

Name: _____



THE JOB INTERVIEW WORKBOOK

Seven Steps to Help You Prepare for The Most Important Half Hour of Your Career

Every year one in seven workers changes jobs...

... the applicants who get the best jobs are the ones who are the most prepared for their job interviews.

What Forest Gump said about chocolates (“Life is like a box of chocolates... you never know what you are going to get”) should NOT apply to a job interview. If the interviewer and the applicant have both done their jobs well, both parties will have a good idea about what they’re each getting.

Caution

If you’re looking for a book you can just read and feel good about, put this back on the shelf. Don’t buy it unless you are willing to give your active participation.

The Job Interview Workbook

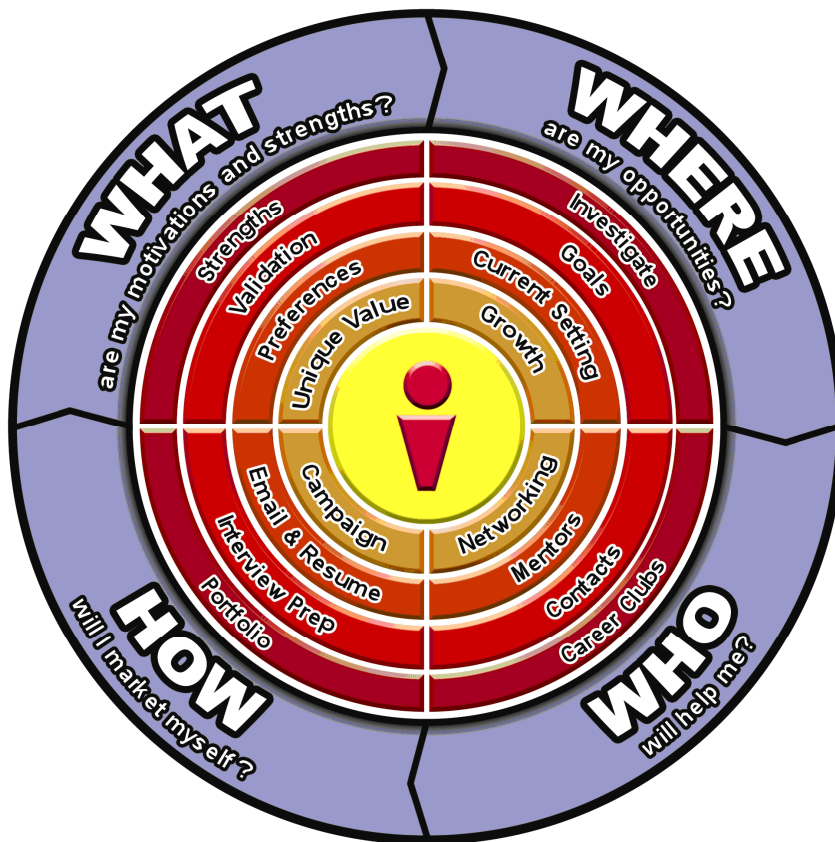
Note:

This interview preparation workbook is provided courtesy of coachingandmentoring.com. We provide complete career workshop materials for church groups, state agencies and job clubs. Materials include a facilitator’s guide complete with PowerPoint slides for each module and worksheets for participants. *If you find this workbook helpful, contact us for more information on our workshop material by emailing us at info@coachingandmentoring.com.*

Interview preparation is part of an overall process that should begin with defining and confirming individual strengths, identifying job preferences, and networking. The best prepared candidates will have done that work before getting to interview preparation.

Career planning is best done on an on-going, non-emergency basis. Our content is based on the Career Planning Wheel™ and relies on the Eight Principles of Effective Career Planning as shown below.

The Career Wheel



Eight Principles of Effective Career Planning

Effective career planning...

1. Is my responsibility
2. Is an on-going process
3. Builds on strengths
4. Delivers employer value
5. Is group-powered
6. Builds networks of contacts
7. Accommodates my preferences
8. Requires flexibility and adaptability

Legal Notice: This workbook does *not* offer any legal advice. If you need or want advice regarding employment law, please consult a lawyer in your jurisdiction.

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Normally the interviewer has far more practice at employment interviewing than the applicant.

Preparation and practice can reverse the normal advantage.

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Seven Steps to Help You Prepare for The Most Important Half Hour of Your Career

I. Overview & Purpose

During an employment interview, you as a job applicant need to sell the prospective employer on the skills, capabilities and contributions that you would bring to the organization. Equally important, you need to ask the interviewer questions in order to obtain the facts you need to make an informed decision - the viability of the company, job duties, quality of supervision, compensation package, corporate values, career path and a host of other items.

Getting the job you really want requires selling your capabilities, and carefully selecting the right company

It is the overall purpose of this workbook to help you get the job you want by helping you (a) to present yourself in the most positive light; and (b) to obtain the facts that will let you make a sound decision on any job offer.

Both the applicant and the employer are selling and buying in an employment interview.

II. Workbook Objectives

To help you get the best job you can, this workbook has been organized around five key objectives. The readings and exercises are designed to:

Getting the best job will require the best:

1. Show you how to frame the best answers to questions that you are most likely to be asked in a job interview;
2. Suggest questions you need to ask if you are to obtain the information needed to make an intelligent decision on "buying into" the interviewing company;
3. Explain techniques you can use when answering questions so that you are sure you understand what was asked, and so that you don't answer questions

Answers

Questions

Techniques

The Job Interview Workbook

until you have the information you need to make the best answer;

4. Guide you in developing a strategy for handling “tough” or embarrassing questions on such things as periods of unemployment, poor grades, or having been dismissed from an earlier job; and, *most importantly,*
5. *Provide you with practical tools for rehearsing or role playing that will improve your interview performance.*

“Sensitive” Past Issues

Practice

III. How It Works

The goals of this workbook can only be achieved if, after going through it, your interviewing skills are better than they were before you completed the necessary action.

Achieving workbook goals requires improving skills.

The purpose of the workbook is *not* to entertain or to enlighten you in some abstract sense – it is to help you get the job you want by improving your skills during an actual interview. However, *the only way to really become more skilled at anything is to practice.* In order to improve their skills, debaters debate, actors act, and interviewers interview.

Improving interview skills requires thought and practice.

So if you’re looking for material you can just read and feel good about, put this workbook back on the shelf. Don’t buy it unless you are willing to give your active participation.

Your active participation is required.

We are going to ask you to *think* about and then to *practice* a way of behaving during a job interview that will increase the likelihood that both you and the interviewer will acquire the information you need to make sound hiring decisions.

*Think
and
Practice*

If you do these exercises thoroughly, you should never leave an interview wondering, “Why didn’t I think about telling her about...”, or saying to yourself, “Darn it, I wish I’d asked about ...”

Preparation means no regrets.

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Taking the Action Steps outlined in this workbook will help you to get across the points you want to make about yourself and to find out key pieces of information about the employer. Those steps are:

Step Action

- 1 Prepare answers to questions you will be asked.
- 2 Prepare questions to ask.
- 3 Learn interview techniques.
- 4 Work at being conversational.
- 5 Develop a plan for dealing with any “Sensitive” past issues.
- 6 Stack the interview deck: Solitaire (using the PowerPoint Interview Card Deck).
- 7 One-on-One Role Playing (Using the PowerPoint Interview Card Deck (a) practice answering questions and asking your own questions with someone else, and (b) get some feedback and ideas on other things you might say or ways you can phrase things.)

You will get the maximum advantage out of this workbook if you have *really* taken the time to think about and to be able to articulate just what your unique strengths, abilities, talents and skills are. And you do have them – we all do.

*The whole point is to be able to clearly define your strengths and abilities in terms of working with **People, Information and Tools (“PIT”)** and to be able to support your claims with specific instances of **Situations** you faced, **Actions** you took, and how the **Results** benefited your employer (“**SAR**”). Think of PIT and SAR as you complete this workbook.*

Steps

Written Answers

Written Questions

Techniques

Written Conversation Topics

Sensitive Issues

Interview Deck, Solitaire

Dress Rehearsals; Feedback and Suggestions.

Know Your Strengths!

*PIT
-People
-Information
-Tools*

*SAR
-Situation
-Action
-Results*

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Step 1: Prepare Answers to Questions You'll Be Asked

Initial impressions are important in interviews. You will want to arrive on time and wear clean, pressed, appropriate clothes with shoes shined and to pay particular attention to all aspects of personal grooming. You will also want to bring your own pen and notepad to take any helpful notes.

Just as important as being punctual or looking neat and well-groomed is knowing what information you want the employer to have when he or she is deciding whether to offer you a job and what the terms of the job would be. Knowing what you want the interviewer to know lets you guide the interview and expands your role far beyond being purely reactive.

You need to know what capabilities you're selling, and how to illustrate them.

There is simply no substitute for the confidence and completeness you get by being thoroughly prepared.

What impression do you make when someone asks you how this job fits into your career goals and you have never thought in terms of career goals? Do you just say, "Like, really well, you know?" or can you explain in detail how this job builds on prior experience or education and is a logical extension of what you've done and would like to do?

Preparedness = Confidence.

The point is that everyone will be forgiven for having to take a moment or two to compose a response to an obscure technical detail, but you don't want to appear stumped by basic, predictable questions. Again, you never want to think "I wish I'd thought of" as you're leaving the interview.

Preparation now avoids later regrets.

The following pages contain types of questions you're likely to be asked with several different forms included. Write out your best answers in the space provided and talk them through with a spouse, friend or mentor afterwards to see if there are ways to make them more accurate or effective.

Write out answers

Always include specific examples of when you've actually used any of the special skills, talents, knowledge or other capabilities that would be useful to

Always include examples, anecdotes or illustrations.

The Job Interview Workbook

the employer.

It is critical to take the time to actually write out the answers (or, if you're using the PDF version, type them in). The physical act of writing provides a focus to your efforts and demonstrates your commitment to giving your best performance during the interview. Changing behavior or skill sets requires *action*, not just *thought*. Again, write out the answers.

*Don't just think about
the answers –
WRITE THEM OUT!!*



Don't be satisfied with the first response you write out. As you get more experience with these exercises and get feedback and ideas from other people, you should be able to improve your responses by thinking of other specific skills or talents you possess and of other instances in which you have used them to an employer's advantage.

*Don't be satisfied with
first answers.*

A few final words before you begin: This workbook is not intended to "coach" you to represent yourself as something you aren't, just to make the best and most accurate representation of your skills and abilities. Experienced interviewers will soon detect if you are just role playing or trying to hide the real you. The best way to get the best job for you is to know your own abilities and talents and be able to quickly and accurately present them to the interviewer.

Question Area

- A. Open-Ended, "Define Yourself" Questions
- B. Compensation Questions
- C. Prior Accomplishments
- D. Improvement or Growth
- E. Unique Skills or Talents
- F. Manageability
- G. Invitation to Negativity
- H. Work-Life Balance
- I. People Skills Questions
- J. Tools Questions
- K. Information or Knowledge Questions
- L. Goal Orientation
- M. Illegal Questions
- N. What If...
- O. Three Important Personal Characteristics

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A. Open-Ended “Define Yourself” Questions

At some point in most interviews, the interviewer asks something completely open-ended where the candidate is given free rein to describe him or herself. Variants on this theme include:

Tell me something about yourself.

Or

What do you really like to do?

Or

Why should I hire you and not someone else?

Or

What words do you use to describe yourself?

In answering these you need to keep the following points in mind:

- **Think from the employer’s perspective** – how will he or she benefit from having you on the team? If your answers don’t help the interviewer figure out what an asset you’d be, you’ve failed in your sales job.
- Be positive and describe yourself in terms of successes and goals as they pertain to the job. Nobody knowingly hires a negative person.
- The best answers describe your skills and talents in the areas of **People, Information, and Tools (“PIT”)** – how you manage, motivate, teach, train, sell to or serve **People**; what kinds of specialized **Information** or knowledge you have acquired; and what kinds of **Tools** can you use, whether they are physical items like hammers, or computer tools like software programs.
- Keep your initial answer short – be able to describe your education, experience, current position, and strengths or abilities *as they pertain to the position*, in 90 to 120 seconds. Then ask if there’s an area

*Be a good sales person
– think what benefits
the employer would
receive.*

*Think Positive!
Think Successes!*

*Describe your skills
and talents with*

- *People*
- *Information*
- *Tools.*

Keep it brief!

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about which the interviewer would like more information.

- Use specific examples of behavior that would benefit the interviewing organization, e.g., problem-solving, nurturing customer relations, saving money, etc. (SAR – Situation, Action, Result).

Use illustrations, examples, success stories, anecdotes.

Practice: Write out a response below. (And remember that this is just the initial draft – you will be able to come back and improve your response as you get more practice and insight as a result of working these steps.)



A commitment to change unaccompanied by action is useless – Start Writing!!

A large empty rectangular box for writing a response, connected to the text box above by a horizontal line.

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B. Compensation Questions

When you take a job, the main thing that you are trading your time and energy for is the compensation or salary. Because you may be a little anxious in this area, it is important to have an answer prepared in terms of how much pay you would be expecting. Variations on this theme include:

How much money do you need to work here?

Or

How much are you making in your current job?

Or

What salary range were you looking for?

Or

What are your salary expectations?

In answering these you need to keep the following points in mind:

- If this is early in the interview, the typical advice is to defer answering the question until you have a complete understanding of all the aspects of the job. You might say something like, “Mr. Randall, I’m not quite sure at this point what the job involves; let me defer that until later when I understand what you’d be asking me to do, OK?”
- You should demonstrate that you understand that your compensation will be directly linked to the value you add to the organization, perhaps by saying something like, “I would expect to be compensated according to how much I contribute to the company, and I can tell you, I will contribute a lot.”

*Don't give salary numbers until you understand the job, **and** they've had a chance to evaluate you.*

Show you understand that you get paid to contribute.

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- Sometimes interviewers who ask a compensation question early in the interview are just trying to see if the parties are reasonably close in their compensation expectations so that both parties aren't wasting their time going forward with the interview, so don't be uncomfortable giving ranges or approximations.
- You need to know the answers to a number of other questions that bear on job satisfaction and career growth before you can answer. For example, does the company have child-care benefits? Education benefits? What about parking or uniform allowances? Pay grade increases? Health benefits? Dental Benefits? Signing Bonuses? All of these impact the money you have left over at the end of the month and you need to know that information before you can intelligently answer.
- If the interviewer asks a second time, be prepared to give an answer. In your answer, it is always safer to give a range that leaves you negotiating room, e.g., "mid-30's" or "34 to 38, depending on what the job involves," instead of a specific answer like "\$32,000." You can also answer by saying something like "A package in the mid-30's." This can let you include the cash value of things like health benefits, day care, etc., recognizing that the interviewer may be thinking of just salary.
- Your prior research should have established what a reasonable compensation level is for a given job. Once you give a specific number, you need to stay reasonably close to it or risk suffering major credibility loss.

Early compensation questions are most likely just looking for broad ranges.

Know all the factors affecting your compensation before requesting or agreeing to a salary

*If pressed a second time, give a **range** and/or refer to a **"compensation package."***

Research compensation levels, and stick with your minimum.

Practice: Write out your response below to what you will say when asked about compensation early in the interview, and what you would say if the interviewer follows up with a second request after you initially deferred your answer:

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A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step – Keep Writing!!

Early in interview:

After being asked two or more times:

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C. Prior Accomplishments

The basic premise of the way most companies conduct job interviews is that the best single predictor of how your actions will contribute to the employer is how you have contributed in the past. They will try to get at those actions by asking questions like these:

Past actions are the best predictor of future actions.

Tell me about your most significant accomplishments on your prior jobs.

How have you really contributed to your prior employers?

What have you accomplished on the job that you are the most proud of?

You need to keep in mind:

- The most convincing way to tell about past contributions is with specific stories, illustrations, and examples. Anyone can claim to have skills or capabilities, but you want to be able to back up any claims with specific stories. As they say, "It ain't bragging if you've done it."
- Frame the response in terms of what the prior employer received as benefits from having had you as an employee. Dollar sales figures, number of customers served without a complaint, number of products produced without a defect or number of days/years without an accident or missed time – any or all of these could be worked into your answer.
- Don't limit yourself to paid jobs. Include hobbies and volunteer or charitable work, if the skills or talents you used there are applicable to this employer.
- Always try to tell about how you interact with **People**, what **Information** or knowledge you've acquired, and any special **Tools** you can use.

Use illustrations, examples, stories and anecdotes.

Speak in terms of benefits to employers – dollars, hours, customer satisfaction, cost savings, etc.

Include any relevant life experience.

***PIT –
People
Information
Tools***

The Job Interview Workbook

- Use the “**SAR**” approach to telling stories or anecdotes – the **S**ituation you faced, the **A**ction you took and the **R**esults you obtained.

*SAR –
Situation
Action
Results*

Practice: Write out your response:



Preparedness = Confidence.
Be Prepared, Keep Writing!!

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing a response to the practice prompt.

The Job Interview Workbook

D. Improvement or Growth

If there's one constant in life, it's change. Employers want to know that you can change or grow as the demands of the job grow or change. Variations on this topic include:

Tell me what you've done to improve yourself in the last year.

What have you learned from your prior experiences?

What plans do you have to continue your development?

You need to keep in mind the following points:

- You want to show that you have accumulated experience and knowledge, *not* that you have had the same experience repeated over and again.
- You need to make a concerted effort to avoid any negativity and you should *never* take this opportunity to recite a laundry list of complaints against your prior employers.
- The best answers will show how you've improved or plan to improve your **P**eople skills, your **I**nformation base or your **T**ools inventory or skills.

Show variety

Being positive gets more jobs than negativity.

*PIT –
People
Information
Tools*

Practice: Write out your response below:



If we think ahead we may be able to avoid being forced to think on our feet – Keep Writing!!

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There's a wrong way and a "write" way to get ready for your job interview.

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E. Unique Skills or Talents

The best managers seek out people with unique skills or talents and employ them in their area of greatest strength. This is why doing a complete skill inventory often pays great dividends. Be prepared for questions like:

What do you consider your greatest strengths or talents?

What sets you apart from other applicants?

Why should I hire you over other applicants?

Points you need to consider:

- Be able to respond with very specific things you can do for your employer. This will give the employer a clear idea of how your talents can be used. Keep in mind that job titles can vary widely from company to company and industry to industry. **Don't depend on interviewers knowing how a job title at a prior employer relates to what you can do for them.** If you can describe the skills or talents you have, the interviewer can do his or her job of matching the skills to the job titles as they exist in the interviewing company – or by creating a new job title for your special skills.
- The best answers will tell about your special talents as they pertain to dealing with **People, Information and Tools**.
- For every specific skill or talent you plan to talk about, you should have specific examples of how and where you have used that skill or talent, either in a work situation or some other real-life situation.
- While everyone should be able to describe their skills and talents, it is particularly vital if you are attempting to change career fields. It may not be immediately obvious to the prospective employer why your prior experience would be helpful.

Be specific, talk in terms of job function, not job titles.

*PIT –
People
Information
Tools*

*Illustrations,
examples, anecdotes*

*Really focus on this if
changing career
fields.*

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Practice: Write out your response below:



As Will Rogers is supposed to have said, “If you’ve done it, it ain’t braggin’!” This is no time for false modesty – Keep Writing!!

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to write their response to the quote above.

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F. Manageability

Being able to do the job is not enough -- employers are quite interested in how well you will respond to guidance or direction. Some variations of the questions used to get information in this area include:

Tell me about the best supervisor you ever had.

How do you like to be managed?

*How well do you take criticism?(followed up with
“What were you criticized about?”)*

*What type of manager will bring out the best in
you and allow you to be the most productive?*

Points you need to consider:

- Take time to think through your preferences in this area. One person might like well-defined assignments with support and encouragement; another may like ambiguous situations where he or she can define what needs to be done and how to do it. In the same job, one of them might be very happy and the other very unhappy. The best course here is to be truthful. Honesty is definitely the best policy when it comes to getting the best “fit” between the best possible person and the best available job.
- Your research in this area should have led you to companies who manage the way you like to be managed.
- Specific examples or illustrations always improve the credibility of your answers and give better insight into your special skills and talents.

Even aside from the interview, you need to think through our preferences in this area.

Pick companies who manage the way you like to be managed.

Illustrations and examples.

Practice: Write out your response below and on the next page:



Professional athletes and actors prepare for weeks and months for performances that may last less than an hour – be a pro, Keep Writing!!

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Who would have thought that doing an interview workbook would be like reading a Chinese fortune cookie?

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing an answer to the question above.

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G. Invitation to Negativity

Some interviewers like to see if they can get you to be negative or to see if you are as proud or arrogant as to deny having any failings. Some of the variants of this type of question include:

Employers would much rather hire positive people.

What is the worst thing your past employers could say about you?

What are your greatest weaknesses?

What would you change about yourself if you could?

You need to keep in mind the following points:

- You may come across as not being open if you can't admit to *any* defects.
- Ideally you would be able to list as "faults" certain of your characteristics or attributes that could actually be strengths in the current situation, e.g., "I expected too much of others in satisfying customer expectations."
- Remember that you may have to live with your responses if you're hired. For example, if you say that your biggest failing was that you are a "workaholic," you may need to be prepared to work weekends and holidays if you're hired.
- When appropriate, include your current actions to help improve on your weaknesses.

Have at least one story about a "defect" or limitation.

Remember that a weakness in one situation can be a strength in another.

You may have to live with your answers.

Practice: Write out your responses below:



No pain, no gain. See if you can get a finger cramp with all this gainful writing!

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Success is when preparation meets opportunity. Keep Getting Prepared!!

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing or drawing.

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H. Work-Life Balance

Employers want to know how important your job is to you in the overall scheme of things. When something needs to happen or get fixed and quitting time rolls around, are you willing to stay and take care of things? All the time? Some of the time? Variations on this type of question are:

How committed can I expect you to be if I hire you?

What do you think is the proper balance between work and other areas of your life?

What is your attitude towards overtime?

Would you have a problem if you had to travel X percent of the time?

Things you need to consider:

- In the long run, honesty is definitely the best policy, particularly in this area. The right answer is what you believe and strive to achieve. Remember that you are trying to find a company and culture where you will be the most effective and productive.
- You will be much better prepared to answer this question honestly if you have done work on setting life goals.

Honesty is the best policy.

Know your life goals.

Practice: Write out your response below:



A job may not be an end in itself, but it can be the means to some very desirable things for you and your family – it's certainly worth a little extra effort to have the best job possible – Keep Writing!!

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Over a 40 year-career, you will spend some 80,000 hours at work. Isn't it worth a little effort to get the best job you can? Keep Writing!!

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I. People Skills Questions

Every employee has to interact with a wide variety of people – customers, co-employees, stockholders, family members of co-employees, people we supervise, etc. Expect some questions like the following:

What kinds of people really irritate you?

What kind of people do you really like to work with?

What is your strongest character trait that makes people like to work with you?

Are there any groups of people you find it hard to deal with or you would prefer not to deal with?

Things we need to consider:

- These type of questions are excellent at seeing how you view the world. This is an ideal opportunity to describe yourself as a team player who likes to work with other goal-oriented, self-starting people. You need to be careful not to project attitudes that say you think other people are for the most part lazy or dishonest or just plain stupid.
- Related to the above, be as positive as possible, e.g., “Actually, I get along with just about everybody...”
- Be careful about expressing negative feelings about any specific racial or ethnic group or people of any particular sex or sexual orientation. Employers have enough problems without hiring a bigot or potential bigot.

Think team membership.

Think positive.

Avoid displaying prejudice.

Practice: Write out your response below and on the next page:



Winners never quit until they are prepared for their interviews. Keep Writing & Win the Job you Want!!

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Take a minute or two off and think of something you are going to reward yourself with when you finish this workbook – and make it a good one, this is valuable stuff you’re doing!

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their reward idea.

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J. Tools Questions

In every job there are “tools” that need to be used. Sometimes these are physical items like drill presses or lathes. Other times, the tools are software tools or sets of reference material. Be prepared to answer questions like:

Tell me about the tools you’ve used in your last jobs.

What kind of things did you use to achieve the results you show on your resume?

What would you need us to supply you to enable you to do the best possible job for us?

What tools do you use today that allow you to be the most productive?

Points to consider here are:

- If the interviewer asked you to actually demonstrate the use of a tool that you claim to know how to use, could you?
- Adopting a flexible attitude about tools can be helpful as the employer may have budgetary or other constraints that prevent the company from supplying you with exactly what you’ve used before.
- As in all your answers, specific anecdotes or illustrations are your most powerful selling tool in getting the interviewer to believe you can do what you claim to be able to.

Be prepared to demonstrate.

Show flexibility.

Illustrations, anecdotes, examples.

Practice: Write out your response below:



A pen or a pencil is the “write” tool for this job!

A large empty rectangular box for writing a response, with a line connecting it to the example text above.

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Good marketing begins with solid product knowledge
– keep on building your knowledge of your skills and
talents.

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K. Information or Knowledge Questions

Most jobs require that you possess certain knowledge or information, and that you have the ability to process critical information in specific ways. Be prepared for questions like:

Tell me what you know about (whatever it is you need to know to do your job).

In the past, when you have been in a new role, how long has it taken you to get up to speed?

What is the most important area of knowledge you bring to this job?

What information or knowledge would you have to develop to perform at a superior level in this job?

Points you need to consider:

- Being able to point to courses, degrees, certifications and the like can serve to summarize your knowledge. You can then embellish that basic information with a brief summary of what you've done since you acquired those degrees or certifications.
- You should be able to give a 20 or 30 second summary of your level of knowledge, using buzz words, terms of art and acronyms that a person of your interviewer's background and experience should be able to understand. After you've done that, you should ask a question about whether the interviewer wants more detail.
- Be careful about talking too much and trying to appear self-important. Anytime you talk more than 40 or 50 seconds you should pause to ask a question or get some other confirmation that the interviewer is interested in a longer answer.

Degrees, certifications, and courses can serve to summarize knowledge.

Have a 30-second summary prepared that closes with a question whether the interviewer would like you to expand on any particular subject area.

Summarize then ask where interviewer would like more information.

Practice: Write out your response on the next page:

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Keep fresh – this doesn't all need to be done in one night.

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The Job Interview Workbook

L. Goal Orientation

Most employers would rather have goal-oriented individuals whose personal goals are aligned with what the company would like the employee to be doing. You need to be prepared for questions like these:

Where do you plan to be in five years? Ten?

How will this job help you get there?

What are the two most important goals you want to achieve in your life?

Give me an example of a goal you set which you achieved?

Points you need to consider:

- Your career goals should bear some relationship to the position for which you're applying.
- Interviewers will be able to detect the difference between an off-the-cuff, generalized response and one that is the result of your actually working through a set of career and life goals.

Relate your goals to the position.

Interviewers can sense off-the-cuff answers.

Practice: Write out your response below:



You might want to talk with the interviewer about how you met your goal to be thoroughly prepared for the interview.

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The Job Interview Workbook



There are 168 hours in a week. Isn't it worth taking just 10% of one week to be absolutely prepared for an interview for the job you want?

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M. Illegal Questions

It is generally illegal for employers to ask questions about the following topics during a pre-employment interview:

- Your race or national origin
- Your religion
- Place of birth
- Marital status
- Number of dependents
- Whether you are disabled

Some times interviewers are not fully aware of the illegality of certain questions and have no wrongful intent when they ask them, so you shouldn't read too much into the fact that they were asked. In fact, you might be grateful to be able to address what may be the real issue in the interviewer's mind: whether you will fit in with the organization or be able to contribute because of whatever way you are different. In fact, you may want to do this in the form of a question, "Why, do you have any concern whether a woman (or Asian, or Moslem, etc.) would be accepted in your workforce?" or a statement, "Don't worry, I plan to contribute 100% to the company for at least the next 10 years."

The choice you are faced with is whether to answer the question and follow-up with a more job-related question of your own, or to politely decline to answer the question, e.g., "I have my personal beliefs, but I've made it a practice to try not to interject those beliefs into the workplace." Alternatively, you could ask about the question, e.g., "Is this related to the job I would be doing?"

In any event, you should write down the exact wording of the question and as much else about the interview as you can recall as soon after the interview as possible. Date those notes and preserve them in the event you

Don't assume illegal intent because of a poorly worded question or two.

The decision to answer is yours.



Document any illegal questions in writing as soon as you leave the interview while they are still fresh in your mind.

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ultimately want to seek legal advice relating to that employer.

Practice: Write out how you will respond if asked an illegal question about any of the topics listed above.



Art time: draw or paste a picture here of something you'd like to buy with the raise from your new job.

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N. What If ...

One popular interviewing technique is called “situational interviewing.” The interviewer presents a hypothetical situation and asks the applicant how he or she would respond in real life. For example, “What would you do if you had an employee you supervised who was always on time, always over quota, and did an excellent job coaching new trainees and all of a sudden he starts calling in sick?”

Situational interviewing is essentially role-playing in job-related scenarios.

You need to be prepared to articulate the problem solving techniques you use and how you would apply it in the hypothetical situation. For example, “When I have a problem I always like to substantiate the facts, check any implicit assumptions, list and weigh alternatives, and then select the best alternative. Depending on the significance of the problem, I may confer with those who could be affected by the decision. I develop an implementation plan in conjunction with those affected, implement the plan, evaluate the results and adjust any future actions. In this case...”

We should state generically how we solve problems, then relate that to the specific situation.

As always, if you have examples or illustrations that show how you’ve handled similar issues before, you should use them in responding.

Always be ready with specific illustrations or anecdotes—

Practice: Write out three “What If” situations relevant to your area of expertise and then write your explanation of how to handle them.

SAR
-Situation
-Action
-Results



Be sure to include a **P**eople situation, an **I**nformation or data handling situation, and a **T**ools-type situation (**PIT**).

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Just remember – if this was easy, *anybody* could fill this job.

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O. Top Three Personal Characteristics

Research on hundreds of thousands of workers from clerks to top executives, in organizations as vast as the U.S. government and as small as one-person enterprises, shows that there is a common set of personal and social abilities that have proven to be critical to the personal success of the people in them. These core abilities have been described as “Emotional Intelligence,” and interviewers are often looking for examples of them.

Practice: Use the following list to help you identify the three personal characteristics that are most important for the job you are seeking. After you have identified the top three personal characteristics, write out an illustration or story about how you have demonstrated that characteristic in the past.

- **Emotional sensitivity:** Recognizing one’s emotions and their effects.
- **Self-awareness:** Knowing one’s strengths and limits.
- **Self-confidence:** A strong sense of one’s self-worth and capabilities.
- **Self-control:** Keeping emotions and impulses in check.
- **Trustworthiness:** Acts ethically, maintaining standards of honest and integrity.
- **Conscientiousness:** Taking responsibility for one’s actions and performance.
- **Flexibility:** Adaptable in handling change and ambiguity.
- **Innovation:** Comfortable with new ideas, approaches and new information.
- **Initiative:** Takes the lead, acting on opportunities.
- **Optimism:** Hope for success versus fear of failures, expects the best from others.
- **Commitment:** Aligning one self with the goals of the group or organization.
- **Achievement drive:** Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence.
- **Understanding others:** Sensing others’ feelings and perspectives and taking an active interest in their concerns.
- **Developing others:** Knowing others’ development needs and enhancing their abilities.

Personal characteristics are not limited to specific job classifications or descriptions.

Think about what three characteristics are needed most in the job you are seeking.

Emotional sensitivity

Self Awareness

Self-Confidence

Self-Control

Trustworthiness

Conscientiousness

Flexibility

Innovation

Initiative

Optimism

Commitment

Understanding Others

Developing Others

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- **Service orientation:** Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting clients needs.
- **Valuing diversity:** Utilizing the strengths of different kinds of people.
- **Politically astute:** Reading and responding to a groups emotional currents and power relationships.

Service Orientation

Valuing Diversity

Political Astuteness



Interviewers typically assume that the best predictor of future actions is past actions, so always try to support any statement with examples, illustrations or true-life stories.

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Step 2: Prepare Questions to Ask

If you show up at an interview and have absolutely no questions to ask the interviewer, it looks like you're so desperate for a job that you'll take any job. Paradoxically, that may prevent you from getting any job. As a job candidate, you need to ask questions to find out the information that will help you make an informed decision about the position.

Having no questions is a sign of desperation.

The questions must be natural to you, so in the following section, write out as many questions as you can think to ask about the indicated subject matters. You may only use a few of these questions in the interview, but the practice of writing them out will get you in the proper investigative frame of mind.

Use your own words.

Remember this important fact: studies have shown that the most effective people are those who listen more than they talk. That implies that they ask good questions and then keep quiet and really listen while the other person answers them.

Questions let you demonstrate your listening skills.

The general subject matters we should be prepared to cover include:

- A. First Tasks
- B. Performance Measurement & Career Advancement
- C. Immediate Supervisor
- D. Corporate Values
- E. Compensation Package
- F. Fringe Benefits
- G. Quality-of-Life Factors
- H. Asking for The Job

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A. First Tasks

Asking questions about the specifics of what the successful applicant will first be working on, and what the employer would be hoping to gain by filling the position provides ammunition you can use in other responses or questions to highlight your specific skills, talents and contributions.

You should ask these questions early and then really listen with all of your attention to the answers. They tell you what “skill sets” the interviewer is looking for, and that lets you tell precisely how you would be a great fit. These questions are essentially the market research you will be basing your sales approach on for the balance of the interview. Also, one of the keys to manageability is whether people even listen to other people and whether they can use the information they are given. You can demonstrate this important skill right in the interview.

Practice: Write out questions that will elicit the following types of information:

- The most immediate problem that needs to be solved as soon as the job is filled.
- The cost of not solving that problem.
- The amount of time the interviewer is spending on interviewing, and whether he or she would rather be doing something else.
- The person who is currently covering the job.
- The reason the job is vacant.

Early on in the interview, do market research on what specific job or problem the successful applicant will be expected to tackle.

Really listen to the answer and use it to your advantage.

Use the interview as an opportunity to demonstrate your communication skills – asking and listening as well as telling.



Isn't it a nice change of pace to be thinking of questions rather than answers?? Just remember that your questions can be as important as your answers.

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Who was it that said an inquiring mind is more important than mere intelligence? Keep Inquiring!!

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B. Performance Measurement & Career Advancement

When you're making a decision on whether or not to accept an offer, you ought to know how your work will be measured or graded, and what kind of career advancement has been associated with that position in the past.

Chances for advancement are fully as important as starting salary.

Practice: Write out questions that seek answers like the following:

- The employer's expectations for this job. (If possible, obtain a copy of the job description and the performance evaluation form.)
- Frequency of evaluation.
- The person who shows the evaluation to the employee.
- The basis for promotions.
- Positions to which people in this position have been promoted.

Note that an excessive level of interest in jobs higher up the ladder may be interpreted by the interviewer as a sign the applicant is more interested in growth than in proving herself in the position the company is looking to fill.



We all sell our services. It's just that some find better buyers than others.

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In retrospect, what should you have known about your last job before you took it?

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C. Immediate Supervisor

Study after study confirms that the single most important factor leading to job satisfaction is our relationship with our immediate supervisor and how he or she treats us.

The single most important job satisfaction factor is our immediate supervisor.

Points you need to consider:

You can ask now about the immediate supervisor, or you can be surprised later.

- You should ask the questions an employer would ask when hiring a manager – because you are in a sense “hiring” your next manager.
- Asking questions in this area will be new to most of us and we *really* need to practice asking these questions out loud with another human being.

Doesn't it make more sense to hitch yourself to a rising star than a shooting star?

Practice: Write out various questions that seek to find out the following information, hopefully directly from the supervisor:

- Who the actual supervisor will be.
- What the turnover in his section has been in the last year, and why people were leaving.
- What has her career path been – is she a rising star or deadwood clogging the ascension of anyone in the section?
- How does he act when someone who works for him does something he doesn't like?
- How does she measure performance? (If she doesn't, that may imply the road to advancement is based on obsequiousness and currying favor with her.) Note that this is a “repeat” question from the one asked the initial interviewer, and it's intentional – you want to see if the interviewer actually knows what goes on at the front-line supervisor level.
- How often and in what form can you expect performance feedback?
- What did the person who got the highest rating from him have to do to get that rating?

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- How do you like your employees to communicate with you and how do you like to communicate with your employees?
- What types of self-improvement or advanced education has she received in the last five years?
- What does he like most about the people who work for him? What would he change the most (*listen for a negative outlook towards people – if this is present it will only be worse actually working for him!*)
- What have you disliked the most about any one who has ever worked for you?
- What have you liked the most about any one who as ever worked for you?



What information about your last boss would have been helpful to you *before* you took your last job?

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D. Corporate Values

The range of values or “corporate culture” that characterizes a company is almost as important to our job satisfaction as our relationship to our immediate supervisor.

The values and culture of an organization are critical to job satisfaction.

Employers often flush out deceptive answers by asking for specific examples and then asking follow-up questions to the answers. *You need to do the same.* If you’re told that mechanical engineers like you always do well, you need to ask “Who would be an example of a mechanical engineer who has done very well in this department in the last two years? Could I talk with her?”

Ask for examples of illustrations.

You need to be ready to ask questions like the following:

- What types of people get ahead in this company?
- What specific types of things do they have to do?
- How much weight is placed on individual contribution versus teamwork?
- What is the most important unit/department in this organization?
- What is the most important value of this company?
- What type of performance feedback can I expect?
- Is there an expected career path for people at my entry-level position?
- What colleges and/or non-profit organizations does this organization donate substantial funds to?

Practice: Write out at least ten questions that you would like to have answered in this area.



Every organization has “a” culture. Some are good, others aren’t – why settle for aren’t?

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What would you like to know about a place where you will be spending about 2,000 hours per year? Or would you rather wait until you get there to be surprised?

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E. Compensation Package

The actual amount you will be paid for the first week or month on the new job is only one part of the overall compensation package. Many times the most attractive job will not have the highest initial direct compensation. You need to know what the *whole* compensation package or system is at the new company, and you find out by asking questions like these:

Look for types of compensation that don't necessarily show up on your W-2 form.

- Is overtime expected or required?
- Are there particular times of year when I will be expected to put in significantly more time?
- Are there stock options or 401K's?
- Is there a history of profit sharing?
- Are there fixed points for raises? At what level?
- When would I be eligible to participate?
- What is the company's participation level?

Points we should keep in mind:

Sometimes all you have to do is ask.

- Sometimes good things go only to those who ask for them. Many items are negotiable, but you never know unless you ask for them.
- Sometimes supervisors will have very little flexibility in some areas but have quite a bit in other areas, e.g., initial review time, educational opportunities, cross-training, etc.

Find out the areas in which the supervisor or interviewer has flexibility.

Practice: Write out a series of questions that will provide you with answers to questions on salary and other compensation.



Oftentimes, good things only go to those who think to ask for them.

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Applause and appreciation are nice, but
pay checks buy groceries and vacations.

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F. Fringe Benefits

Many times an attractive benefits package can make a substantial difference in how attractive a job looks to you. You need to find out about things like:

The right benefit package can make a big difference.

- What kind of medical coverage is available?
- Dental?
- Is there any child care assistance?
- What types of educational assistance is available.
- Are alternative work arrangements an option? E.g., job sharing, and teleworking.
- Is there a retirement plan?

One important point to keep in mind: the interviewer may not actually know the details you are interested in. If so, ask to talk to the appropriate human resource specialist.

Be sure to talk to a knowledgeable person.

Practice: Write out some questions you would like to have answered about benefits



This could be a good item to ask your spouse or significant person in your life about.

A large empty rectangular box for writing practice questions.

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The idea is prepare now, get paid later.

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G. Quality-of-Life Factors

Some people have a need to be working 10-12 hours a day, five or six days a week. Others want to be able to devote a lot of time to other goals. You need to be find out about factors that affect the quality of life, such as:

- Overtime
- Travel
- Vacation (amount and scheduling flexibility)
- Flex Time
- Telecommuting
- Transfers to other offices
- Transfers to other jobs or career paths.
- Expectations about off-the-job participation in civic affairs.

Define what could impact the quality of your life off-the-job

Both parties need to be explicit about their expectations in this area.

Points you should keep in mind:

- Getting a good fit in this area can be as important to your job satisfaction and life satisfaction as salary.
- You should always ask for specific illustrations and examples.
- Be careful when deciding to ask questions about transfers as they may be interpreted as indicating you are just using the opening to get your foot in the door – and that may not be to the personal benefit of the interviewer.

Practice: Write out questions that you would like to have answered in this area. Ask for specific illustrations and examples.



There may or may not be such a thing as a dumb question, but it's definitely dumb not to ask questions about something as important as a new job. Would *you* hire a person who couldn't think of anything to ask?

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Keep up the great questions – *60 Minutes*
might want to talk to you about a job!!

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H. Asking for the Job

As long as you've got the interviewer in the room, shouldn't you go ahead and ask for the job? Remember, the single greatest failing of starting sales people (and remember that you ARE selling in this interview) is not asking for the order. Asking for the job lets you display your desire and confidence. Points to consider:

Some people just like to be asked. The interviewer could be one of those people.

- Summarize the contributions you feel you will make to the organization, using the interviewer's earlier statements of what they're looking for and why they're looking.
- Summarize your skills and experiences that support your implicit argument that you would "fit the bill" for the job.
- Be convincing and enthusiastic in your expression of interest in the job.

Example: "Mr. Boyd, I've really appreciated your time today. It's helped me understand even more what the X Company is looking for. I feel that with my experience at Y Company, I can make an immediate impact in (lowering cost of goods manufactured or increasing sales, etc.) Don't you agree?"

Practice: Write out a "closing" statement where you thank the interviewer, summarize what you can do for the company, and ask for a confirmation from the interviewer..



If this is especially hard for you, you might want to pick up a sales book that suggests "trial closes," e.g., something by Tom Hopkins or Zig Ziglar. Alternatively, ask a friend who is a sales person for some ideas.

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The harder it is to write out answers or questions in any particular area, the more important it is to do the writing and do the practice before the interview.

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Step 3: Learn Interview Techniques

Sometimes it is not in your best interest to give direct answers to every question you are asked. This can cause you to lose complete control of the interview and keep you from finding out what you need to know before you answer. Sometimes it is in your best interest to defer an answer, and other times it is in your best interest not to actually answer a question. You should, therefore, know about the following techniques:

You need a set of answering techniques to get out of being in a purely reactive mode during an interview.

- A. Getting Clarification
- B. Restating the Actual Question
- C. Declining to Answer the Precise Question
- D. Presenting Preferred Alternative Questions
- E. Softening Hard or Unexpected Answers
- F. Admitting Ignorance
- G. Addressing Hostility or Anger
- H. Encouraging More Complete Answers

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A. Getting Clarification

When you do not understand a question or why it was asked, when you would like to buy a little time to think, or when you'd like to nudge the focus of the question a bit, it can be useful to use the clarification technique by making statements or asking questions like:

- "I'm not sure I understand the question."
- "What do you mean by (repeat the confusing part of the question)?"

Understand the question before you answer a different one.

Practice: Review the questions in Step 1 that you'll be asked, and write out three requests for clarification.



Sometimes, asking the right question is more important than having the right answer. Other times, knowing why a question was asked can be as important as knowing what appears to be the answer.

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B. Restating the Actual Question

You can always “buy time” by restating the question, making some comment like, “Well the question of is an interesting one,” or merely by repeating it without a comment.

Repetition can buy time.

Practice: Go back to the questions listed in Step 1, and practice restating five actual questions.



Whoever said that a life unexamined was not worth living must have been getting ready for a job interview.

A large empty rectangular box for writing a response to the question above.

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C. Declining to Answer the Precise Question

When you can not disclose the information requested by the question (e.g., where answering would require that you disclose confidential or proprietary information) you can decline to answer the actual question but go on to provide some related information. You can do this by saying something like, "I'm not really in a position to answer; however, I can say that"

Avoid answering sensitive or awkward questions without appearing to be "stonewalling" the interviewer.

Remember, if you disclose your prior employer's confidential information, you will be proving that this company shouldn't trust you either.

Practice: Review questions from Step 1, and practice declining to answer precisely the question posed.



You are under no duty to answer all questions exactly as asked, just to be truthful in your answers.

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D. Presenting Preferred Alternative Questions

You can sometimes buy time and avoid a difficult question by appearing to restate the question while actually changing the phrasing or intent of it. For example, “I suppose that what you’re getting at there is Based on my experience I would say that”

Do the politician shuffle – ask the question you would have rather been asked.

Practice: Review the questions in Step 1 and write out three different scenarios in which you slightly restate the question asked.



Knowing ahead of time what you want the employer to learn about you is a big help in deciding what to answer.

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E. Softening Hard or Unexpected Answers

Sometimes you may have to give answers that may put you in a bad light or are at odds with what the interviewer would probably like to hear. At these times, you can soften what might be a somewhat hard-sounding “No” by saying things like,

Take the edge off hard answers.

- “Frankly, this is one area where I would have to say that”
- “Actually, on this one topic”
- “Unfortunately, that was not the case in this instance....”
- “I can understand why that might seem to be true. However....”

Keep it short. Don’t belabor the point and move into a transition question.

Practice: Review the questions in Step 1, and write out two different scenarios in which you need to soften hard or possibly unexpected answers.



Sometimes we build credibility by saying no.

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F. Admitting Ignorance

If you want the interviewer to believe you when you tell her what you know, it can often help to admit your lack of knowledge when you really don't have a clue as to how to answer a specific question. You can try avoiding the need to admit your ignorance by asking a clarifying question. On the other hand, if it's obvious to you that you don't know, you should build credibility by admitting that you don't know. Sometimes, when you do this in the form of a question, you find out that the interviewer doesn't know either, e.g., "Mr. Nelson, I frankly don't recall what a framholtzer is; what is that anyway?"

Build credibility for what you do know by admitting what you don't.

Practice: Write three questions you would not be able to answer in an interview and then write responses to each question requesting clarifying information or admitting that you don't know the answer.



Was it Plato who said that a wise man knows he doesn't know? Or was it Clint Eastwood who said that a man has to know his limits?

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G. Addressing Hostility or Anger

On rare occasions, you may meet with interviewers who are overtly hostile or angry, perhaps exhibiting sarcasm or prejudice. It will help calm your pre-interview jitters if you have a plan formulated for this worst-case scenario, *keeping in mind that for certain jobs the interviewer may be deliberately seeing how you handle stress* (e.g., you're interviewing for a job managing a customer relations help desk). Perhaps having something prepared like the following will help:

Sometimes the best way to deal with a bad situation is to get out of it as gracefully as possible.

"Mr. _____ I have the feeling that for some reason this is not the best time to be interviewing with you. Would it be better to reschedule this for another time?"

You deserve the full attention of the interviewer. If you can't get it, it may be better to wait until you can.

Practice: Write out two different ways to gracefully terminate an interview. In one of them, try to leave the door open for renewing the interview at a later date.



Everybody has days when they are tense or irritable – we shouldn't take it personally.

A large empty rectangular box for writing practice, connected to the text above by a line.

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H. Encouraging More Complete Answers

There are several techniques to use to get the other parties to a conversation to expand on or fill in a previous answer. It can be as simple as saying:

“Really?”

“And...?”

“And then...”

“Tell me more about that”

“I’m not sure I fully understand, can you elaborate”?

There’s a reason we have two ears and one mouth. Drawing out information from the interviewer lets us understand his or her wants and needs better.

Another technique is repeating the few words that were said by the other person to the conversation. For instance if the other person ends her last sentence with “... the general stock rally,” repeat the phrase as a question, e.g., “General stock rally?”

And, of course, one really effective technique is to just be silent and let the other person fill the silence by expanding on the answer. This can be augmented by appearing quizzical or questioning.

Practice: The next time you are having a conversation with someone, see how many times you can get them to expand on an answer using one of the above techniques. Try the silence technique at least three times.



Only rarely do you learn as much talking as you do listening. Keep learning by keeping the other person talking.

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Step 4. Work at Being Conversational

Not all great conversationalists are born that way. Some work at it, and in a setting like an interview, a little work ahead of time can help you to be much more prepared and relaxed in making "idle" conversation.

You don't need to have been born a great conversationalist. A little preparation goes a long way.

Practice: Write out what you could say to make conversation in the following ways:

- Talk about a sports team from the city or region where the interview is being held.
- Talk about how the interviewing company was in the news lately, focusing on positive news items.
- Comment on something you notice in the room (e.g., photographs, academic degrees or certificates, desk ornaments or art objects).
- Ask about a publicly-announced program or product of the interviewing company.
- Comment about a current event in a way that encourages a discussion and exchange of ideas.
- Talk about something you did away from work that you really enjoyed.
- Share a personal goal.
- Add three conversational topics of your own.

How many script writers do you think there are for TV "talk shows"?



Even Jay Leno and David Letterman have prepared monologues.

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Isn't it nice to be taking a few minutes to think of things to say without people watching you?

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Step 5. Develop a Plan for Any “Sensitive” Past Issues

You may have things in the past that you feel would be detrimental if brought up in an interview. This can be a range of things like a prison sentence, a period of especially bad grades, credit problems, a nervous breakdown, alcoholism, drug abuse, or loss of custody of your children. Sometimes your fears about how others might react are worse than any actual reactions.

The worst thing you can do is to go into an interview without any plan on how you are going to deal with your “sensitive” past. While there are no pat answers to these sensitive matters, here are a few general principles or guidelines:

Trust and Honesty. Employment relationships, like all long-term personal relationships, are built on trust and honesty. Most people can understand if you are honest with them. If there is a chance they will find out about the “sensitive past,” you may be well advised to be the one who tells them. The issue of timing could be critical. You may want to wait until you have had a chance to get to know one another and then introduce the subject with a statement you feel would be appropriate, perhaps something like:

“Ms. _____, I’ve really enjoyed meeting you and learning about the opportunities at X company. However, there’s something in my background that I want you to know about. I don’t ordinarily discuss this, but the last thing I want is to have my background cause you any difficulty. To be more specific,

“I’d like to emphasize that this is all behind me now and this has not been any sort of a problem for”

For some problem areas, you may want to make dealing your “sensitive past” one of the primary

The worst plan for dealing with sensitive issues is not having a plan.

Know ahead of time how you are going to deal with any issues that may be bothering you.

The timing and phrasing of the disclosure can be very important.

Consider making the “sensitive past” an issue of strategic importance in your job campaign.

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strategic factors in planning your approach. For example, someone with a felony may approach a prospective employer by making contact through a prison support group or a religious leader. That way, the prospective employer will have already been informed about the potential problem prior to the interview, indicating that he or she has is willing to consider employing you. In these cases, it will be even more important for you to be especially well prepared in all areas of the interview process, and to be able to point to specific examples or illustrations of behavior that would benefit the employer.

Try to find a setting where an apparent liability can be an asset.

Practice: If you have some “sensitive past” issues, write out (a) how you would respond to a question about it early in an interview, and (b) how you would tell the interviewer later on in the interview.



A sharp pencil and a sharp mind.

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Step 6: Stack the Interview Deck: Solitaire

By this point you've come a long way. You've thought out responses to questions you're almost sure to be asked. You know what you want to ask. You've considered some interview techniques to help you avoid or postpone answering or get a more detailed response to certain questions. You're able to be "conversational," and you have an approach for dealing with any especially sensitive issues.

So what?

If you can't actually use this knowledge during the interview, it will all have been for naught. **The ONLY way we get more skilled is to practice.** Step 6 involves practicing saying things out loud to yourself by using the Interview Card Deck contact info@coachingandmentoring.com for details. (Note: for on-line purposes there is a PowerPoint containing various questions to prepare for.)

Scroll through the Interview Card Deck and perform the actions indicated, either answering questions, asking questions, or using interview techniques. In doing this, you should go back to this workbook and write out new ideas that occur to you for dealing with certain questions or issues, or other specific examples of your unique talents and skills.

The only way to get more skilled at interviewing is to get more practice.

Use the Interview Card Deck to practice answering and asking questions out loud.

Write out ideas for better answers, questions, techniques or illustrations.



Remember to update the workbook as you come up with ideas for better answers, questions, techniques, examples or illustrations.

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I have a great memory, it's just a little short sometimes – I'm sure glad I get to write things down and organize my thoughts.

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for writing or drawing.

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Step 7: One-on-One Role Playing

You're almost ready now. The only thing you need now is the practice of saying everything you've mastered in front of someone else. *You need a little full-dress rehearsing, and the only way to get this is to do it with another person.* Email info@coachingandmentoring.com for details about a practice Interview Deck. Your practice partner will read the questions or situations off their computer screen—you will answer as if it were a real interview. As your practice partner gets acclimated to the process, have them ask follow-up questions or questions of their own, so that you get more experience with the give-and-take of an actual interview.

The final step in practicing is to go through the Interview Card Deck with a partner, practicing interactively.

Ask your partner for feedback using the form on the following page.

When you are almost done with a session, ask for ideas on how particular answers could be strengthened or rephrased. One advantage of doing this with someone who knows you is that they may be able to add examples or illustrations of your skills or talents that you'd forgotten. Use the Practice Interview Feedback form on the following page.



As Yogi said, "it ain't over until it's over." Until then, keep making notes about additional stories, illustrations, examples and anecdotes to substantiate your talents and skills.

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Interview Practice Feedback

Date: _____

What was your overall evaluation of the interview?

What questions did you think needed further work?

What questions did you feel were handled extremely well?

Did the applicant have any idiosyncrasies of speech that might annoy the interviewer or hurt the applicant's chances (e.g., ending every comment with "You know?" or beginning answers with "Like,..")

Did the applicant use any improper grammar (e.g., "We was going to the lake.")?

Based on your familiarity with the applicant, were there examples of his or her skills, or talents that were left out? Think specifically of whether there were skills in the area of working with people, or special areas of information or knowledge, or specific tools that he or she forgot to bring up.

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Interview Checklist

- Extra copies of resumes or portfolios.
- Business cards, if appropriate.
- Phone number to call if you are delayed in traffic, etc.
- Name of person you will be meeting and any necessary notes on how to pronounce the name.
- Shined shoes.
- Appropriate attire for the job.
- Clean and pressed attire.
- Pen (not just a \$.29 special, something formal and special)
- Note paper.
- Directions to include street address, floor, suite, and where to park.
- Map.
- Breath mints or drops (NO gum!!).
- Comb or brush.
- Schedule to allow a visit to restroom beforehand to check appearance, clean hands and face, etc.
- Schedule to allow an opportunity to have a light meal beforehand.
- Handkerchief to deal with minor problems.

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We Want Your Feedback!!

Any work of this sort benefits immeasurably from the feedback of job applicants themselves. We are particularly interested in feedback in the following areas:

*We need your help to
make this book better*

- Any additional interview questions that you have found challenging.
- Additional questions that are becoming pertinent for potential employees to know, i.e., what the “hot” buttons are for new employees.
- Questions on which you would like suggestions or comments.
- General feedback on the usefulness of having gone through the workbook.

If you are an employer, we would appreciate any feedback on topics you would like applicants to be prepared to discuss during the interview.

E-mail your suggestions to: feed to:

info@coachingandmentoring.com.

Legal stuff: By submitting a comment or suggestion to The Center for Coaching & Mentoring, Inc., you are granting them, the right to use the comment or suggestion in print or other media without any further compensation.

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Join a Career Club: if you are looking for help and support in managing your career.

“Why? What is it about a Career Club that is any different from doing my own individual career research and preparation?”

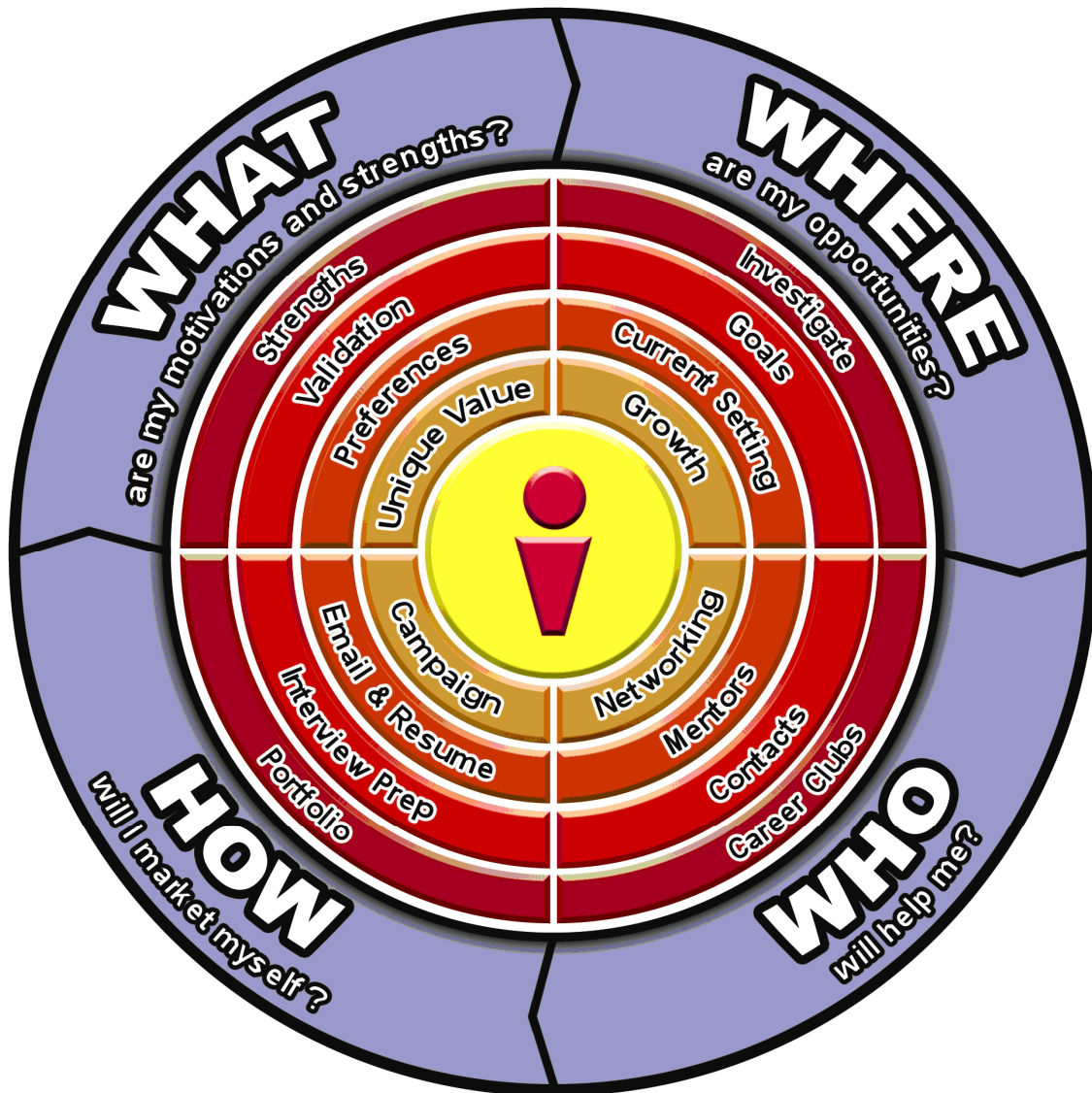
There are several answers to this important question:

- (a) Career Clubs work better than individual job preparation. Richard Nelson Bolles, author of the classic *What Color is Your Parachute?* and a strong proponent of job-seeking support groups, notes an 84 percent success rate when job-search techniques are conducted in groups, compared with a 15 percent lower rate when the same techniques are followed individually
- (b) Many parts of the career process are inherently interactive, e.g. job interviews or working with a mentor. You can substantially improve your performance in those areas by rehearsing or practicing them in a Career Club setting.
- (c) Career Club modules take you through phases of preparation that you might overlook on your own – each of the segments on the Career Club Wheel™ shown page 73.
- (d) Input from other group members will increase the range of options and factors for you to consider and help you select the best answers for you.
- (e) You’re more apt to actually do the work if you make the commitment in a group setting.
- (f) It’s fun!

For more information: info@coachingandmentoring.com

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Career Club Wheel™



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Appendix: Further Resources

No one workbook will suit everyone's needs and learning styles. The resources listed below may be helpful to you:

- *Your Work Abilities: How to Express and Apply Them Through Man Power Specifications* by A. W. Rahn (One of the very first books to a structured way of creating sharply defined and documented "work abilities". Available for on-line browsing at www.coachingandmentoring.com)
- *Pick Your Job – And Land It!* by Sidney and Mary Edlund (An excellent resource on the importance of setting specific job goals along with a detailed discussion on how to develop and test goals. Available for on-line browsing at www.coachingandmentoring.com)
- *What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Bolles
- *Knock 'Em Dead 2000* by Martin Yates
- *Interviewing*, Third Edition, by Arlene S. Hirsch, John Wiley & Sons, part of the National Business Employment Weekly Premier Guides

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Notes: