

# The Ultimate Guide to Job Interview Answers 2008

**Use these job interview answers to increase your confidence, build rapport, effectively sell yourself, overcome objections, and deliver a stellar performance that will get you hired!**

Congratulations on your smart decision to invest in yourself and your future! This Guide is written for both first time job hunters and seasoned professionals alike. We assume that you are already familiar with the basics of preparing a decent resume and cover letter. This is why there is no BS filler or author ego stories in this Guide. The only thing you will find here are pure, time-tested interviewing strategies and techniques, proven Interview Answers, and real-world scripts and examples that you can use right away to confidently go into your interview – and ACE IT!

## **TIPS ON READING THIS GUIDE ON YOUR COMPUTER**

We suggest you print this guide out right away, but you may also want to read it on your computer. For the best experience, try this:

- 1) From the top menu choose view > full screen. Or just hit "control L"
- 2) Once you are in full screen mode, use "control +" and "control –" to zoom in and out until you are comfortable with the text size.
- 3) Then use the "page down" and "page up" keys (instead of the mouse) to move forward and back through the guide.
- 4) To get out of full screen mode, hit "control L" again, or hit the "Esc" key.

Relax, Focus, and let's get started!

## How to use this Guide

The layout of this Guide is designed to allow you to easily flip to the appropriate page when preparing for an interview. We suggest when you first start working with this Guide that you read the answers out loud and listen to your voice as you read them. This is important! Read the answers out loud and get comfortable with the shrewd and intelligent language.

The next step would be to stage several "practice interviews" where you have a friend ask you the questions – and again simply read your answers from the Guide. This way you can choose the answers that best fit your personal communication style and job history and experience. Finally, stage a practice interview that is as close to the real thing as possible. Grade yourself, and continue practice interviewing with your friend until you are confident that you are prepared to strategically deliver a performance that will get you hired. These Winning Answers will be right at the tip of your tongue when "judgment day" comes!

Do yourself a favor and print out this Guide right away. You'll be flipping through the pages over and over again as you prepare for your interviews. You'll even want to keep this Guide and study it even after you get the job. Every time you meet a person in a professional setting you will be prepared to intelligently sell yourself and answer any question that could possibly come your way.

Spend some time with this Guide and give it your best. You will have a serious arsenal for when you go in to conquer an interview and get the job. Nothing will be able to trip you up!

## Interviewing: The Basics

Employers look for employees because they have a NEED. Don't mistake that the interview is about you – it is really about their NEED. You need to sell yourself as the right person to satisfy that need. Sure, you may have great experience, but WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

Managers hire people in order to make their own job easier. How are you going to make the Hiring Manager's job easier? How are you going to make the Hiring Manager look good in THEIR boss's eyes? You need to make your skills, experience, and education relevant to THEM and their needs, goals, and situation. After every statement you make to the Hiring Manager, you need to at least mentally add " ... and this will make your job easier because ..." or " ... and this will make you look good because ..."

Imagine the Hiring Manager asking "... so how would that benefit me and my needs?" Make your answers and examples relevant to THEIR needs and communicate how hiring you will benefit THEM as well as the company.

If Managers hire based on their needs, then you are going to have to uncover and reveal their needs in order to come up with answers that will get you hired. Remember that every time a hiring manager asks you a question, YOU HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO ASK A QUESTION OF YOUR OWN. Questions are a great follow-up to a winning answer.

Early on in the interview you should use your own questions to uncover the hidden needs of the Hiring Manager so that you can tailor your answers and attitude to show that you understand their needs and that YOU are exactly the perfect person to solve those needs. Please see the section in this Guide on "Questions to Use to Uncover the Interviewer's Hidden Needs."

## What Hiring Managers Are Looking For

Whether they know it or not, all Hiring Managers are looking for certain characteristics or "Behavioral Competencies." One of the most important is CONFIDENCE. Now, all of us have made mistakes in the past, and maybe all of your performance reviews have not exactly been "glowing," but the point is not to live your life looking in the rear view mirror. If you know you have made mistakes, and you are working on improving yourself, then there is no reason why you shouldn't move forward with CONFIDENCE and an EXPECTATION OF SUCCESS.

Review the following Behavioral Competencies with CONFIDENCE. Nobody is a super-person that exhibits all of these characteristics at 100%, but if you have ever worked any job then you have exhibited all of these characteristics to some degree. EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE when you read these, and think of times on the job when you HAVE exhibited these characteristics – NOT times when you might have failed to.

What you want to demonstrate to the Hiring Manager:

**Courage / Persuasion:** This is your ability to increase your determination to get the job done when you are faced with resistance or a difficult situation. Show the ability to move people towards a commitment to buy or act. Demonstrate that you are fair and nice, but also show that you are aggressive and may even sometimes intimidate others. Don't be modest. Demonstrate confidence and the fact that you are not easily intimidated. Indicate the desire to influence the thinking of others. Show that you can gain agreement from others via logic, alternatives, and emotional appeals.

**Beliefs / Ethics:** This is your capacity to believe strongly in what you do and emphasize service. Indicate LOYALTY so that the Hiring Manager knows that you won't quit after three months – or leave your clients hanging and out of the loop. This quality is key to the development of accounts and customer satisfaction. Show that you will

act in terms of what is right. Demonstrate that you follow through and actually do what you say you will do.

**Commitment:** This is your capacity for becoming dedicated to your work. You should demonstrate a strong belief in what you do. Demonstrate that you are willing to make a sacrifice for people when appropriate because you are a COMMITTED person. Show a strong responsibility and commitment to not only the Hiring Manager and the company, but even more importantly, to customers and clients.

**Work Orientation / Stamina:** This is your capacity to handle mental intensity and hard work. Indicate the high tempo and speed at which you work, and your capacity for endurance. Show that you invest the TIME and ENERGY necessary to get the job done right the first time – consistently.

**Interpersonal Skills / Charm:** This is your capacity to know how and when to get things done with people. Show that you are outgoing and charming, and that you are especially effective in this regard when you have an objective in mind, or need someone to do something. Demonstrate that you have an intrinsic need to win the approval of others, fit in, and get along. Show that you have the ability to build quick relationships with people.

**Discipline:** Demonstrate that you have inner standards that make you both predictable and productive. Show that you enjoy the responsibility of planning and carrying out your own schedule. Indicate that you can motivate yourself to work on a task until completion.

**Competitiveness:** This is your drive to be better than others. Show that you like to compete and have the desire to win, and show the maturity of knowing how this benefits everyone.

**Focus:** This is your ability to determine what is important, set priorities for tasks, and maintain direction. Show that you understand how to set short and long-term objectives, and how to intelligently schedule these objectives so that you hit your goals and complete tasks on time.

**Big Picture Thinking:** This is your ability to see the big picture, and not get bogged down in the minutia of small tasks. Demonstrate a tendency toward project closure. Show your ability to see "the real goal" and what it takes to get there.

## "Show," Don't "Tell"

You may have noticed in the above section that it is suggested that you "show" and "demonstrate" that you have what it takes to fill the Hiring Manager's needs. This is contrasted with simply "telling" the Hiring Manager that you have what it takes. The formula for this is pretty simple:

- 1) Clarify the interviewer's question.
- 2) Confidently answer the question by "telling" using two of the above Behavioral Competencies.
- 3) "Show" that you have demonstrated these competencies in the past by GIVING EXAMPLES.
- 4) Ask and verify that you have answered the question to the satisfaction of the interviewer.

Say:

"So ... what you are asking me **"X."** That is a good question and I am glad you asked. Yes, I definitely have the ability to **"Y"** and that is because I usually have no problem doing **"Z."** For example, at my last job I ran into a situation where I **"A,"** but I was able to **"B"** because of my ability to **"Y"** and **"Z."** Does that make sense? Can you see how having the experience of working through that type of situation would make me a good asset to your group?"

**A simple answer would then look like this:**

"So ... you are asking me if I have worked with important accounts before. That is a good question and I am glad you asked. Well, I definitely have the ability to work hard to earn the trust of my clients, and then focus on customer service in order to keep them happy with the business relationship. FOR EXAMPLE, at my last job I was brought in to work with a disgruntled client after another Account Manager left. Although it took a lot of hard work, I was able to fix what was wrong by listening to the client carefully and making sure that we delivered exactly what was expected of us. It took a while, but I was able to rescue the relationship with this important client. Does that make sense? OK. Does that answer your question? Good. I think I could be an asset to your group having worked through this type of experience with an important account. Would you agree?"

## **About using "FOR EXAMPLE"**

"FOR EXAMPLE" is the most important phrase in your job interview arsenal. Don't be afraid of using it frequently as a part of the answer to every question! The more examples you can provide of specific instances where you have demonstrated the characteristics Hiring Managers are looking for – your ability to fill their needs – the more likely you will be hired.

There are two things to be said about using "FOR EXAMPLE," however.

First, don't overdo it on the examples. You only need to provide enough examples to satisfy the interviewer, or basically instill the confidence that you will be successful in filling their needs. Don't oversell yourself by giving too many examples! Watch for cues that the interviewer is satisfied that your examples back up your statements or claims. You should also ask questions to probe the effectiveness of the answer.

Ask questions like:

- Does that make sense? You follow me? Is that a good example?
- Have I addressed that 100% to your satisfaction?
- Does that answer your question about "X"?
- Do you think that my experience with that type of situation would be relevant to my work here?
- I think that's the kind of experience you are looking to bring to your team, isn't it?
- You would agree that my skills in that area would help me succeed here, wouldn't you?

Most importantly, when you use "FOR EXAMPLE," make sure your examples are specific, measurable, and relevant. You are telling a story. You need to PAINT THE PICTURE. Be specific. Use people's names. Give background info on clients and colleagues, and indicate your role and involvement.

Make the situation as relevant to the Hiring Manager's work as possible and use terms and ideas he or she can understand and relate to. Give dates and measurable information and statistics relating to the time and money you have saved by deploying your Behavioral Competencies on the job. Use gestures and pauses – and don't be afraid of drawing simple charts or diagrams on paper or on a white board. Practice telling these stories! It is your examples or "stories" that people relate to, and it is your examples and stories that will get you hired. Show, don't tell!



## **When you give examples, use the S.T.A.R. Statement format**

**IF YOU TAKE ANY ONE SINGLE ACTION AFTER READING THIS GUIDE, IT SHOULD BE TO IDENTIFY AND WRITE OUT AT LEAST SIX to EIGHT DETAILED PERSONAL S.T.A.R. STATEMENTS.**

### **Situation / Task**

Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. Be very specific and give details, but keep it short and concise. Throughout your interview you'll want to make many S.T.A.R. Statements when using "FOR EXAMPLE."

### **Action**

Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what YOU did – not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you MIGHT do, or WOULD do – tell what you DID do. Incorporate Behavioral Competency keywords into the description of your action. (Reread the Behavioral Competency section above to make sure you include some of those terms in your S.T.A.R. Statements).

### **Results**

Describe what you achieved. What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? How did it make people feel? How did you feel? How did your boss feel? How much time and money did you save? Would you say that you solved the problem? Did other people recognize you or commend you for your efforts? Name them specifically.

Your result: How did it GET? GET RID OF? RELIEVE? AVOID? PRESERVE? PROTECT? ENHANCE? IMPROVE? INCREASE? – Use some of these "outcome keywords" when describing your results.

Take the time to develop and practice your S.T.A.R. Statements! You'll want to have AT LEAST 6 to 8 S.T.A.R. Statements at the tip of your tongue when you go into an interview. Create S.T.A.R. Statements from the jobs on your resume that you want to bring attention to. As you use the Statements and Stories as examples, your interviewer will become familiar with the various positions you have held, and will get a good idea of your track record of success in those various positions.

## **About Behavioral Interviewing**

Even if an employer has not told you that you will be involved in a "Behavioral," "Behavior-Based," or "Situational" Interview, you are still likely to face "Behavioral Interview" style questions.

Traditional Interview questions ask you basic questions such as "Tell me a little bit about yourself." The process of Behavioral Interviewing is much more challenging. They will ask you about situations and try to pick apart your answers to see if your behaviors match up with the Desirable Behavioral Competencies they are looking for. They are trying to make a prediction of your future success by understanding how you have handled situations in the past.

In a Traditional Interview, you can usually get away with somewhat vague, general answers – or just tell the interviewer what you think he or she wants to hear.

In a Behavioral Interview, on the other hand, they're going to be asking you for very specific examples. They're going to be asking you for details, including names of people, dates, and outcomes. They'll ask you about lengthy projects you've been involved in – how your role evolved, how you handled deadlines, pressures and difficult personalities, how you went about thinking through problems, and how you determined what steps to take, and in what order.

When you give examples from your work experience, the Behavioral Interviewer is going to probe you to try to understand how you think. They are going to start questions with "Tell about a time ..." or "Describe a situation ..." and then they will ask you to elaborate with questions like "So what were you thinking at that point?" or "What was your decision making process?" or "Tell me how the meeting went with that person."

## **Remember, the core Characteristics / Competencies they will be looking for are:**

- Courage / Persuasion
- Beliefs / Ethics
- Commitment
- Work Orientation / Stamina
- Interpersonal Skills / Charm
- Discipline
- Competitiveness
- Focus
- Big Picture Thinking

Additionally, they will be examining your critical thinking skills, willingness to learn, willingness to travel, willingness to sacrifice, self-confidence, teamwork habits, professionalism, energy, decisiveness, sensitivity, tenacity, work standards, risk-taking orientation, and more.

**Don't let this worry you. All you have to do is prepare!!**

Yes, it can be difficult to prepare for Behavioral Interview questions because of the huge range of possible situational questions you might be asked. The best way to prepare is to arm your self with an arsenal of example stories that can be adapted to many Behavioral Questions. This brings us back to S.T.A.R. Statements.

Again, if you learn any one single thing from this guide, it should be that you need to write out and develop at least six to eight Personal S.T.A.R. statements, and know them backwards and forwards, in great detail.

Use examples from several different jobs. Also consider using examples from community service, hobbies, church group, or other areas that you think will be relevant to the job at hand. Also use examples of any special accomplishments, or awards you might have received, and try to QUANTIFY your results. Be specific about numbers, dates, and durations!

Keep in mind that many Behavioral Interview questions are related to stressful or negative situations – you'll need to be ready with examples of negative, difficult experiences, but try to choose negative experiences that had positive outcomes.

**Here's how to prepare:**

- 1) Write down six to eight example situations from your past experience where you demonstrated desirable behaviors and skills that employers look for. What was the Situation? What Action did you take? What was the Result? Add as much detail as possible. Edit and rewrite your examples. This is your Arsenal! Take the time to make it strong. You want to get hired, don't you?
- 2) Don't be bashful – think of examples that highlight your strongest skills.
- 3) Half of your accomplishment statements should be totally positive, such as large achievements or accomplishments. The other half should be situations that started out negatively but ended positively.
- 4) Have some variation in your examples. Don't take them all from just one job. Don't make them all relevant to just one theme.

- 5) Use fairly recent examples, if you can.
- 6) In the interview, listen carefully to each question. Pause, and then choose an example story. If you practice, you can learn to tailor a relatively small set of 6 to 8 examples to respond to almost any type of question. This way you successfully "package & spin" your work experience for almost any type of question!

## Interview "Don'ts"

- **Don't take your accomplishments for granted.** No matter how small, or how few, your accomplishments are important. Package them and position them so that they demonstrate your desirable Behavioral Competencies and show that you will be successful at your new job. Don't forget to make your accomplishments measurable in terms of saving time and money, or making your colleagues, clients, and superiors feel more secure, respected and admired.
- **Don't be too modest.** Job interviews are not the time to be modest. By all means, don't be cocky or overbearing, but DO make flat out statements like "Based on my skills, and experience with **"X,"** I really do think that I would be a great addition to your team." If anywhere, the job interview is the right time and place to toot your own horn.
- **Don't be constrained by official job descriptions.** Your role and responsibilities are often more than your past or future "official titles" may indicate. Think of yourself as equally as important as the Vice President or CEO within your sphere of influence. If you think of yourself as an important person who has a job to do, then others will think of you in the same way. Indicate that you are willing to take on tasks outside the official job description as necessary and appropriate.

- **Never volunteer any negative information about yourself.** Don't testify against yourself. If asked your greatest weakness, reply with a weakness you have conquered, or tell the interviewer about a weakness that may actually indicate a strength, like "sometimes I get impatient with teammates who are not as organized as I am." Don't ever describe any job requirement or task that you did not like.
- **Don't criticize your former boss or employer.** Talking trash about past jobs, bosses, colleagues or clients never pays off – in interviews and life in general. It is better to be a person who does not gossip or talk trash about other people.
- **Don't ever lie.** Don't be dishonest in an interview. It will come back around and get you. You can, however (within reason) exaggerate, omit, be ambiguous if necessary, and talk in superlatives. You are trying to sell yourself, after all. Advertisers have no qualms about making strong claims about their product or service. Do the same for yourself. Put your best foot forward and pump yourself up – but never lie.
- **Don't inquire about salary, vacations, or other benefits until after you've received an offer, or when you are close to the offer stage.** It makes sense that you should build your own perceived value as high as you can before you ask for the money. You will be able to price yourself higher this way.

However, you must be prepared for a question about your salary requirements. Some interviewers may even ask this up front. Go into every interview with an idea of the probable salary range for the position. Be prepared with an understanding of the market rate for the type of position you are interviewing for. If the subject of salary is brought up and you must address it, then ask for the highest number. ALWAYS ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT, or you won't get it. You will regret low-balling yourself, so ask for the high number, but make sure it is within the right range so you don't appear stupid or greedy – or price yourself out of the job.

- **Don't feel pressured to answer every question.** Sometimes the best answer is "I don't know." If you don't know the answer, say so. You can't know everything. Use times like these as an opportunity to demonstrate your willingness to learn. By all means, do not try to BS something that you know nothing about. Change the subject or answer with a different S.T.A.R. Story if "I don't know" is not in your vocabulary.

Besides these bullet points, just use common sense. Dress and groom appropriately, don't be late, bring a copy of your resume, don't smell like smoke or food, get a good night's sleep, eat the right meal at the right time, be polite, be relaxed, don't talk about politics or religion, don't stress out excessively, and most importantly – work with this Guide and PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! You are going to ace it!

## **Tell me a little bit about yourself.**

**Discussion:** This seemingly simple question can actually be the most daunting and the most difficult to answer! It is, however, an open-ended opportunity to communicate a lot of positive attributes. Keep it short, give a bit of background on yourself, and highlight several accomplishments. Integrate keywords based on desirable Behavioral Competencies. You should show how your career has taken a logical progression – noting how your education helped, if relevant – to where you are now. You should practice this type of "opening statement" until you have it down cold. Practice it until it's perfect!

Cover your 1) early years 2) education 3) work history, and 4) recent career experience. Remember that this is just a warm-up question. Don't waste your best points on it.

"Well, I grew up just outside of Chicago and then went to school at the University of Maryland where I studied Political Science and Art History. While I did love Political Science, I always knew that I would need to do something practical, so right out of college I got a job doing "X". Job "X" really tested my stamina and work ethic because I had to

work my butt off, but I managed to achieve a lot there and learn a lot about my chosen field. From there I got hired into a more senior position at Company "Y". That's where I really developed my teamwork skills and learned to create and manage budgets as high as \$1.5 million dollars. Right now I think that my skills and experience make me a great candidate for a position on your team, and I hope to demonstrate that today. What kind of qualities are you looking for in the ideal candidate for this position?"

## **What do you know about our company? What do you know about our competitors?**

**Discussion:** Before you go into the interview, you want to research the company so you know as much as possible about its products, size, quarterly revenues, image, reputation, management, history, philosophy, goals, problems, and competitors. Communicate that you have made a conscious choice to target this company because of the great things that you know about it.

"I know that this company has great products that consumers really like. I also know that the CEO started the company in his one-bedroom apartment in 1979. I admire his leadership style, and I understand that it has resulted in a great work environment here, and a great reputation in the business community. I know that your major competitors in the space include companies "X", "Y", and "Z". I really am quite interested in learning more about this company's forward looking competitive strategy and plans for future growth ... Did I mention that I am excited to be here?"

## **Why do you want to work here?**

**Discussion:** Keep your answer opportunity-oriented. Show that you are looking to work hard and contribute, but also talk about the company as being the right place for you for the foreseeable future. Indicate the features of the company you like, and why the work appeals to you. Indicate your skills and experiences that will enable



you to take advantage of the company's features and become a valued employee.

"I want to be part of this company's "X" project. I really think I could contribute to its success. I can handle the mental intensity and put in the hard work that it will take to help make project "X" a success. I believe that I can make a definite contribution to this company's goals – including the need to increase customer satisfaction, cut costs, and increase revenues. My track record shows I have been able to do this in the past, and I look forward to the opportunity of performing, learning, and being recognized my contribution here. What would be the most important ability for a person to have to succeed in this position?"

"I'd like to say flat out that I really do want to work here! Basically I am looking for the opportunity to perform and be recognized. I think that this company is the right place for me to do that I think it is a good fit for my skills and experience. FOR EXAMPLE, I am VERY interested in your company's "X" project. I want contribute to it and be a part of the success I think it will be. I really think I can benefit this company and your department because of my ability to identify critical tasks and get things done. Project "X" is a great chance for me to shine, don't you think?"

## **In what ways do you think you can make a contribution to our company? What makes you qualified for this position?**

**Discussion:** Remember that contributions to a business are usually measured in time and money. Show how you can contribute to the success of projects, and make sure you relate that to the impact on the bottom line.

"I really think that based on my considerable experience doing "X" combined with my discipline and energy, I can really save time by keeping things running smoothly and efficiently. Also, I think I can

help cut costs and maximize revenues for our department. I was able to do that at job "Y" and I don't see any reason why I would not be able to do the same thing here. FOR EXAMPLE, at Job "Y" I increased revenues within our department by 24% over the course of three months by implementing "Z". I am confident that I will become a valued member of your team based on that type of contribution. Will I have the opportunity to work on business problems like that if I am hired on?"

"Another important question ... I think my courage, honesty, hard work, and analytical abilities will help make this department's projects a success. I have demonstrated smart planning, risk management, resourcefulness, and teamwork throughout my career – and this has brought me to this interview here today. At Job "X", THE TYPES OF CONTRIBUTION I MADE WERE ... You see, I give everything my "all," and I hope to help make this department a success in every way – and I know I will be rewarded for that. What are the ideal types of contributions you look for from the individuals on your team?"

## Why did you leave your last job?

**Discussion:** Describe your reason for switching jobs directly and succinctly. Do not go into great detail unless you are asked. The longer you spend on this subject the more suspicious the interviewer may become. Make sure you stress you are leaving on good terms. The Hiring Manager will want to believe YOU WERE NOT THE PROBLEM and will want to get an idea of how you handled yourself. Provide evidence you handled it well by volunteering references. State the facts in a positive way. Don't be negative or bad mouth your former boss, colleagues, or company. Don't speculate on the motives or feeling of the other people involved in the events of your departure. Stick to one response. Don't change answers during the interview. Give a "group" answer if possible, like "our office was closing". Another possible answer – although not the best – is "we agreed to disagree."

Never reveal personal or emotional issues as part of an answer to this question. Be succinct – state your answer and leave it at that. You are

at the interview to discuss the position at hand. If you have been fired or laid off, you may consider answering ambiguously or using a general statement that avoids the issue.

"Well, I really want the opportunity to perform, learn, and develop further than I think I would have been able to at my last position. I did leave on good terms, but I'm here today because I know I have the "X" skills as well as the ability to "Y". I believe in myself, and I'm looking for more responsibility and the greater possibility of advancing my career."

"My company brought in new management who wanted to bring in their own team. Prior to that point, I was recognized as one of the best workers in my department. However, I felt that I could advance my career more if I pursued other opportunities, and I left on good terms. I would be happy to provide references to verify that I was indeed a valued employee. I'll tell you one thing – I am very excited about coming and working for you BECAUSE ..."

"While it is an excellent company that afforded me many fine experiences, I left my last position because the advancement opportunities just were not there. I had to read the writing on the wall and help myself. A position with your team will give me the opportunity to do good work, learn, and grow that my last job just wouldn't. I am happy to be here and I am really pleased that I am being considered."

## **What did you like best and least about your previous job?**

**Discussion:** This question reveals a lot about you. You want to indicate that what you liked BEST about your last job are things that will appeal to the Hiring Manager. Show that your last job allowed you to demonstrate many desirable Behavioral Competencies. Give specific examples of how your last job allowed you to flex your skills and show your maturity. Never make statements like "I like that my last company gave me a lot of vacation days," or something similar. When answering about what you liked LEAST, keep it short, do not be

negative, and relate your answer to how your last job LIMITED your ability to perform at your best.

"One thing I liked about my last job was that it allowed me to develop my leadership skills. For example, I was put in charge of a project where I had to earn the "buy-in" of people from multiple different departments, including marketing, IT, product development, and even HR. I held all the responsibility for getting this project completed on time, even though I had no real authority over my teammates since they did not report to me. I was able to create a project vision that the team agreed on, and then day-to-day I had to make sure that each team member completed their work on time. I did this in most cases by appealing to my teammates own self-interests. FOR EXAMPLE ... "

"What I liked about my last job was the fact that there was good on the job training. I was able to really develop my "X" skills, which I know will help me succeed if I am fortunate enough to be able to join your team. What are the qualities and skills of the people who have been most successful at this company?"

"What I like least about my last job was that the management style was pretty hands off – and this was fine for me because I am self motivated and work hard to achieve. But but the lack of structure sometimes allowed some of my teammates to slack off from time to time – and I often ended up having to pick up the extra work. I would not mind that SOMETIMES, but it got old after a while. I had to constructively approach my manager and let her know what was going on WITHOUT creating any friction between me and the slacker teammates, who I actually liked as people. In the end, it worked out well – because I was pro-active. Have you ever run into that type situation as a manager?"

## What would your last boss say about you?

**Discussion:** Be careful with this one as references are likely to be checked. If you can remember terms or language that your boss used in the past, try to use them. Be honest, but only indicate the positive

things that your boss would say about you. Don't testify against yourself. Don't offer any negative information. Keep it short.

"She would say that I was a valued member of her team. I know that she was sorry to see me go, but I had to do what was right for my career. I think the most important thing she would say is that she could really rely on me to follow through and do what I said I was going to do."

## What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

**Discussion:** Tailor your strengths to the position and the hidden needs of the manager in terms of making their job easier and making them look good. Whatever you do, don't claim that you don't have any weaknesses. List your strengths first, and list many. You will want to list the desirable Behavioral Competencies that hiring managers are looking for. Then speak to your weaknesses, but only name one.

You can identify a weakness that is actually a strength, but be careful with this – you don't want it to be too obvious or transparent.

Keep the description of your weakness short, and finish with a pause as if you are ready to move onto the next question.

"I think my greatest strengths include my determination to get the job done, my ability to focus, stay on task, maintain quality, and my ability to create enthusiasm and motivate a team. I am also very good with people in terms of maintaining agreement and consensus. I am also very customer service oriented. I treat everyone as a customer. My clients, bosses, and coworkers included. I keep my customer service level high by following through and actually doing what I say I am going to do. FOR EXAMPLE, at my last job ...

"I would say that my biggest weakness is that I don't like to miss deadlines, so sometimes I get impatient with colleagues that lag with their piece of a project."

"Well, I have had to learn that different people are motivated by different things, and people have different degrees of motivation in general. This has been a weakness of mine, but I have been improving it over time, and it has really paid off, and made me a better manager."

"I would say my greatest weakness in the past has been over-committing to too many tasks. With too much on my plate I was sometimes not able to do the most important things, if you know what I mean. However, I've taken steps to correct this by consciously thinking through what I agree to in order to make sure it contributes to my most important goals for the job. I try to make sure I am completing the critical stuff that really makes a difference."

## **What are your long-range career objectives, and what steps have you taken toward obtaining them?**

**Discussion:** This question is an opportunity to show a logical progression in your career. Even if you have worked as a temp at various jobs, or worked in multiple different industries, you can tie your jobs together by showing how you developed new skills and honed existing skills at each of the positions you have held. Don't retell the journey of your career path, but do touch on jobs or skills as a connected progression that build on each other. Make sure you communicate that you **CHOSE** each job for a specific reason that is related to your overall goal.

Make sure you state your overall goal as it relates to the job at hand. Show that all of your career experience has been moving toward the job you are interviewing for. Consider stating that your long term goal has always been working for the company you are interviewing at. State that you are aiming for a promotion from the position you are interviewing for to a position higher up within the same company. This is a good time to demonstrate that being at the company for 3 to 5 years is part of your long-range career objectives.

"My long term objectives involve increasing levels of challenge and responsibility in the field of Industrial Engineering. Throughout my career I have been working toward a position just like this. Even at jobs I've held that might seem somewhat unrelated, I have always been developing the energy, initiative, creativity, and analytical ability I would need to be a success for you and your department. If I am hired in, I would like to stay at this company for three to five years – if not longer – and hopefully be promoted and rewarded for my hard work and dedication. Does that make sense?"

## **What have you learned from your mistakes?**

**Discussion:** Show that you are able to learn from your mistakes, but don't offer up any negative examples concerning your past performance. Show that you have been successful, but that have the maturity it takes to examine your own behavior so that you can learn and grow and be a better employee. Be brief.

"Good question. Well, I have been successful at every job I have had, but I have had the normal ups and downs. I'd say that I do actively try to monitor my work habits and the quality of my work so that I can constantly be improving myself. FOR EXAMPLE, I have had one or two hiccups with clients where their satisfaction was not where I thought it was. I learned that I have to really monitor certain difficult clients closely and "take their temperature" so I can keep their satisfaction level as high as possible. Do have any clients like that here?"

## **Can you explain this gap in your employment history? What have you been doing for the "X" months since you were last employed?**

**Discussion:** A gap in your employment history can be alarming to a Hiring Manager. If you have a gap in your work history, you might try to face it head on by bringing it to the interviewer's attention and making positive statements about it to ease potential concerns. Unless you must, try not to indicate personal reasons for the gap. Try to show that you made a conscious choice to take a break from regular employment so that you could accomplish a goal related to the position at hand. Show that in the time you were not employed you were doing a positive and entrepreneurial activity, and that you kept up with trends and developments in your chosen field. Discuss any volunteer work, extracurricular activities, classes or training you might have completed, long range projects that you may have supervised (such a major remodeling or move of the family) and any professional associations that you have kept up with, or regular meetings you attended. Show that during the gap you sharpened skills that are relevant to the position at hand. Show that you have even learned new skills that will fill the Hiring Manager's needs.

"I made a choice to support myself for a while by pursuing a personal goal of building my own eBay business related to one of my hobbies. I have learned a ton from that about sales, organization, project management, customer service, and logistics. While I was doing that I also kept up with trends in my field by reading regularly, and I also attended several classes related to my career goals. I was so satisfied with my results that I felt I could go back to regular employment and just manage my eBay business in my spare time. It's now a great additional source of income that I use to move toward my own well-developed personal financial goals."

## Have you ever been fired or forced to resign?

**Discussion:** Many people have been fired. If you have, you are not alone, it is not the end of the world, and it does not have to be any real barrier to reaching your career goals. If you have been fired, hopefully you have covered your tracks sufficiently enough as to have



left that position off your resume, omitted it from your references, or ensured that word will not get out. If you are not able to do this, and if you do need a reference from the place you were fired from, then make a list of former managers and coworkers in other departments who you think would be willing to give you a good reference. You can even consider outside vendors who you have worked with closely.

If you choose to address the issue full-on, do not use the word "fired." Be creative and try to show an agreement or consensus with your former employer concerning your departure. Never assign blame. Do not go into detail about anything negative, and try to keep it brief. Watch your body language and make sure you stay calm do not appear nervous about the question. Follow up with a positive achievement from the following position you held. Smile, and end by pausing and nodding affirmatively. If you have been fired, then you need to practice this answer over and over until you can deliver it with confidence!

"At Job **"Y"** my manager and I agreed to disagree and I immediately moved on to company **"X"**, which was a smart move for me because it was there that I implemented the customer relationship management program that increased customer retention and loyalty by 37 percent."

"Despite my excellent performance over the course of two years, I was unexpectedly let go from Job **"Y"** after the company lost a major client. From there, however, I landed an even better position at Company **"X"** where I was rewarded for my excellent work with Client **"Z"**. A major accomplishment I made there was ... "

## **Why have you had so many jobs in such a short period of time?**

**Discussion:** There are many good reasons for you to have changed jobs frequently. The idea is not be perceived as a "job hopper." You will want to focus on how switching jobs often was mostly a CHOICE based on taking advantage of opportunities for you to perform, learn,

grow and advance congruently with your career goals. You will want to indicate, however, that the job you are interviewing for would be a major milestone in your career path – the "grail" you have been working toward. You will need to reiterate your commitment to the company and your dedication to stay there and fill the Hiring Manager's needs.

You may note that you fell into different contracts or temp jobs because "success breeds success." More good and different contracts or temp jobs may have kept coming your way. Also, many organizations blend temp and full-time employers and you can note that you have taken advantage of this as an opportunity to gain new skills and experiences. Do not apologize for switching jobs frequently. Be proud that you have been able to easily fit in to different organizations and make a solid contribution from the get-go.

"So, you're wondering if I am going to stay here long enough to make a meaningful contribution and help make your projects a success? That's a good question and I am glad you asked. I've switched jobs in the past for very good reasons. One reason is that it was a function of the economy. Everyone was changing jobs during the dot com times as we were moving towards an information and technology driven society. I worked at some excellent companies that afforded me great opportunities to learn new skills that are totally relevant to the position that we are discussing here today. These include my ability to "**X**" effectively as well as "**Z**". I believe that those are the types of skills that will enable me to be successful here, aren't they?"

"I can see why you ask that question, and I have to say that I was able to pursue different opportunities that aligned with my career goals because I am a reliable quick learner with the people skills needed to "fit in" and be effective in different environments. I have had opportunities to see how several different businesses do things, and that is really why I am here today. I have a fairly clear understanding of how this company operates, and I like it, and I do want to be here a long time so that I can contribute to everyone's success – including my own. Does that make sense?"

"I can understand why you would ask that type of question, and I have to say that 'success breeds success.' I have been successful at temping and contracting, and new and better gigs kept coming my way. I put a lot of thought into taking them, and I always left on good terms. Plus, I was able to learn skills that will be important to THIS position while earning a living at the same time. Now, having seen what other companies offer, I have been able to target your company as where I want to be. I also have developed a clear understanding of my own personal skills and career goals. Can you see how that would help me be successful here?"

## What was your role in your department's most recent success?

**Discussion:** You'll want to be very specific here, and frame your answer in terms of how you saved time and money. The Hiring Manager is looking for a pattern of success, and you need to describe recent successes in detail. Use the S.T.A.R. Statement formula for your examples. Be prepared with at least three examples concerning your recent successes, and make sure at least one of them relates to teamwork and something you accomplished as part of a group. Make sure you address how your work made other people FEEL, as well as the time you saved and the revenue or cost-savings you generated.

"I guess that would be a recent project for client "X." I handled all of the communication with the client for our last project. It was a three month long project where my team had to build a custom package based on the needs of client. I was instrumental in translating the client's business needs into detailed product features. I had to make sure that my team understood what the client wanted, and then check the quality to make sure that we were delivering a quality product with the features that the client was expecting. This was an ongoing process that required a lot of communication and teamwork with my team as well as the client. I think my role really was to clarify the scope of the project, and then "manage the client's expectations." We were able to deliver on time, and the client was thrilled! I was able to

make sure no time was wasted on adding unnecessary features, and since we were working on a fixed bid price, we saved my company time and money. My manager and everybody on my team felt great because the project went so smoothly. Is that the type of experience that would help me be successful here?"

## **Give me an example of a problem you faced on the job, and tell me how you solved it.**

**Discussion:** This is a problem solving question that tests your critical thinking skills. This is a great question for showing that you are a creative and capable problem solver. The problem you select to use as an example should be as similar as possible to a problem that you are likely to face at the job you are interviewing for.

"That's a great question. At my last job I frequently had outstanding invoices that would throw off my accounts receivable. I was responsible for getting out weekly revenue reports to my VP, and we regularly made a lot of important decisions based on these reports, so it was of utmost importance that my reports were as accurate as possible. First of all, I always made sure that I had great relationships with the Account Managers so I always knew that I could write a quick email or make a quick call and the Account Managers would help me out with issues surrounding client payment. Also, I would research the problem thoroughly so I had all my "ducks in a row" before I started asking questions and taking up other people's time. I would try to solve the problem on my own at first, with the information available to me. Also, I would start to create the reports on Wednesdays. That way I made sure that I would have plenty of time to get to the bottom of things in case any issues happened to come up. That way I was able to solve the frequent problem of accounting discrepancies. What kinds of challenges are you currently facing in your department? How tough a position does this put you in? What could the ideal candidate do to help solve this problem in his or her first three months on the job?"

"I try to take a systematic approach to problem solving where I take time to gather the relevant data, clearly define the problem or goal, then come up with possible solutions. I think it is important to get the information and clarify the problem first before you start coming up with possible solutions. FOR INSTANCE, when I was at Job "X" ..."

## **Give me an example of an important goal you had to set and tell me about your progress in reaching that goal.**

**Discussion:** This question tests your goal setting, critical thinking, and project planning abilities. It also tests your initiative and motivation. Show that you can set attainable goals, and that you know how to work toward achieving these goals over a period of time – through your own efforts and the cooperation of others. Don't use the example of your goal as "getting hired into this job."

"OK. Well, I have certainly had to set many goals throughout my career. When I set goals I use the "S.M.A.R.T." formula. Goals should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-framed. Basically I like to set realistic goals that are clearly outlined and can be achieved within a pre-determined time frame. I use this when setting goals for myself and when setting goals for my team. Most recently, at my last job, we noticed that we were getting a lot of customer service complaints via email, but we had not developed any structured method to handle these emails and pass valid customer complaints or concerns on to the departments that managed the products in question. So, I set a goal for decreasing the time it took to address customer service emails from roughly eight days to 48 hours. And I wanted to achieve this and put a new system in place within ten working days. I then worked with my team to create a way to categorize the emails as they came in, developed over twenty stock responses to use, and worked with my Manager to add a few hours a day of customer service duties to one employee's permanent job description. I also worked with the Product Managers at other departments across the organization to determine the best way to

pass them emails related to their respective products. We managed not only to reduce our response time to customer complaints to 48 hours, but we also reduced the overall volume of customer complaints because the Product Managers started incorporating more consumer suggestions into their fix lists. Does that example describe how I approach goal setting? Can you describe any business problems here that may be similar to the problem I just described?"

## **How do you deal with competition? Are you a competitive person?**

**Discussion:** Most employers are looking for a competitive spirit. This involves not only the drive to beat business competition, but also an internal competitive fire to be the best. You want to show that you play to win, but also that you are a team player who understands that competition among coworkers benefits everyone.

"Yes, I would say that I am competitive. I am not afraid of competition. In fact, I am competing for this position, and I want to win! As long as I have clear goals, I wholeheartedly enjoy competing, and you and I both know that being competitive and working hard benefits the company as a whole, right? I deal with competition by performing at my best. I think competition is healthy, and I embrace it."

## **What would you consider an ideal work environment?**

**Discussion:** In answering this question, try to describe an environment as close as possible to the environment you are trying to get hired into. Make statements that align with the corporate culture. Also, you should mention some general characteristics about a healthy working environment to point out the type of company standards that will bring out the best in you. Ask questions. HR professionals in

particular really like to talk about the "corporate culture" and the great environment they have created for employees.

"I think an ideal environment would be one where people are treated as fairly as possible, recognition is given where it is due, people really care about their work, and the opportunities for advancement are there. I really like the fact that – as you mentioned – this company really values "X". Also, I would like to be able to interact with other departments within the organization, and work on teams. How would you describe the corporate culture here?"

"Well Jim, I think an ideal environment would be one where everybody works hard toward clearly defined goals. Also, I value a place where there is competitive spirit, but one based on a "win-win" attitude. I think a good environment is where everyone is treated as a competent professional, and is respected – no matter their tenure or level of experience. I want to work in an environment that brings out the best in me and gives me the opportunity to succeed and advance. How does the environment here impact a typical day on the job?"

## **How well do you work with people? Do you prefer working alone or in teams?**

**Discussion:** Being able to work with others is extremely important. Even if you really are a lone-wolf at heart, you need to demonstrate that you enjoy and work well with other people. The Hiring Manager will usually have to work with you, and the interview is the beginning of that relationship. This is the time to let your people skills shine. You should give three solid S.T.A.R. Statement examples of how you have dealt with various team and interpersonal situations in the past.

"Good question. Well, I certainly can work independently and stay motivated with little supervision and direction. FOR EXAMPLE ... So you can see that I can keep my "eyes on the prize" and hit deadlines without somebody having to breath down my neck, so to speak. THAT SAID, I really enjoy working on teams because of all the synergy that

is created. I am able to take direction well from project leaders as well as my teammates, and I am also able to persuade my teammates to my point of view when necessary. FOR EXAMPLE ... I also like knowing that what I do is an important piece that feeds into other people's projects, and that we can all work together to be successful."

"I am definitely a team player. I played basketball in college and that taught me a lot about cooperation and responsibility to my teammates. I think I definitely brought that spirit into the professional world. FOR INSTANCE, I worked as part of a team at job "X" where the quality of my work was relied upon by the whole team. I knew they were counting on me and I knew I had to deliver for the sake of everyone's success. THAT SAID, I can also stay focused to get a job done when I am working independently. FOR EXAMPLE, at job "Y" I had to complete a month long project with virtually no supervision. I was able to look at the project as a whole and divide it out into bite sized chunks that I needed to complete each day. I delivered the project just under budget and ahead of schedule, and I was rewarded for that. How would you describe the typical project team here?"

## **Describe a situation when working with a team produced more successful results than if you had completed the project on your own.**

**Discussion:** This is another "behavioral interviewing" style of question. The Hiring Manager wants to learn more about your thought process, and how well you can form examples to answer this teamwork related question. You will want to show your ability to solicit ideas from others, listen carefully, and persuade people to your point of view.

"Well, I have worked both independently and on my own throughout my career. I enjoy both, and can do both equally well. I will have to say though, that working with others has often yielded great results



for projects I have worked on – specifically when it comes to brainstorming. I try to get everyone involved in coming up with new solutions by making time for sessions where "there are no wrong ideas or answers." The creativity of a group of people is always going to be greater than that of one person, and thus the results will be more successful. I did that a lot a Job "Y". FOR EXAMPLE ..."

"Working with others allows you data-mine other people's skills and experiences, get perspectives and ideas that you would not have on your own, and check the quality of your own work before it goes out the door. For example, at Job "X" I worked with many great programmers and designers. I was able to "pick their brains" – so to speak – about the effectiveness of various techniques, estimates on how long it would take to get various things done, etc. I would not have been able to do my job as effectively with out them. Will there be the opportunity to work in a team situations at this job?"

## **Tell me about a time you had to gain the cooperation of a group over which you had little or no authority. What did you do? How effective were you?**

**Discussion:** This question tests your charm, persuasion and salesmanship skills. This is a common work situation. You may often need to gain the cooperation of co-workers from other departments and especially your boss. You want to show that you understand that different things motivate different people, and that you can persuade them by indicating what the benefit to THEM is if they do things your way.

"That's a tough situation, but one that has been pretty common in my experience. I've often had to sell my ideas as they relate to process and priorities. One thing I try to do is to communicate my ideas in ways that are, most importantly, easy to understand. I also try to outline the benefits in a logical way. But of course I also try to make an emotional appeal to people's own self-interest. I LISTEN

CAREFULLY to determine where the real objection is, and then I try to overcome that objection. I am usually pretty effective with that. Also, I always try to compromise when I think it will benefit the group or the project. FOR EXAMPLE ... Does that answer the question?"

"Good question. I have come to realize that how you present your idea is just as important as the idea itself, right? I try to put myself in other people's shoes and really listen to them as if I was seeing things from their perspective. That way I can present my ideas in ways that are as persuasive as possible. FOR EXAMPLE ..."

## **Give me a specific example of something you did that helped build enthusiasm in others. How do you motivate other people?**

**Discussion:** This is a leadership and management related question. You want to show that you are a good manager, and a team player. Give specific and concrete examples of how you have created enthusiasm for a task or project. Show that you understand how different people are motivated by different things.

"Well, first of all, I try to approach everything with a positive attitude. I think that can be catching. To try to build enthusiasm in others I tell them "This is going to be fun, and easy," or if it is really a task that is not that fun, I say "the sooner we can get this done, the sooner we can move on to the fun stuff." For individual people, I try to figure out what motivates them. If they are interested in being promoted, I say something like "think of how good this is going to reflect on you in your performance review" or if they like to make other people feel good, I will say "Can you imagine how great everyone is going to feel when you get this done?" ... FOR EXAMPLE ... Also, I try to make a game or a contest out of things. I make sure that I give out rewards, even if they are small. FOR INSTANCE we once had a contest where the person who created the advertisement that got the best response won a \$100 gift certificate to Amazon. Also, it is fun to have team

dinners and events for group bonding – something people can look forward to when we reach a milestone. Overall, I try to really be there for everyone in terms of being enthusiastic myself. What kinds of things are done here to build enthusiasm and group spirit?"

## **Describe a situation where you found yourself dealing with someone who didn't like you. How did you handle it?**

**Discussion:** This question tests your interpersonal skills and your maturity. Of course there are going to be times on the job when you need to deal with a person that does not like you. Most employers are looking for a level of professionalism from their employees where they can put personal differences aside and get the job done. Employers are also looking for people who are influencers. Becoming an influencer means that you need to seek approval from other people and win them over. Use an example that shows that you try to seek approval from people that don't like you, but that you are not intimidated or insecure by the fact that you might not be able to change a person's opinion of you. Do not say that you would try to avoid a person that does not like you.

"Well, Jim, I once had to deal with a manager in another department who was not aware of my qualifications – and from my perspective she seemed to have some negative opinions about me. She was always extremely short with me, and often would not even give me the time of day, although she was not like that with other people. Maybe we had gotten off on the wrong foot or something, but I made a point of seeking her approval and winning her over. I went out of my way to do extra work for her, and be extra nice to her. I was not insulted by her lack of regard for me, but I thought if I could improve the relationship then I would be more effective at my job. I was not going to let her lack of professionalism, judgmentalism, or whatever it was, take away from my goals at that company. And I was not going to let it affect my good attitude. I tried to bring her around through my good work and cheery disposition, rather than by being confrontational or reactive. I

usually try to do that. If I can't bring someone around, or if I can't stand someone else, I just try to be as professional as possible and focus on the work and what needs to be done."

**Do you consider yourself to be a leader?  
What are the attributes of a good leader?  
Give me an example of when you had to  
show good leadership.**

**Discussion:** Leadership is an important skill that Hiring Managers are looking for. Even if the job you are going for does not involve leadership, you will need to show leadership if you are going to be promoted. Even if you are a lone-wolf, or you are not comfortable directing others, you still need to understand what makes a good leader. Describe the qualities of a good leader and flatter the Hiring Manager by stating that you are sure that he or she shows many of these fine qualities. When you give examples of your leadership experience, show that you take initiative and responsibility for getting the job done right.

"I think a good leader makes clear goals for the team, and sets an achievable time-frame to accomplish those goals. People are so much happier when they are enabled to work to their best abilities towards challenging goals that are "bite-sized," realistic, and attainable. A leader should realize this, and know what it takes to enable people to work at their best. A good leader should believe in his or herself, and be believable at the same time. I think a good leader is charismatic and earns the consensus and willing cooperation of the group. Also, a leader should lead by example, and hopefully not manage by fear or unproductive negative criticism. It's true that I have never had a purely leadership role, but I have certainly demonstrated most of these characteristics to some degree throughout my career – and I really look forward to developing my leadership skills here at this company."

"When I was at Job "X" my manager had an unexpected family emergency and he put me in charge of my shift for a week. Things went fine for the first two days, but then we had a huge order come in and another unrelated customer problem happen at the same time. We had to redo the irate customer's order, but also had to fill the big order. I had to shift around my co-workers priorities and even convince a couple people to work late so that we could complete both orders on time. I was able to take the initiative, make a quick decision about how we would handle the situation – and because I had good relationships with my co-workers – get the cooperation of the team to do what needed to be done. When my manager came back, she congratulated my handling of the situation by taking me out to lunch. Can you describe the leadership opportunities involved with this position?"

"I think that the real challenge in leadership is to help other people reach their own potential. To do this, I try to create enthusiasm, motivate people, and outline clear and achievable goals that they can work toward. I think I showed good leadership and Company "Y" where I ..."

## **Have you ever had to get a point across to different types of people? Give me an example. What approach did you take?**

**Discussion:** Again, this is a question about communication and persuasiveness. You want to indicate that you can communicate with people in ways that make sense to them and their own experiences. When working with a diverse group, you will want to make sure that you are understood. This involves being clear and concise, and most importantly, verifying that you are understood. You want to also show that you can "sell" an idea, and negotiate to agreement.

"Well Bob, I have certainly had to do this quite a bit. For instance, in order for me to become one of the leading sales reps at Job "X" I had to communicate our value proposition to all different types of people at

all different types of companies. To do this, I had to make our product relevant to THEIR specific business needs. For instance, if I was selling to a sole proprietor, I would have to show how it would benefit him by freeing up more time for him to focus on more important tasks. If I was selling to a larger business, I would demonstrate how it would make the employees more efficient, and then I would calculate cost savings resulting from the increase in efficiency. Before I would go into the sale, I would determine what kind of needs and problems the prospect was most likely to have, and I would speak to these needs. I do the same thing when presenting my ideas to a team. What kinds of persuasion skills are necessary for this position?"

"Sure, being able to get your idea across to different types of people is important. You know, I have noticed that different people learn different ways, and different things motivate different people. Some people are more motivated by fear than they are by reward. Also, some people are more interested in FEELING, and how they will FEEL about a product, rather the FACTS surrounding product features or benefits. I usually take the approach of uncovering what motivates people and how they learn. Do they learn by reading? By hearing? By seeing? For example, I once had two different clients who were interested in the exact same product, but would not buy for two very different reasons ... I had to uncover exactly what those reasons were and then satisfy them both in different ways in order to close both sales. Does that answer your question about how I approach getting my point across? You would agree that persuasion skills would help me succeed here, wouldn't you"

**What do you do when people disagree with your ideas? Describe a situation in which you had to arrive at a compromise or guide others to a compromise.**

**Discussion:** This question tests your salesmanship, persuasiveness, and interpersonal skills. You want to show that you can negotiate, and that part of this is being willing to compromise. But also show that you can overcome adversity and be tenacious when others disagree with your ideas.

"You are asking me how I deal with disagreement to my ideas? OK. Well Susan, I have had to sell my ideas and negotiate quite a bit over the last few years – particularly at Job "Y". When I was there we had regular strategy sessions where each member of the team made suggestions for goals, and strategies for reaching those goals. What I would do is, first of all, try to overcome objections to my ideas before they actually came up. FOR INSTANCE ..."

"You see, when people disagree with me I try to put myself in their shoes and really see where they are coming from. I try to determine where the real disagreement is coming from. Is it an ego issue? Have I not made my idea clear? Do I need to state it more in terms of how my idea would benefit them? I try to handle disagreement constructively and look for a "win-win," and that usually involves some type of compromise. I try to make concessions if the other side will also make concessions. FOR EXAMPLE, one time at Job "X" I reached a compromise with a vendor on the ..."

## Are you good at delegating tasks?

**Discussion:** This question tests your management and leadership abilities. You should show judgment concerning when it is best to delegate a task – or tackle it yourself. Show that you know how to define clear and measurable goals for other people, and show that there are no issues surrounding your ability to tell other people what to do.

"Yes, Steve, I believe I am. If I am in the position to, I try to delegate tasks appropriately so that the work can be spread out, and projects can be completed sooner rather than later. Part of delegation is understanding people's capabilities and then giving them clear goals to

execute against. I have no problem defining tasks for people and telling them what to do, because I go in to work everyday with the attitude that we are all working together as a team, and work needs to be done. I think it is really important to try to create a detailed set of instructions for people when tasking them. I also try to make clear my expectations of exactly what needs to be delivered and when. I like to try to set people up for success. FOR EXAMPLE ..."

## **Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.**

**Discussion:** This question is about communication, persuasion, and presentation skills. Focus on your presentation skills as you use them to persuade. You want to show that you can prepare and persuasively present a topic or position to a group of people.

"You are asking me about my presentation skills? Good question. When I was at both Job "X" and Job "Y" I had to make presentations to groups that included people from multiple different departments. These presentations involved my recommendations for marketing strategy based on my own research results. My manager and I had usually interpreted the results ourselves, and then wanted to persuade others to see our point of view. I usually created the presentation materials and did most of the presenting. The first thing I did was to always make sure that I was prepared. I would outline exactly what I was going to say, and the points I was going to make. I would then create an agenda and distribute it in advance. Then I would create Power Points that actually ADDED to communicating my points. I stay away from flying bullets, and I would never create bullet point lists that I would merely read from. I use Power Points to keep people visually interested, and also to present information in graph form. I am a strong believer in using visual aids to get my point across, but I make sure that they are not distractions. I would be happy to email you one of these presentations so that you can check it out."



"Well, I read somewhere that fear of public speaking is one of the most common fears out there. So I figured that if I could be good at public speaking and presentations, then I would have a real leg up on the competition. So I make presentations as often as possible. The more I do them, the better I get at it. For one presentation I made, I developed some talking points where ..."

"I like to use the whiteboard to my advantage. When trying to persuade people to a course of action, I create a list of positives and negatives on the whiteboard. I fill in the positive side as much as I can, and then I open up the group to propose negatives. When they do, I try to overcome their negative objections verbally rather than writing them on the board. I am left with a list of positives on the board that supports my position. You follow me? Can you think of situation where I might use this technique to persuade others to your point of view if you and I were on a team together?"

## **Can you tell me about an important written document you were required to complete?**

**Discussion:** The ability to write well is of utmost importance in the Information Age. Even if you don't write as well as you would like to, you need to show that you plan the time to carefully proof read your work and even have others edit it as appropriate. Your example should show that you are very conscientious and quality-oriented when it comes to written business communications.

"This is a question about my writing skills? Well Jim, I have had to complete detailed proposals throughout my career – and these have usually acted half as sales pieces, and half as legally binding documents. Most recently I completed a fifteen-page proposal that had to be approved by my manager and by the VP of my department. What I did was create an outline, and then get it approved by the VP first. Once she approved my outline, I knew I had some "buy in" at the higher level, and I also knew I was on the right track with the content.

I then went ahead and did a first draft and then CAREFULLY proof-read it before I went over it with my Manager. I incorporated his revisions, showed it to him again, and then I presented it to the VP, who said it was good to go without any changes. The whole process took about 10 hours, and three meetings. I had scheduled all of this all in advance, so I got the proposal out to the client on time. Both my manager and my VP knew exactly what the client was getting. We won the account! My manager was really happy about that. How important are good writing skills with this position? What kind of documents would I be writing?"

## **Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor? With a coworker? How did you resolve the conflict?**

**Discussion:** You want to show that you always work toward a productive solution to conflict, and that you don't hold a grudge or keep a chip on your shoulder. Show that you can stick up for yourself, but do it in a non-confrontational, non-emotional fashion. Deliver this answer with lots of eye contact.

"That is a very important question. You are wondering how I deal with conflict? Well, I am always looking for the productive solution to conflicts and I do my best to leave my ego out of it. I forgive people often – because everyone has stress ... but when something needs to be said, I do try to bring it out in the open, and IN PRIVATE so I don't make someone – or myself – look bad. Often I find that the cause of conflict is a misunderstanding. So I approach it from the point of wanting to get clarity. I avoid accusatory questions like "Did you do it?" and use questions like "Could you be the person that did this?" FOR EXAMPLE, one time at Job "X" ..."

"I usually get along well with everyone. In the case that a conflict comes up, I try to focus on a productive solution, rather than personalities. I try to maintain respect for people no matter what their

position. I think it is possible to find a "win/win" solution to almost every situation. FOR EXAMPLE ..."

"Well Margaret, I try to approach conflict positively, and try to work toward a productive "win-win" resolution. I try to keep larger goals in mind and frame discussion in terms of the goals of the company or the goals of the team. FOR EXAMPLE, I once had a colleague who I felt was always dogging me. I thought about it for a while, and then made it clear to her in private that I was willing to learn from her, but that I don't tolerate unproductive negative criticism. We talked for a while and then we had a much better working relationship from that time forward."

## **Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses at work that tested your coping skills. What did you do?**

**Discussion:** Workplace stress is an issue for everyone. Don't pretend that you never get stressed out. You want to show that you can deal with stress and cope with difficult situations. Show that you are calm under pressure, and know how to avoid stress through planning and time management..

"Well I think it is important to remember that stress effects everyone, and it is inevitable that sometimes people are going to have bad days. That is why I try to give people the benefit of the doubt when they seem to have a short fuse. What I do personally is try to control my response to a situation. You can't necessarily control what happens to you, but you can control your response. What I try to do is lengthen the time between the stressful situation and my response – so that I can identify the cause of the stress and decide what I can do about it. FOR EXAMPLE, on several occasions I have had to deal with very irate customers who actually yelled at me. What I did was stay calm and not let them get under my skin. I really tried to listen and decide exactly what it was that was at the root of their problem. Then I provided solutions that could be completed within a specific time-

frame. I always find that it is best to face those types of situations head-on and be objective about them. I do my best to be professional and not get my emotions involved. Also, I try to avoid stress in the first place by tackling difficult tasks or conversations sooner rather than later. Does that make sense? Did I answer that to your satisfaction?"

## **Describe the workload in your current or most recent job.**

**Discussion:** In answering this question you will want to show the intensity and tempo of your work habits. Show that you know how to manage your workload. Whatever you do, don't complain about having been "overwhelmed" or how every day was "crazy busy." Hiring Managers are looking for employees that are calm in the face of a heavy workload, and know how to prioritize and stay focused to work on a task until completion. Show that you have managed a significant workload by developing creative solutions for accomplishing all of your work on time without stressing out or having to stay late or work weekends.

"Well, at my current job I do have a pretty heavy workload. To make sure that I get everything done on time, and to the right standards of quality, I do a couple different things. First of all, I plan chunks of my day where I can work without interruption. I'll take two hours where I don't answer the phone or check email, and I just crank it out. Within this time I try to complete as many tasks as possible. I also try to handle every piece of paper only once. I won't work on something just a little bit – I will try to schedule time so I can work on a task until completion so that I can cross it off my list. FOR EXAMPLE, I developed a system for incoming orders where I accomplished "X" ... I motivate myself to get through my workload by keeping in mind that what I finish today I won't have to do tomorrow. As a Manager, how do you make sure the members of your team have appropriate workloads?"

## **Describe the most creative thing you have ever done.**

**Discussion:** Creativity is a real value in the work place today. It is through creativity and innovation that organizations get the competitive edge. Use this question to demonstrate that you are a creative person, and a creative problem solver.

"One of my most creative accomplishments was when I had to increase market share for a new product without making any impact on our existing budget. I developed a word-of-mouth marketing technique where I had an intern create a Blog and Internet message board related to my company's new products. The intern managed the content, and actively went out on the Internet to recruit members. We started a community that grew to over 1,500 members. I determined that if each of these active users told just three other people about our new product, then it would result in an increase of over \$50,000 dollars in revenue over the lifetime of these consumers. And I created this whole program – including the contribution to the bottom line – without a single dime in additional budget. How do you think I could use that kind of creativity to solve marketing challenges here at Company "X"? ..."

## **Describe the relationship that should exist between the supervisor and those reporting to him or her.**

**Discussion:** This question tests your maturity and approach to business relationships. You should demonstrate your professionalism and understanding of what goes into a good working relationship.

"Well, I think good communication is really important. Communication should be able to flow in both directions. Communication and trust. I think both the manager and the employee need to clearly understand each other's role and responsibilities. That said, I like to keep my

business relationships professional. While I do my best to be friendly and pleasant with everybody, I don't ask questions about people's personal lives unless they bring it up. And I don't think you have to be best friends with your manager unless that is something that naturally evolves. I think it is best to keep business and personal life somewhat separate, and just keep your eyes on the prize and work hard toward the goals of the team and the goals of the company."

"I think the most important thing the supervisor can do for the relationship is provide clear goals and then enable the employee to reach those goals. The employee should then not only work hard to exceed those goals, but also communicate clearly and consistently with the manager about progress, or any issues that might stand in the way. A good working relationship is based on good communication, trust, and mutual respect. That said, I do try to avoid asking questions about people's personal lives, and I don't think you have to necessarily be "best buddies" with someone to have a good working relationship – it's about teamwork, getting along, and getting the job done. Does that make sense?"

"I think it is important to understand that each and every relationship is different. I try to conduct myself professionally, and interact without any assumptions or judgments. That way I can see how the relationship evolves, and go from there. I do have a healthy respect for authority, but I also like to be valued for my contributions. I think all relationships are based on a give and take, right?"

## **What motivates you to go the extra mile on a project or job?**

**Discussion:** With this question you want to demonstrate that you are a self-starter and that you are able to motivate yourself. Nobody wants to have to look over your shoulder and be a micro-managing task-master. The Hiring Manager wants to know with certainty that you will complete your work on time without having to be nagged or monitored. You should show that you are motivated by a combination

of internal and external attributes or goals. For instance, you want to demonstrate that responsibility is part of your essential nature. Show strong internal beliefs and ethics as they relate to motivating yourself to pull through for the team and for yourself – because it's the right thing to do. Also, show that you have an external material goal you work toward – like getting a new car.

"You are asking what motivates me? Well Jim, I have a really strong belief that if I work hard in life, I will be rewarded. Advancement in my career is important to me, and I want to be respected by my managers, colleagues and clients. You see, I'm internally motivated to make sure that my work is of high quality, and that I get it done on time. I want to be known as that kind of person. I like to be proud of what I do, and feel good about getting it done. That said, I also have personal financial goals that I work toward. For instance, I am currently saving for a new Turbo Mini Cooper. I even know exactly what color, and the options that I am going to get! I've already saved a good amount of cash for this, and I know that if I work hard I will get a good bonus and I will be able to get my dream car even sooner. Do you set goals like this for yourself? I find it really motivates me."

## **Give me an example of a time you did more than what was required in your job.**

**Discussion:** For this question you want to demonstrate your initiative. Do you find work that needs to be done and then do it, or do you wait around until you are told what to do? You may want to show how you have pitched in on projects in which you were not involved, just so you can help out the overall efforts of the company. You may also want to show that you did a variety of things that were outside your job description in order to keep a client happy.

"OK sure. I've gone above and beyond many times throughout my career. Mostly to keep clients happy, or to make sure that something happens on time when it looks like it might be late. Also, I have no problem helping other people out with things as long as my work is in

good shape and my team's project is on track. FOR EXAMPLE, one time I had a client that had an urgent need to have a project completed early. I promised the client that I would do it, but I did not want this to unfairly impact my teammates schedules, so I stayed late three nights in a row to do what it took to complete the project. I then actually drove the completed documentation two hours down to the client on a Saturday. That way I ensured that the client would be ordering from the company for years to come. What are the most important short term goals for this department where an extra effort could really make a difference?"

## **What does it mean to be successful? According to your definition, how successful have you been so far? How do you determine or evaluate success?**

**Discussion:** This question is about holistic thinking. Your answer will reflect on your values. Generally, success has to do with security and a certain comfort level. You will want to give a general answer, but also relate your idea of success to your career goals.

"Success is a sense of well-being, at the heart of it. It is about feeling good about what I do, knowing that I can go to work everyday knowing that "challenges equal skills." I can be in the zone, work hard, and be rewarded for that. That way I can have the flexibility to do thing things in life that I want to do outside of my work. That includes traveling, fishing, and spending time with my family. Yes, I feel I have been pretty successful so far with the usual ups and downs. And yes, I am happy about what I have accomplished so far in my career, and I don't see any reason why I won't continue to be successful. What would a person need to do on a daily basis in order to be successful at this position?"

"Success for me is success for myself, as well as success for my co-workers and my company. Success to me is as a sense of well-being



and satisfaction that comes from using my skills to overcome problems effectively. It's about everyone on my team feeling good about the job we are doing, and having pride in the quality of our work. That kind of success on the job translates into success in life. I know that if I work hard, I will be rewarded and I will advance and earn more so that I can have the flexibility in life to take great vacations and provide for my family. I've been successful throughout my career – with the normal ups and downs – and based on what you have said today, I don't see any reason why I wouldn't continue to be successful with this position. What would I need to do here in order to be a success?"

## **What was the best decision you ever made? What were the alternatives? How did you go about making it?**

**Discussion:** This question checks your judgment and decision making process. Try to give a big picture example, and show the repercussions that your good decision had on your life. A good answer could include discussing how you came to the decision to target and take a job with a past employer where you have had success. Or, you may want to talk about a move you made across the country and how that opened up new doors for you. Make sure you showed how you evaluated the alternatives. You may want to discuss any formal decision making models you used.

"Is this a question about my decision making process? OK. Well, for most big decisions, I try to do a S.W.O.T. analysis. I outline the **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities, and **T**hreats associated with a course of action. Are you familiar with the model? So then you know that Strengths and Weaknesses are something that you are aware of internally within yourself, or within an organization. Opportunities or Threats are conditions external to yourself or your organization. I used this type of analysis when I faced the big decision of which company to target when finished college. I took a good look at my own strengths and weaknesses and then tried to identify the opportunities and threats related to the various positions and companies I was targeting.

I chose to join Company "X" because of my strengths in electrical power handling analysis, and I also thought that Company "X" would allow me the opportunity to develop my skills – even though the pay was not as high as another job I was considering at the time. There were also other alternatives that I ruled out. I decided to join Company "X", and boy did I make the right decision! I had a fantastic experience at company "X". I learned so much, and I was promoted twice. I have also done a lot of thinking about my career recently, and I have determined that joining your company would be the best possible move for me based on my own strengths and the opportunities available here. I really do think I have a lot to offer in terms of making your projects a success."

## **What steps do you follow to study a problem before making a decision?**

**Discussion:** You want to show that you make decisions in a logical and thoughtful way. Show that you understand that the decisions you make have an impact on others. Also show that you can make a decision efficiently, and that you are always looking to save time and money.

"When I make a decision, I basically try to manage risk. I make a list of possible courses of action, and then I examine the benefits and potential risks of each. I'll do this mentally, on paper, or through a discussion with my colleagues. Basically I try to make decisions based on the best possible outcome with the lowest probability of risk. I do tend to be something of a risk taker, however, so often I will choose a riskier decision if the benefit would be significantly higher. I aim high, and I want to achieve great things in my career, and I think you have to take risks to do that – but calculated risks made through careful decision making."

"That is a great question. When I make decisions I try to look at the impact that my decision will have on my coworkers and clients, and of course I keep the big picture in mind. I try to see how my decision can benefit me and my team by saving either time or money, or both."

Every day is a series of small decisions, and I try to align them all with the larger goals of the project, if that makes sense. So I study the problem to see what kind of impact different courses of action will have. Mostly on efficiency, time, and money – for both the people on my team, and the project as a whole. Does that answer your question?"

## **What is the best thing you have ever done? (or) What is the best thing that ever happened to you?**

**Discussion:** This is a very open ended question that you should be prepared for. Don't let it stump you! Show that the "best thing you have ever done" was an accomplishment that you worked toward over a period of time – not something that "happened to you." Answer in terms of the best thing you have achieved. Discuss how you used your desirable Behavioral Competencies like planning, resourcefulness, and tenacity to accomplish "the best thing you have ever done." Use a major milestone in your life as an example, or you may also use a volunteer activity, or some other activity where you made a major difference in other people's lives through your own hard work or bravery.

"Well Steven, I'd say that the best thing I have ever done is choose to go into the field of Human Resources. After trying a couple of different jobs after college, I finally got a good sense of my own abilities and I was then was able to determine the best place for me in the working world. I really made a goal of getting into HR, and I motivated myself to really work hard to study and read everything I could about HR departments and best practices. I also did quite a few informational interviews with people who had great careers in HR. I knew that if I kept trying, I would get the position I wanted. When I finally landed a position in HR at Company "Y", I was overjoyed! It was there that I sharpened my people skills as well as my ability to develop and implement processes and procedures. FOR EXAMPLE ... You see, I have been happy and successful ever since, and I've felt really great about

what I do day to day. So I would have to say that choosing to go into HR was the best move I have ever made. What about you? What would say was the best thing that you have ever done?"

## What's one of the hardest decisions you've ever had to make?

**Discussion:** This question tests your ethics, beliefs and decision making abilities. Make sure you "sell" your answer and really make the case for specifically why the decision you had to make was a difficult one. Use an example from your career – not from your personal life. Your example may involve a decision to leave a job, a decision to expose a coworker who was dishonest, or a decision to change your career in a significant way.

"Well, I think one of the most difficult decisions I have had to make was to let go of an employee that had been with me for several years. His name was Joe, and I really liked him. When he first came on, he worked really hard, and I trusted him to deliver quality work with little supervision. We worked really closely together on several projects, and we actually did things together outside of work on occasion. However, when we had some structural changes and he picked up some more challenging responsibilities, he started to show a pattern of failing to follow through and complete the tasks he said he would. Now, I really did like this guy, and knew what he was capable of, so I resolved to speak with him and let my concerns be known. I told him that I would do whatever I could to help him be successful, but it turned out that it really came down to a last straw where I had to let him go. I had to do what was best for my team as much as I liked Joe. It was a tough decision for me. Have you ever had to make a decision like that?"

**Recall a time when you were assigned what you considered to be a complex project. Specifically, what steps did you take to prepare for and finish the project? Were you happy with the outcome? What one step would you have done differently if given the chance?**

**Discussion:** This question tests your project planning and preparation skills. Demonstrate that you can see the big picture, but also identify the details relating to what you will need to do day-to-day to complete the project. Show that following the completion of projects, you take the time to look for "lessons learned" and better techniques that you can apply to future projects.

"I have worked on many complex projects. I think that the most important thing is to clarify the goals of the project as much as you can in the beginning, and then create a reasonable timeline with milestones where significant parts of the project will be finished. Also, it is smart to tackle the most difficult parts early on in a project. If you wait until the last third of project timeline to do the riskiest or more challenging tasks, then you are going to have less time left to figure it out before the deadline. Also, I like to breakdown large tasks into bite-sized chunks so that it is easier to know where to begin. Careful and detailed planning is the most important thing you can do to make sure a complex project goes smoothly. FOR EXAMPLE, I worked on one year-long project where I was in charge of ... I was definitely happy with the outcome of my work, and the outcome of the project overall. But looking back on it, the one thing I would have done differently would have been ..."

"In order to set up for Complex Project "X" at Company "Y" I started by outlining the major milestones that would be involved in completing the project, and then I worked backwards to breakdown the work that

would need to be done to meet those milestones. I made a list of every risk I could think of that might stop me and my team from reaching those milestones, and I then added some contingency in the schedule in case anything came up. I also made sure that my role and responsibilities in the project were as clear as possible so I knew exactly what I had to do – and what I didn't have to do. We ended up completing the project on time, but there were some problems that I think we could have avoided. I would have changed "Z" in order to avoid the quality problems we ran into. That said, I think that every time you complete a project you should do a detailed post-mortem both on your own work, and on the project overall so that you can discover as many "lessons learned" as possible to apply to future projects. Do you think these types of project management skills will help me succeed here?"

## **Tell of some situations in which you have had to adjust quickly to changes over which you had no control. What was the impact of the change on you?**

**Discussion:** This question tests your ability to think on your feet and deal with change. In the new economy you can expect your position, company, and industry to change frequently. You will want to show that you anticipate and even embrace change as inevitable – and that you know how to take advantage of it rather than fear it.

"Well Bob, given today's turbulent economy, as well as newer trends toward constant innovation in our industry, I think change is a fact of life. I try to anticipate change, and take advantage of it, rather than be reactive, or fear change. FOR INSTANCE, when I was at job "Y" we had a supplier that suddenly went out of business. We relied on them for an essential part of our product. The fact that we could not get it from them basically left me high and dry – I had to figure out how we could source another vendor and come to a buying agreement without seriously impacting our time-frame for delivery. So you can see that the impact on me was huge! While I never thought the vendor would

suddenly go out of business, I had been keeping up with other similar vendors by reading the trade magazines. I was able to find a vendor who sold a similar part and negotiate a decent buying price. We had to delay several client shipments by a couple weeks, but it turned out that it was really just a small hiccup for us. Now I make sure that I have backup suppliers for ALL of our critical parts."

## **Describe some times when you were not very satisfied or pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?**

**Discussion:** Don't go into detail about any poor performance. Choose something simple to discuss. Show that you have the ability to look at patterns in your own work performance and make changes and adjustments so that you don't make the same mistakes twice.

"Well, like most people, on occasion I have had to finish some things late. I really hate to be late. That is why in project planning I try to build time in for contingency in case something goes wrong or something gets in the way. In times where I have been late on something, I try to identify specific things that might have caused me to be late. Usually it comes down to time management, prioritization, and dealing with interruptions. One time at Job "X" I was not able to finish a Creative Brief by the time I was supposed to submit it to my Manager for review. I took a look back at the week and realized that I should not have spent as much time on another more exciting project that I could have put off until after I finished the creative brief. Also, I realized that responding to emails during the day is usually a time-suck. So, what I usually do now is respond to email in the morning, and then not spend any doing that again until after 4pm. I also schedule blocks where I do not answer the phone. I have found that this really allows me to stay focused on a task so that I can complete it on time and avoid being late. I usually try to look at patterns in my work habits so that never make the same mistake twice. Does that make sense?"

## **Describe a situation in which you found that your results were not up to your supervisor's expectations. What happened? What action did you take?**

**Discussion:** Again, don't go into detail about any poor performance issues you may have had. Choose something common that happens to everyone from time to time. Make sure that you show that you were not happy with yourself for failing to work up to YOUR OWN standards, and show that you put measures into place for yourself so that you would not make the same mistake twice.

"That's a tough question. While I generally do work that is of high quality, one time at Job "Z" I completed a report that went out to a client with the wrong data. The client was confused and called my supervisor. It got worse because my supervisor insisted the data was right. When I was asked about it, I took a better look and it turned out that I had accidentally included data from another project. Needless to say, I was embarrassed both for putting my supervisor in a bad position and for failing to work up to my own quality standards. I took a good look at why I had made the mistake and I determined that I was not using a good naming convention for files on my computer, and I had pulled the wrong data. To make sure this did not happen again I created a naming system where I could easily identify documents by their filename. From then on out I also made sure to TRIPLE CHECK any reports before sending them out to the client in order to verify that they were accurate. I never made a mistake like that again!"



## **Give me an example of a time when you tried to accomplish something and failed. Were you discouraged by this? What did you do about it?**

**Discussion:** Don't go into detail about your failure. Choose an example that did not have a great impact on your company or your colleagues and then focus on relating what you learned from the experience and how you applied that to future goals.

"Well, on occasion I have set deadlines for projects that were too aggressive, or I over-promised what I could deliver within the time-frame. FOR EXAMPLE ... So you see, from that I learned that I should build in "contingency time" into my schedules in case something goes wrong, AND I should carefully consider the work that needs to be done before I commit to a due date."

"Sure. Like everyone, I get discouraged from time to time. I get discouraged mostly when unresolved problems linger for too long, or when tasks start to rack up in my "to do" list. I like to resolve problems as soon as I can – so that I can focus on moving forward. Occasionally I have let items linger on my list, but everyday I really focus on getting everything done so I can start fresh with a clean slate every week. How do you help your team prioritize tasks?"

## **What do you really want to do in life? What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years from now?**

**Discussion:** This can be a tough question. It is very open ended. Be prepared, and practice your answer. Relate your answer to your career goals, but also show a larger objective in your life that the Hiring Manager can relate to – like having the security of knowing that you can provide for your family, or having the earning power to take the

type of regular winter ski vacations that you enjoy. Make sure you include the position you are interviewing for as an important part of your "five year plan."

"Well, as I mentioned, my career is very important to me. It is what I am most focused on in my life right now. I really do want this job because I know it will allow me to do good work and perform to the best of my abilities, and I know that will take me places within this organization. I want to work hard at this job so that I can be promoted here and have a lengthy tenure. Within five years I would like to be at the management level, and working toward the VP level within ten years. Success in my career is part of what I want out of life, because I want to enjoy what I do, do good work, and be rewarded for it nicely. I want to have the sense of security of knowing that I can provide for myself and my family. I also want to have the earning power so I can save for the future, and take regular ski weekends without having to worry excessively about my finances. That said, becoming a respected executive at the VP level is my long-term goal. What can I do here to best point myself in that direction?"

"Every three or four years I establish long term goals and objectives, and I try to review them every quarter. I try to keep them realistic, and I assess them in relation to where I currently am. My current plan obviously includes a move toward more challenging and satisfying work, and that is why I am here today. Besides that, I feel really good about where I am with my personal goals. In five years I would like to be ..."

## **What was the last book you read? Movie you saw? Sporting event you attended?**

**Discussion:** Just answer the question about the book, if you have a choice. If you must choose a film, refer to an uncontroversial "feel good" film. Mention two books. The first should be a title related to business, or your field. Mention this book in passing, and then discuss a book you read for leisure in order to indicate balance in your life.

"I recently read "**X**" by Alan Smithee. That really gave me some perspective on changes in the Advertising Industry, but the book I enjoyed most recently was "The Five People You Meet in Heaven" by Mitch Albom. That book was a really relaxing read. Have you heard of it?"

## **Do you have any hobbies? What do you do in your spare time? What would you like me to know about you that is not on your resume?**

**Discussion:** You want to show that you indeed have hobbies outside of work and that you are a well-rounded person. Try to list wholesome activities, and don't go into detail. Even if you really do like collecting Japanese robot toys, the interviewer does not need to know about your esoteric interests. Listing something creative but not too involved is good.

"Work and being successful in my career is really important to me, but outside of business, I enjoy working out, playing softball in a league, and doing woodworking projects on the weekends. I also enjoy hiking with my family and friends. Do you like hiking? I find it really gives me clarity."

## **If you had six months ahead with no obligations and no financial constraints, what would you do?**

**Discussion:** This question can be a zinger. It is very open ended. You should show your entrepreneurial spirit here, or make your answer related to being with your family. Try to bring the focus back to your career and the job at hand.

"Well, I think I would like to spend some time with my family and focus on making improvements to our home. I would also take the time to learn some new skills related to my career. I want to take a class on "X" at the local university so that I can be more effective at my job and eventually be promoted to VP. I would also like to travel to Europe and spend some time working for a company over there. I have read in the trade magazines that they have different techniques concerning "Y" in the "Z" industry over there."

## How to answer "Yes or No" Questions

**Discussion:** Turn simple yes or no questions into a launching pad for your great examples. For an answer to a yes-or-no question like "Can you use ABC software?" you might answer: "Yes. In fact, I was trained on it, and at Job "Y" I even developed some new techniques with it that were adopted by the department." Always give a good quick example when answering "yes" to a yes-or-no question. If you need to answer "no" when it really would be better to answer with a "yes," try to avoid the "no" by using some of these answers:

"Yes, I certainly have had some experience with products like that."

"Yes, I am familiar with those accounting practices in general, and have read about them."

"Yes, I was in a situation similar to that. It was at Company XYZ ..."

"Yes, I have had some exposure to those techniques. How do you use them here?"

"Yes, I have experience similar to that."

## **You may be overqualified or too experienced for the position we have to offer.**

**Discussion:** This is not a fun thing to hear when you really want the job, or really want to get "in" at a particular company. You need to be prepared to speak to this type of objection from a potential employer. Managers are afraid that overqualified employees will look to move on to other jobs a short time after being hired, so you will want to demonstrate that you will be committed and dedicated if hired.

"Well Jim, I think you would agree with me that strong companies need strong people. I know I am a strong candidate, and I want to reiterate that I do want this job, and I plan to be dedicated and committed to staying here. I think that you will get a faster return on investment from me than you would from a less experienced candidate because I have more experience than required. I know that the talents that make me overqualified will be used well here. I want to emphasize again that I am interested in a long-term association with this company. I do want the job, Jim. I hope that you will offer it to me."

## **What are your expectations regarding promotions and salary increases? How much do you expect if we offer this position to you?**

**Discussion:** The question of salary, bonuses, benefits, and vacation time is best avoided until you are in the offer phase. However, many employers breach this topic up front before an interview, or at the very beginning of an interview. You need to be prepared for this question. Most importantly, you need to know the market rate for the position you are going for. Try not to talk about salary until you talk about your

own great qualifications in specific detail. It makes sense that you should build your own perceived value as high as you can before you ask for the money. You will be able to price yourself higher this way. If you face the question of compensation up front, and you can't reasonably put it off, then face it head on. Understand the probable salary range, and ask for the highest number. **ALWAYS ASK FOR WHAT YOU WANT**, or you won't get it. You will regret low-balling yourself, so ask for the high number, but make sure it is within the right range so you don't appear stupid or greedy – or price yourself out of the job. Only mention the single highest number in the market range – don't give two numbers. Also, don't be specific during the interview about your expectations concerning promotions and salary increases. You will want to have this built into your offer letter, or at least discussed after you are in the offer phase.

"My understanding is that a job like this one draws a salary in the range of (the highest number). I am not out to make any silly requests regarding salary, but I do expect to be compensated fairly for the skills and experience I bring to the table, and the hard work and dedication that I put in **EVERY DAY** on that job. I know that if I work hard here and make a real impact on cost savings and revenues, then the promotions should follow naturally. I'm not worried about that. Right now I am mostly concerned with demonstrating that I am the best possible candidate for this position."

## **Why should we hire YOU? What can you do for us that someone else cannot?**

**Discussion:** This is the answer you should basically be repeating over and over in different ways throughout the interview. You want to try to differentiate yourself. Show that you have all the Behavioral Competencies required to succeed at the job, but also show that you are unique, different, and better than other candidates. Don't forget to speak to the Hiring Manager's hidden needs – what you can do to make his or her job easier and make them look good. Relate your past

experiences of success in solving previous employer problems that are similar to those of the prospective employer.

"Bob, I think I have demonstrated that I have the focused work habits, problem solving abilities, and people skills that it will take to do great work for you and succeed if I join your team. I would also say that I am unique, different, and hopefully the best candidate for this position based on my extensive experience in handling business challenges exactly like those that you face everyday. I think my unique and varied experiences with companies "X", "Y", and "Z" differentiates me from other candidates that might have a skill-set similar to mine. I'm confident in stating that. I am a dedicated and loyal hard worker and I'll do what it takes to make your projects a success in every way."

## Closing Statements

**Discussion:** At the end of your interview you need to "close the sale" and define a time-frame for measurable "next steps." In closing, you should summarize by emphasizing your qualifications as they apply to the job. Questions from the Hiring Manager that should trigger your closing statement include:

- "Do you have anything to add?"
- "Is there anything you'd like to address?"
- "Have we missed something that you'd like to add?"
- "Is there anything else?"
- "Do you have any closing comments?"

The closing statements you make should not be questions. They should be firm statements made with good eye contact and an affirmative nod. You should make five strong statements concerning your qualifications. Count them off on your fingers for emphasis. It is of utmost importance that you practice your closing statement and

have it down! Don't be afraid to reiterate that you want the job – but make sure you indicate the benefits to the hiring manager in terms of your ability to fill his or her hidden needs.

"Jim, just before we wrap up here, I want to ask you to put your faith in me and give me the job. I will reward you by doing my absolute best to do quality work and make our department shine."

"Margaret, I really appreciate you taking the time to speak with me, about the position of "X" here at "Y" Company. What you had to say about project "Z" makes it sound even more exciting! I am extremely interested in the position and feel that my background in "A" and my nine years experience in "B" really make me a strong candidate. I would like to follow up with you next week to see where you are in the hiring process. Can I give you a ring? If you need anything from me in the mean time – like work samples, references, etc. – then by all means give me a call or shoot me an email. Lastly I would like to say that I really want the job, and I hope you will offer it to me. Thank you for your time today! I look forward to hearing from you by Wednesday of next week."

"Now, to be sure we are both clear on my qualifications, what you get with me is (detailed list of skills, Behavioral Competencies, and benefits of working with you) ... Are these kind of qualifications you are looking for? Great! I really do want the job, and I would like to hear from you by next Wednesday because your decision will have an impact on decisions I have to make concerning other opportunities I am currently pursuing. Can I give you a call early next week to see where you are with the hiring process? What are the next steps we should take?"

"Bob, we seem to be in agreement that I have the qualifications, skills, and experience it will take to succeed here? Great! If you make the decision to hire me, would it be reasonable to expect a formal offer letter by Thursday of next week?"

"Based on my skills and experience, and what I have presented here today, you would agree that I would be a great addition to your team,



wouldn't you? Fantastic. I really do want the job. I can start as early as two weeks from today. Does that work for you?"

"Jim, I would like to ask you to hire me. I have the **"X"**, **"Y"**, and **"Z"** skills that it will take to make your department a success, and I have the successful track record to back this up. I really want to come and work for you. When will you be making a decision?"

"Margaret, I really think this position will utilize my strongest skills, such as **"X"**, **"Y"**, and **"Z"**. I know I will be challenged here, and I want to be stretched above and beyond my current abilities. If I am hired on, I am confident that you and this department will benefit in terms of my ability to help to solve problems **"A"**, **"B"**, and **"C"**. I would like to ask you to hire me. I am available to start in three weeks from today. Have I left any doubt in your mind that I would make a great addition to your team?"

"Bob, I think that I am somebody who is not afraid to make decisions, but I am also a team player. I also realize that **"X"** and **"Y"** are key to this company's success. I think I've shared with you today some great reasons why I am the best possible candidate for you to bring on to your team. We seem to be in agreement that my skills and experience are a great fit for this position, and I do want the job, and I can start next week. I would like to respectfully ask you – what are our next steps in moving toward an offer letter?"

"Jim, I think we are in agreement that I have the (detailed list of skills and Behavioral Competencies) that it will take to really excel at this position and make a significant impact on cost savings and increased revenues. Also, based on what you said about **"X"**, I know that you will really benefit from having me on board in terms of my ability to solve problems and make your job easier by doing **"Y"**. I really do want to come and work for you. What are our next steps in getting me started here?"

"Based on what you had to say about **"X"**, **"Y"**, and **"Z"**, I really think I can help address the challenges of this department. Although I am sure that there are things to learn – as there are in any job – I think

you will find I am very quick learner. I also think you were right when you said my experience with "A" and "B" would be very valuable here, and I would like to ask you to hire me. What are our next steps in moving toward a formal offer?"

"Have I left any doubt in your mind that I would make a great addition to your team?"

## Questions to use to uncover the hidden needs of the Interviewer.

**Discussion:** Throughout your interview, you are going to want to tailor your answers to the interviewer. Each interviewer will have his or her own hidden needs depending on their role. For example, a person in HR will want to be convinced that you understand the corporate culture, you will fit in with the company, you will get along with everyone, you will not show any disruptive behavioral or ethical problems, and that you will generally be easy to deal with. A person at the VP level will want to know that you are going to be an asset to his or her department and reflect well on him or her. The Hiring Manager will want to be assured that you will be dependable and that you are completely capable of doing what it takes to be successful at the position you are being interviewed for. Remember that that the Hiring Manager in particular will want to hire someone that:

- 1) they like, and are likable
- 2) will make their job easier, and
- 3) will make them look good.

Each interviewer will also have their own set of hidden needs. Use the following question early on in the interview to uncover hidden needs so you can frame your answers to speak to those needs:

"What could the ideal candidate do to make your job easier?"

"What would be the most important ability for a person to have in order to succeed in this position?"

"What are the most important short term goals for this department? What are the most important long term goals?"

"What are your formal goals as a manager? What kind of challenges are you facing in meeting these goals?"

"How is your success and the success of your department measured?"

"What does your boss expect of you and your team in terms of performance? What really makes your boss happy?"

"What qualities are you looking for in the right person for this position?"

"What kind of qualities and skills would it take to really succeed and make a difference at this position?"

"What would be the top priority of the person who accepts this job?"

"Can you describe a typical day for someone in this position?"

"What are the day-to-day expectations and responsibilities of this job? What would make that person a superstar?"

"What kinds of challenges are you currently facing in your department? How tough a position does this put you in? What would solve this problem for you?"

"How will my leadership and management responsibilities and performance be measured? By whom? How often?"

"What is your biggest challenge coming up in the next eight weeks?"

"What is currently the greatest opportunity for you and your department? The biggest threat?"

"What are the qualities and skills of the people who have been most successful at this company?"

"Why does this one thing mean so much to you?"

"How did you arrive at that?"

"How does that sound?"

"If you could give me your perspective on that ... "

"Would you elaborate on that?"

"How does **"X"** fit in the picture?"

"Give me an example of ..."

"What else should I know about ..."

"What else would help me understand ... "

"Talk to me about your experience with new challenges for this department ... "

"How do you handle **"X"**?"

"What bothers you most about what you are currently working on?"

"I sense you're frustrated by **"X"** ... What would make it easier?"

"How does **"Y"** affect your group and your ability to make your numbers?"

"Can you see how the skills and experience I bring to the table could benefit you and your department? They could, couldn't they? What

would be the one thing I could do here that would benefit you the most?"

"Do I have it right?"

"Am I getting the picture?"

"Is that it?"

"If you were to go ahead with **"X"**, when would you **"Y"**? How many would you **"Z"**?"

"What's your reaction?"

"Why exactly do you ask?"

"Tell me more about . . ."

"Please tell me exactly what you mean."

"What makes this urgent?"

"Why is this important right now?"

"If I could do just one thing over the next three months for the maximum benefit to you and your department, what would it be?"

## ***BONUS SECTIONS***

### **HOW TO TELL IF SOMEONE IS LYING TO YOU**

In the business world there is usually some kind of deception going on. While you should always be an HONEST and ETHICAL person, you are bound to encounter clients, coworkers, and even Hiring Managers who lie through their teeth. Don't forget that people who flat out lie are bound to eventually fall flat on their face and break their teeth! Regardless, you need to be able to sniff out the liars before karma catches up with them. Here's how to do it.

Watch for body language! A liar will hesitate to make eye contact. They'll do everything to avoid it. Their arm and hand movements will seem stiff and mechanical. Their body will seem to take up less space as if closing in around them. The liar may scratch behind his ear, or put a hand near his mouth. He is also unlikely to touch an open hand to his chest. He may shrug, and appear to act casual. A liar is likely to use humor or sarcasm to defuse your concerns, rather than addressing you seriously.

His timing may be off between gestures or words. He may show unnatural pauses between statements and facial expressions. His head might move mechanically out of sync with the emphasis of his words. His gestures are likely not to match his verbal message. His timing of emotional gestures may seem disjointed. Expressions such as happiness or surprise may be only shown around the mouth, instead of the whole face. Watch for him turning his body away from you. Look out for exaggerated deep breaths, audible inhalations, or difficulty swallowing. The liar is unlikely to stand tall or outstretch his arms. He may shift his body toward the nearest exit. He may place objects in front of him – like a stapler, or a glass of water.

If a person stonewalls – giving the impression that his mind is made up – it is often an attempt to limit your ability to challenge his position. If someone says straight away that he absolutely won't budge, it probably means that HE CAN BE SWAYED. He needs to

object completely because he knows he'll cave in if you pressure him. The confident person will use more balanced phrases like "I'm sorry, this is basically the best I can do."

A person who is lying will depersonalize his answer and use an abstract assurance like "You know I'm against that sort of thing. That's morally wrong." They will imply an answer, but will not state it directly. A liar may also keep adding more and more information until he's CERTAIN that he has sold you on his story. Guilty people are uncomfortable with silence and will fill in the gaps when they shouldn't need to.

Remember that in TRUTHFUL statements a fast "yes or no" is followed QUICKLY by a more detailed explanation. A lying person may pause because he needs time to think up an explanation. He may stall by asking you to repeat the question or by answering your question with a question.

Look out for reactions that are out of proportion to the question. Why would a truthful person deny something excessively? A liar may repeat points he has already made. He may also hesitate to use words that imply involvement or ownership – like Clinton's famous reference to "that" woman Monica Lewinski.

A liar's sentences may be garbled or muddled rather than emphasized, or his statements may sound like questions – indicating that he's seeking reassurance. Do his eyes or head lift at the end of a sentence like he is asking a question? He may be lying.

People who are more prone to lying may be the ones who are always telling you how dishonest others are, or how corrupt the world is. Have you noticed that a suspect person often asks you "you believe me, don't you?" ... Most people who tell the truth don't need to ask people that kind of question. Is the person mostly interested in you understanding him, or is he more interested in how he appears to you?

A liar will usually answers your questions willingly but then asks none of his own questions on the same topic. When confronted with a

probing question, truthful people will usually answer quickly and then will counter honestly with the same type of question back in your face.

If you change the subject, does the person appear to be more relaxed or in a better mood? Innocent people usually want further discussion if you ask them a question that appears to question their truthfulness. Innocent people usually become indignant and angered when accused falsely. Does the person sit there with a blank expression? He may be more concerned with his response and how it will come across than the validity of the accusation itself.

A liar may use phrases such as "to be perfectly honest," and "to tell you the truth," and "why would I lie to you?" ... He may state an answer to your question perfectly, as if he was giving precise detail to an event that occurred three months ago. He may also ask qualifying questions like "Where did you hear that?" or "Could you be more specific?" or he may repeat your questions back to you in an attempt at sounding incredulous. For example, "Did I sell you a car with a faulty transmission? Is that what you're asking me?"

A liar may pre-qualify his statement by starting with something like "I don't want you to think that ... " – while this may be exactly what he wants you to think. Whenever someone makes a point of telling you what they're not doing, you can be sure that that is EXACTLY WHAT THEY ARE DOING. Such as, "I'm not trying to question your judgment, but ..."



## **3 FREE SOFTWARE PROGRAMS YOU CAN USE TO MANAGE YOUR JOB SEARCH EFFORTS, MAKE MONEY WHILE YOU LOOK FOR A JOB, AND CUT YOUR INTERVIEW PRACTICE AND PREPARATION TIME IN HALF.**

### **"Palm Desktop"**

**<http://www.palm.com/us/software/desktop>**

Palm Desktop is a TOTALLY FREE application that you may be familiar with. You can use it as a powerful job search management tool whether you have a Palm Pilot or not. By now you should know that applying for jobs and going on interviews is a "numbers game" – and you will want to keep careful notes on the many jobs you have applied for and the interviews you have done. To set it up (even if you are already running Palm Desktop) do the following:

- 1) Create a new user.
- 2) For each job, enter the COMPANY NAME into the "last name" field and enter the Hiring Manager's name in the "first name field."
- 3) Define your "categories" so you have cold, warm, hot, hottest, and dead. This way you can sort to show your hottest job prospects.
- 4) In the "notes" field for each prospect make sure you enter the date of each contact with the company, and write down what you discussed. Paste in the exact cover letter you sent them, and also paste in the job description if you have it available.

You can use this tool to manage contact with prospective employers throughout your career. Keep adding to it. You may be surprised that new or different positions have opened up when you go back through and "data-mine" your old job leads. You will find that using Palm Desktop to manage your job search efforts is fast and easy – and it's free.

**"eBay Turbo Lister"**

**[http://pages.ebay.com/turbo\\_lister/](http://pages.ebay.com/turbo_lister/)**

eBay Turbo Lister is free standalone application that instantly turns you into a merchant. Use it to design and save your eBay ads, and then with one click you can re-list items. Save time and money and generate income while you are looking for a job by using Turbo Lister to sell on eBay.

**"CueCard 1.5"**

**<http://www.download.com/3000-2051-10075304.html>**

Use CueCard 1.5 to create virtual flash cards to practice your Interview Answers! You can create an unlimited number of flash cards to study from and then test yourself. This software is highly recommended. Run the flash card test in random order and then practice your answers out loud with a mirror. Remember that the key to interviewing is to prepare yourself, so take the time to create flashcards with this free program, and then PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE – even if you are a seasoned executive!

## **7 MENTAL EXERCISES TO SHARPEN YOUR PERSUASIVE MIND, CALM YOUR NERVES, AND FOCUS POWER**

### **Solar Plexus Exercise to Focus Power**

Sit back, relax, and take in an easy, deep breath. Release your muscles. Allow yourself to be fully supported by the chair or floor. Try not to expend any effort with any muscle in your body. Take in another gentle, deep breath and release as you exhale. Now turn your attention to your solar plexus. This is the area of your body just below your breastbone, between your chest and abdomen. Picture a vibrant, glowing sun in your solar plexus. Feel its warmth and energy. Focus on this sun for a moment and watch how it shines and see if you can feel it shining. You may never have paid attention to this area of your body before. This sun represents your inner strength, your intuition, and all your inner resources. Imagine this sun inside of you glowing and expanding and burning with warmth. Keep your body as relaxed as you can and focus on your glowing solar plexus for at least 2 minutes. Try to do this longer and stronger each time you do this. The Hiring Manager will feel your confidence in yourself and the glowing warmth of your sun!

### **Breathing Exercise for Stress-Free and Confident Interviewing**

One of the most effective ways to relax before an interview is to learn to breathe properly. If you breathe properly, you breathe from your diaphragm – the thin muscle that separates the lung and abdominal cavities. As you are inhaling, **IMAGINE THAT YOU ARE FILLING UP THREE SEPARATE SECTIONS OF YOUR LUNGS.** First, concentrate on your abdomen, making it expand with air, and next fill the middle portion of your lungs by expanding your chest cavity and raising your rib cage and chest. Finally, allow the upper portion to be filled and you will notice the upper part of your chest expand and your **SHOULDERS RISE SLIGHTLY.** Hold your breath for several seconds before beginning to exhale. Begin to exhale by pulling the abdomen in (which pulls the diaphragm up), and you should notice your shoulders and upper chest

drop as the air begins to leave your lungs. Make sure the exhalation is complete, forcing all the air out and letting go of all muscular tension tensions in your body as you do this. Say silently to yourself while exhaling: "As I breathe out I let go of all the tension in my body." You can do this anywhere – even within a group of people. No one will notice that you are relaxing and preparing to ace the interview.

### **How to use Positive Self-Talk to Create a Winning Attitude**

You must learn to deal with the negative thoughts that pop into your head throughout the day. Negative thoughts are like pollution in your mind that holds you back from what you are trying to achieve. In order to get rid of negative thoughts, you need to counteract them with positive thoughts. Do this on a case-by-case basis. For instance, if you say to yourself "I can't stand this" or "this is terrible" or "this person should have done such-and-such" THEN YOU NEED TO ADD "so I'm going to change this and take positive action to help myself." If you are in a situation where your co-workers or clients upset you, say to yourself "No matter what you do or say to me, I am still a worthwhile person". Think of yourself as a loveable and capable person. For every negative thought you have – whether it comes from yourself or is caused by another person – counter it immediately with a positive thought.

### **Forgiveness Exercise for Money Magnetism**

Don't forgive for the sake other people – forgive for yourself! Many people are taught that forgiveness is a weakness when on the contrary, it's a strength! When you walk around with resentment and blame inside of you it is like a polar magnetism that repels money away from you. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong. To forgive is to set the prisoner free, and then discover that the prisoner was you! When you feel wronged by a client or co-worker, practice saying to yourself, "I forgive them, and I am going to let this go, because I know my goals, I know what I am worth, and I am going to achieve what I set out to do without keeping inside any bad feelings that could get in my way."

### **Self-Image Exercise: Dress for Success without Spending an Arm and a Leg**

To be a successful interviewee you need to think of yourself as a well-dressed and well-put-together person. Do yourself and favor and schedule two and a half hours for yourself next Saturday to go through your closet and ABSOLUTELY THROW OUT ANYTHING THAT YOU HAVE NOT WORN IN THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF. Even if you were in love with that shirt when you got it, and maybe you still have a little affection for it, BUT DO NOT HESITATE! Put it in a bag and take it down to Salvation Army and make a tax-deductible donation.

Your image is a selling tool, and your own self-image (what you think of yourself) is your MOST important selling tool. Take an exhaustive look at your clothes and WHEN IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT. The same goes for that comfortable pair of shoes that were sharp when you bought them, but you have been wearing them for too long now.

When you are done purging IMMEDIATELY go down to a discount chain store like Ross, Marshall's, or TJ MAXX where you will be able to find deals on brand name clothes. Buy FOUR NEW BLACK TOPS. Buy BLACK tops only. This should run you only \$85. Then buy two WOOL trousers or skirts in GRAY or another dark color. Have them tailored at your dry cleaner so that the length conforms to current styles. Then go to a nice shoe store and buy the BEST BLACK LEATHER SHOES YOU CAN POSSIBLY AFFORD. Take a look at your wristwatch. Does it say to people that your time (and their time) is valuable? Buy the best all-stainless-steel watch you can afford. Get a haircut. Try on one of your new outfits on Sunday night before the workweek. Look in the mirror and say, "I look sharp. I'd hire me!"

### **Self-Definition Exercise: Write your own book, or others will write it for you**

You yourself can control the way others view you. First off, you should not accept put-downs. Be assertive and let others know that you don't like unconstructive negative criticism. More importantly, you need to define your own image for yourself, and for others.

Imagine that everyday you walk around with two open pages of a blank book – one page on the left, and the other on the right. As the day goes by, the left page is filled in with what others say or think about you. The page on the right is filled in with what you say or think about yourself. Some people let the left page get filled up and then walk around angry and resentful at what others say or think about them. You need to fill up the right page with the positive things that you think about yourself. Eventually the right page will overflow into the left page and the bad things will start to be erased by the positive things you think about yourself, as other people pick up on you writing your own story, defining yourself, and taking your self-image into your own hands.

### **Added Value Exercise**

There is ALWAYS more value you can add to yourself in an interview. Whether that value is a hidden benefit of hiring you, an additional skill, or an emotional payoff for the Hiring Manager, there is never any end to the positive things that can be attributed to the product called YOU.

As an interviewee, one of your strongest verbal tools is "Oh, and by the way ... " This combined with the notion that there is always "one more reason to hire you" are strong guiding principles that will keep an interviewer thinking and believing until you end the interview and "close the sale." While it is important to know when to STOP selling yourself, always think "one more reason to hire me." Repeat over and over to yourself "one more reason to hire me, one more reason to hire me, one more reason to hire me." Oh, and by the way ...

## THE 7 ESSENTIAL PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR FOR SUCCESS

**VISION.** In order to succeed in anything you need cultivate a ROCK-SOLID VISION of what you want to achieve. This vision cannot be fuzzy or tentative, but needs to be specific and tangible. You need to have in your mind a rich image of where you want to be – an image you can see, feel, hear, touch, smell, taste. Define what you want to be doing at the end of your journey, what rewards you, what you want to be enjoying, and who you want to be enjoying it with – family, friends, loved ones, the people that work for you, and the people you respect.

**GOALS.** You MUST translate your vision into specific, tangible, time-conscious goals that can be measured, monitored, and adjusted on a regular basis. Make your initial goals reasonably attainable and then stick to it until you achieve these goals, then NEVER EVER FAIL to raise the bar and set higher goals for yourself.

**ACTION PLAN.** THINK HARD about exactly how you can translate your specific goals into a set of behaviors that produce specific results. Getting a job, like any other business activity, must be broken down into bite-sized daily and weekly actions that are tied directly to the goals and the vision that you have made concrete in your mind.

**TEAM WORK.** In order to be successful, without exception, you need to be a team player even if you are at heart a lone wolf or a renegade. All business is a networking activity that involves not only interviewers and interviewees, but also attorneys, accountants, agents, appraisers, contractors, partners, secretaries, friends, and a cast of multiple other players who will be important to you. Do WHATEVER YOU POSSIBLY CAN to keep a smile on your face, truly reach out to people, and TALK TO STRANGERS whenever possible. Try to be likable. You can start by saying to yourself "PEOPLE LIKE ME." You must reach out to others and work with others as best you can if you want to achieve your goals, not matter what they might be.

**CREATIVITY.** You need to spend time reflectively thinking about exactly what you did throughout the day and whether each activity moved you TOWARD or AWAY from your goals. You must be CREATIVE in the solutions you offer for clients when selling. Your ability to apply creative techniques to the particulars of a given transaction is a key ingredient to success. The "big guys" have been doing this for decades. There is always a solution, and it usually involves emotional gifts or concessions, or OTHER PEOPLE'S TIME, EFFORT, OR MONEY. Creativity can be learned. Before you go into an interview, try to think of a TOTALLY DIFFERENT AND NEW way that you could present and package yourself to the same or better effect.

**PROFESSIONALISM.** Do your homework, and read the small print. Take the time to learn the newest trends in your field. Stay organized. Take the time EVERY WEEK to go through your files and throw away useless paperwork, email, and mental garbage. Records must be kept, bills paid, your finances maintained. There is no magic wand. It takes attention to detail. If you don't have it, the other guy probably does, and he or she is going to get the job instead of you. MAKE AN APPOINTMENT WITH YOURSELF for an hour every week to get organized. Play the game like an organized, informed professional and you will win.

**HONEST EFFORT AND HARD WORK.** You need to be as honest as you can in every respect. Always think win/win and do not lie regularly or you will slip and eventually fall on your face and break your teeth – which will not give you a very winning smile! What goes around comes around. It's a small world. Everyone has to win in some way, or no one wins in the long run. Honesty combined with a ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES AND WORK HARD WORK TO SCRUB THE FLOOR attitude will allow you to reach your goals. If you set high goals, you need to set high work standards. Even if you set low goals, you need to set high work standards. Are you ready to work your butt off? Combine that with VISION, GOALS, an ACTION PLAN, TEAM WORK, CREATIVITY and PROFESSIONALISM and you are good to go!

Good luck with your interviews!