[Music]
do you get a little nervous when your
interviewer asks you tell me about
yourself
well that sounds about right it means
you're human and you've come to the
right spot
this video teaches you how to handle the
tell me about yourself interview
question with ease authenticity and
confidence
in this video i'll teach you why
interviewers ask this question so often
and how to answer tell me about yourself
so that you're ready for this question
no matter when someone asks you
telling a compelling and inspiring
career story is incredibly powerful and
i've seen it make the difference between
an offer or no offer many times
welcome to the pocketboard channel where
accomplished industry mentors share
their hard-earned lessons learned
guidance and mentoring tips to help you
navigate your current professional goals
my name is erica and i'm a former google
hiring manager and an interview coach
landing my dream job at google almost 10
years ago changed the trajectory of my
career and i mentor people to help them
land their dream jobs because i know how
life-changing the right job can be
as an interviewer i've been on the other
side of the table hundreds of times
maybe even a thousand
i've learned what works and what doesn't
work when it comes to acing job
interviews i've mentored and interview
prepped almost 100 people who've gone on
to land their dream jobs at top tier
companies including the super tough fang
companies
the tell me about yourself interview
question is highly common because it
serves so many different purposes and
you need to have a solid answer to this
question there are a few reasons that
interviewers ask this question including
reason number one
they read your resume and they want to
hear your career journey from your
perspective this is an opportunity to
demonstrate your strategic approach to

career planning and to tell a compelling
story about your career to date
reason number two
they didn't take time to read your
resume and they're hoping you can catch
them up quickly so that you can be set
up for an effective interview
in this case this is an opportunity for
you to align with the interviewer and
even give them ideas on appropriate
interview questions to ask you
reason number three they want to hear
how you're mapping your past experience
to this role that you're interviewing
for do you have an interesting and or
strategic reason for making this move in
your career
this is the time to share your broader
goals and purpose and how this role will
further your career or life mission
reason number four this question is
actually one of the best ways to assess
someone's communication skills
why
because it's a subject you love and know
well yourself so you should be able to
present a thorough comprehensive and
concise account of your past
accomplishments and future goals
if you can't communicate this well this
would be a red flag for your
communication skills something that
every interviewer is looking for
because this question is so common and
because you don't know the reason your
interviewer is asking it you need a
strong answer that can address all of
these potential cases
the key to answering tell me about
yourself is to summarize the past in
terms of what you learned and how those
learnings make you a good fit for this
role
then go on to describe your future goals
and how this role will enable those
goals
by doing this you're telling a cohesive
career story that connects the past to
the future and makes it clear that you
are the right person for the role
in addition to presenting a compelling
and inspiring case you need to be
concise ideally taking fewer than two
minutes

some non-goals you will need to avoid as
you formulate your answer to this
question
first
no bragging i find that this tends to
happen when candidates are nervous or if
they're suffering from impostor syndrome
and i'll tell you now the person
interviewing you already thinks you
deserve to be there so there's no reason
to posture or brag
it's better to share what you've gained
or learned from each of your past career
experiences than it is to brag about
what you achieved this can be a fine
line so i will show you how to walk it
carefully as i teach you the framework
second non-goal you need to be able to
walk me through a comprehensive
compelling and concise story in less
than two minutes i don't need to know
every detail of your projects or even
your three titles and promotions your
manager named sherry or any other level
of detail beyond this was my role and
what i gained or learned from it for
each of your past roles
non-goal number three this is not a
question that the interviewer is asking
because they want to learn about your
hobbies who is in your family and how
much you love them or your myers-briggs
type this is about your professional
story and you only have 90 seconds so
jump on it
non-goal number four shallowness
sometimes people share a perfect story
about their past career and then
suddenly things take a steep left turn
the candidate tells me the reason they
want this job working with me on my team
is because they want a great paycheck or
wonderful work-life balance sometimes
they even share trauma stories of how
horrible their last or current job is
and look these are reasonable things to
want a great paycheck great team members
let's throw in great benefits too
however in the context of an interview
you want to present a more compelling
story about your career and your goals
think of at least one way this job will
advance your intellectual or
professional goals or sense of purpose

and share that with the interviewer and
don't worry the paycheck the benefits
the great team it will come with a job
so i usually don't talk about myself
much in my interview coaching work
because it's really all about you
however what motivated me to make this
video about how to answer the tell me
about yourself interview question is
actually that i once flopped really
badly when someone asked me this
question off guard not in an interview
setting
i'll tell you the story for some comic
relief and hopefully even if you're
realizing that you've made some of the
same mistakes i'm about to share or if
you're realizing you've done some of the
non-goals we just described you can know
that it's absolutely within reach for
you to learn a new approach and get
really good at this question so it was
day one and i was starting a new job i
met with my new boss for the first time
i hadn't met him in the interview
process and he asked me tell me about
yourself
what really threw me off was that he
told me before he asked the question i
already read your resume i just want to
get to know you
in my defense i had just taken off six
weeks to travel between jobs so i was
very rusty in identifying that this was
actually an interview question i
panicked and blurted out i love
gardening and i have an orange cat
this is basically the nightmare version
of answering the tell me about yourself
answer
i said nothing about my career in the
past my goals how i hope to contribute
to him the team the business that i'd be
joining and the way i'd been planning to
come into the role the reality is i had
spent the last six weeks working with an
executive coach and coming up with a
plan for how i was going to join the
company and make an impact so i really
undersold myself and my abilities
you'll be happy to hear that i did
recover after that but i wanted to share
this story as a warning that no matter
who asks you in any context no matter

what always always always keep it
professional and lean into this
framework i'm about to teach you
there will always be a time later to
share your love of gardening and orange
tabby cats named toby but first you need
to get the job
the framework i'll teach you is to break
up your career story into two parts the
past and the future you'll spend about
two-thirds of the time talking about the
past and what you gained along the way
and one-third of the time talking about
how this job this team this company will
fulfill a key goal you have for your
future this can be a professional goal
or an intellectual one
okay get out a piece of paper or if
you're like me do this all in a
spreadsheet i'd like you to list all the
companies you're interested in applying
to including the role and the team if
you know about the team
if you're applying to multiple roles
within one company have one entry for
each role
and for each role what you're going to
do is fill in this sentence
i'm excited to bring my blank
to accomplish blank for the company
next you're going to do the same
exercise for each of your past roles in
this part of your answer you're trying
to help the interviewer see what you
will bring to the role and how the role
team and or company will further your
professional or intellectual goals
to convey this story concisely you'll
start by writing down what you want to
convey you'll want to have one entry for
each match of future and past roles
since the story of what you gained from
each past role will differ based on the
future role you want they will each
leverage different aspects of your
learning and abilities
so for each pass role write down one
bullet or sentence that starts with
i learned blank
make sure the blank lines up with the
role you're applying for
so for some of you this exercise is
going to be easy for others it will be
much harder and it will take you more

time this is not a problem pause the video take the time to do it bookmark me come back tomorrow but commit to doing the work

it is going to supercharge your answer to the tell me about yourself question because you're going to talk about your career past and future on inspiring and strategic terms

next you need to start practicing saying this out loud you can voice or video record yourself but you need to record yourself so that you can play it back and hear yourself

each time you ask and answer the tell me about yourself question listen to yourself and note down one to three things that you can improve then try it again

note down the time it takes you each time you answer the question and ensure you do not exceed two minutes

the reason i set the two minute rule is in an interview i find that people give more details when they get nervous so it tends to take a little bit longer

i try to train myself down to 90 seconds so that in an interview i will be two minutes or less

next you need to practice work and rework your words and phrasing make it natural authentic and flow easily

ask yourself the question in a few different ways like why do you want this job or tell me about your career so far or tell me how this job fits into your goals and be sure you aren't thrown off when interviewers ask this question in different

ways i'm going to do two examples with my own experiences mapped to two different roles so you can see how i address both the past and the future to match against the roles that i'm theoretically interviewing for

the first theoretical future role that i'm applying for in this example is a data science role so here's my answer to tell me about yourself

i started my career in research where i learned how to design physical experiments how to analyze data summarize findings and author papers to share those findings more broadly

i then moved into a physical engineering
role where i was designing batteries
often using statistical methods combined
with manufacturing constraints
my favorite part of that job was
arriving to work each morning where i
would have a file of data that had been
exported from our prototype test lab and
i could use the data to analyze and
assess the battery designs that i was
prototyping
i then moved into a software platform's
role as a product manager where i
learned how to ingest large quantities
of messy data normalize and correct the
data and then use it for data-based
products
from there i joined google where i was
developing a medical device that used
complex data models to predict health
signals like pulse rate
it was in this role that i developed a
passion for building algorithms and
machine learning models and i actually
went back to graduate school to earn a
master's degree in computer science
where my focus was on machine learning
models
from there i wanted to learn more about
the business side of running an
engineering team so i joined a growth
stage iot company and learned how to
design and manage large engineering
organizations towards achieving business
goals sustaining innovation and building
to scale
i learned that my most fulfilling career
moments have happened when i was working
on small accountable teams and where i
had a data forward role that required a
strong business and user acumen
i'm excited to bring my business
leadership and machine learning
backgrounds to a data science role where
i can help your team design and launch
data models that help the company better
leverage its data and empower users to
make more informed decisions
okay so that was about 100 seconds so i
did this in under two minutes which
achieves one of our three goals
conciseness
our other goals are to tell an inspiring
and compelling career story that

connects the past to the future and
makes it clear that i'm the right person
for the role do you think i achieved
these goals
i felt that i connected the path to the
future by highlighting the
experimentation statistics data modeling
and the academic machine learning
education that is in my background i
added the part about having a past
leadership role because my story
wouldn't have been cohesive without it
it can be hard to tell a cohesive story
that takes you from a leadership role to
an ic role but the way i did it gives a
hat tip to my leadership skills without
raising any red flags about why i want
to step back into an ic role
the second theoretical future role i'm
applying for is a product management
role as i answer the tell me about
yourself question again see if you can
spot all of the adjustments i make that
enables me to tell a compelling and
cohesive story that connects my past
roles with the future desired role that
i'm applying for
i started my career in research and
development where i worked as part of a
team to design novel methods for drug
delivery
all of our methods were firmly grounded
in product development pathways and i
enjoyed doing research that had this aim
of solving real world problems and
eventually to create products rather
than purely academic research i then
moved into a physical engineering role
where i was designing batteries to meet
real world use cases from semi trucks
carrying goods everywhere to off-grid
power systems to spaceship backup power
i quickly moved into a team lead role
where i was responsible for managing
over 200 battery products
this is what really gave me the bug to
go into product management i then moved
into a healthcare software platforms
team as a product manager where i
learned how to build and launch consumer
and b2b products that rely heavily on a
compelling ux design and complex data
backends
from there i joined google where i was

developing a medical device that could
monitor clinical trial patients it was
in this role that i learned how to build
product roadmaps and to manage
deliverables across multiple engineering
functions from firmware to hardware to
cloud and mobile applications
from there i wanted to learn more about
the business side of running a product
development organization so i joined a
growth stage iot company as the head of
engineering and r d operations
in that role i learned how to design and
manage platform level roadmaps involving
multiple products and to ensure
short-term delivery while maintaining a
clear three-year platform level roadmap
my most fulfilling career moments have
happened when i was working in tight
partnership with skilled engineers
designers and marketers to build
products that deeply impact users and
solve their problems well
i feel most fulfilled when i'm driving
products forward on a team where i can
bring my best and also bring out the
best in others i'm excited to bring my
engineering and product experience to
bear on the unique problems of your
users and actually i've already
generated some ideas that i'd love to
test
okay that was about 100 seconds so i did
this in just under two minutes and that
achieves one of our three goals
conciseness our other two goals are to
tell an inspiring and compelling story
that connects the past to the future and
makes it clear that i'm the right person
for the role do you think i achieved
these goals
in this example i needed to show that i
have product management chops but i also
wanted to flex my engineering background
which i believe will make me stand out
from other candidates who have more
business oriented backgrounds
i tried to do this by starting with my
engineering and research background and
then mentioning my tight partnerships
with engineering throughout my journey
when it came time to talk about how
these experiences connect my future
goals i tried to stick the landing by

making it clear why i love being a pm and why i love working closely with other product builders and that i've already spent some time thinking about the problem domain and the user needs for this company to recap the framework for how to answer tell me about yourself in an interview first you'll spend 60 seconds sharing a quick overview of your past roles and how they've given you the skills and abilities that will help you succeed in the role you're interviewing for

then you'll spend 30 seconds sharing how the role you're interviewing for will leverage your abilities and enable you to have your desired career or professional impact

easy peasy

congratulations you now know how to answer the tell me about yourself interview question like a boss and you will never fear this question again the best thing about knowing how to answer this question is that you now have a formula for telling your entire career story in a concise compelling and inspiring way

you can use this even when you aren't interviewing it gives people an inspiring and compelling overview of your career story and your sense of purpose professionally

just drop the bit about the next role and instead share how your current role is furthering your professional or intellectual goals all right my work here is done but yours is just beginning so take out paper and pen or a spreadsheet if that's how you roll and get started with the framework i've taught you

no there is no faster way to get good at this

yes you actually do need to do the activity to get good at answering tell me about yourself

and yes this can make the difference between a no higher interview and an interview that results in an offer telling a compelling and inspiring career story is extraordinarily powerful once you get to a point when you're able to tell your career story in 90 seconds

offhand with no notes for each role
you're considering you are well on your
way to landing your dream job
if you want me or other pocketboard
mentors to create more helpful videos
subscribe to this channel to get new
mentoring tips faster make sure you ring
the bell and you'll get notified when we
publish new videos
please drop a comment in this video to
tell us what mentoring tips or skills
you want us to cover in our next video
i'm erica g and you can find me on
pocketboard if you'd like one-on-one
mentorship and coaching with me
[Music]
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