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**Job Interview Basics: Personal Questions**

**By Shaun Stevens**

Of all the questions you'll be asked, personal and family ones appear to be the most "statistical."

For this reason, most jobseekers answer them in a "static" way, with "name, rank, and serial number." They're also often emotionally charged, since interviewers ask about personal perils, family feuds, and status symbols. Therefore, rehearsing your lines is particularly important, since what you say is as important as what you convey.

While most of the questions in this area have only marginal value in determining your qualifications to perform a specific job, you must get past them so you can get down to business with the interviewer. That's why they're called KO factors. Wrong answers will knock you out in Round 1; right ones will keep you in the ring for a while. Personal and family items are invariably at the top of resumes, on the front of application forms, and at the beginning of interview checklists. Since these are the "cue cards" used in the actual interview, expect the questions in Act 1, Round 1.

"First impressions really count" (and they really do to overworked people who are interviewing), this is your chance to shine. Most film critics will tell you they lock into a review within five minutes. If they watch longer, it's either to enjoy the show or to justify their negative rating. That's why lawyers often see judges writing their decisions from the bench soon after the opening statements. Yours will, too. Your judge is overworked. Then greet the interviewer with the Magic Four Hellos:

- 1.) Smile. If you can't fake it, just think about how lucky the interviewer is to be meeting you.
- 2.) Direct eye contact. If it's too much for you, look at the bridge of the interviewer's nose.
- 3.) Introduce yourself. Say, "Hi, I'm (first name) (last name). It's a pleasure meeting you."
- 4.) A firm but gentle handshake. Rehearse. No live shark; no dead flounder. Then, once you're "on the road".

Head for the chair on your favored side (right if you are right-handed, etc.) If you're ambidextrous, you can take center stage. Just be sure there's a chair behind you.

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Stand there until you're asked to be seated. Basically most managers copy their bosses training, style and procedures (or lack thereof). There is little originality in interview questions. The same questions are repeated in interviews ad infinitum. The problem is that once you are hired all your wonderful traits are forgotten. It simply becomes "You had better work your ass off or you will lose your job."

Standard Interview Questions on Personal and Family:

1.) What are your parents' occupations? 2.) Do you live with your parents? 3.) Do you own or rent your home? 4.) How far do you live from this company? 5.) Do you speak a foreign language especially French or Spanish? 6.) How much time do you spend with your family ? 7.) In your opinion, what makes a happy? marriage 8.) Who is the boss in your family? 9.) Is your spouse employed? Will there be a

conflict?

10.) What contributed to your divorce? What have you learned from this experience? 11.) Describe your relationship with your children. 12.) What child care arrangements have been made for your children? 13.) Do you keep and follow a personal budget? 14.) Do you balance your chequebook on a regular basis? 15.) Do you own a life insurance policy? 16.) Do you have a savings plan? 17.) Are you in debt? 18.) How large is your visa bill? 19.) Do you pay off your charge card bills every month? 20.) Have you ever been refused a bond? 21.) Do you have a valid driver's license 22.) Have you ever had a driver's license revoked? Why? 23.) Are you a Team Player? 24.) You look like a person "on the ball"

Where do you see yourself in time period – 1 year, 2 years etc?

25) How do you see yourself fitting in our organization?

As previously mentioned most interviewers have little or no originality in their Interview skills and procedures.

All they generally do is copy the standard questions that have been commonly asked.

Little originality if at all.

The trick is to plan and anticipate your answers to the se "vital" questions in order that you past muster in order to get the job and income involved.

Standard practice is to have 3 interviews

1) Interview one is the first step – basic screening

2) Interview 2 is a bit more serious

– You have passed step one

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– If they are thorough they may have called your references

3) Interview 3 is usually by a team or another member of the "team"

A more senior person or even just another person in the organization will interview you.

Although the reason for this will be claimed to be to add in additional expertise and experience into this vital hiring procedure the real reason is to spread the responsibility so that no one person can be blamed if "you don't work out".

Remember none of these questions need be answered by you. However you take the risk of offending the interviewer (and their interview skills and thus ending your chances for employment and income from that firm). Note that a number of the questions may be totally incongruous, that is inconsistent and incompatible.

Best not to laugh.

For example the interviewer may ask if you are a self starter, take responsibility and make your own decisions and then ask leading questions To ask if find out if you are the type that always follows company procedure without question.

Or they may ask questions to verify that you always consider the company's needs and wants as most important and then ask questions to verify that "That a customer should never question the company's policy on returns or extended warranties".

When the interviewer goes to great length to explain that the company has a great focus for "team players" it is not a good idea to point out that being a "team player" is not always a good thing. That the interview questions have focused on identifying you as a "self starter who takes charge". And besides that it is true that the Sept 11 hijackers were "good Team Players".

Lastly two points

– One very intelligent manager's hiring guideline was that when he took out a serious candidate to lunch he watched if the candidate salted his soup before tasting it.

The manager wanted people in his organization who checked things out before jumping to act.

If you get an interviewer who asks original thought provoking questions in your interview take quick note.

For example if the manager asks a question such as "It is 4:55 pm. A customer is considering buying an expensive item which the store has had on hand for some time and has not sold. The customer is very interested in this item. Has phoned their spouse for their ok. The phone call is going to be returned for approval at 5:15. What do you do?"

Take note – this is a very smart person in an organization which may well be very good to work for.

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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 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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