

Taking Control of the Interview

By Paul Clayton

The problem with an interview is that most of us who interview others are not trained in how to interview. Most people get to a supervisor's position without any formal education on how to interview. We get there and next thing we know we have to hire someone. We do what most people do; we repeat some of the questions that others have asked us. Some of us make up our own secret ways of finding what the potential employee is like. One supervisor told me she made her judgment on what the person's fingernails looked like. In a survey done a few years back it was the conclusion of the survey that most employers guessed at what to do during and interview.

Employers want three things from a potential employee.

1. Dependability -showing up on time, finishing what they say they will do.
2. Likeability - playing well in the playground.
3. Workability -the ability to carry out the job.

Almost all of the employers knew what they wanted but were not necessary sure how to find it. Nearly all questions that employers ask revolve around these three issues, dependability, likeability and workability. I tell potential interviewees that they are going through the most unfair part of life, the interview. It is unfair because they are going to judge you in the first few minutes.

Most interviews have a common beginning question. "Tell me about yourself?" I tell clients to take the salespersons approach on this by doing what sales people do. Ask the person what they are looking for before you show the whole store. Some possible ideas could be for the interviewee to pause and look searchingly and ask, "What would you like to know about me?" Or the interviewee could say "my last few jobs have been?" This way they can direct the questions around something that they know about. I always remind the client that it takes a lot of interviews to get a job so don't look desperate. I tell them "this may not be the job you are supposed to get, so if you get it fine if you don't fine." It may take 32 interviews to get the right job.

Responses form Interview Techniques

I share with them what I consider to be the four main questions interviewers want answered. I know this is a bit simplistic but I work hard to keep it that way.

Why are you here?

What can you do for us?

What are your salary expectations?

What kind of person are you?

If the individual can prepare good answers to these fundamental questions, they are ready for the majority of questions interviewers will ask.

Ben Kathan NY

Greetings from upstate NY. Here in Warren County we touch on this most important question several times a week while talking about the interview. "Tell me a little about your self!!!!"

In the welfare-to-work business we often hear a sob story when we ask this question. We get responses such as.... I'm 56, single mother of 6 kids under ten years old, with an 8th Grade education, with no daycare etc.....

We Like to start by having the client self assess their skills and abilities. One way we do this is to have the client white their name vertically such as this:

P

A

U

L

For each of these letters we start a word or statement that highlights an ability or skill:

P Patient, Persistent

A Accountable

U Utilize resources

L Long lasting on jobs

(U and L Create some difficulty)

After this exercise the client can answer the Question "Tell me a bit about yourself?" with ease: I am patient and accountable, while being able to utilize various resources, and i tend to stay on the job for long periods of time. This method is not rocket science, but if the client can use their name as a reminder to these key words, then they will be able to answer the question at hand in a clear, concise, and positive way. We also hand out packets of words that can assist in finding words to describe themselves.

That's all from Warren County,

JERROD

When working with customer's in our office, we hand out a sheet of interview questions that they can use to practice answers in relation to the job for which they applied. All of the questions on the list have been asked of someone in one of our programs during an interview. I always try to tell my customers that many employers will be more nervous during the interview than them because they are not used to doing an interview. If they practice answering questions ahead of time, they will be prepared for just about anything that comes up and will find it easy to give a relaxed impression and good solid answers. When it comes to "Tell me something about yourself", you have to answer that question in relation to the job you are interviewing for. Give the employer the skills that you have to do the job. Let him/her know that you are dependable, organized, a team player, etc. and can do the job well and get it done. Know something about the company that you are applying to. Try to include something about them in one of your answers. Always have

one or two questions that you can ask at the end of the interview should they ask you if you have any questions. If one of our customers comes back after an interview with a new question that was not covered, we add it to our list. Practice makes perfect they say so....if you practice interviewing ahead of time you will usually do well when it is the real thing. Carole Ziegler MI

I pretty much say a lot of what you have mentioned. Part of my speech in preparing people for interviews includes the importance to fill out the application as accurately as possible. To write legible, and keep it very neat. An employer looks at applications with a critical eye. If you do a great job with your app., most likely you do great work too. I inform them to try and find out about the company and/or the position they have applied for, as this will prepare them in a much better way. The most important part to a successful interview is that you feel confident that you know what you are going to talk about. The more you know about the company the better off you will be in an interview. I remind them not to treat the secretary/receptionist as just a person answering phones. Sometimes employers ask secretaries/receptionist to look out for the person's behavior while waiting. Also to check and see that they showed on time. Another, equally important suggestion, is that they understand that the interview isn't or the employer only....that they also have to make a decision to whether they would like to work there or not. To look at current employees, see if they appear happy, & to see if people interviewing appear happy.

I remind them that an employer can teach work skills, however they can't teach personable skills. I hope this info is of some use to you....keep up the great work. :)

Lydia Hernandez CA

I personally use and suggest others use visualization. I visualize myself with the interview panel and how the answers seem to just flow when asked the questions. I visualize how comfortable I am in the setting. I also suggest they ask questions about the company and policies as they also are making up their mind if they would actually like to work for a particular company. It has to be a good match for all.

I also am a firm believer in the "best job" is out there for each of us and not to despair if they don't get a particular job. Don't let them get you down! It will work out for the best!

Susan H-S CA

I suggest that applicants go after a job just like they went after finding a life's partner. The interview is the dating game. You didn't plan on marrying everyone you went out with (nor did you want to) so don't plan on getting a job after each interview. I set up the class as a singles group and pick someone to represent the men and have him come on strong (in my words) I am the best, You can't do better. Every woman I ever dated was lucky to get me. So let's go to your place. You can cook me dinner. Get rid of the kids so I can watch a game on TV... Of course you have a big screen and remote" Then I ask one of the ladies to represent the women and decide if she wants the hard sale, great guy or wait and see some of the others. Everyone laughs but we can now get into a discussion of what we really wanted our dates to have or do. I translate this into interview approaches.

"Ask me what I would like." or "tell me a little about themselves" I also use this analogy for turning down a job because of money. So, tell me gentlemen....If a lady turns you down for a date because you do not drive a new Cadillac....then you win the lottery...What's her chances of getting a date when you are rich?.

Linda Strim CA

The interview. Ah! I've had a formula that seems to work great with my clients. Yet, I'm still very superstitious around the whole issue. (Must be my performance background.) Anyways, I start by developing a strong respect for the "magic window". I bring up the subject a lot, sprinkled with quite a bit of drama. (The Magic Window is that first 15 seconds..) I work with this concept from day one. I want create fear. (Yes, fear.) And I want the person to know that they have GOT to "own" that window. They have to "take advantage of it". I tell the story of when I first began to perform, and I sought to rid myself of stage fright; I tried to feel comfortable. Then one night, I did it! I went onstage feeling relaxed. 5 minutes later, it hit me--all the repressed fear, and all at once like a ton of bricks. I came very close to losing my knees. I usually go into detailed and dramatic description of this. I then explain that I realized that I need to feel the fear/nerves; and I need to be OK with it. I need to remember that it will happen. I ask them what happens with them mentally and physically when they feel that fear, etc. I do very short mimicry (VERY short) of people in "fear" states (stiff, blank expressions, etc.) and let the person know that their personality needs to shine through the nervousness, "especially during the magic window"! I don't try to calm people; I don't try to lessen this experience. I make a big deal of it. I believe that many people don't realize what a big deal it is. I make sure my clients know that they need to be likable. Etc, etc. This is the weird part: my clients interview well. I've gotten great reports! Is this luck? I've heard time and time again "he/she interviewed very well" whether they get the job or not. And so, I will continue to do what I'm doing. (cross my fingers, knock on wood)

Seanna Willett CA

First impressions are important...preparation reduces anxiety. say the person's name when answering interview q's. be aware that means eye contact, body language, dry handshake, posture follow through after interview...evaluation and thank you note...what q's were difficult to answer rough spots....always refer back to the job during the interview...esp. how you can...1.do the job..2. make money for the company3.make life easier for the boss.....your point about being liked is usually my first musts list...when you appear arrogant, or what's in it" for me attitude" they will find an excuse to reject you...by contrast "should they like you" they will find a reason to accept you...so likeability is the first step in a series of psycho-social interventions....Len...Ohio

I tell clients that this whole interviewing thing should be viewed as you would a game. Games have rules. Generally, if you play by the rules, you have a better chance of winning the game. I tell them that they wouldn't think of getting onto the basketball court without knowing a little something about their opponents (the company), or without knowing how the game is played. Interviewing is the same way. There are rules; rules for dress, rules for how to answer the questions, rules on how to behave, etc. I further explain

that there are people out there who make sure that the "players" know what they're doing. Those people would be the coaches (us). We are the veterans who've done this before and can best advise the players on what to do. I try to convince them that this is an area that's been researched to death and that in general if they can follow the basic rules, they'll have a better chance of making a basket (getting the job)! Anyway, I think you get the idea. For whatever reason, this approach or big-picture explanation seems to help our clients better understand this weird world of interviewing. Audrey White MI