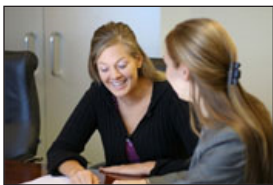


I Wrote a Resume That Got Noticed...Now What?

By Lancelot Larsen

Now that you've presented your great resume, the next step will be the interview. In the interview process you may be competing with up to five other candidates. Now the employer will get to talk to the person whose resume he has been impressed with. Your actual interview is an extremely important part. Just because your resume looks great, that will not guarantee you a job. During this interview process, the employer will want to throw away any candidates who won't be able to handle the pressure or answer a question differently than what they were looking for. There are certain questions that you may be asked, such as, how would your friends describe you, or what can you do for us that someone else cannot do? These questions are to find out what kind of person you are and what you can bring to the company. Keep in mind that the interview is full of trick questions that help find the weakest candidate. Remember to keep calm and answer the questions in such a way that shows your desire for success and an easy going personality.



The interview process is like buying a book as a gift for someone. When you are at a bookstore and see five copies of the same book, of course you want to select the most physically perfect copy. The title is what you are looking for and will suit your purpose, but you want to give the copy that has the fewest rips in the jacket and thumbprints on the pages. So, technically, the book is beside the point; you're looking for something perfect and presentable.

And so it goes with interviewing. Ultimately, you and the five other candidates *can* do the job. Interviewers invite you over to the office and ask you all kinds of questions under the guise of trying to decide why you should be hired. The reality is that your interview is all about finding out why they should *not* hire you.

When you buy a book as a gift for someone, you have no idea if it will remain unread and be given away, be half-read and left for dust, be read and donated to the library, or be read and decorate the recipient's bookshelf. But the point is that you did pick the best-looking copy of the book, presented it to the recipient, and did your good deed. The fate of the book is out of your hands.

The same principle applies to interviewers. They know who their company needs and know who's going to be the best fit, but the rest is out of their control afterwards. No matter what they hear and believe from interviewees, interviewers have no idea if new recruits will quit immediately, stay for a while and goof up operations, do good work and move on after a year, or become integral parts of the company and move up to the highest ranks.

The objective for the interviewer is to present the most immaculate candidate of the lot. The best way to uncover this kind of person is to look for damaged and shopworn areas, not details that prove the candidate is suitable. It's the initial presentation that matters.

In sum, the point of the interview is more to find out whom the employer should not be hiring than it is to find out whom it should be. Most candidates looking for work are applying for jobs they *can* do. With a little on-the-job training, most people can do most jobs in the market, save for those requiring years of hard science or theory beforehand. What the employer wants is a candidate who doesn't just know how to do the job but will do it without

hesitation, complaint, or potential mutiny. Employers are also trying to avoid candidates who are looking just to collect a check and avoid any attempt to provide positive contributions to the company above the call of duty.

During the interview process employers attempt to cast off candidates who will crack under pressure, develop into misanthropes, or bring nothing to the office but their shoes, shirts, and cups of coffee. Therefore, interviews are filled with trick questions and contextual pitfalls dedicated to finding the weakest link.

The following are 10 common interview questions posed to identify how you are not what employers are looking for:

1. How Would You React if I Told You Your Interview so Far Was Terrible?

This question is a trap for you. If you become angry or annoyed, then it's points deducted and one reason to give another interviewee a chance at earning the position you seek. The reality of the professional world is that people holler and get scathingly persnickety towards one another and their work. But most employers and interviewers try to avoid accepting personalities that fly off the handle as much as possible.

If you get this question, practice grace under pressure and stay diplomatic. Mention that you would feel disappointed to hear that the interview was not going well since you prepared for the interview and wanted to do well. Then ask what the problems are and how you can improve. If you do this, then you will have avoided a reason not to hire you.

2. What Is the Worst Thing You Have Heard about Our Company?

The purpose of this question is to shock you. The interviewer wants to hire someone who can think clearly and effectively during sudden and stressful situations. He or she doesn't want anyone who gets confused easily or shuts down when problems escalate. Of course, most of the time, interviewees will have no answer for this question since most of them have, in fact, heard nothing bad about the companies to which they are applying.

If you say something to the effect of "I heard that it's tough to get a job here," you might get a positive or interested reaction that could become a big plus point for you. If nothing else, it proves that you can think on your feet. If you stammer and act like you can't answer the question, then you will have given them cause to turn down your application.

3. How Long Will You Stay with the Company?

This question serves to show how well you researched the company and how you will fit in. More importantly, it's a question designed to weed out candidates who do not take the company seriously. In order to save yourself from this pitfall, give an answer along the lines of why you like the company and what you hope to accomplish while you are there — more about how you will serve the company but also about how you plan to develop while there (seeking a particular position or expanding your experience in a relevant area of work).



4. What Would You Like to Be Doing Five Years from Now?

This question is a more masked version of the pitfall question “How long will you stay with the company?” Prepare the same answer and use the same precaution. If you don’t show that you researched the company and have plans for it, then you will have given the interviewer a reason to pass you over.

5. Why Should I Hire You?

Every interviewee’s favorite question, it’s blunt, impertinent, and hard to answer. If you can get past the rough nature of the sound of it, the answer to this question is easy. Just sell your skills and experience and prove to the interviewer that you can be managed.

Interviewers are not just looking for someone who’s got what it takes and the experience to back it up. They want someone whom they can control and who will walk that fine line of independence and obedience. The trick is to express this second sell in a discreet way so that you are not showing yourself off as someone who cannot think independently and has to be told what to do every minute of the day.

6. How Would Your Friends Describe You?

This question is asked to find out how focused you are during the interview and at work in general. If they expect you to respond by taking the question literally or without some thought, then by answering by giving common or non-specific traits like “easy to get along with” and “fun to be around” or “knows where all the bars and clubs are,” then you will have given them what they are looking for: a candidate without focus on the candidacy at hand, one who can easily be distracted...and discarded.

You should give answers specific to the world of work that demonstrate your abilities and work ethic. Show the interviewer how you provide for your friends and, likewise, will provide for the company. Tell the interviewer about the time you sacrificed a hot ticket and hotter date to *Rigoletto* so that you could drive a friend to the emergency room. If you tell the interviewer that your friends come first, and you will apply that same principle to the company, you will score big points for this trick question.

7. What Can You Do for Us That Someone Else Cannot Do?

Like a couple of the questions listed above, this one is asked to see how interested you are in the company while assessing your skills. Your answer to this question should target the job description. You should show that you know exactly what the company is looking for and how you can contribute every step of the way. If you can avoid showing that you know very little about the position, you will have avoided the true purpose of this question: to eliminate candidates who have no clue about the job they are trying to enter.

8. Do You Feel You Could Have Done a Better Job Than Your Previous Boss?

This question is asked to avoid hiring future malcontents. If you want the job, avoid at all costs any criticism towards any old bosses, even if one of them is currently imprisoned for embezzlement. Even if you have a funny story to tell about your former boss that you know the interviewer would get a kick out of, you should refrain and stay positive.

If you get this question, give a diplomatic answer with sound statements. The best answer is the one that provides some kind of idea you had that you thought would have improved the company. In other words, stay away from personal commentary. Just respond as if you were the boss yourself and had one or two ideas on how you would have managed operations differently. This plan is a safe bet.

9. What Are Some of the Things about Your Boss That You Disliked?

This is a more direct version of the question “Do you feel you could have done a better job than your previous boss?” Its purpose is more specifically to find out if you are going to be a potential troublemaker.

Whatever you answer, remain calm and never show any blatant emotions. You could say nothing or sing your former boss’s praises. You could also say that you disliked nothing about your former boss but, if pressed to answer, that you did not like something trivial that had to do with operations. Whatever you decide, make your answer a constructive one and be positive.

10. Have You Already Done the Best Work You Are Capable Of?

This question serves to show how confident you are in your work. Interviewers are looking for candidates who lack confidence so as to avoid hiring them. But they are also looking for candidates who have too much confidence so as to prevent having a braggart or bully or boar around the office.

To avoid what they are looking for — to reject you — answer this question modestly and show the good work you’ve done, but add that you expect to do even better work in the near future by contributing greatly to the position itself and those involved.