

Instructor's Guide

for

GETTING THE JOB YOU REALLY WANT SERIES, VIDEO 9:

GETTING GOOD ANSWERS TO TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

"There are hundreds of questions that employers ask. It is more important to learn a technique for answering any question than to memorize the answers to a few questions."
Mike Farr, *Getting the Job You Really Want*

Overview

In this video you learn that many people fail to successfully answer one or more tough questions during an interview. You must prepare by considering the types of questions that are likely to be asked. Keep a list of questions you are asked as you hold interviews and review the ones you had difficulty with.

Think of the question you are most afraid an employer might ask you, and write down an acceptable answer to it. If you can answer this question, you'll have more confidence that you can answer any question that comes up.

Most questions are asked to try to establish your dependability and skills. Listen carefully to what's being asked. Use the **three-step process for handling questions**:

1. Understand what's really being asked.
2. Answer the question briefly and in a non-damaging way.
3. Answer the real concern by presenting your skills.

Use the **Prove It** technique to separate yourself from others by telling a story and using facts to show how you were successful in a previous job using skills similar to the job for which you're applying. If you don't have experience specific to this job, include skills you have that are related, either from work or family life.

Some tough questions that come up often are:

1. Why should I hire you?

Set yourself apart by stating how you can solve a problem for the employer, help make more money, or provide something of value.

2. What are your weaknesses?

This is a trick question. Don't say you have no weaknesses. Use the three-step process for handling questions listed above. Acknowledge that you've made mistakes related to the type of work you're applying for, but that you've learned and improved. Turn the negative into a positive.

3. What will former employers say about you?

Be honest and positive. Talk to former employers to find out what they will say about you. If pressed, be honest about any problems you had in a former job. Try asking former employers for a letter of recommendation; given such a written reference, some employers won't contact a reference at all.

4. Tell me about your personal situation.

This question is designed to find out if you're stable and likely to stay in the job. Select information that shows that you're reliable and won't be distracted from the work by personal issues.

5. What sort of pay do you expect?

This question is designed to screen you out. Four rules of salary negotiation are 1) never discuss salary until an offer is made; 2) know the probable salary range in advance; 3) bracket your salary and state it as a range; 4) never say no until an offer is made and you've waited 24 hours. Think about your ideal salary but also know what is the least you'd take if the job offered other plusses.

Presentation Suggestions

State the three-step process for handling questions, listed in the previous section. Focus on the first step and ask students to discuss the fact that an interviewer might ask one kind of question but really be trying to get at something else. Use the question, "Tell me about yourself," as an example. What does the interviewer really want to know in answer to such a broad question?

When you feel the students have begun to understand the concept that the intent of a question may not always be obvious, give them the **Anticipation Quiz** to complete prior to viewing the video. If you wish, allow the students to state their answers and discuss them.

Show the video. Encourage students to make changes to the answers they put down for the Anticipation Quiz while watching the video.

At the conclusion of the video, ask students to discuss any changes they made to the answers on the Anticipation Quiz as a result of information in the video. Follow up the discussion with the **Activities**.

Use the **Discussion Questions** to request oral or written responses from students, or assign the questions as homework essays.

Give the **Quick Quiz** at the conclusion of class and correct the quizzes as a group.

Assign the **Homework Option**, if desired.

Anticipation Quiz

Directions: Answer these questions as completely as possible. You will revise your answers as you watch the video.

1. When should you state your desired salary?
2. Should you refuse to reply to a question about your personal life?
3. Is it ever a good idea to lie about a problem you had in a previous job?
4. When asked about your weaknesses, is it a good idea to say you have none?
5. To prove you can do a job better than others, what can you do to prove yourself to interviewer?

Answer Key

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | When an offer is made. |
| 2. | No |
| 3. | No |
| 4. | No |
| 5. | Tell a story or give specific examples. |

Activities

Activity #1

Title: Dealing with Tough Personal Questions

Format: Small group

Time: 30-35 minutes

Materials: Digital timer, chart paper, markers

Procedure:

1. Organize the class into groups of six.
2. Provide each group with some sheets of chart paper and marker pens.
3. Give each group these statements on a piece of paper:
 - a. You were fired from your last job because you were often absent due to an ongoing family illness. You have since asked for help

- from a relative and should not have to spend as much time helping out at home.
- b. You are recently separated from your spouse and living in a hotel until you can find an apartment.
 - c. You have lived in seven cities in the last three years because your spouse's job has required that you make frequent and unexpected moves.
4. Ask students to take turns role playing an employer and job candidate in an interview (5 minutes per role play). Have each employer ask about the candidate's personal life with one of these scenarios above in mind. Candidates cannot lie and cannot refuse to answer a question. Keep a list of techniques used to honestly address a personal situation in a positive way.
 5. Have each group try to characterize and rank the techniques they used from most to least successful, and then have students share with the entire group the most successful and least successful approach they observed.

Activity #2

Title: Prove It!

Format: Individual

Time: 20-25 minutes

Materials: Index cards, pen

Procedure:

1. Write this on the board or overhead: "Prove to the interviewer by telling a story and using facts how successful you were in a previous job using skills similar to the job for which you're applying."
2. Explain that even if you've never worked in the sort of job you're applying for before, you can relate skills used in a previous position to skills used in another one.
3. Ask students to consider a situation where they are applying for a job as a bank teller. Have them write four skills that they feel they possess related to this job on four index cards (one on each card).
4. Have the students write a short paragraph on each card explaining how the skill listed there relates to being a successful bank teller.
5. Ask the students to take a piece of paper and, picking one skill, write a story about how they used that skill successfully in a real-life situation.

Have them be as specific as possible about why they were successful. For example, if the skill is that they are good with numbers, the story might involve keeping track of monies paid for school yearbooks; though the school had lost money in previous years because of accounting inaccuracies, that year the monies tallied exactly and the school showed a 20 percent profit.

Discussion Questions

1. One speaker in the video states that the driving force behind most interview questions is the question, “Why should I hire you?” Identify a few typical interview questions and discuss how they relate to that question.
2. What does admitting you have made mistakes but have improved in that area show about you? How would an employer perceive that statement?
3. Are there questions you believe an interviewer should not be allowed to ask? Are there things you think a previous employer should not be allowed to say about you?

Quick Quiz

Note: You may read these questions out loud, allowing time for students to respond, or copy and hand this out as a written exercise. If you read the quiz, write responses on the board/overhead.

Directions: Indicate whether each statement is true or false, according to the video.

1. “What are your weaknesses” is a trick question.
2. If you can prove that what you claim about your skills is true with specific examples, you can set yourself apart from other job candidates.
3. You should avoid at all costs thinking about or answering the question you are most afraid of.
4. You can research salary ranges for the job for which you’re applying on the Internet and in the library.
5. It’s appropriate to be honest with an interviewer early in the interview about your salary requirements.
6. The three-step process for handling questions includes “Never discuss salary until an offer is made.”
7. When stating your weaknesses, don’t ever relate them to the job you’re applying for.
8. When an employer asks about your personal situation, he is most often trying to find out if you are honest.

9. The second step in the three-step process is to answer the question at length in a non-damaging way.
10. In addition to considering your ideal salary, consider the least amount of money you would take.

Answer Key

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|-----|-------|
| 1. | True |
| 2. | True |
| 3. | False |
| 4. | True |
| 5. | False |
| 6. | False |
| 7. | False |
| 8. | False |
| 9. | False |
| 10. | True |

Homework Option

Identify what you consider to be your ideal salary. Now identify the least amount of salary you could take and still pay your bills. Write a want ad for a job that offers qualities that would cause you to take the lower salary.