**JB Bester - STAR: Interview Sample Questions**

* **Relationships and Networks** 
  + Talk about a time when you had to work closely with someone whose personality was very different from yours.

In one of my more recent jobs, I worked with a person who is a certified genius – a member of MENSA etc. He was The DevOps guru who took care of all the back-end and networking stuff as well as anything else we had issues with. Sadly, he has the bed-side manor of a brick, and would often tell someone to their face how stupid they were; We suspect he is on the spectrum somewhere. Encountering this person was like encountering a force of nature and it terrified me initially. Unfortunately, being colleagues, I had to work with him closely on a regular basis.

To overcome my issues I was having with this person, I resolved to never take anything he said too personal, but to let his comments just roll off, and move on. Next, I started using him as a reference and source on subjects I had no clue about. I taped into his wide knowledge to find out things I did not know. I’d shoot him an email with a question and he’d call me right back. Often, the first thing he’d say was that I was stupid or slow or something like that. I would simply respond by saying “hey, great day to you too!” He eventually cottoned on and started conversations with “Hi, great day!” before telling me how stupid I was. LOL! I also started relating to him on a more personal level by reaching out to him to get to know him “at home” so to speak. I showed interest in his interests and even got to know about his family.

We are still acquaintances on social media and they even send our family Christmas cards!

* + Give me an example of a time you faced a conflict while working on a team. How did you handle that?
  + Describe a time when you struggled to build a relationship with someone important. How did you eventually overcome that?
  + Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully persuade someone to see things your way at work.
* **Courage and Candor** 
  + Describe a time when you had to interact with a difficult client. What was the situation, and how did you handle it?

In one of my previous assignments I provided fist-line customer support services remotely via telephone to customer all over the world. On one occasion I had to deal with a senior executive from one of the tech departments, who was stuck in China due to messed up flight schedules, and was experiencing tech issues with her company equipment. Due to time differences and her difficult circumstances she was very irate. The issue was compounded by the fact that I was just a lowly techy and she knew much more than I did. I could not give her immediate satisfaction and had to go through the prescribed procedures and processes before I could escalate her case to the next higher tier of support.

I was very patient and polite with her up to a point at which time I gently reminded her that I was just doing my job, and really wanted to help her. I assured her that this was going to work out and that we were going to get her the help she needed. I asked for her patience and assistance with the process.

The client complied with my request, and with her help we were able to pin-point the issue. I realized that this issue required specialist intervention. So, I assured the client that I would call back shortly, then reached out to my floor-manager, and a specialist friend to escalate the issue outside of normal channels. The issue was eventually resolved and the client was very happy. After that incident she would often ask for my assistance in person when she called the help desk.

* + Tell me about a time you needed to get information from someone who wasn’t very responsive. What did you do?
* **Agility** 
  + Describe a time when your team or company was undergoing some change. How did that impact you, and how did you adapt?
  + Tell me about the first job you’ve ever had. What did you do to learn the ropes?

The first job I ever had was as a sales clerk / cashier at a late-night video store during my junior year. I worked with the manager who was very bossy with a very loud personality. She was a hard task master and took no nonsense from any-one. One night we experienced an attempted robbery and she single-handedly took down the 2 robbers.

My task was primarily to keep the store clean and the videos organized – both the empty cases on the displays, and the 1000s of videos in the storeroom behind the counter. When customers came to be checked-out, I had to find the correct video and verbally relay the rental policies before concluding the transaction.

Learning all the video categories and the cataloging numbering system was the hardest part of the job. The boss made it look so easy. She could list off videos by name and catalogue number, and even tell you the actors etc. To learn what I had to know, I wrote myself stacks of note cards and carried them wherever I went. I even sat reviewing them during the sermons at church.

I was able to do that job throughout my junior year until I moved on to a better gig as a junior director at a T-shirt manufacturing and printing company. The boss was sad to see me go. She said because it was hard to find good dedicated help that put in the effort to be excellent – even at renting out videos in a late-night video rental joint.

* + Tell me about when the budget or priorities changed mid-stream.
* **Initiative and Foresight**
  + Describe a time when you saw some problems and took the initiative to correct it rather than waiting for someone else to do it.

I find it hard to answer these questions because they want me to reflect on what I did. I don’t take notes of these things I do, but taking initiative is one of my characteristics. I lead by example and when I see something needs done I do it. I have never ever delegated a job that I was not willing to do first. I was always the first to mop the floor, or scrub the pots, and I was the first to get down into clogged up French-drains to clean them out. In a recent assignment, while working as first line tech support, I noticed that the knowledge base was lacking some important resources that could have helped me if they were available. In my spare time between calls I started researching info and solutions on tough issues I had to face while helping users. I wrote these up for future reference and started posting them to the knowledge base for the whole team to use. I was commended for this initiative and my “google-foo”. Writing up issues became part of best practices for everyone on the team, with the result that the knowledge base became our most valuable resource for trouble shooting and delivering excellence in customer service.

* + Tell me about a time you were dissatisfied in your work or the work of your team. What could have been done to make it better?
* **Results Orientation** 
  + Tell me about a time you had to be very strategic in order to meet all your top priorities.
  + Describe a long-term project that you managed. How did you keep everything moving along in a timely manner?

During one of my previous assignments I worked as the international coordinator and facilitator at a relief and development NGO in West-Africa. I was part of a project to help develop a remote tribal community who lived on the edge of the Sahara Desert. Or vision was multi-fold and focused on the broad strokes of over-all community development. To be able to coordinate these efforts I spent a year recruiting funds and support for the mission. During this time, I also did extensive studies to familiarize myself with anything there was to know about the group and the local conditions. This also included intensive language study.

I then ‘mobilized’ to go visit key stack-holders in Europe, and North and West Africa. This took about another year to build the necessary relationships and rapport. During that time of travel, I also started writing and publishing extensively about the needs of the target group. Next, I went into the field for a time to work with the different development teams from the different organizations that were in the area; to get to know the teams and to assess the situation on the ground. Collaboration between teams was a huge hurdle that was eventually over-come by fostering in-person interactions and strategic meetings.

Once global goals were defined various teams took ownership of different aspects of the work to move the development strategy forward.

During the years of my involvement, my love for tech and technology helped immensely as we started using sat-phones and computers to better facilitate our work. I became a sort-of “tech consultant” and we did fantastical things on a shoe-string budget, to make our work easier and better. It is during this time that I build my first website in HTML, I published a lot of our work on this website to help co-ordinate the project.

Throughout my involvement with the project, till the end, I continued to travel widely to find support and resources, and to meet with stakeholders and investors. The long-term goal was to hand-over the work of community development to the local community themselves, and for me to work myself out of a job. I was involved with this mission for 7 years, from 1995 till I finally left the field in 2001.

* + Sometimes it’s just not possible to get everything on your to-do list done. Tell me about a time your responsibilities got a little overwhelming. What did you do?