One You Postponed...”

Describe a time when you had several projects due at around the same time and had to postpone one in order to do the others on time and the process you used to determine which one you postponed. The hiring manager is wondering about your ability to prioritize tasks and what kind of standards you apply to determine task hierarchies.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“**Prioritizing** tasks is always an important skill in any job setting. I’m a construction contractor, so there are often competing demands on my time. It has happened more than once, but in a recent situation, I had three clients competing for my time. I could handle two of them and get the work done on time, but one of them would have to wait. I had subcontractors lined up for such times so I could always meet my deadlines, but in this case, one of the clients had already expressed flexibility in the deadline, so this client was the natural choice to ask for week-long extension. The client was amenable, especially

because I assured him that I wanted to give my full attention to his work and wanted to do the best possible job for him and would need more time to do that.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: prioritizing
- ✓ The applicant is answering a concern on the part of the hiring manager as to whether the applicant is able to set priorities properly by mentioning the word “prioritizing” right up front.
- ✓ The answerer demonstrates that he or she had “back-up” so he or she is someone who can think ahead and handle multiple projects responsibly: something the hiring manager may very well have in mind in relation to the job being discussed.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't phrase things in a way that shows any sign of frustration about competing demands like “Management was so disorganized at my last place of work we hardly knew whether we were coming or going. Everybody had to wear five hats all at the same time.”
- ✗ Don't use as a system of prioritizing words like “One client didn't really care when the work got done...” because it would not ring true and might raise a red flag in the interviewer's mind. Most clients care very much when their work gets done.

“Tell Me About A Time When You Were Asked To Take Sides Regarding Another Employee And You Remained Neutral.”

The hiring manager or interviewer wants to know whether this potential employee will engage in office politics or not.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“It was clear to me that one of the directors was trying to get rid of Bridget, the office manager at the service office for our at-risk youth group homes. The director was finding fault with her frequently and making sure she knew he was putting documentation in her file every time an issue came up. As the secretary of another director, I was not privy to whether Bridget was truly incompetent or not, so I stayed out of all conversations. One day an issue arose about her, and the two of them spoke about it in the general office area. The director immediately asked me what I knew about the situation, clearly hoping that I would say something about Bridget's incompetence. I had no evidence that she had done anything wrong in the situation he was describing and had no knowledge of it. I said I did not know enough about the situation to render an opinion one way or another. Bridget actually proved that she was in the right on that issue and removed the documentation from her file in front of all of us, while the director apologized to her. I was glad I had not jumped in on an issue I didn't have thorough knowledge about. In these situations, I find that it is always best to remain **neutral** until all of the information or evidence is presented, regardless of how I feel about the people involved. Bridget stayed in her position for several more years. To my knowledge, there were no future complaints about her competency.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Neutral approach

- ✓ An answer such as the above shows that the person is a team player who won't engage in petty office squabbles. He or she wants to be fair to everyone and would prefer to stay neutral. The person's genuine lack of any knowledge of wrongdoing on Bridget's part and refusal to badmouth even when invited to do so by a director shows the person truly is not into playing office politics, a quality which will carry over well into any new job.

DON'T:

- ✗ If the person had badmouthed either the Director or Bridget, any assertions that the person does not play office politics would have been rendered moot!

“Recall A Time When You Used Logic To Save Your Company Money.”

The hiring manager wants to know if you are a creative thinker who is committed to the whole purpose of the company.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“At Briar Manufacturing, we were urged to look for ways to **cut costs**. Being responsible for accounts payable, I noticed how expensive our lighting bills were in every way, from the offices to the warehouses. Of course, we needed excellent lighting, but my boss had never heard of the new green light bulbs that last for many years and use less energy. Knowing that they cost more than regular bulbs, I did a cost-benefit analysis for him, projecting the savings in energy costs over the next five years as opposed to the initial higher costs of purchasing the bulbs. He was impressed with how it added up and added my suggestions to our costs-cutting project. When it was implemented, I was proud to know I had saved the company some money.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Cost Cutting
- ✓ Hiring managers like to know that employees will be cost-conscious and also that they will be thinking of the company's benefit as much as their own.
- ✓ This employee showed initiative, logical thinking, and cooperation with a cost-cutting outlook—extremely important in today's competitive business market.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't be fooled into thinking you only have to talk about things that showed up directly in the budget. You might not have come up with a specific cost-cutting idea, but you may have taken on the work of other employees if a company was down-sized or tried to concentrate more work into less time so as to increase efficiency. These things save a company money too.

“Describe A Time When You Felt Compelled To Speak Up For Compliance Reasons.”

The hiring manager may want to know if you are a “whistleblower” for nefarious reasons, e.g. the company is not in compliance with legal or environmental standards and wants to hire people who will keep their mouths shut. More likely, however, the company is well aware that compliance is an important form of risk management and wants employees to be helpful in this.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“In our kitchen counter fitting business, our workers rarely wore protective eye gear. They did not like wearing the protective eye gear and often lost the pairs the company issued them. As assistant manager in the warehouse, I urged the manager to post the required OSHA signs and to continually furnish the workers with new eye gear and insist that they use it. When we got that underway, I began to lobby that we do as well in the matter of protective foot gear, because the heavy granite could easily break someone’s foot if it fell during transport. Soon we were completely in **compliance** with OSHA standards, and when a disgruntled customer reported us to OSHA out of vengeance, we passed an inspection with flying colors, avoiding huge fines.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: compliance
- ✓ In an increasingly transparent business environment, employers have to take compliance issues seriously. Show that you do too. Most companies would rather have someone speak up before something becomes a legal (and therefore expensive) issue.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't seem as if you were not on the company's side.
- ✗ Don't be negative about the company's shortcomings when it came to compliance.
- ✗ Don't cast yourself in the role of a “whistleblower.”

“Describe A Time When Your Work Environment Changed In A Way You Didn't Like And How You Adjusted To It.”

The hiring manager wants to know how flexible you are and how well you deal with transitions.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“My director and I had our own offices on a separate floor from the other offices, with my office as the administrative assistant in a small ante room in front of his. Then the company decided to go with an

open floor plan in a bigger space all on one floor. The director still had his office, but I was in an open floor area with two other administrative assistants. I felt we had gotten good work done in such a quiet environment. I had to adjust to being in public view at all times and become part of a pool of administrative assistants. Also, the two other directors felt free to ask any assistant for help. I managed to adjust to this situation, which I didn't like as well as the former one, by making friends with the people I shared the open floor space with. At the end of the day, being a **versatile** team member is essential if a team is to reach its common goal. After a time, I learned more about the company's purpose as a whole rather than just our department's role in it, and that made me a more valuable employee. I think it also prepared me nicely for the Always Moving Policy you have in your organization. I feel like I could move seamlessly from one location to another and adapt nicely."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: versatility
- ✓ Multiplier: Always Moving Policy
- ✓ Things change; in fact, the only constant is change, especially in our rapidly evolving global economy. Hiring managers want to know that you will be adaptable even when things don't change to your liking.
- ✓ Show how you made apple pie out of crab apples in a changing work situation, and you'll do fine with this question.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't make remarks like, "Well, like many people my age have a resistance to change..." or "The only time I really transition well is when my kids help me along, like with technology, which I'm almost hopeless about without their help."
- ✗ Don't say anything to make you sound inflexible or caught in a time warp.
- ✗ At the same time, don't try to be Gumby either. Don't hide the fact that some changes come hard (the question asks that, after all), but show that you know how to roll with the punches.

“Give An Example Of A Situation In Which Personality Conflicts Threatened To Derail A Project And How You Coped With That.”

The hiring manager wants to know if you will be able to put professionalism above personalities and get the job done even if you have to deal with difficult people while doing it.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"A project coordinator and I were responsible for a whole curriculum that included releasing twenty-two books within a two-year period. He had a polar opposite approach to work relationships than I did. He seemed to relish conflict and feel that it helped move things forward. I work better when I am in

harmony with others, and I'm always one to pour oil on troubled waters. When sparks started flying between us, I realized I couldn't change him and I didn't think I should change myself over to his style, so I simply decided to be completely professional at all times and only communicate in ways which furthered and progressed the project. My ability to **adapt** to the situation and find a solution to our differences allowed us to move forward effectively. He calmed down a great deal around me, and we put out one book a month and finished the project two months early."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: adaptability
- ✓ Hiring managers know that personality conflicts are inevitable whenever you have people working together. He or she is concerned with whether you will be able to handle such things when they arise on the job.
- ✓ Because personality conflicts are so common, surely in your arsenal of experiences you have a story about one that turned out in a positive way.
- ✓ Be Positive.
- ✓ Be Professional. Show how you got the job done by being so.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't over-describe your personality and the personality of the other person, trying to make it clear just how superior you are to that person.
- ✗ Don't demonize the other person. Personality conflicts are just that—differences in personalities.

“Give An Example Of A Time When You Resigned From A Company And Why You Did So.”

The hiring manager's secret fear is that you may resign from this company, and he or she wants to make sure you would not do so without good reason. Recruiting, hiring and training cost companies a great deal of money. They don't want to hire someone who will easily walk out.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As a tech geek, I loved being a floor person at the Big Box electronics and appliance store. The company had been founded by tech geeks like me, and we loved talking to customers, especially about computers, and trying to find solutions to customers' needs. When the company was sold, though, the new owners had a different approach. They preferred that we spend the time we had with customers trying to sell them the particular products that were most profitable to the company. Since we had gone away from the high level of **customer service** that I excelled at and valued, I found myself wanting to work somewhere where the sales philosophy was a little closer to my own.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: customer service
- ✓ The hiring manager is concerned about things that might make you leave the company. If you ever resigned before, he or she wants to know if you did so for good reasons or if you left more on a whim.
- ✓ Reassure him or her that there were fundamental and sound reasons for your resignation.

DON'T:

- ✗ We've said it before, and we'll say it again: don't be negative.
- ✗ Don't badmouth the company. This person does a good job of noting that there was a "different approach" and that she had a different "sales philosophy" and does not pass verbal judgment on the approach and philosophy of the company.

“Tell Me About A Situation When A Company You Worked For Showed Interest In Your Professional Growth And How You Took Advantage Of That Interest.”

The hiring manager most likely wants to know if you are someone worth investing in who will also give the company a good return on any investment in you.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“The fast food store chain I worked at (where I was promoted from crew member to shift leader) offered college tuition reimbursement if people were interested in the hospitality industry. I took advantage of the opportunity to get a degree in Hospitality Management as I continued to work at the store. When I got my degree, I stayed on for a few more years to give the chain the benefit of the knowledge and expertise they'd allowed me to gain. It is my belief that we must **continue to learn** and grow while we are in the workforce. Now I'd like to work in your hotel's banquet service, and understand that you offer your employees **XYZ Company University Courses** specific to your organization. I would love to be able to further my education this way.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: continuous learning
- ✓ Multiplier: XYZ Company University Courses

- ✓ This person has shown himself or herself to be someone who was promoted, and who is interested in the field of Hospitality Management enough to take the time to go to school to learn it, and who is also grateful and loyal to a company that promoted his or her professional growth.
- ✓ A company may have an educational or certification program that is being underutilized. Show yourself to be a good candidate to invest in with such programs.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't recount how you skipped out on any continuing education opportunities because it ate into your personal time.
- ✗ Don't make the hiring manager feel that you are too lazy, slovenly, careless, or indifferent to invest in yourself or allow a company to invest in you.
- ✗ Don't ever hint that you "took the money and ran," so to speak. Show how the investment the company made in you paid off for them.

“Give An Example Of A Situation In Which You Took Specific Steps To Further Your Career.”

The hiring manager wants to know how ambitious you are and how much work you are willing to do and how much initiative you are willing to take in order to increase your personal value.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“Although I was trained as a bookkeeper, I knew that accountants had more responsibility, but that I would need more schooling. Keeping my day job, I enrolled in accounting courses at a local college and, after a period of several years, took the CPA exam and passed. I was then promoted into the accounting department at Bliss Software.” This is a good example of me being a **self-starter**, which I feel is a necessary characteristic in our industry.

DO:

- ✓ Quality: self-starter
- ✓ This person has shown by a clear example that she took the initiative to take a step up in training, responsibility, and salary.
- ✓ If the company you are interested in is going to invest in you (by hiring you and training you), the company wants to know that you are willing to invest in yourself.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't brag, exaggerate your accomplishments, or cite a time when you undercut someone else to get ahead in this competitive business environment.

“Give An Example Of A Risk You Took In An Employment Situation And How It Panned Out.”

The hiring manager is trying to discern your risk profile and assess your good judgment.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“When my mother became seriously ill and needed someone with her at all times, I approached my boss about working from home. None of the company’s workers worked from home; it was strictly an onsite workplace. Yet my boss had always been pleased with my work and did not want to lose me as an employee, so she took the time to go over my workload with me in detail. This was a situation in which a certain amount of **calculated risk** would need to be taken. We both realized that I could work from home via computer and there would be nothing amiss in my work. I was glad I took the risk of approaching her about my situation. Until Mom died, I was able to be at her home all day, every day, and still stay abreast of my work and my career. As a side note, I know that your company is leaning toward an increase in **telecommuting** and I believe that this experience shows that I am prepared for this challenge.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: calculated risk-taking
- ✓ Multiplier: telecommuting
- ✓ People have all different levels of risk tolerance. Tell a story that shows you are capable of taking well-thought-out, calculated risks
- ✓ Recount a risk that turned out positively that is within your risk tolerance level.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about anything that was extremely risky or extreme in any way: “I decided to single-handedly change the secret recipe at Coke and see if anyone would notice and if customers would like my version best!”
- ✗ Don't talk about something that really involved no risk: “I asked the boss if we could have the company picnic at a different park next year.”

“Describe How Your Very First Job Benefited Your Career Path.”

The hiring manager may want to know if there is a rhyme or reason to your employment history (a direction, in other words) or if it has just been random.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“My first job was as a cashier at a big discount department store. It had just opened, there were fifteen cash registers, and even then the lines were to the back of the store. I became a fast and accurate

cashier, which developed my keyboard skills and led me to an interest in a career in IT. In this industry, efficiency is the name of the game and this is the skill I developed at the department store.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: efficiency
- ✓ Show that you respect and value employment of any sort, including your first job, and how well you are able to make connections and see the silver lining in any job experience.
- ✓ Connect your first job to skills you are using now.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't get all misty-eyed and stroll down Memory Lane too much. Leave out extraneous or too much information.
- ✗ Don't say it was irrelevant, as you are so much superior to that kind of work now.
- ✗ Don't cite work you can't relate to the job at hand.

“Describe A Time When A Non Work-Related Experience Taught You Things You Might Find Useful In This Job.”

Tell me about a time when a non-work-related experience taught you things you might find useful at this job. The hiring manager wants to know if you will be a good fit for this job and this company.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“When my husband went through a lung cancer operation and chemo, I knew the kinds of concerns, fears, and communication needs that we had. That was when I realized that being a patients’ advocate would be a good fit for me. I feel I have a special understanding of patients’ needs so that I can appreciate good treatment as well as see ways that hospital services might be tweaked to better serve patients’ needs. **I volunteered** at St. Clare’s Hospital for three years as a patients’ advocate, and the head nurse and several doctors have recommended me for this position here at your hospital. Part of the reason for me wanting to work at XYZ Company is your **Children’s Hospital Outreach Initiative**. I would very much like to be a part of that initiative and help it grow exponentially.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: outreach/volunteering
- ✓ Multiplier: Children’s Hospital Outreach Initiative
- ✓ This is an excellent opportunity to show the interviewer that you understand the company’s needs and desires in relation to this job. It also gives you a little more leeway in answering than simply referring to your work or educational experience, but it is an opportunity to show how you will fit in on the personal level with the ethos of the company.

- ✓ Answering this question well shows that you bring life skills to the table too. In this case, the interviewee has provided a non-work-related experience that fits perfectly with the job she is applying for. Try to make your answer do the same.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't stray from the Point, which is to convince the hiring manager that you are the right person for the job.
- ✗ Don't bring up an irrelevant life experience that only has the dimmest possible connection to the work to be done.
- ✗ Don't skip doing your homework on the company, its history, its projections into the future, its mission statement, and its philosophy, as your best answer about your life experience needs to resonate with some aspect of the company.

“Tell Me About A Situation Where You Had To Work In Your Supervisor’s Place And How You Managed It.”

The hiring manager may want to know if you can handle more responsibility than the job currently calls for; they may want someone who will grow into the next highest position in time.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I was a teacher at Rolling Meadows, a small private school covering Grades 1 through 8. One day when I was on my lunch break, I found the principal in the ladies’ room in tears. Apparently, personal and professional stresses were overwhelming her, and she told me there were some parents upstairs in her office who were extremely upset over a disciplinary situation arising from their child’s behavior. Someone needed to **manage this crisis**, and I was the one to do it. Since she was in no condition to handle such a difficult situation, I went upstairs and served the parents coffee and cookies and did an initial intake about the situation. I listened to their concerns and took notes and by the time the principal returned to the office, calm and dry-eyed, I had established rapport with them. I stayed a few more minutes to help everyone transition into the next phase of the discussion—between the principal and the parents—and then I returned to class. The principal later thanked me and said they were in a very reasonable frame of mind by the time she talked to them, and it was a productive discussion.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: crisis management
- ✓ Show that you are willing to go beyond your job description when push comes to shove.
- ✓ Show that you are a person who can take on responsibilities that are above your pay grade.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't brag about how you took over your (incompetent) supervisor's position and did it better than that poor hapless boob could ever do.
- ✘ Don't show a lack of respect.
- ✘ Don't draw a blank either: "I don't think that ever happened. I don't really know what my supervisor did at my old job, to tell you the truth."

“Describe A Time When You Had To Bring Two Departments Together To Work More Effectively With Each Other.”

The hiring manager wants to know if you are capable of promoting cooperation and if you are a person who strives for teamwork and unity.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“There was a growing stress in the business services firm where I worked because of an emphasis on making profits and selling more services to clients. Those of us in the accounting department felt like everyone thought we were old-fashioned when we adhered to accounting standards and ethics and sometimes had to tell clients some bad financial news or restrain them from doing things that were illegal. When the pressure got bad, I wrote an article in the company newsletter about the downfall of Anderson Accounting (you remember the Enron scandal) called ‘The Consequences of Creative Accounting.’ It was subtle, but I think it made the point, because after that, some of the stress between the departments died down. The **diplomacy** I demonstrated ultimately solved the problem and allowed us to continue on successfully as a company.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: diplomacy
- ✓ Show that you are someone who brings people together through a relevant example.
- ✓ Show that you are someone who cares more about the purpose of the whole than one who takes sides or wears blinders, seeing only his or her part in things.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't exaggerate or lie.
- ✘ Don't claim big swaths of credit for cooperation that was not yours to claim.

“Describe A Time When You Had To Let A Friendly Co-Worker Go For Poor Job Performance And How You Did It.”

The hiring manager wants to know if you will put principles of professionalism above personalities but be sensitive while doing it.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“It’s always painful to have to let anyone go, but if it is right and fair, it must be done. I had hired a friend of mine as a freelancer for excess editorial work. We were writing a lengthy manual that required research, and I assigned her five thousand words to research and write. I expected her to behave professionally, but I found that she did not take deadlines seriously enough. When I called her before the deadline to ask if there was anything else she needed, she said, ‘Thanks for the reminder about the deadline! I had forgotten it!’ Given a slightly extended deadline, she turned in only about a third of the work and it could not pass a plagiarism test. Someone had to **make the tough decision** in this situation and that person was me. I knew this person to be extremely talented at what she did, but it seemed that other concerns in life had eroded her professionalism. I gave her feedback about the situation, honestly but without any anger or accusation. I paid her fee, and I simply never used her again.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: making tough decisions
- ✓ Emphasize words like “right and fair” and make sure you show that your actions were both.
- ✓ Show that you were not mean or condemnatory toward the person but that you had to uphold professional standards in spite of friendly personal feelings.

DON’T:

- ✗ Don’t say how you were “betrayed” by someone you trusted.
- ✗ Don’t put down the person’s job performance too harshly.
- ✗ Don’t ever use coarse language to try to prove your point in this or any other scenario. As a matter of fact, don’t use foul language at ANY point of the interview process.

“Tell Me About A Time When You Managed An Individual Who Was Technically Competent But Who Lacked People Skills.”

The hiring manager probably wants to know if you yourself have people skills and that you know how important they are.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I believe very much in the “sandwich” technique of giving people criticism. This is an effective method for **personality management**, which I will show using the following example. You compliment them first, get to the meat of the matter, which is the criticism, and then compliment them again. One of the members of our team had a superior intellect and education (he had a Ph.D. from Princeton). He was superlative at what he did, but very impatient with subordinates. As his subordinate, I had to tread delicately, but I knew I spoke for everyone when I emailed him that his superior education and skills meant that others needed help and guidance from him and not to be dismissed because they had BAs and MAs from average universities. I confessed that I needed his help and instruction and that I recognized his superior abilities but I hoped he would be more understanding about my limitations. Actually, he was, after that, and he was kinder to me and to his other co-workers too.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: personality management
- ✓ Cast your actions in a diplomatic light, acknowledging the delicacy of such a situation.
- ✓ Affirm the importance of dealing with people well.
- ✓ Affirm the importance of people skills as well as professional skills.

DON'T:

- ✗ Tread carefully when discussing the other person’s lack of people skills, sketching them rather than describing them in gory detail or making broad generalizations about the person, such as: “Everyone in the department hated this man.”

“Give Me An Example Of A Time When You Counseled An Employee To Improve His Or Her Performance, But Your Efforts Failed.”

Give me an example of a time when you counseled an employee to improve his or her performance but your efforts to help failed. The interviewer wants to know how effectively you handle ineffective workers.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“One of our employees seemed like a great young man, very polished and eager when we first hired him. After a time, we noticed recurring lateness, slipshod performance, and a surly attitude. I would invite him into my office for a talk, and he would agree with everything I said and also agree to change the things he needed to change. I believed him every time and also lobbied for him to be given a second chance. In my opinion, this person desperately needed a **mentor** and I made every opportunity to try and be that to him. However, after a day or so, the same behaviors would crop up. Soon he was fired. I later learned that he had a problem with alcoholism and had entered some kind of a treatment program. I certainly wish him the best. I certainly could have benefitted from the **Addiction Awareness Program** that your corporation provides for families. It may have helped me mentor him more successfully.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: mentorship
- ✓ Multiplier: Addiction Awareness Program
- ✓ Explain why you were ineffective, and if it was due to factors beyond your control, make sure that is stated firmly without, however, making excuses for yourself.
- ✓ Own up to any factors you could control that might have made you ineffective and mention what you learned from them.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't say negative things about the employee or put him or her down or seem to blame him or her unduly for your ineffectiveness.
- ✗ Don't over-apologize or put yourself down either.

“Tell Me About A Time When You Conducted A Training Seminar And How Your Presentation Skills Came Into That.”

Your prospective job may include training and presentation skills and the hiring manager wants to know how well you will do at that.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“My work history has never had me in that position; however, my husband and I are trained presenters in family wellbeing. This allows me to excel in **public speaking**, something I thoroughly enjoy. The program we teach, Kinship and Kindness, was developed by a family therapist, and we are certified to teach a two-day seminar on it. Our training seminars usually take place on weekends. As trainers, we have to procure a venue, make sure there is a good sound system, have a screen, our laptops, and our PowerPoint presentations in place as well as coordinate refreshments and hard copy handouts ready for the amount of people we are hosting. Then we give the presentations in turns and also conduct small group discussions afterward. It's taught me a lot about conducting conferences from the ground up. More importantly, I think that I would be a great addition to your internal **Toastmasters Mentorship Program**, as I could use the experience to help your younger employees who are trying to develop this skill.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: public speaking
- ✓ Multiplier: Toastmasters Mentorship Program
- ✓ Off-the-job training can be used to showcase skills if your on-the-job experience doesn't include them.
- ✓ Details about your presentation skills show a grasp of what a presentation takes.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't make something up or exaggerate it.

- ✘ Don't use an unserious or questionable example: "I persuaded the guy at the auto mechanic's shop to give me a big discount if I didn't put the repair through my insurance."

“Tell Me About A Hobby You Engage In Outside Of Working Hours And Relate That To The Skills You Need On The Job...”

The hiring manager wants to know how well your work life and personal life gel—what kind of a person you are and will be in both worlds.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I love to garden in my spare time. I'm a serious gardener—in the wintertime, I order seed catalogues and read them and plan for the coming spring. Growing things takes a lot of patience, understanding, and planning. I think that patience, that understanding of the rhythm of the seasons, the understanding that if you plant something, it will come up if you care for it, really helped me deal with difficult employees in my last job in Human Resources. There were times when a person just needed some time and training to settle into the job, and I was **patient** enough with some people others wanted to let go because I knew they just needed a little bit of time to 'grow.'"

DO:

- ✓ Quality: patience
- ✓ The interviewer has lobbed you a softball by reminding you to relate this to the skills you need on the job. Do so!
- ✓ Remember, it's not about you. Even when you are talking about your hobbies, it's not about you—it's about how well you can serve the needs of the company.

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't name hobbies that are too eccentric: "Well, on weekends, I like to close all the curtains, pull down blackout shades, and watch horror movies for hours on end."
- ✘ Don't talk about a hobby you can't relate to the job at hand: for example, "I like bird-watching" followed by a silence, which you misinterpret and add, "Oh, and bowling."

“Tell Me About A Time When You Contributed To Employee Morale.”

Are you someone the hiring manager and the other employees at the company are going to be able to stand to be around day in and day out? The hiring manager wants to know if you are a Positive person or not.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“We were in the midst of an environmental lawsuit at our factory, and morale was very low. As an assembly line worker supervisor, I knew that the feelings among most workers were guilt and shame, for the investigation alleged we had polluted the town’s well and caused illness in children. I suggested to our manager that we draft a mission statement to refocus our attention on what mattered most to us as a company. I convinced him that the employees should have input or they would not buy into it. When he gave me the go-ahead, I wrote up an email and invited everyone to help draft a mission statement, anonymously if they wished. I thought this was a great time to **engage the employees** around a collective cause. People’s interest perked up. Many of the suggestions contained phrases about being responsible to the environment. We adopted a mission statement that included that wording, and when we had to retool to meet environmental standards, everyone jumped in and made the whole process a lot easier. As a result, I have become a dedicated advocate for the environment, and I understand that your **Earth First Employee Education Program** is helping convert your employees as well. I would love to be a part of that program if selected.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: employee engagement
- ✓ Multiplier: Earth First Employee Education Program
- ✓ This worker was thinking of the whole purpose of the company and the welfare of the people within it. He or she cared, a lot, and was very helpful. This is a nice person to have around!
- ✓ He or she took initiative too, another quality a hiring manager may want to see.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t dwell too long on why employee morale was low or criticize the company for the reasons it was.
- ✗ Don’t end on a negative or even a neutral note.

“Tell Me About A Time When You Went Above And Beyond The Call Of Duty.”

The hiring manager is wondering if you will sometimes be willing to sacrifice for the benefit of the company.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I was a security guard for a large office building in the Midwest. This mostly consisted of checking people in at the front desk and making sure they actually had an appointment before I directed them to the bank of elevators. There was a vinyl tunnel that connected the office building to its twin across the street. During a tornado, one of the vinyl frames in the tunnel popped open, and rain started coming in

while the wind scattered sharp pieces of vinyl all over the floor. The situation required me to make a **split decision** under pressure and take action, so I did. While the custodian mopped up the water, I called a repair crew to come and cover the frame with cellophane wrap, and I positioned myself at the entry to the tunnel from our building and directed people to use the basement throughway if they had to go into the other building. I managed to cover both the front desk and the tunnel entry. Someone from one of the top floors noticed me and praised me for dealing with the emergency. He said I had gone above and beyond the call of duty and recommended me for a raise.”

DO:

- ✓ Qualities: quick thinking, decision making under pressure
- ✓ The praise of a supervisor and the raise gives this story some heft.
- ✓ Use the STAR pattern whenever possible, citing results.
- ✓ The interviewee has shown that she is someone who cares about her job enough to stretch herself beyond her job description .

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't exaggerate: “I simultaneously fixed the broken pane, swept up the broken vinyl pieces, mopped the floor, all while preparing for the visit from the President of the United States.” If you cast yourself in too heroic a role, your veracity will be doubted!
- ✗ Don't talk about things that are not directly related to work: “I watched my supervisor's kids one weekend when I had been planning a shopping spree.”

“Tell Me About A Mistake You Made And What You Learned From It.”

The interviewer may have in mind the question of whether you are someone who is capable of a course correction when circumstances call for it.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“My first year as a Language Arts teacher was really a baptism by fire, with **discipline** issues taking center stage. Since private schools do not require teacher certification, while I was an expert in my field, I knew little about class discipline. I spent the summer after that first harrowing year studying up on best practices in classrooms. One of the main recommendations from all the sources I consulted was to make rules clear from the very beginning. When the next school year started, I posted my classroom rules on colorful poster board, spelling out what the kids could expect of me and what I could expect of them on the very first day. Throughout the school year, the kids often pointed to the rules and reminded each other of them, and we always had something to refer to when there was a question about behavior. I had no serious discipline problems that year and because of that, the kids really experienced the joy of learning. I was amazed at how their reading and writing improved.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: enforcing discipline

- ✓ It is okay to admit to a mistake as long as you learned from it and took action to do a course correction.
- ✓ Make sure you are able to report a Positive result directly related to the actions you took.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't recount a mistake that had irreversible consequences; that's just too much for a job interview. For example, don't say, "I didn't watch the kids well enough on the playground and one child broke his wrist. He was unable to play sports throughout high school because of it. I sure learned to be more alert."

“Tell Me About A Time When You Questioned Your Own Abilities.”

The interviewer may want to know if you are the type of person who strives for self-improvement and is capable of taking responsibility when things appear to be going wrong.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As chef at a boarding school, I was responsible for all aspects of food purchases, preparation, serving, and storage. One week, we had four or five children report to the sick bay with stomach ailments. To my horror, it turned out they all had eaten a meat sauce for spaghetti and some parents were calling to complain that the meat sauce must have been bad. I felt simply awful about it, and I wondered if I had somehow been remiss. Then I checked the temperature and timing at which the meat sauce had been stored; they were according to standard. I checked how long the meat sauce had been set out in the cafeteria and what measures were taken to make sure it remained at a temperature sufficient to kill bacteria for the amount of time it was out there. I went to the dumpster and exhumed all the packaging of the meat sauce to make sure it had been properly wrapped in the freezer. As far I could see after investigating, I had not been professionally remiss. I needed to do all of the **due diligence** necessary to ensure that what I had done had not led to the children getting sick. At the same time, it was a great relief when the outbreak of stomach problems was proven to have spread to children who had eaten the vegetable sauce served at the same time as the meat sauce, and that a couple of teachers came down with it who had not eaten in the cafeteria at all that day. Of course, I was sorry that anyone was sick, but it was clear that it was not a professional slip-up on my part when the village doctor diagnosed the illness as stemming from a virus. Nevertheless, I understand that your organization has an optional **Food Safety Program** that I would be very excited to be a part of should I become a member of your team.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: due diligence
- ✓ Multiplier: food safety program
- ✓ The interviewee questioned her own abilities, but she also took action to double-check that all systems in place were viable. She took responsibility for her actions and did an investigation to

make sure she had not contributed to the illness, all the while being objectively ready to admit fault for the problem.

- ✓ In a Positive outcome, she was not actually at fault. This is an ideal answer.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't shift blame for a situation that made you question yourself.
- ✗ Don't proclaim yourself innocent of all mistakes if you were at all at fault.

“Tell Me About A Time When You Had To Be The Bearer Of Bad Tidings.”

This is another question where the hiring manager is trying to scope out your people skills.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As the assistant program manager, the task fell to me to tell one of our contractors that his role in our project was going to be eliminated. Although budget constraints were a real issue, it was also true that a lot of his work had to be redone. I knew this contractor well, and I knew that he needed the money and that the loss of the job would add to his stresses. However, in the interests of the project and the company, I had to be **sympathetic** yet firm.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: sympathy
- ✓ The hiring manager wants to know how you handle the inevitable ups and downs (with an emphasis on the downs) of a workplace.
- ✓ This is a particularly strong answer because it shows that the interviewer places the good of the company and its projects over personal considerations and yet is an empathetic person who is skilled in relationships.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't recount something that is not job-related or is too extreme: “I had to tell my boss that I had seen her husband kissing a gorgeous blonde in a street-side café” or “I had to tell a co-worker that his daughter had called from the municipal jail where she was under arrest on a driving under the influence charge.”

“Tell Me About An Occasion When You Were Positive About An Outcome While Others Around You Were Negative About It.”

The hiring manager wants to know if you are a Positive person even when surrounded by pessimism. In others words, he or she wants to know if you are brave and forward-looking even in adversity.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“During the worst year of the economic downturn, one of the grants that our non-profit depends upon didn’t come through. Other people at our non-profit thought that we were doomed, but I chose to remain **positive** throughout the process. They could not see that our work had a future without that one sizable grant. I already had several new grant proposals in the works with other foundations, and I was confident that several of the smaller amounts would come through and that, in total, they would almost cover the loss of the larger grant. That is exactly what happened.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: positivity
- ✓ Everyone likes Positivity, including interviewers. That’s why we have stressed it as one of our five Ps and an important key point toward scoring during an interview.
- ✓ If you can stay Positive when others are nay-saying, you will be a valuable asset wherever you go, and you will probably achieve more than those who spend all their time saying “No,” “Impossible,” and “It can’t be done.”
- ✓ Everyone loves an optimist, especially one who has good reason to be optimistic or who has enough foresight to envision a better result.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t claim a Positive outlook if your outcome or result didn’t reflect the positivity of your attitude about a situation. It’s great to be Pollyanna, but if your sunny-side-up approach to work is founded in blindness and naiveté, no one is going to take you seriously.

“Have You Ever Been In A Situation Where You’ve Found That Working In A Team Was More Successful Than Working Alone?”

Have you ever been in a situation where you’ve found that working in a team was more successful than working alone? The interviewer is asking if you are a person who can work as a team and admit when you need help or if you’re someone who has to go it alone, no matter what the consequences or results.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I have been fortunate enough in my career to have worked both alone and in team situations on a variety of different tasks and projects and I’ve found that there have been many times when **being a member of a team** has resulted in much better results than if I’d gone it alone. What I like the most about teams is each person brings their own perspective and knowledge to the group and there have

been times when someone brings something up that I never would have thought of on my own. In fact, even during times when I'm working on a task alone, I've found it's helpful to talk to others about what I'm doing and get their perspective. Sometimes just having that outsiders view makes all the difference."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: teamwork
- ✓ Someone who recognizes the benefits of working with others is a better choice for an employer than someone who can't work well with others.
- ✓ If you can find the value of working with others and consulting others who might be able to help you, you are not only showing that you're resourceful, but that you're a team player and a problem solver.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how horrible it is to work with others. Yes, we all have had bad experiences, but it's not in your best interest to bring them up right now. What the employer wants to know is, are you open minded enough to consider others ideas and input?

“How Do You Handle Dealing With A Group Of People That You Don't Normally Work With Or Have Authority Over? How Did You Manage It And Did Your Approach Work?”

How do you handle dealing with a group of people that you don't normally work with? How did you manage it and did your approach work? Your interviewer wants to know about your communication skills and your interpersonal skills.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I was helping introduce new software my company had designed to a group of engineers who had never used the program before. They had been using a competing company's software for years so I knew I was going to have to not only overcome their loyalty to the old product but help teach them a whole new way of doing things. I knew right off the bat this was going to be an uphill battle so I approached it not from an "Our product is better" standpoint, but from a "We're here to save you time so you can get back to doing other things" standpoint. By highlighting the benefits of switching over and translating the time saved into both money and the ability to be more flexible with their hours, they were not just more receptive to our product, but actually excited to test it out and see how it really did stack up with their old way of doing things. The process was far smoother than I had originally anticipated and I was proud that that was due in part to my **communication skills** with the engineers at our first initial meeting. Facing challenges like this help to keep me on my toes and I really enjoy finding new ways to approach situations like this. I know that your company also does similar **educational product introductions** and demonstrations and I'm excited to keep winning over new and different customers!"

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Communication Skills
- ✓ Multiplier: Product Information and Demonstrations
- ✓ Do talk about how you've managed to win over difficult groups of people by being creative or changing your approach.
- ✓ Do emphasize that you enjoy a challenge...but only if you honestly do.
- ✓ This person realized they were facing a challenge winning over their new clients but rather than approach it from the traditional angle, they looked for common ground they knew the clients would appreciate and came at it that way. Being adaptable is a valuable skill.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how miserable it is to be in a situation like this or how much you hate talking to new groups.
- ✗ Don't bash groups because you found them challenging.

“How Do You Motivate Other People To Work With You? Can You Give Examples Of How You Build Enthusiasm In Others Around You?”

How do you motivate other people to work with you? Can you give examples of how you build enthusiasm in others around you? The interviewer wants to know how you deal with different personalities and if you have the ability to get others to work together and cooperate with you.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I had been working at BetaBytes for a few months as a team leader and noticed that we had one member who was incredibly gifted in programming but lacked the social skills to really gel with the group. On numerous occasions we would hold team meetings and he would sit quietly in the back and not say very much. However, when we would talk one on one, he would come out of his shell and offer insights and ideas that really helped to move our tasks along. Rather than forcing him to interact and make him uncomfortable by calling him out in those meetings, I **motivated** the rest of the team members to approach him individually in the same way and draw him out that way. Slowly, over the course of a few of these one on one meetings, he started warming up to the rest of the team as they recognized not only his personality quirks but his phenomenal strengths and talents as well. Now when we have our meetings, he's an active participant and eager to jump in. “

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Motivator
- ✓ Do talk about how you've managed to inspire others and get them enthusiastic about what they're doing.
- ✓ Do talk about times you've brought diverse groups and difficult individuals together and how you did it.

- ✓ By addressing the reluctant employee on a personal level rather than just seeing him as a cog in a machine, this person was able to draw out someone who might never have really participated. Interpersonal skills and diplomacy are key to running a good team and this individual clearly demonstrates their ability with this answer.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how you hate those one or two odd ducks that pop up in every team.
- ✗ Don't tell the interviewer that the best way to deal with difficult people is to just not deal with them at all.

“We’ve All Had To Work With People Who Don’t Like Us. How Do You Deal With Someone Who Doesn’t Like You?”

We’ve all had to work with people who don’t like us. How do you deal with someone who doesn’t like you? The employer wants to know if you’re willing to set aside personal feelings and remain professional enough to get work done, even when faced with someone who is difficult or doesn’t like you.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“The best way I have found to deal with people I don’t like is to treat them with courtesy and respect and always remain strictly **professional**. Not everyone is going to like me, but the best I can hope for is a civil working relationship and the ability to maintain a professional atmosphere and get the job done. I was working for a production a while back and was in charge of keeping all the departments on a tight time schedule. One of the people I had to deal with was the costume designer. She was predisposed to not like me from the moment I walked onto set because I had been hired to replace her friend who had been fired earlier. Regardless of what I did, she never liked me. Rather than make it personal, I kept our dealings strictly professional. I was polite with her but firm and made sure that I always worked with her and tried to make sure that I maintained clear and open communication and made sure that I answered all her questions. We worked together for six months and in that time she never warmed up to me, which was fine. We did our jobs professionally and on time and the crew was able to operate normally. I’ve found throughout my career that there have been a number of times when I’ve had to work with people that don’t exactly mesh with me perfectly, but I used what I learned with that show to deal with each new challenge. Although I have had supervisors and bosses since that I did not necessarily get along with on a personal level, I maintained a professional demeanor and outlook that made it possible for us to work together. Maintaining my integrity and professionalism is far more important to me.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Professionalism
- ✓ Do talk about how you dealt with people you’ve had difficulty with.
- ✓ Do emphasize that you keep it professional and don’t make it personal.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how horrible this person was. Even now, after the fact, keep it professional.
- ✗ Don't indicate that you take things like this personally. "If I'm not loved by everyone I work with, I can't do my job!" That mentality just isn't realistic, no matter who you are.

“Tell Me About A Time You Had To Make A Decision You Knew Was Going To Be Unpopular. Were You Able To Reach A Compromise Or Bring People Around To Your Way Of Thinking?”

Tell me about a time you had to make a decision you knew was going to be unpopular. Were you able to reach a compromise or bring people around to your way of thinking? The hiring manager wants to know that you're able to make the tough calls and stick to them but at the same time, be open to the possibility of compromise.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“As a manager I was in charge of setting everyone’s schedules. Because it was up to me to make sure hours were covered, I was often approached by people looking for shift changes, extra hours, or reduced hours. During the holiday season we’re incredibly busy and I often had to scramble to make sure that I got shifts covered as people tried to take time off. Rather than face a scheduling nightmare I made it a policy that requests for time off had to be submitted two months prior to December in writing. For those that followed the rules, it was a breeze and they were able to get the time they needed off. For those that ignored the request, I had to be firm and say no, something that was often difficult but necessary. Although I was firm, I wasn’t impossible and if an employee truly needed the time off or something came up that had to be dealt with, I made sure to work with them on a case by case basis to help meet their needs. This policy of **firm fairness** and reasonable **compromise** has helped to make our holidays much smoother. It was a little tough at first, telling people I liked no, but now that people know what to expect and how to properly request their holiday time off, the entire season has become much easier to manage and schedule. “

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Fair/ability to compromise
- ✓ Do talk about how you’ve navigated potentially difficult and unpopular decisions.
- ✓ Do emphasize that your decisions are based on the good of the company, not on playing favorites.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how you were such a hard-ass that people are afraid to talk to you. Making unpopular decisions that make other employees miserable can sometimes be used as a weapon or tool. Don't be that employee!

“Do You Consider Yourself To Be Creative? Tell Me About Something Creative You’ve Done That You’re Proud Of.”

Do you consider yourself to be creative? Tell me about something creative you’ve done that you’re proud of. Creativity is a precious commodity within the corporate world and creative individuals are highly sought after. Use this time to talk about things you’ve done that highlight your talents. And don’t worry, being creative doesn’t always mean being artistic...finding new and unusual solutions to problems is also a way to be creative!

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“One of the things I enjoyed the most about working at “Black Frog Technologies” was their enthusiasm for employee inventions. I spend a lot of time doing very linear work so I always look forward to opportunities to express my **creativity**. Every year we would hold a design challenge where our CEO would present us with a ridiculously silly problem and we would have a month to come up with a solution, design it, test it and then showcase them at the annual company picnic. Now traditionally the fridge in the company break room is notorious for containing food and lunches that people have forgotten. We were constantly dealing with situations where food would spoil and stink up the space. So one year we were told we had to come up with a way to keep the break room from smelling like rotted cabbage.

At the time I was working in the development department on a aerosol particulate detector used by companies that store gas and other flammable materials on site. By taking the designs and tweaking them, I was able to create a sensor that was sensitive to rising concentrations of methane, the natural byproduct of rotting organic materials. Through a little creative rigging, I connected the sensor to a toy pig that I got from my niece. The pig sits on top of the fridge and acts as the alert system. When food begins to spoil, it triggers the sensor which sends a signal to the pig, causing it to oink. When you hear the pig, it’s time to clean the fridge. The competition was meant to be silly but the technology I came up with was actually put to practical use. We’ve started working on a new prototype that works on a large scale and is specifically designed for produce and grocers to use to alert them to organics that are getting close to becoming overripe. Food waste is a huge issue in this country and by helping to alert people to the possibility of spoilage and encouraging them to move the product faster, we’re able to prevent millions of dollars in losses. I was excited to learn that your company has a similar program with your **Employee Innovation Challenge** and I can’t wait to see what sorts of projects we’re allowed to tackle this year!”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Engineering, creative problem solving
- ✓ Multiplier: Company Creativity Challenge
- ✓ Do talk about how you’ve been creative and if possible, relate it back to business

- ✓ Not only was this employee creative in their solution to a silly challenge, but they managed to take their idea and expand on it, making it a viable product for the company.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't go off the deep end and discuss your creative process if it is anything like the movie "The Big Lebowski."
- ✗ Don't shake your head and say "I'm not creative. That's just not me." Everyone is creative...think of something you've done in the past or a problem you've solved by finding a new way to get a job done.

“Tell Me About A Time You Had To Think On Your Feet To Overcome A Sudden Obstacle. How Did You Cope?”

Tell me about a time you had to think on your feet to overcome a sudden obstacle. How did you cope? How well do you roll with the punches and come up with solutions to sudden problems? Are you flexible and able to adapt or are you someone who loses focus when things aren't perfectly aligned?

EXAMPLE ANSWER

"I was responsible for putting together a massive file for my boss that he needed to take with him to a potentially lucrative business meeting the next day. Unfortunately I had just had a tragedy in the family and was trying to get back home to my family two states away at the same time I was putting this project together. I knew that the success of our company was riding on this file and that I was the only one who could complete it. My boss allowed me to take it with me and work on it as I was travelling with the promise that I would have it completed and emailed to him in time for the big presentation. During my travels I had a long layover in an airport and was using that time to finish the presentation and had planned on emailing it to him as soon as it was complete. What I didn't know at the time I was making these plans was that the airport I was stopping in was in the middle of renovations and their Wi-Fi had been shut off. When I landed I realized that I had the time to finish the project but no way to email it and not enough time to leave the airport and find somewhere to access the web. Rather than panic I looked for a **solution** at hand. I realized that although I couldn't access the net from my laptop, my phone was still working and that I could tether to it and use it as a mobile hotspot. By downloading an app and creating a quick network right there in the airport terminal, I was able to mail the project to my boss on time and make it home to my family. The file was delivered and the meeting was a success."

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Problem solver
- ✓ Do talk about times you've overcome something unexpected
- ✓ Do talk about how you stayed calm and solved the problem

DON'T:

- ✗ Don't talk about how you fall apart when things go wrong

- ✘ Don't relate your obstacles to things that are insignificant or ridiculous.

“Have You Ever Had An Experience Where Your Performance Was Less Than What You Expected And Or What Your Supervisor Expected? How Did You Handle That?”

Have you ever had an experience where your performance was less than what you expected and or what your supervisor expected? How did you handle that? Nobody likes to admit failure but in this instance, you're not actually admitting total failure if you can manage to bring it around to a learning experience or show how it gave you the opportunity to improve in the future.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“I had just been promoted at work into a new position vacated when my supervisor left unexpectedly. Because their departure was sudden I wasn't adequately trained for the job I was now holding. Although I had a general idea of what was expected, there were things I didn't realize I was responsible for. During my first full staff meeting in this new role, it was discovered that I was supposed to have brought in copies of a report for all the department heads to evaluate. Because of this, we had to postpone the meeting for a few days while I scrambled to put the materials together, a delay which did cause us to lose valuable time. I was humiliated and vowed to never be caught unprepared again. As soon as I could, I set up a meeting with my new supervisor and we discussed everything I was expected to do and she helped me clearly outline my new role and **responsibilities**. That experience made me realize that people need to always be ready to step up and take on new positions which is why I am really excited about the possibility of working here. Had I been able to participate in a **supervisor job shadowing** program like you have here at my old job, I never would have been caught off guard.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Responsibility
- ✓ Multiplier: Supervisor job shadowing program
- ✓ Do talk about times you've made a mistake but make sure to relate it to a positive outcome
- ✓ Do talk about how you used the experience as a learning opportunity and how you've grown because of it

DON'T:

- ✘ Don't talk about a failure that had no learning outcome
- ✘ Don't deny any failures and claim to be perfect. Nobody is actually perfect!

“Pretend You Had Six Months To A Year All To Yourself To Do Whatever You Wanted And Money Was No Object. What Would You Do?”

Pretend you had six months to a year all to yourself to do whatever you wanted and money was no object. What would you do? This type of open ended question is meant to see what sort of a person you are if you were allowed to dream freely without worrying about a job or work related responsibilities. The interviewer wants to see what makes you tick and what your true interests in life are. This one can be fun to answer, but there's still an angle you should keep in mind... Regardless of what you'd *really* do with the money (Lemur farm in Siberia?!?), keep your answers closer to home and a little more grounded in reality.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“First thing I would do is spend time with my family. They’ve been there and really supported me these past years and I want to be able to give back to them. We’d travel. I’d love to go to Europe and of course I’d take them to Hawaii as well for a little sun and fun. I’d also like to get more involved. If money were no object I’d like to be more **philanthropic** and start a foundation to help bring literacy to underprivileged children and communities. I’d also like to donate to the Humane Society and sponsor more space in the shelters for animals that have had to be turned in due to families losing their homes in the struggling economy. Luckily for me, I don’t have to have a year off or an unlimited budget to do some of those things. I know that the company participates in a wide variety of **outreach and charitable programs** and I’m hoping that I can become involved as well if I am hired.

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Philanthropy
- ✓ Multiplier: Company participation in outreach and charity
- ✓ Do talk about reasonable and realistic dreams
- ✓ Do talk about how you want to improve not only yourself but your community as well.
- ✓ By mentioning the charities, it shows that this interviewee has a vision that extends beyond themselves and the immediate concerns they might have for their own comfort and the comfort of their family. The fact that they are aware of the company’s involvement in charities and outreach shows that they have done their research and that their values are in line with the company’s as well.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t talk about how you want to be somewhere totally different in 5 years
- ✗ Don’t make your goals about somewhere other than the company, even if your plans are different. They want to hire someone with the idea that they will be retaining them, not replacing them in just a few years.

“Tell Me About A Time Someone On Your Team Didn’t Do His Job, How Did You Resolve This Problem?”

Being a team leader means making sure all parts are operating together smoothly. If you have one employee who is having difficulty or not doing their part, it can throw off the entire team and ultimately

the project. Employers like to know that the people they hire to lead teams can actually lead, and that means dealing with these situations as they arise.

EXAMPLE ANSWER

“At my last position I was responsible for several other individuals, one of whom seemed to always be a step behind the rest of the team and consistently missing deadlines. I hid him aside and I discovered through the course of our discussion that he had been promoted from another department but never given the necessary training for his new position. He was terrified to ask for help because he thought that if it became known that he lacked this training he would be immediately fired. Instead, he had been struggling and essentially learning as he went.

Rather than having him fired, I realized what he really needed was a little help. We worked out a schedule where we could meet up and I could **mentor** him. By working together and helping him go over the materials and learn his job, I was able to retain a valuable employee. Now rather than slowing down the team, he has become an integral member.”

DO:

- ✓ Quality: Mentorship
- ✓ Taking responsibility for your team members and ensuring they’re all working together is a sign of a good leader.

DON'T:

- ✗ Don’t brag about Machiavellian techniques you have employed in the past.

OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER

What questions CAN'T a hiring manager ask in a traditional or other type of interview?

Some questions that come close to or cross the line are:

- ✗ How old are you?
- ✗ Where were you born?
- ✗ What church (synagogue or mosque) do you go to?
- ✗ How many children do you have?
- ✗ Are you planning on getting married any time soon?
- ✗ Are you bi-racial?
- ✗ What kind of an accent is that?

If you have been looking for a job, you are probably familiar with most employers’ statements that they do not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, national origin, color, creed, and etcetera. Any question that addresses categories of potential discrimination is either pressing the limits or has crossed the line. An employer also cannot ask about any disabilities you might have unless that disability will specifically affect your ability to perform the job. There are laws about these things.

Rather than standing up and sweeping out of the room in indignation, though, you might want to answer such questions with humor and grace, especially if you want the job.

If the interviewer continues to probe, it might be good to start gathering your things and saying, “I’ve taken up so much of your time, I really must be going since you don’t seem to have any more questions relevant to my potential job performance. It was a pleasure meeting you. If you have any more questions relating to my ability to perform the job, I’ll be happy to answer them now or in a follow-up. Thank you so much. It’s been a pleasure talking to you.”

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

After going through all of these questions and answers, you should have a much better feel for what to expect in your interview. More importantly, you should have been able to visualize how to include your Qualities and Multipliers in your response to really supercharge your answers.

So the moment of truth is here: simply reading these questions and answers and trying to memorize the responses to use in your interview is not going to get the job done. You need to read the example answers we have given you and use them as a starting point before you insert *your own* success stories, Qualities and Multipliers.

You need to practice. Take out a piece of paper or boot up your word processor and get these answers down. The more you repeat this step, the more second nature your answers will become and the more likely you will feel calm and confident in your interview.

We have given you good examples of how to employ the DO’s and DON’T’s in any answer you give, no matter what kind of job experience you have or have not had. This should help guide you along the way.

And please, PLEASE, remember to prepare some questions to ask. We’ve already talked about the consequences of not doing this, so at the very least, make sure you accomplish this crucial step.

Above all else, remember our one simple mantra:

It’s not about you, it’s about them!

We wish you every success in your job search and interviews!

Your Friends,
Jeff Gillis & Mike Simpson