

dhrjobs.org

Search for jobs with our online job search engine



Post navigation

[← Previous](#)[Next →](#)

Job Interview – Best Prep Questions

Posted on [June 10, 2012](#)

As professional recruiters, we have learned over the years there one question we can ask of almost any job candidate prospect to determine their level of willingness to cooperate with the hiring process, and their ability to adapt their preconceptions of the hiring process to the practical aspects of a professional job search. Everyone answers that one question pretty much the same. The question: “Who can present your credentials best, you – the person who actually lived your experiences, or me?” Well the obvious answer is “you,” the person who lived your experiences. But that is the wrong answer. Which illustrates why so many folks have difficulties with job interviews, often wondering later why things didn’t turn out better. Why would your recruiter be a better person to present your credentials than yourself? Because a recruiter will organize your credentials so they appear as a solution to the employer’s needs. Typically, when job candidates present their own resume and supporting credentials in an interview, they present their background in a way that is the most flattering, not necessarily the most effective or logical for getting the job at hand. This article reviews how a job candidate can organize and present their credentials in a job interview so it is to their best advantage. The best way to prepare for a job interview is by learning which questions will likely arise in a job interview, and having some predetermined answers for those questions – answers that both illustrate your skills and successes and present your experiences as the solution to the job you seek.

Often, face to face interviews are preceded by a telephone screening, whereby a key Human Resources or other representative contacts the job candidate directly by phone to ask some basic questions. While the strategies described herein apply to phone and on-site job interviews, the objectives differ. In the telephone interview, the objective should be to quickly illustrate your interest in the job and skills you bring to bear so as to generate a job interview. With the face to face interview, the objective should be to lead to a job offer. Attempting to get a job offer differs from actually getting the job. A job candidate who asks for the job offer by selling themselves to the company as the best fit and most motivated candidate, will likely leave the job interview with an offer in hand.

MOST IMPORTANT JOB INTERVIEW CONSIDERATIONS:

DON'T BE ON TIME – BE EARLY

It is important you arrive at the interview 20-30 minutes early. Obviously, being late sends a negative message about you to the interviewer. Many interviewers don't meet with candidates who arrive late. Plan ahead. Investigate traffic patterns relative to the time of your job interview. Don't expect the interviewer will be sensitive to delays caused by traffic congestion or an unexpected traffic accident. They expect you will allow for those eventualities, just like they do.

DRESS & LOOK PROFESSIONAL

Women: A skirt, dress or dress-suit or pant-suit are the most appropriate for the female candidate. Make sure your clothes are neat, clean and well pressed and make sense. Avoid controversial garb, anything too revealing or too trendy. You want to look professional, not like you are there to get a date or express a fashion statement.

Men: A dress suit, shirt and tie is the most appropriate clothing for the male candidate. Make sure your clothes are neat, clean and well pressed. Avoid flashy colors, jeans, T-shirts or tennis shoes. Wear your hair neat (including facial hair), clean and well groomed.

Oh yeah, and please cover tattoos and body piercings. While your private friends may enjoy the current fad of body art, most likely, a new employer isn't impressed, in fact, may look upon those expressions as somewhat immature – regardless of how you may feel about them. If such corporate attitudes are uncomfortable for you, find another prospective employer who is more open to such un-requested expressions of personality. Otherwise, be professional, dress professional, behave professionally.

PREPARE

Have a pen, notepad and extra copy of your resume and references with you. Make notes of questions you want to ask that relate to the job and company. Put those items in a place that will be easy for you to get to when you need them in the interview. If you currently use a daily/weekly planner, bring that with you too. You should try to arrive at your interview well rested, with a clear mind and a plan for presenting your credentials and supporting materials like references.

GREET JOB INTERVIEWER ENTHUSIASTICALLY

Smile, be friendly, not nervous, offer a solid handshake and say something friendly, like: "Good morning, pleasure to meet you, and thank you for the opportunity to visit with you today." Show your enthusiasm about the opportunity to work for their company. Remember, they are interviewing you for a job that requires specific skills and genuine enthusiasm — if you don't express that at the interview, they may not be convinced you have the stamina required for the job.

DON'T HIGHLIGHT NEGATIVES

For the job interviewer, it is all about filling the job with the right person. Believe me, most job interviewers don't want to hear about your antique tin can collection, or how you landed that elk last year on your vacation. An interviewer wants your undivided attention on their job needs. Your personal habits distract from that focus. Such personal comments may include topics like: smoking, chewing gum, nervous finger or feet movement, tapping a

pencil or a fork, humming, whistling, stretching, cleaning finger nails, clearing your throat, excessive “ums” in conversation, or focusing too much time on unrelated topics. Don’t make negative remarks about your past or present employers or workmates. Negative remarks will not help your cause, and will seem as though you are blaming others for poor results.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY THOROUGHLY

Learn as much as you can about the company and the duties of the job position which interests you, like income range and associated benefits. Family and friends are sometimes sources of information about the company you seek for employment. But don’t rely on hearsay, try to talk to someone in the company about the requirement and expectations of the job you seek. And utilize more than one source of comments about the company you are considering. Any positive things you learn about the company, make sure you mention them to the interviewer as a way to express your long term interest in the job you seek. Be prepared to answer questions about why you want to work for their company, offering sensible reasons that are practical in results.

PREPARE TO ASK QUESTIONS

You don’t want to confuse the interviewer with too many questions. Remember, they are interviewing you, so be prepared to answer all their questions smartly. But challenge the interviewer with some of your own questions – determine those questions before you arrive to the job interview. Keep good eye contact when you ask your questions. Don’t get into lengthy discussions. The idea is to engage the interviewer, to show them you can take charge when required and get the information you need. You should strive to create a list of questions that go to the heart of the job you seek.

KEEP A GOOD ATTITUDE

Be confident and knowledgeable and you will express a good attitude. But don’t seem over confident in your abilities. Remain relaxed, answer questions sincerely. Be interested in the job and the company. Lighten up some and use a little humor! Your job interviewer should be made to feel you really want the job and their company. Show serious interest so that you will be considered a serious candidate. Do not mention offers of interviews with other companies, unless asked.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO EXPECT

When answering questions that have a pre-determined answer, remember to offer a straight forward and immediate answer, and keep it simple. Avoid yes/no answers, unless you are offering an example to illustrate your answer. In fact, as much as possible, try and offer your key answers in a format of : Strategy-then-example. In that sense, if you were to discuss aspects of how to build a team of your workmates, you could answer with a short comment about your overall strategy of how to build a team, then follow that up with a quick real-time example of how you recently utilized that strategy and the results you got. Something like – “I build a team by making sure everyone involved understands our mutual goals, the timing, and their influence on those goals. When I did that last Spring, as we were introducing a new product, the goal was to sell more product by training team members to up-sell the new product to existing customers – we increased sales over 20-percent in one month.”

“TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF”

Most people feel their personal lives are important, so when this question is asked they talk about everything from their children to their wives to their religion and even their favorite hobby or television show. Job interviewers want to hear some of that, or they don’t feel they did a proper interview. But, the truth is, the job interviewer is more

interested in getting the right skills and experience for the job. So keep your personal comments superficial, and in answering those personal questions, spin your answers in a manner that your answer reflects the skills and knowledge required for the job. After all, you are interviewing for the job, not a hobby partner.

“WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS”

This is your primary time to express how your experience and skills match up to the requirements and needs of the job you seek. Be specific, but don't spend an hour. Keep your words simple. Write out as many of the answers as possible before the interview, so you can be comfortable when you explain your skills. Again, be brief and use examples.

WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES?

Mature thinkers tend to know their weaknesses. That is why most job interviewers ask this question. Will you admit you have weaknesses, and if so, how do you manage those? Is the weakness too major to allow you to be successful in the job you seek? Meaning to say, know in advance how you will answer this question. For instance, many hard workers are accused of working too many hours. Sometimes it's to do with the workload, sometimes it's just a matter of poor time-management. So if you say you are accused of being a “workaholic,” temper that answer by admitting you do work hard, but that you always maintain a reasonable workload for you and your team, so you and your team (if there is one) are active, but you are not really behind in your work. So admit a weakness or two, but express how your results don't suffer.

DESCRIBE YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE?

If you are seeking a management oriented position, describe your management style. Is it more hands-on? Is it analysis based? Do you delegate and verify results? Whatever your style, describe it specifically, not generically. Don't offer hourly-wage answers, offer management oriented answers; hourly wage answers include comments like: “I'm always on time; I always get my work done; I get along with others;” and such. Those are the attributes a manager expects of the people who report to them. Make your answers relative to management. Describe your ability and success when you delegate; your success with smart, accurate analysis and reporting and how those reports lead your activities; outline strategies you use to motivate or influence team members. Be detailed, but in short answers.

“WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE YOUR CURRENT JOB?”

There is nothing wrong with leaving one job for a better one. Make sure the interviewer sees you as being in that mind-set. If there are serious issues afoot in your current or recent job, don't spend time discussing those, keep the focus on how you are a good match for the job at hand, and how you are motivated to improve and advance. A good response might be something like: “I am always looking to better myself. I heard positive things about your company and this job in particular, so I wanted to explore my options”.

“WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE IN FIVE YEARS”

This isn't a trick question, like most people believe, having two sides: 1) To show how ambitious are you. 2) Are you loyal. It's okay to say you want to advance, if that is the case. But do it politely, a good generic response may be something like: “I want to be a better manager than I am now.” Or, “I would be actively working towards promotions in this company.”

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER:

Obviously, there are too many hiring scenarios to try and cover all pertinent job interview questions here. But, there are some basic questions that may likely arise, and for which you should generate pre-fabbed answers, so you can offer an intelligent and job related response if such questions come up in conversation. Write out your answers to each of these questions.

How will you be an asset to our company (good opportunity to mention prior achievements, without being boastful.)

Why did you pick this industry?

Describe a unrelated leadership role that you held.

What has been your greatest challenge in your career?

Give me an example of a problem that arose in your job, and how you solved it.

Tell me about a project you initiated and the results.

What types of situations put you under pressure and how did you deal with it?

Give me a situation in which you failed, how did you deal with it?

How do you work with difficult people?

What was your greatest accomplishment?

What challenges are you looking for in a position?

What motivates you?

If I asked people who know you to describe you, what three words would they use?

Describe a situation where you had to work with someone who was difficult. How did you handle it?

What traits are most important for a good manager?

Tell me a about a team project of which your are particularly proud of. What was your contribution?

What type of environment appeals to you the most?

What characteristics are most important in a good manager? How have you displayed one of them?

What makes someone a good leader?

What are your expectations of a good employer?

What do you do in your spare time?

The whole idea here is to leave nothing to chance. Literally write out your answers in advance. Most job candidates do not follow this good advice, believing they already know how best to present their credentials. Don't make that mistake. Organize your answers in advance, put them in perspective of how your skills and know-how best fit the job for which you are interviewing. By organizing these simple tasks to prepare for your job interview, you will greatly increase your odds of getting hired. Don't leave your next great job to chance. Prepare for it now.