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Interview Q & A: Tell Me About Yourself Written by Brian DeVasto, Career Search Specialist

This document contains information that builds on that in the video “Interview Q & A—Tell Me About Yourself.” The video is available upon request. Please ask library staff for the link to the video.

As you prepare for an upcoming job interview, keep in mind that you will need to provide answers that:

- Sound genuine—not rehearsed
- Address all parts of the interviewer’s question
- Be the answer that the interviewer is looking for

How do you effectively answer behavioral and situational interview questions? Be a Shining Star! (Situation-Task-Action-Result)

- **Situation:** Describe the context within which you performed a job or faced a challenge.
- **Task:** Describe your responsibility in that situation. Perhaps you had to help complete a project within a tight deadline, or resolve a conflict with a coworker, or hit a sales target.
- **Action:** Describe how you completed the task or endeavored to meet the challenge. Focus on what you did, not what your team, boss or coworkers did.
- **Result:** Explain the outcomes or results generated by your action, emphasizing what you accomplished and/or learned.

For behavioral questions, interviewers are usually trying to learn three things:

1. How you behave in a real-world situation
2. Understand the measurable value that you added to that situation
3. Learn how you define a term like “pressure at work”—a concept that people interpret differently

Success in a behavioral interview is all about preparation. There aren’t necessarily *wrong* answers, as these questions are aimed at getting to know the real you. However, there are preferred ways to answer the questions. The important thing is—as always—to practice! For every scenario that you describe, structure your responses in a way that communicates what you have to offer.

Tell me about a time when.....

Situational interview questions let the interviewer gain insight into how you will handle situations—whether they be day to day situations or emergencies and understand your methodologies—how you would specifically get the job done!

- For every scenario you describe, structure your responses in a way that clearly communicates what you have to offer.

One of the most challenging parts of an interview is when the interviewer kicks off the interview saying, “Tell me about yourself.”

What do you say?

- Begin with an overview about your current position or activities, then provide a summary of the most relevant highlights about yourself that makes you most qualified for the role.

Example: Currently I serve as an administrative assistant to three of the company’s five executive members, including the CEO. At Company X, I have been recognized for my strong time management skills, written and verbal communication skills, and my commitment to excellence. During my twelve years of experience in this role, I’ve developed the ability to anticipate roadblocks and develop alternative plans. My greatest value to any executive is to work independently, freeing up their time to focus on the needs of the business.

5 Key Tips

1. Be ok with talking about yourself!

Many candidates are uncomfortable talking about themselves, but remember that this interview is an opportunity for you to shine and separate yourself from other candidates. There isn’t a simple “one size fits all” tip for telling about yourself. For example, a new college graduate would not have as much of a career background to discuss as someone who had been working many years.

Be animated during the interview. Maintain eye contact with the interviewer(s), smile, gesture, speak with inflections and not in a monotone. All these capture the interest of your interviewer and reflect that you want and care about getting this job.

2. Emphasize these points:

- If you’re a new graduate: state in a few sentences why you are applying for the job, what motivated you to consider this field, and one or two about previous experiences.
- For candidates with a longer job history, briefly discuss your last jobs, perhaps a sentence or two about each job, and elaborate more on jobs that are relevant to the position to which you’re applying.

3. Stay on Track!

If you're not fully prepared for the interview, it's easy to ramble on and digress from relevant topics. This is why it is so important for you to prepare and practice before the interview. Write down what you are going to say, practice it out loud, and commit to sticking to that content.

4. Prepare a statement about yourself that correlates well with the job that you are applying for

- Carefully read the job posting, focusing on the qualifications listed in the posting. If you have these job qualifications, emphasize them as you talk about yourself.
- Research the organization so that you can speak knowledgeably about it and speak to how your qualifications will benefit the company.

5. Ways that you can separate yourself from other job candidates

- Show that you've done research on the company and the industry
- Be prepared by having thoughtful answers to interview questions
- Show genuine enthusiasm and excitement for the role

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