

HOW TO HAVE A GREAT INTERVIEW

Interview Preparation - Whether you are an interviewer, or the interviewee, a good interview is generally the result of the right answers to the right questions. There are a lot of do's and don'ts in an interview to address, and this article is going to address just one at this point. Quality preparation prior to the interview is one of the biggest areas that can greatly affect the outcome of the interview. We encourage both the interviewer and the candidate to do a good job of thinking about possible questions and answers prior to the interview. The outcome can be amazingly different. Let's walk a mile in the other person's shoes for the sake of this article. That's another way to say, let's look at how to be well prepared from both points of view.

As an interviewer, the objective is to select the person most well suited for the job. That is, the person that can ultimately bring the best return on investment, or do the job the most efficiently. Certainly some of the first questions in most interviews involve a verification of the skills necessary to complete the job, but then the questions will go much deeper. The questions will generally involve identifying not just what, but also quantifiably just how much the candidate has achieved. Those questions often also involve behavioral questions. In order to really determine what those questions should be, let's look at our overall goal in the first place.

You may have heard this before, "When we go into the hardware store to buy a drill bit, are we really after the bit?" No, what we really want is the hole it creates. When we hire a person, are we looking simply at their skills, or features? No, what we are really trying to assess is what the person can do for the business from this point forward. What the candidate has done in the past is an important step in establishing potential ability, but it really doesn't address what the candidate will do going forward. This is an important distinction and where the real questions will begin. From a candidate's point of view, preparation begins with an understanding of what the company is all about. Then the candidate needs to begin to imagine themselves in that job. The real key to the right answers lie with how well the candidate begins to portray not just what has been done in previous jobs, but what they can do for the company in the future. Let me say that again. It is most important that if you are the candidate, you must portray how you could be expected to perform in the future. This is what the hiring manager is ultimately after.

Now with those thoughts in mind, let's look at how to answer some possible questions. From an interviewer's perspective, asking the right questions can lead to these kinds of answers. Let's say the question is, "Describe to me how you built sales by 33% over 2

years as indicated on your resume.” The best answer involves: 1. Stating the Problem or situation, 2. Describing the Action undertaken, 3. Explain the Results, 4. Relate the question to the interviewer’s company and indicate how the action may be repeated leading to similar or better results. A possible answer could be, “We were underutilizing our plant and could benefit from more sales close to the plant. I gathered data on all of our customers in the region and found some potential customers to target. I then, began making strategic sales calls to them, first understanding their needs, then to bring back solutions that we expected could meet their needs. The result is a steady increase in sales based on our quality level of service. Now, I see that your company has some strategically placed facilities. If you are looking to expand sales at some of those, I’d like to employ some similar methods in my value based sales approach.”

Did you like that answer? This may be just one of more than 30 or so questions that might be asked. Do you see how the answer gets your interviewer to begin thinking about you in terms of your productive capacity? I’ll bet that if you as the candidate answer an interview question that way, that the interviewer at that point will have dollar signs going through their head. They’ll be thinking about not whether they want to hire you, but how much are they going to have to pay you to get you on board.

From an interviewer’s perspective, wouldn’t it be refreshing to be thinking about how your candidate may be able to perform going forward, rather than having to focus on verifying their skills and capabilities?

The question – answer method described above can work in many different types of jobs. In an operational position, it may involve how the candidate reduced costs in their previous jobs, and then to relate things that the candidate might look for once in a new position. In a management role, it may involve how a team of employees was successfully turned around and now they all work together well.

So the next time you are faced with either side of an interview, be that the interviewer or the interviewee, consider your preparation. Write out some possible questions beforehand. Practice answering those questions. It works for both sides very well. You’ll both come off as being well prepared. It may not work to get you the job every time, but one thing for sure if several candidates are being interviewed and all are similarly capable, the one that gets the job will be the one that appears to be the most potentially productive!