

Interviewing, The Who, What, and Why of Interviewing

By Carole Martin

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Interviews can be daunting to the most experienced job seeker, and "terror-ific" for the less experienced. Preparation before the interview can make a huge difference in your confidence level. Here are some basic questions to get you thinking about the process.

One of the questions most frequently asked in an interview is:

"WHO ARE YOU?" - or - "TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF."

The answer you give to this question will set the tone for the rest of the interview. Focus is the key or you will wander about in a circle, or dig yourself into a deep hole.

The secret to success with this free-form question is to focus, script and practice. You cannot afford to "wing" this statement, as it will have an effect on the rest of the interview.

List five strengths that you have that would be pertinent to this job. (Experiences, traits, skills). What do you want the interviewer to know about you when you leave?

Practice with your script, until you feel confident about what you want to emphasize in your statement. Your script is a way of helping you stay on track, but shouldn't be memorized, resulting in sounding stiff and rehearsed. You should sound natural and conversational.

One of the most dreaded questions by candidates is:

WHAT ARE YOUR LONG-TERM GOALS?

This open-ended question, and others like; "Where do you see yourself in five years?" throw most candidates off balance. The object of the question is to check for your self-awareness and communication skills.

If you are the type of person who prefers an organized way of life, you may find this question a "piece of cake". But, if you are among the majority of persons who let life happen as it comes along, you will probably not have a smooth answer without some forethought.

The best answers will come from you thinking about what you want. Most successful business people will tell you that a key success factor is the ability to set and achieve goals. Begin by setting short-term goals. Right now your goal may be "to get a job". But, what kind of job? And, where do you go from there?

No one can tell you exactly how to answer this question - it will come from what is important to you. However, the more focused and employer-centered you can be about your goal, the better your chances will be of steering the interview in the right direction.

Another among the dreaded questions is:

WHY SHOULD WE HIRE YOU?

This is another broad question that can take you down the wrong road unless you have done some thinking about what to say ahead of time. This question is about selling yourself. Think of yourself as the product. Why should the customer buy?

Develop a "sales" statement. The more detail you give the better your answer will be. This is not a time to talk about what you want. It is a time to summarize your accomplishments and relate what makes you unique.

Start by looking at the job description or posting. What is the employer stressing as requirements of the job? What will it take to get the job done? Make a list of those requirements.

Next, do an inventory to determine what you have to offer as a fit against those requirements. Think of two or three key qualities you have to offer which match what the employer is seeking. Don't underestimate personal traits that make you unique - your energy, personality type, working style, and people skills.

Completing an exercise around this question will allow you to concentrate on your unique qualities. Like snowflakes, no two people are alike. Take some time to think about what sets you apart from others.

Regardless of what you are asked in an interview, preparation and practice will improve your performance and give you a better chance at competing with the other candidates. Knowing who you are and what you have to offer is vital for success!

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Carole Martin is a professional interviewer and coach working with people worldwide, coaching them on interview techniques.

In addition her online business, <http://www.interviewcoach.com> , she is an interview expert for Monster.com where she hosts a message board and chat session, and writes articles.

Her background includes over 15 years Human Resources Management experience in technical and non-technical industries, and a Master's degree in Career Development. She is an adjunct faculty member at UC Berkeley's MBA School and JFKU in Orinda, CA.

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Carole Martin - MONSTER.com's interview expert - has a workbook full of exercises and tips.

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