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A Closer Look At Two Interview Questions

By Judi Perkins

A job interview is stressful. The person who hasn't made a lot of changes isn't practiced at what is involved (nor should they want to be), and the person who has made a lot of changes doesn't have any idea as to what's involved either, or they wouldn't be making so many changes!

Preparing for the interview de-stresses the situation considerably. Yet, 78% of all candidates – regardless of the level for which they are interviewing – wing it! And frequently cause themselves to be weeded out in the process.

Like so much of the interview, seemingly innocent questions can trip you up. You think you are answering them in a way that puts you in the best light, but you'd be surprised at how many people completely miss the boat. Merely to hope an interview has a positive result is not enough. That's basically forfeiting your ability to drive up the percentage of a positive outcome.

For instance, in response to the question, "Why do you want to work here?" some people will say things such as:

"I've worked in this industry for 15 years and been very successful. I feel I can make a difference in your organization. I have a proven track record of leadership. I've read in the paper that your company is having some problems, and with my experience as a Director of XXXXX, I can help straighten those out."

That answer may sound good and appear to suffice, but on a scale of 1 – 10, it ranks about a 4!

Why? The answer shows no research, no thought, no consideration. It sounds stock and could suffice for any number of companies. Overall, unimpressive.

In my experience as a recruiter, I've found that while mid level management tends to UNDERanswer the question, upper level management will often OVERanswer the question. One group doesn't provide enough information because of a limited lack of experience. The other group has been around, worked their way up the ladder in more than one company, and in their attempt to sound thoughtful, intelligent,

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and wise, end up saying very little at all.

Let's look closer.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK HERE? Here's where you get to show off your research. Tell the interviewer what you've learned about the company, and why it's appealing to you. **SPECIFICS** are the key here.

Relate those specific examples from your experience to what you've learned about the company, their focus, and their market. Look to your personality and what motivates you and how that relates to any details you learned from the ad, your recruiter, your friend who referred you, or from where you learned of this opportunity.

For instance, perhaps their ad stated that they were looking to establish a marketing department from

ground up. If you thrive on growth, challenges, making things happen – there's your answer – along with examples of how you have grown, established, or done market research in a parallel situation.

And you might ask, "What if it's not a high profile company? What if it's on the small side and local?" Right. Not every company is the size of General Electric or even a regional public powerhouse that you can look up in Dun & Bradstreet.

But most librarians are more than willing to help you find any information that might be present in any of their research books. Local newspapers may have done stories on the company, and the library would have those too. And these days, most companies have a website.

Share what you can do and why you feel you can make a contribution and benefit the company. This question is about how **YOU** can benefit the company, not how the company can benefit **YOU**.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF Some interviews are lost right at this point. This is not an invitation to go on ad nauseum about everything that has happened to you since you were five years old or since your first job out of college. Nor is it the time to shrug your shoulders and give an unplanned, one-sentence answer.

Some people, especially those who haven't prepared and have a tendency to talk when they get nervous, find themselves rambling. Put together a nice little 2 – 3 minute verbal bio about your career, your qualifications, and why you are interested. Know what you're going to say in advance.

A FEW POINTS TO REMEMBER In recruiting we used to say, "'A' candidates for 'A' companies, 'B' candidates for 'B' companies and 'C' candidates for 'C' companies," and a 'B' candidate is not only some one who's talents and track record is only so-so, it's also an 'A' candidate whose poor interviewing skills **MAKE** him a 'B.'

Knowing who you are, what you want, what you have to offer and what you've accomplished – and having it all on the tip of your tongue – can make or break you for a job offer – not just for your perfect

job, but sometimes for even finding ANY job.

Being able to sell yourself, your skills, how you can benefit a potential company and then being able to close the deal necessitates taking the time to research and learn the company. It means knowing yourself well enough that you can apply aspects of your capabilities to the individual facts and details of that INDIVIDUAL company – and that you can do it smoothly without groping for words or just winging it.

And last, but not least, the words of Peter Handal of Dale Carnegie Training, echo the importance of interview preparation, including what strikes most people as silly – role playing. But as he said, "you only have one chance to make a really good impression," and if you don't take it seriously enough to study and thoroughly prepare, someone else will, and that's the person who will get the job!

Do your homework before EVERY interview! There's no chance to make a second good impression!

Judi Perkins has been a contingency and retained search consultant for 25 years, with a short stint in the temporary and local permanent placement market. She has owned her own firm and hired

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Crazy Interview Questions

By Joel Vance

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If you want to get that amazing new job, you are first going to have to learn the answers to common job interview questions. The majority of the interview questions that you have thrown at you will be typical interview fare, but a company may decide to throw you a curve ball in the form of a crazy job interview question. This is starting to happen more and more, it is becoming quite a trend actually, so you need to take some time to learn what these interview questions might be so that you can answer them quickly and in a manner that leads to you getting the job.

There is a method to an employer's madness when they use an 'out of the ordinary' job interview question – and that's to get you thinking fast. In most cases the employer is testing you to see if you can think on your feet or if you are creative enough to work well in this job position. If the interviewer doesn't think you have what it takes because of your answers to the job interview questions, then you will not get the position.

Before you go into any job interview try to keep an open mind. Prep your imagination a bit to get it flowing freely just in case you get some of these crazy job interview questions asked of you. You can't

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afford to freeze up during an interview; because if you do, it is all over. So go in prepared, or at least as prepared as you can be.

Here are a few of the strange and yet rather common job interview questions that you may run across:

Q) If you were an animal what kind of animal would you choose to be?

Choose an animal that is efficient at everything that it does and one that is often very busy.

Q) What kind of fruit would you be?

You should choose a fruit that tastes good in a fruit salad along with many other fruits. This can be used to show that you are a team player who works well with others all of the time.

Q) What would be the very first thing that you would do if you won the lottery?

This is a gauge of your priorities. Whatever you do don't say you would quit your job.

Think about the answers to these sorts of job interview questions before you go into the interview. This way even if these particular interview questions don't get asked you will still have an idea of the types of answers that you should be giving.

Joel Vance is a Human Resources 17-year HR expert who's taught at 4 major universities around the country and currently has a best selling book on interview questions at

<http://www.theperfectinterview.com/go/tpiarticle023.php>



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