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Staying Ahead of the Curve: 5 Questions to Expect in Your Interview

By: Jonathan Bogush- Director of Connectivity

In today's job market, making sure you successfully prepare yourself prior to an interview is essential. Going into an interview without a plan will nearly guarantee that you will not get the job. In 2015, I have briefed and debriefed with dozens of individuals before and after interviews and, because of that, I am privy to some insider knowledge about the questions people are facing when interviewing for a job. Obviously, no two situations are ever exactly the same, but in general, I am seeing some striking similarities between the types of question lines companies are using to vet job candidates. Below is a brief roadmap of the types of questions you'll be asked and how to craft impressive answers to even the toughest questions.

1. Why don't you tell me about yourself?

This question, often the interview opener, has a crucial objective: to see how you handle yourself in unstructured situations. The interviewer wants to see how articulate you are, how confident you are, and generally what type of impression you would make on the people with whom you come into contact on the job. The interviewer also wants to learn about the trajectory of your career and to get a sense of what you think is important and what has caused you to perform well.

Most candidates find this question a difficult one to answer. However, the upside is that this question offers an opportunity to describe yourself positively and focus the interview on your strengths. Be prepared to deal with it.

There are many ways to respond to this question correctly and just one wrong way: by asking, "What do you want to know?" You need to develop a good answer to this question, practice it, and be able to deliver it with poise and confidence.

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The right response is essentially a career "elevator pitch" and generally revolves around two things: focusing on what interests the interviewer and highlighting your most important career accomplishments.

Focus on what interests the interviewer

Do not dwell on your personal history-that is not why you are there. Start your career "elevator pitch" by discussing the job experience that really kicked-off your career and then work your way up to the present (or most recent) position you are in. Naturally, try to focus a majority of the content in your pitch on your most recent employment and explain why you are interested in the position you are interviewing for (the pitch of the "elevator pitch"). The key to all successful interviewing is to match your qualifications and experiences to what the interviewer is looking for. You want to be selling what the buyer is buying.

Highlight Important Accomplishments

A good interviewee will memorize a few professional stories that clearly demonstrates why he or she is the best person for the job. When preparing your "elevator pitch" be sure to do a quick inventory of the various accomplishments you've had job by job and be sure to be able to recount those stories; stories that illustrates your best professional qualities. For example, if you tell an interviewer that people describe you as "hunter," provide a brief story that shows how you have been successful in identifying and closing customers. Stories are powerful and are what people remember most.

2. How long have you been with your current (or former) employer?

This is a hot-button question if your résumé reflects considerable job-hopping. Excellent performers tend to stay in their jobs at least three to five years. They implement course corrections, bring in new resources, and, in general, learn how to survive-that's why they are valued by prospective employers.

If your résumé reflects jobs with companies that were acquired, moved, closed, or downsized, it is still viewed as a job-hopper's history. It is unfortunate but true. When the question of professional tenure comes up during an interview be sure to be diligent in explaining the circumstances behind why you moved from job to job. Do not shy away from the question; face it head on and be sure to point to professional references that can speak towards your background.

3. Why did you leave your last position?

Obviously, this question relates to the previous question and I believe how you answer very much dictates your chances of landing a job. At high levels, issues that relate to personality and temperament become more important than they might otherwise. The interviewer wants to know if you will fit in with the company. The interviewer may also be fishing for signs of conflict that indicate a potential personality problem.

Be honest and straightforward, but do not dwell on any conflict that may have occurred. Highlight positive developments that resulted from your departure, whether it was that you accepted a more challenging position or learned an important lesson that helped you to be happier in your next job.

4. Describe a situation where you were part of a failed project.

If you can't discuss a failure or mistake, the interviewer might conclude that you don't possess the depth of experience necessary to do the job. The interviewer is not looking for perfection. He or she is trying better to understand your level of responsibility, your decision-making process, and your ability to recover from a mistake, as well as what you learned from the experience and if you can take responsibility for your mistakes.

Respond that you'd like to think that you have learned something valuable from every mistake you have made. Then have a brief story ready with a specific illustration.

It should conclude on a positive note, with a concrete statement about what you learned and how it benefited the company.

5. Tell me about a situation where you did not get along with a superior.

The wrong answer to this hot-button question is, "I've been very fortunate and have never worked for someone I didn't get along with." Everyone has had situations where he or she disagreed with a boss, and saying that you haven't forces the interviewer to question your integrity. Also, it can send out a signal that the candidate is not seasoned enough or hasn't been in situations that require him or her to develop a tough skin or deal with confrontation.

It's natural for people to have differing opinions. When this has occurred in the past, you could explain that you presented your reasons and openly listened to other opinions as well.

That's all for now. Be sure to keep up to date with latest job searches being worked at TYGES International at www.tyges.com and good luck in 2015!

ACTIVE JOB OPENINGS:

- HV Cable Installation Project Manager with 7+ years of experience working on large-scale, complex HV cable installation projects with major General Contractors and Utilities customers - Looking for someone to project manage large-scale HV cable installation projects for major Utility customers nationally.
- Process Engineer with 7+ years of experience working within a wire/cable manufacturing plant; must relocate to the greater Charleston, SC area - Looking for an experienced Process Engineer from a wire/cable manufacturing background that has a deep expertise in LEAN/Sigma practices, knowledge of extrusion, cabling, jacketing line troubleshooting.

- Manufacturing Technology Engineering Manager willing to relocate to the greater Louisville, KY area - Looking for someone with a strong connector tooling and fixture design background, knowledge of designing automated assembly equipment, and serving as a global project engineer leading geographically disperse teams of engineers.

Please note: I want to direct you to a blog that our firm started the first of 2014 - www.reinventingrecruiting.com. It deals with a multitude of topics and I encourage you to follow it and make comments or ask questions. All are welcome. To sign up / follow the blog, go to the blog website, www.reinventingrecruiting.com, and look to the lower right hand corner where you will see a tab "follow" - click on it and sign up. I hope you find the blog helpful and insightful and please give us feedback on topics you'd like our experts to discuss.

Should you be interested in learning more about any of our current job openings or Impact Players, please contact us at connectivity@tyges.com. We look forward to working with you in the future.

Good luck in your current ventures and you'll be hearing from us next month!

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