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2016 Candidate Prep Packet



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10 RULES TO INCREASE INTERVIEWING SUCCESS

1. Speak clearly and enthusiastically about your experiences and skills

Be professional, but don't be afraid to let your personality shine through. Be yourself. Don't be afraid of short pauses. You may need a few seconds to formulate an answer.

2. Be positive

Employers do not want to hear a litany of excuses or bad feelings about a negative experience. If you are asked about a low grade, a sudden job change, or a weakness in your background, don't be defensive. Focus instead on the facts (briefly) and what you learned from the experience.

3. Be prepared to market your skills and experiences as they relate to the job described

Work at positioning yourself in the mind of the employer as a person with a particular set of skills and attributes. Employers have problems that need to be solved by employees with particular skills; work to describe your qualifications appropriately.

4. Research information about the company before the interview

Some important information to look for includes what activities are carried out by the employer, how financially stable the employer is, and what types of jobs exist with the employer. Researching an employer during the job search can help determine more about that organization and your potential place in it. Know how you can help the company and prepare questions to ask the interviewer about the company.

5. Plan to arrive for your interview 10-15 minutes prior to the appointed time

Arriving too early confuses the employer and creates an awkward situation. By the same token, arriving late creates a bad first impression. Ask for directions when making arrangements for the interview.

6. Carry a portfolio, notepad or at the very least, a manila file folder labeled with the employer's name

7. Bring extra resumes and a list of questions you need answered

You may refer to your list of questions to be sure you've gathered the information you need to make a decision. Do not be preoccupied with taking notes during the interview.



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10 RULES TO INCREASE INTERVIEWING SUCCESS (continued...)

8. Brush up on your etiquette

In many career fields, the lunch or dinner included during the interview day is not only employer hospitality, but also a significant part of the interview process. Brush up on your etiquette and carry your share of the conversation during the meal. Often social skills are part of the hiring decision.

9. Write down all names and title (CHECK SPELLING)

After the interview, take time to write down the names and titles (check spelling) of all your interviewers, your impressions, remaining questions and information learned. If you are interviewing regularly, this will help you keep employers and circumstances clearly defined.

10. Follow up the interview with a thank-you letter (CHECK SPELLING)

Employers regard this as evidence of your attention to detail, as well as an indication of your final interest in the position.



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MASTERING THE PHONE INTERVIEW

Treat the phone interview seriously, just as you would a face-to-face interview

A phone interview seems so informal on the surface that it can be easy to fall into the trap of "phoning it in" -- i.e., not preparing for it as well as you would for an in-person interview. Don't get caught with your guard down. Be sure to research the company, study the job description, and practice your responses to anticipated questions, just as you would for any other interview.

Have your resume and cover letter in front of you

You'll almost certainly be asked about some of the information that appears on these documents. You might also want to have in front of you any supporting materials that relate to information in your resume and cover letter, like documents you've designed or written, a portfolio of your various projects, or the written position description from your key internship.

Make a cheat sheet

Jot down a few notes about the most critical points you want to make with your interviewer(s). Are there certain skills and experiences you want to emphasize? Do you have certain interests or passions you want your interviewer(s) to know about and understand? Be sure these pieces of information appear on your crib sheet. Then touch on them during the interview, even if your only chance to do so is at the end of the session when the interviewer asks you if you have any questions or anything to add.

Get a high-quality phone

This isn't the time to use a cell phone that cuts in and out, or a cheaply made phone that makes it difficult for you and your interviewer(s) to hear and understand each other.

Stand up, or at least sit up straight at a table or desk

Again, there's a psychological, frame of mind aspect to consider here. But on a more tangible level, research has shown that you project yourself better when you're standing up, and you'll feel more knowledgeable and confident.

Phone interviews can be tricky, especially since you aren't able to read your interviewers' nonverbal cues like facial expressions and body language during the session -- a big difference from the typical interview. But if you prepare well for your phone interview, you won't need to read anyone's nonverbals to gauge your performance. You'll know for sure how you've done because you'll be invited to a face-to-face interview, where you'll have yet another opportunity to prove you're the best person for the job.



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10 TIPS ON DRESSING FOR SUCCESS

Congratulations, you got the interview! Now what to wear....If you are going on an interview, dress as if you were going to an important business meeting. Business casual attire is always a safe bet but it is better to take it up a notch and dress a little nicer than you normally would. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:

1. Whatever you chose to wear, it should be pressed and clean
2. Observe and follow the employer's dress code. You want to dress to impress and also try to fit in with others there. When in doubt, ask the hiring manager what the dress code is before going on the interview.
3. Your hair should be kept simple and conservative
4. Be very careful with perfume and or cologne: It may smell good to you, but any scent can be distracting
5. Be cautious and do not over do the jewelry: Keep it simple with just a watch and wedding ring (if you are married.)
6. Women: make up should be subtle
7. Men: face should be shaven clean or if you have facial hair it should be neatly trimmed
8. Nails should be trimmed and clean
9. Keep your dress shoes polished and ready to go
10. Cover up any body art or body jewelry you may have

At the end of the day you want to be looked at as a professional. Dress for success and dress for the job that you want.



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HOW THE MOST SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES INTERVIEW

We've conducted hundreds of interviews, and have seen time and again how a successful candidate differentiates themselves during the process from their less successful peers. Yesterday, the New York Times published an interesting snapshot of how one candidate's interview skills evolved over the course of his search.

In past blog entries, we've detailed some amazing instances of baffling candidate behavior but beyond the obvious "red flags" of arriving late without good reason, demonstrating unfamiliarity with germane, public information, or showing up in dress socks and Birkenstocks there are plenty of other ways to make or break one's candidacy.

One key factor under a candidate's complete control is their preparation, approach to, and execution of the interview process.

Preparing for an interview involves more than reading the company's annual report, latest press releases, or executive bios, and starts long before one sits down across the table from the hiring executive.

Early on, when discussions begin with the search professional, a savvy candidate will carefully review and analyze the position specification and tailor their resume as specifically as possible – including clear, concrete accomplishments that directly address the responsibilities and requirements of the position.

This exercise, beyond making one look as well-suited and attractive as possible on paper, forces critical thinking and specific self-assessment: why am I best suited for this opportunity and what is my value proposition to the hiring executive and the organization? It lays out the framework for subsequent communication, and crystallizes and prioritizes relevant experiences and accomplishments from one's background – again targeted as closely as possible to the particular opportunity.

During early discussions, successful candidates get as much information as possible from the search professional and other sources, including the typical and requisite study of financial filings, analyst reports, and other industry media. They ask thoughtful questions about what success will look like in both the short- and long-term, perspectives on the hiring executive and company culture, and generally what expectations are for the person in the role.

In terms of mindset, the best candidates approach the meeting with the hiring executive as if they were a consultant – seeking to understand what "issues" the hiring executive is confronting and how they represent the best solution. Too many people get so caught up in trying to sell themselves from the first handshake that they forget to LISTEN. The vast majority of the time, if you let them, the hiring executive will spell out upfront, in crystal clear terms, what it is they are looking for, and what critical "issues" they are looking to solve. Successful candidates tailor their message and responses as specifically as possible – remembering it is not about "them" in the abstract, it's about how they represent the "solution" to the hiring executive's needs.



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HOW THE MOST SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATES INTERVIEW (continued...)

A good “interviewee” doesn’t get overly personal or bogged down in anecdotes or ancient, irrelevant history. The best interviews usually take the form of a conversation, not a monologue. Excruciating levels of detail about one’s past are rarely necessary or appropriate, especially in an initial meeting. The best candidates heed the fact that they have limited time to make their case. They keep their answers to questions on point and don’t ramble or get caught in tangents – they never feel compelled to say: “Stop me if I am going too far into the weeds/straying too far off course/getting into too much detail.”

The most successful candidates approach the interview with the hiring executive as if they were a professional advisor. Nine times out of ten, if one listens upfront and asks the right questions before and during the interview, the keys to successfully addressing the hiring executive’s needs will be unmistakable. With appropriate preparation, the best candidates are able to convey – specifically and concisely – that they are the exact “solution” that the hiring executive is looking for.



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“SELF-DEFEATING JOB-SEARCH MOVES TO AVOID”

By Liz Ryan

The desperate post-interview phone call, the proclamation of self-doubt, and more blundering ways to negate your chances of winning the job

Despite the healing economy, employers are often slow to post openings and make hiring decisions. It's a frustrating situation that can cause eager job candidates to act in counterproductive ways, scotching promising opportunities. Here's our list of 10 real-life job-search misfires we hope will serve as cautionary tales for job-hunters. Don't replicate these counterproductive deeds.

Inflicting Gratuitous Interrogation

I was reviewing résumés and found one that stood out in a positive way. I e-mailed the sender and asked whether he had a minute to talk by phone. "I might," he wrote back. "Where is the company located, what is the starting salary, who is the CEO, and how long have you been in business?" That was the end of the correspondence; our street address was on our home page, the salary was listed in the job ad, and the company story (including inception date and leadership bios) was in the About Us section of our site. In his haste to make sure his time wasn't wasted—a reasonable goal, in my opinion—the gentleman asked me to answer four questions he'd have already had answers to if he'd done a bit of homework. Lesson: It's perfectly fine to guard against time-sucking or even bogus job ads, but do it in such a way that you don't shoot yourself in the foot.

Forgetting Who You're Interviewing With

The executive director of a small not-for-profit shared this tale with me. "I miraculously got enough money from my board to hire a marketing director last year," she said. "I was over the moon. I had one precious job opening to fill. I interviewed five people, three of them from industry and two from the not-for-profit world. One of the industry folks was super-smart and insightful. Sadly, she knocked herself out of the running about halfway through the interview." "How?" I wanted to know. "I asked her to tell me one story that illustrated how she rolls. I told her to think about our five-person agency and what we need in marketing, and tell me a story from her career that would make it clear she belongs here. She told me a story about a 24-month intranet development project involving 60 people across functions and six or seven levels of organizational sign-offs. I was nearly asleep by the time she finished. I think this lady really needs a big company atmosphere." The job-seeker's intranet story screamed "I don't understand scrappy not-for-profits at all." Lesson: In your written job-search communications and especially on an interview, keep your stories and questions relevant to the hiring manager's issues.



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Selling Yourself Short

A friend at a placement agency told me this story. Last summer she had a candidate on the short list of two finalists for a plum sales management job. She'd just gotten off the phone with the hiring manager, who said, "I have to sleep on it, but I think your guy Frank is getting the job tomorrow," when Frank himself called her. "Don't be mad at me," Frank said. "Oh, no," said the agent. "What did you do, Frank?" Frank had gotten fearful and had called the hiring manager to say, "If you don't want me in the sales manager spot, I'll take a sales territory assignment." The manager hired him into the territory job and hired the other finalist for the sales management job. The placement agency lady never told Frank how close he'd come to the higher-paying, bigger job. Lesson: Stay the course. You'll never show an employer what you're worth, or persuade them they need you, by groveling.

Letting Minor Adversity Vanquish You

"I am so frustrated with my job search," said a man I met at the library. "I had an interview last week, and when I got there at 20 after 5, the front door was locked," he said. "Did you go around to the back?" I asked. "Did you call or text HR or the hiring manager?" "No, I went home," said the gentleman. "When I got home, there was a message telling me the front door would be locked and I should go around, but I had left home before that message arrived." "Did you reschedule?" I asked him. "No, I figured the opportunity was lost." "Call them!" I said. He did, but they'd filled the job already. Lesson: Corporate hiring types are no different from anyone else; they make mistakes. On one job interview back in my 20s, I walked around the whole building looking for an open door for a 5:30 interview, and I finally walked across the loading dock to get in. Show your resourcefulness by rolling with the interview punches.

Sending a Generic Thank-You

I interviewed a brilliant young man for a business development role. "Look, Barry," I said. "I want to make sure we're on the same page. Over the next couple of days, send me an e-mail message and tell me what you heard today. It doesn't need to be long. Just write a couple of paragraphs about what you see as our competitive situation and how you'd approach the assignment so that I know we'd be in sync." Barry happily agreed. An hour later, I got the generic post-interview thank-you e-mail from Barry, saying, "Dear Ms. Ryan, Thank you so much for chatting with me today. I'm excited about working for your company and know I'll do a great job." Today we would call that an epic fail in the showing-comprehension department. Lesson: Whether the hiring manager asks you to, or not, make sure your post-interview thank-you recaps the conversation in an intelligent way, pointing out what the company is up against and how you're equipped to tackle those challenges.

Offering a (Doubly) Misguided Information Packet

A reader called me for advice, saying, "I'm targeting a product manager opening at Company X. I'm going to a trade show where they'll be exhibiting." We talked about visiting the company's booth and chatting up employees. A week later she called again. "I visited the booth but everyone was busy, so I left a packet for the sales manager." "Hmm, for the sales manager?" I asked. I thought about a sales manager's likely level of interest in a non-sales employee's job-search packet dropped off during a chaotic trade show. What was in the packet? "I left him a note with an article I wrote for an industry journal several years ago," she said. "Was the article about Company X?" I asked. "No," she said,



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“SELF-DEFEATING JOB-SEARCH MOVES TO AVOID” (continued...)

"It was a story about software documentation." Unfortunately, Company X is not a software company. Busy working people are deluged with information. Job-search overtures need to be specific. My caller could have gotten her hiring manager's name via a short conversation if she'd stuck around that booth until the trade show crew had a minute to chat. The unrelated article didn't help her case and was likely tossed in the recycling bin. Lesson: Your target person is the hiring manager. Other, random people in the organization typically don't make great conduits unless they're friends of yours. And whatever materials you send must make it clear what you want and why anyone should care.

Frantically Self-Doubting

The CEO of a tech startup called me. "What about this?" he said. "I ran an ad, and a lady wrote right back to me with a great e-mail message. I replied to say, 'I'd love to talk when you have time.' She wrote back to tell me that she's not all that technical, and I replied to her saying that we need more than just technical people. She wrote again to make sure I knew that she's really not all that technical. By this time I was trying to figure out why she responded to the ad at all, but her résumé was great, so I said, 'Let's just get together and take it from there.' Then she wrote back to ask me if there were going to be technical tests during the interview. We don't use anything like that, but I had lost faith at that point and gave up. Please tell your readers to go with the flow. There's no point in acing yourself out of job opportunities because you fear you might get tossed out at some later point in the process." Lesson: Work the process. At a minimum, you'll make valuable contacts, learn some new things, practice your interviewing skills, and give yourself a reason to get dressed up.

Surrendering to Salary Worries

"I got a call for a job interview, but I didn't go," said Samantha, a woman I chatted with at a networking event. "Oh, why's that?" I asked. "They told me not to come in if I need to earn more than \$75K, and I'm really focusing on jobs that pay \$80K and up," she said. "Seriously?" I asked. "You skipped the interview over that \$5K gap? Are you being overwhelmed with interest from employers?" "Heck no," she said. "I haven't had an interview in months, but I figured I'd hold out for the number." If Samantha had gone to the interview and started a conversation, she could have learned enough about the organization and its issues to talk them into another \$5K in base or bonus or some other valuable exchange medium. Lesson: When you're invited to a reasonable job interview, go! If it doesn't sound perfect at first hearing, that's O.K. Life is long, and priorities and investment levels turn on a dime. You'll never know if you don't show up.

Saying Yes to an Illogical Request

A client of mine, Maurice, wrote to me, dejected. "I should have taken a stronger stance," he said. "What happened, Mo?" I asked him. "This corporate recruiter called and talked to me for an hour, and I guess I passed through that gate O.K.," he said. "She called me back and asked me to write a marketing plan for the company. I haven't even met those people yet. I went crazy and wrote a 20-page marketing plan and sent it to her. Then, radio silence for three weeks." Maurice fell into the trap called Give Them Exactly What They Ask For, No Questions Asked. You'll never show your value that way. A generic marketing plan is almost useless, and a thoughtful, customized one requires collaboration



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with the client. Trying so hard to please, especially in the early stages of the selection pipeline, is a bad strategy. Lesson: When you're asked to deliver X, Y, or Z during a job search, remember that you're an important part of the equation. Maurice could have said, "It would be irresponsible of me to write a marketing plan with so little information about the business, and apart from that it wouldn't be fair to the people who have paid me for marketing plans in the past. Let's set up a time for me to talk with the marketing VP and discuss her marketing-plan needs then."

Utterly Failing to Prepare

I interviewed an editor candidate who said, "I think I could really help you." "Marvelous!" I said. "How? Where could our publication improve?" "You mean your publication specifically?" she said. "You got me there. I didn't actually look at it. I'm not a reader." Lesson: Don't apply for jobs that don't interest you.



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HERE ARE 5 INTERVIEW QUESTIONS THAT HELP HIRING AUTHORITIES WEED OUT MARGINAL CANDIDATES IN THEIR YOUR QUEST FOR THE PERFECT HIRE

1. Where would you like your career to be in 2-3 years?

The hiring authority is looking for answers that demonstrate goal setting, and career planning. Also do the candidate's goals match those of the department or the company where they would be working? If the candidate's career goals won't fit into the company's future goals, chances are the candidate will realize that quickly and start looking for a new position at another company that matches his or her personal goals.

2. Describe in detail the type of boss you'd like to work for; then detail out the type of boss you'd least like to work for.

At this point the candidate may be clueless as to what type of supervisor they will be working for. The question in your head is a simple one, do they or don't they match their future boss. If they do, keep asking questions; if they don't, start the interview closing questions.

3. What about the activities in your current position do you enjoy most? Least?

This is an indirect way of determining a candidate's strengths and weaknesses. Candidates typically like to do activities they are good at, and try and avoid activities they are marginal or weak at. If the job entails a lot of phone work, and the candidate loves to file not a good fit.

4. All new jobs come with difficulties. If you encounter any in this position what do you think they may be?

Remembering that hiring authorities are trying to weed out marginal candidates quickly, this is another question that reveals a candidate's area of weakness and / or a candidate's self-doubt about being able to accomplish the goals of this position.

5. If the company gave you \$5000 to spend anyway you wanted during your first year of employment, what would you spend it on?

This is a great question to determine some quick and creative thinking on the candidate's part. The answer the hiring authority is looking for really is determined by the position the candidate is interviewing for. If it were a techie type, continuing education would be a good answer, a sales manager type, perhaps a contest for the account executives under his or her control.



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“JOB INTERVIEW SUCCESS- THE “TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF” TRAP”

By Howard Cattie

One of the most common questions in a job interview, yet most commonly fumbled is the question, “Tell me about yourself,” and yet this is the easiest answer for someone to present in an interview. The question often arises because the manager hasn’t really reviewed the resume in a lot of detail. So while they are catching up, they throw a pop quiz by asking you “tell me about yourself”.

This question is an open-ended question and the answer is a free form essay which can easily lead to all kinds of perilous responses. However, it is also a huge advantage. You have a gift—an opportunity to state 2 or 3 of your strongest points and then control where the conversation goes next with a question at the end. Your answer demonstrates your ability to communicate on your feet when you’re thrown a question, your ability to focus, and your ability to clarify your personal interests and agenda. This common job interview question should be answered similarly to an “elevator pitch” with an answer that is clear, bulleted and relevant to the opportunity. It should be easy to understand and should not generate more questions than answers. It should be less than 2 minutes.

So the key to handling this question in the interview is to prepare the answer before the interview. The manager really doesn’t want to hear about your life history, what you’re interested in, a long boring sequence of your jobs, or any ego trips. An absolute disaster occurs if instead of answering the question, you respond with hesitancy or confusion and ask “what would you like to hear?”

What they really want to hear is a focused summary of relevant bullets that can benefit him and may help him solve a problem. I say “may” because we don’t know enough detail at this stage of the interview to use the word “can”.

So how do we structure this answer?

Let’s say we want to use 5 sentences max and a steering question. Here’s how we might structure it.

A. If you prepare properly for the job interview, you’ve identified keywords for products, industries, technologies, tasks and titles that can easily be used to create bullets in this summary. The first 3 sentences can list some of these keywords and expand them with length of experience (years) or with breadth of experience (for tasks or titles). Then, add some results and these keywords have now become bulleted accomplishments. Do not try to cover the entire job description. Focus on the 3 major strengths you feel you bring to the table based on the keywords.

B. Sentences 4 and 5 should be oriented toward benefits to the manager and areas of possible mutual interest (complementing agendas) which are to be explored in today’s meeting. For example, some of the biggest benefits we can bring to a company and to a manager are: fast start in terms of proven expertise, an independent worker which requires less management time, someone who can take on more responsibilities over time, someone who can solve the immediate problem, someone that would help the manager achieve their personal agenda, someone who is low risk or high results.



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“JOB INTERVIEW SUCCESS- THE “TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF” TRAP” (continued...)

C. Then we end with the appropriate steering question to move the job interview towards our preferred direction.

Here is a sample for an IT professional:

Sample sentences 1-3;

Mr. Manager, I've had 20 years of experience with a technical background in information technology, a BS in computer science with increasing responsibilities from developer, project leader and also a presales consultant. My strongest expertise is in the Microsoft technologies including .net development, SQL server data base and Business Intelligence where I have performed all tasks associated with defining, developing and implementing custom Business applications for the Financial Services industry. I have received increasing compensation and responsibilities, and have received strong performance ratings in the 4 companies I have been with because I completed my projects in a timely and reliable manner.

Sample sentences 4-5:

My personal goals at this point are to find a company where I can build upon this technical background and bring this expertise to help solve additional problems as well as add some new experiences.

Since I've targeted your particular company (or when I read your ad), it appears my background will allow me to contribute quickly, get off to a fast start and take on some responsibility to help the department accomplish its goals.

Sample Steering Question:

I look forward to sharing additional relevant experience with you today, but before we start, could you give me an idea of what the expectations are for this role and how it will help the department reach their goals?

So, the key to handling this simple, yet treacherous interview question is to be prepared ahead of time. Pick 3 points and your steering question. Structure a very simple 4-5 sentence summary of what you bring to the table that is clear and relevant to the manager and the opportunity at hand. Do not stray into other events. Do not cover the job description in detail. Remember, it is a summary. The manager will get to the detail he needs, rest assured. Good luck and good interviewing.

Howard Cattie is Head Coach of CareerOyster, an innovative online career coaching firm. CareerOyster helps job seekers learn powerful, effective resume writing and winning job interview skills through products such as ResumeCoach and InterviewCoach. To get started, and to get your free video career advice and job search tips newsletter, visit <http://www.careeroyster.com>.

““6 QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING YOUR INTERVIEW



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THAT WILL MAKE AN EMPLOYER WANT TO HIRE YOU”””

It's common advice among job seekers: when you're interviewing, you need to interview the employer right back. After all, you're the one, who is potentially going to fill this position, so you need to know if it's going to be a good fit, right?

Except that while salary ranges, benefits and schedule flexibility are important details you deserve answers to, hiring managers don't appreciate questions like these until at least your second interview (or maybe even after they've made you an offer).

During your first interview, the "impress me dance" is still in full swing. **When a potential employer asks if you have any questions, they don't want inquiries about parking validation; they want to see if you're prepared, educated and inquisitive.**

Here are six questions to ask at the end of your interview that will help you master the twisted tango of getting hired:

1. If I were to start tomorrow, what would be the top priority on my to-do list?

The answer to this question will give you more insight into the current state of the position, while the question shows that you're invested and interested in learning how you can start things off with a bang. The added bonus lies in the Jedi mind trick: now you've already got your interviewer picturing you as the position holder.

2. What would you say are the top two personality traits someone needs to do this job well?

The answer to this will be very telling. "Creative" and "intuitive" can be translated to mean you will be on your own, while "patient" and "collaborative" could mean the opposite. Not only will this question allow you to feel out whether you're going to be a good fit; it will also get your interviewer to look past the paper resume and see you as an individual.

3. What improvements or changes do you hope the new candidate will bring to this position?

This answer can shed light on what might have made the last person lose (or leave) the job, and it also tips you off on the path to success. Asking this shows an employer you are eager to be the best candidate to ever fill this position.

4. I know this company prides itself on X and Y, so what would you say is the most important aspect of your culture?



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“6 QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING YOUR INTERVIEW THAT WILL MAKE AN EMPLOYER WANT TO HIRE YOU” (continued...)

This type of question is sure to impress, as it shows that you’ve done your research on the company and gives you a chance to gain insight into what values are held to the highest ideal.

5. Do you like working here?

This question might take interviewers back a bit, but their answer will be telling. A good sign is a confident smile and an enthusiastic “yes” paired with an explanation as to why. If they shift in their seat, look away, cough and start with “Well...”, consider it a red flag.

Regardless of their answer, employers appreciate getting a chance to reflect on their own opinions, and this turns the interview process into more of a conversation.

6. Is there anything that stands out to you that makes you think I might not be the right fit for this job?



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“CHANGE THE WORLD: TREAT THE INTERVIEW AS A SALES CALL”

By Lou Adler, creator of Performance-based Hiring and the author of the Amazon Top 10 business best-seller

Most employment interviews are a waste of time. Candidates think they're about correctly answering the interviewer's questions and interviewers think they're designed to figure out if the candidate meets the requirements listed in the job description. They're not.

Google just found out after exhaustive research that brainteasers don't predict on-the-job performance. (To be a bit cynical here, this is not new news. I read about this classic problem in the mid-1990s doing research for my first book.) The bigger news at Google is that they found that very few of their hiring managers have a good track record using the interview for predicting on-the-job success. Google's revelation is not uncommon.

Given that the common and traditional interview is flawed, including the vaunted behavioral interview (see below), what is a job-seeker, hiring manager, recruiter or anyone on the interviewing team to do? I suggest all parties take a page from any well-trained sales department and convert the employment interview into a discovery call. Here's salesforce.com's blog describing this core activity. In essence, the idea is to use the sales call to find out the customer's needs and then craft a solution that demonstrates your product is a perfect fit. Whatever side of the desk you're on, this is what interviewing should be about.

During the interview the buyer and seller roles often switch, so conducting parallel discovery can become a bit unnerving – similar to dating. Regardless, here are the basic steps.

The Discovery Process for the Job-seeker

Step 1: Find out what's being sold. Don't assume the person interviewing you is competent. If the interviewer is either box-checking skills, asking pointless questions, or asking brainteasers, begin your discovery right away. This starts by asking questions at the beginning of the interview to uncover real job needs. Here are some questions that will get you started:

- What's the focus of the job?
- What are some big problems or issues the person will face right away?
- How will performance be measured?
- Are there any team related challenges?
- Why is the position open?

Step 2: Prove you're the solution. Once you have some understanding of the job, you'll then need to describe some past accomplishment that demonstrates you're capable of doing the work required. Use the SAFW two-minute response to form your answers. This involves providing a 1-2 minute overview of a major past accomplishment with just enough details to naturally prompt the interviewer to ask some clarifying follow-up questions. You'll need to do this for at least 2-3 of the most important aspects of the job during the interview in order to “win the sale.”



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“CHANGE THE WORLD: TREAT THE INTERVIEW AS A SALES CALL” (continued...)

Step 3: At the end of the interview ask for the order, or at least find out the next steps. Something like, “Based on what we’ve discussed, do you think my background is a good fit for the position? (Pause) What are the next steps in the process?” If you are a good fit for the job, the interviewer will be specific about the next steps. A vague response is not a good sign.

The Discovery Process for the Interviewer

Step 1: Be different. Don’t ask behavioral questions since all candidates have practiced answering these. (Here’s Google’s multi-million answers.)

Step 2: Figure out what you’re selling. Start by making sure everyone on the hiring team is familiar with the performance-based job description listing the top 4-5 performance objectives required for on-the-job success. Interviewing accuracy is dramatically improved when everyone knows what they’re evaluating.

Step 3: Early in the interview find out why the candidate is looking for another job, most likely it’s something involving economic need or lack of sufficient career growth. You’ll use the balance of the interview to determine if your position meets these needs. This will be essential for negotiating the offer, especially if the person is a passive candidate and/or has multiple opportunities.

Step 4: Validate what you’re buying. Use The Most Important Interview Question of All Time and the associated fact-finding questions to find out if the candidate is competent and motivated to do the actual work required. This involves describing one of the performance objectives and then asking the candidate to describe a comparable accomplishment. You’ll need to do this for the 3-4 most important performance objectives to make an accurate assessment. From this you’ll be able to determine if the gap between what you’re offering and what the candidate has done is a career move, a lateral transfer or something below or beyond the candidate’s current abilities.

Step 5: Determine thinking skills. Rather than using brainteasers to figure out thinking and problem-solving ability, ask about a real problem the person in the role is likely to face. (This is the second half of the two-question Performance-based Interview.) The purpose is to get into a back-and-forth dialogue to determine if the candidate’s approach to solving the problem is appropriate. Focus on the process of getting the answer, not the answer itself. Then Anchor the question by getting an example of what the person has done that’s most comparable to the problem being discussed. (See Anchor and Visualize questioning pattern.)

Step 6: If the candidate is someone you’d like to consider, describe the opportunity gap and present your job as a true career move. Then find out the candidate’s interest in further discussion. (Here’s the complete explanation behind the selling process involved in negotiating offers.)

Whether you’re on the hiring or job-seeking side it’s important to recognize that an interview is a sales call. While figuring out who’s the buyer and seller is a function of supply and demand, meeting the performance objectives for the job is what’s being bought and sold. Unfortunately, too many companies, job-seekers and interviewers lose sight of the core purpose of the interview. You won’t, if you put yourself in the shoes of a top sales rep on a 100% commission plan, and are always fully prepared.



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50 BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Leadership:

1. Tell me about a time when you accomplished something significant that wouldn't have happened if you had not been there to make it happen.
2. Tell me about a time when you were able to step into a situation, take charge, muster support and achieve good results.
3. Describe for me a time when you may have been disappointed in your behavior.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to discipline or fire a friend.
5. Tell me about a time when you've had to develop leaders under you.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Initiative and Follow-through:

1. Give me an example of a situation where you had to overcome major obstacles to achieve your objectives.
2. Tell me about a goal that you set that took a long time to achieve or that you are still working towards.
3. Tell me about a time when you won (or lost) an important contract.
4. Tell me about a time when you used your political savvy to push a program through that you really believed in.
5. Tell me about a situation that you had significant impact on because of your follow-through.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Thinking and Problem Solving:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to analyze facts quickly, define key issues, and respond immediately or develop a plan that produced good results.
2. If you had to do that activity over again, how would you do it differently?
3. Describe for me a situation where you may have missed an obvious solution to a problem.
4. Tell me about a time when you anticipated potential problems and developed preventative measures.
5. Tell me about a time when you surmounted a major obstacle.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Communication:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to present a proposal to a person in authority and were able to do this successfully.
2. Tell me about a situation where you had to be persuasive and sell your idea to someone else.
3. Describe for me a situation where you persuaded team members to do things your way. What was the effect?
4. Tell me about a time when you were tolerant of an opinion that was different from yours.



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50 BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (continued...)

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Working Effectively with Others:

1. Give me an example that would show that you've been able to develop and maintain productive relations with others, though there were differing points of view.
2. Tell me about a time when you were able to motivate others to get the desired results.
3. Tell me about a difficult situation with a co-worker, and how you handled it.
4. Tell me about a time when you played an integral role in getting a team (or work group) back on track.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Work Quality:

1. Tell me about a time when you wrote a report that was well received. What do you attribute that to?
2. Tell me about a time when you wrote a report that was not well received. What do you attribute that to?
3. Tell me about a specific project or program that you were involved with that resulted in improvement in a major work area.
4. Tell me about a time when you set your sights too high (or too low).

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Creativity and Innovation:

1. Tell me about a situation in which you were able to find a new and better way of doing something significant.
2. Tell me about a time when you were creative in solving a problem.
3. Describe a time when you were able to come up with new ideas that were key to the success of some activity or project.
4. Tell me about a time when you had to bring out the creativity in others.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Priority Setting:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to balance competing priorities and did so successfully.
2. Tell me about a time when you had to pick out the most important things in some activity and make sure those got done.
3. Tell me about a time that you prioritized the elements of a complicated project.
4. Tell me about a time when you got bogged down in the details of a project.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Decision Making:

1. Describe for me a time when you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
2. Tell me about a time when you were forced to make an unpopular decision.
3. Describe for me a time when you had to adapt to a difficult situation. What did you do?
4. Tell me about a time when you made a bad decision
5. Tell me about a time when you hired (or fired) the wrong person.



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50 BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (continued...)

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Ability to Work in Varying Work Conditions (stress, changing deadlines, etc.):

1. Tell me about a time when you worked effectively under pressure.
2. Tell me about a time when you were unable to complete a project on time.
3. Tell me about a time when you had to change work mid-stream because of changing organizational priorities.
4. Describe for me what you do to handle stressful situations.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Delegation:

1. Tell me about a time when you delegated a project effectively.
2. Tell me about a time when you did a poor job of delegating.
3. Describe for me a time when you had to delegate to a person with a full workload, and how you went about doing it.

If You're Looking For Behaviors that Revolve Around Customer Service:

1. Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an irate customer.
2. Tell me about one or two customer-service related programs that you've done that you're particularly proud of.
3. Tell me about a time when you made a lasting, positive impression on a customer.



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5 GREAT ANSWERS TO AWKWARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

By Dominique Rodgers, Monster Contributing Writer, April 2014

"I see all the time I spent studying up on Company X's competition was a total waste. I wanted to offer some new product suggestions in my interview, but obviously I should have focused more on determining my spirit animal!"

Have you left an interview with similar thoughts before? Most people have. Whether you are dealing with an inexperienced interviewer or a pro who's deliberately trying to catch you off guard to see how you handle yourself, sometimes these awkward questions come out of left field. And it's your job to deal with them.

Here are five great answers to awkward interview questions.

Tell me about yourself.

This one seems deceptively easy. Who knows more about you than you, right? This question gets awkward, though, because it's so vague and broad. Rather than race through potential topics on the spot, you should be prepared beforehand.

"I recommend memorizing a few general statements about yourself. Here is an example of what to say: My name is (X) and I have (X number) years of experience in (X field). My strengths include (choose 3 strengths) and I'm currently looking for a position because (X reason) and this position interests me because (X reason)," says Tracey Russell, a recruiter with Naviga Business Services, a national sales and marketing recruiting firm.

What's your passion?

This one gets awkward because candidates assume the interviewer wants to hear a work-related answer. That might work if you're applying to be a zookeeper and your passion really is animals. Otherwise, no one will believe bean-counting is your life's bliss, so don't pretend.

Russell explains, "You want to choose an answer that is not work related. Give an interesting tidbit about yourself that will help you stand out from other people. For example, if your passion is health and nutrition, don't just say you like to work out and eat healthy. Instead, describe how you've recently taken up Bikram yoga and grow your own organic vegetables in your garden." The more details you provide that show you're a well-rounded person, the better.

Why are you looking to leave your current job?

This question is an absolute minefield. Does the interviewer need to know that your kids' tuition just increased and you really need more cash? Or that your current boss aggravates you like a week full of Mondays? Absolutely not.

You don't have to reveal every reason you're considering leaving, says career coach Caitlin Graham. You should also never reveal anything personal or financial as the basis for the change. It may make the interviewer question your professionalism. Instead, Graham recommends "anything that comes from the desire to make a professional transition" such as "looking for more of a challenge" or a desire to enter a slightly different area of the industry.

How do we know you'll stay?

If you've made a few job transitions lately with different companies, you should be prepared to answer questions. It may be that your industry is a volatile one or that you just had numerous great opportunities. Either way, the company you're interviewing with will need some reassurances.



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5 GREAT ANSWERS TO AWKWARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (continued...)

A great answer would be one that focuses on your learning and adaptability at each position, how in-demand your skills are, and how in making these changes you've come to appreciate a stable work environment and the sense of accomplishment that comes along with that, says Fred Cooper, managing partner at Compass HR Consulting.

If you were a fruit or a pizza topping, what would you be?

Yes, interviewers do occasionally pull out the random questions just to see what happens. Executive and business coach Beth Carter recommends answers that will showcase your skills and personality. Her responses: an apple or ham and pineapple. An apple is tough on the outside and sweet on the inside, showcasing Carter's strategic implementation and soft skills. Ham and pineapple seem like a bad combo, but their diversity actually goes together beautifully, and Carter likes to use diverse teams to accomplish common goals.



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SAMPLE THANK YOU FOR THE INTERVIEW LETTER

Date

Joseph Candidate
838 Marian Way
Atlanta, GA 30069
(770) 517-2660

Mr. Jack Smith
Director of Human Resources
The SearchLogix Group
2950 Cherokee Street
Building 1000
Kennesaw, GA 30144

Dear John:

Opening Sentence: Express sincere appreciation for the interview

2nd Paragraph: Reemphasize your strongest qualifications; draw attention to how those qualifications match the job requirements

3rd Paragraph: Reiterate interest in the position; use this opportunity to provide or offer supplemental information not previously given

4th Paragraph: Close for the next step

Last Paragraph: Restate your appreciation

Respectfully yours,

Joseph Candidate

NOTE: Before printing or sending, ALWAYS check your spelling.



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10 REASONS FOR NOT ACCEPTING A COUNTEROFFER

1. You have now made your employer aware that you are unhappy. From this day on, your loyalty will always be in question.
2. When promotion time comes around, your employer will remember who is loyal and who is not.
3. When times get tough, your employer will begin the cutbacks with you.
4. Accepting a counteroffer is an insult to your intelligence and a blow to your personal pride: **you were bought**.
5. Where is the money for the counteroffer coming from? All companies have wage and salary guidelines, which must be followed. Is your next raise early?
6. Your company will immediately start looking to replace you with a new person at a better price.
7. The same circumstances that caused you to consider a change will repeat themselves in the future, even if you accept a counteroffer.
8. Statistics show that if you accept a counteroffer, the probability of voluntarily leaving in six months or being let go in one year is extremely high.
9. Once the word gets out, the relationship that you now enjoy with your co-workers will never be the same. You will lose the personal satisfaction of peer group acceptance.
10. Is this the type of company you want to work for if you have to threaten to resign before they give you what you are worth?



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“THE DEAD MEAT THEORY- WHY COUNTEROFFERS DON’T PAY OFF”

By Mark Bregman

John Q. Executive walks nervously into his boss’ office to announce, “Mr. Employer, I’m really sorry to have to tell you this, but I’ve decided to accept another position. The XYZ Company made me an offer I couldn’t refuse.” Mr. Employer doesn’t miss a beat. “Wait a minute, John. We can’t afford to lose you. Tell me about this other offer.” Almost every executive will play this scene in his or her career. When the counteroffer is put on the table, what happens next is critical; not only for a particular situation, but also as an overall career strategy. Before even considering a counteroffer, John Q. needs to look at these questions.

1. Why is the boss so afraid to lose me?
2. What will my future be here if I stay?
3. What will others think of my decision?
4. What brought me to submit my resignation in the first place?
5. If I accept the counteroffer, am I a winner or “dead meat?”

I have seen many people caught in this scenario, and have come to a definitive conclusion. It almost never pays to accept the counteroffer. Let’s look at some possible answers to John Q’s questions:

1. The Motivation of the Boss:

If John Q. is good enough to get that super offer from XYZ Co., then Mr. Employer almost certainly values his work. He may even like John. But, for most employers the first thoughts that come to mind upon receiving a resignation are: How is this going to inconvenience me? How long might it take to find a replacement? Who will run the department in the interim? Who will train John Q’s replacement? In many cases, the first answer that comes to mind is, “Let me buy some time to sort this out.” If John Q. can be persuaded to stay, the employer can, at his leisure evaluate the impact of John’s departure, Mr. Employer might put out a confidential search with a recruiter for John’s replacement (we’ve done several of these). He can examine John’s subordinates to see if any can be groomed to succeed him. Mr. Employer can even bring in John’s potential replacement as a “consultant”, and let John train his successor. So what if these steps cause the employer to shell out \$20,000 to \$40,000 more in annualized salary. The three to six months it takes to sort things out will be inexpensive compared to the potential cost of sudden loss of a key manager. And, odds are, the boss isn’t going to gamble on John Q’s continued loyalty much longer. Despite the counteroffer flattery, Mr. Employer may decide that his most logical long range solution is to get the replacement on board as soon as possible.

2. John’s Future in His Current Company:

John is still John. His company is stilling the same. If the match were really so wonderful, John wouldn’t have been vulnerable to XYZ Company’s offer. Will an elevated title or a few dollars really improve the essence of the relationship? Maybe, but only for the short term. If the boss hasn’t already done so, soon after giving the counteroffer, he will begin to second-guess John’s contribution to the firm. Mr. Employer may feel betrayed, blackmailed. He may worry that other employees will use job offers to leverage their positions sometime in the future.



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“THE DEAD MEAT THEORY- WHY COUNTEROFFERS DON’T PAY OFF” (continued...)

When the next scheduled salary review comes up, the boss has a chance to “get even.” Without another outside offer in hand, John Q will have to accept the boss’ excuse: “Don’t you remember, John, I just gave you that big raise when XYZ tried to steal you away.” When a real promotion comes up, will the company choose to advance the person who had been looking and had to be induced into staying? Or will they reward a loyal, dedicated coworker who has demonstrated a genuine commitment? Or even worse, might they hire from the outside, over John Q’s head?

3. What People Will Think:

If John Q accepts the counteroffer, certainly some people won’t be happy. Clearly, the XYZ Co., which is already anticipating his arrival, will be disappointed. If a recruiter was involved, John’s credibility will be strained by the reversal. What about his references? What if they see his actions as a career leveraging maneuver? What if they feel used, or worry that they may be “manipulated” in the future? How about John’s coworkers? Regardless of how discrete he’s been, someone, if not everyone, is sure to know he had planned to leave. The office grapevine rarely deals kindly with these matters. Maybe subordinates may have started jockeying for his job. Maybe they are relieved he is leaving! Or, maybe he was so well liked; his fellow employees are planning his farewell testimonial luncheon. As rumors circulate, escalate and demand denial, John Q. will get the short end with his peers. John’s sudden reversal may be perceived as fearful, a sign of weakness. Respect for him may drop. His relationships may never be the same.

4. Why John Had the New Offer:

A candidate for a job change is either dissatisfied with his current position, or tempted by the positive aspects of the new opportunity. Or, more usually, it’s a combination of both factors. As a search consultant, I will admit that I can’t get an executive to see a potential new employer unless he is motivated (nor would I want to force such a meeting). It is that motivation that led John Q to see the XYZ Company, listen to their pitch, and interview well enough to elicit an offer. We must assume that John Q. Executive was smart enough to carefully analyze the offer, listing and evaluating all the plusses and minuses before accepting. A clearly convinced John Q. marched into the boss’s office to resign, only to be confronted by the counteroffer. In the face of such an emotional encounter, many people would be hard pressed to remain cool and logical and focused on, the original intent, to resign and move on. However, all the factors that preceded that moment remain unchanged. John needs to remember that he has decided that XYZ represents the better long term opportunity.



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“THE DEAD MEAD THEORY- WHY COUNTEROFFERS DON’T PAY OFF” (continued...)

5. A Winner or Dead Meat?

I trust that the reader will not be offended by the purposely outrageous phrase that I use to characterize the result of accepting a counteroffer. I certainly don't regard people with so callous an attitude. I have found, though, that many executives in the emotional throes of a decision about whether to accept a counteroffer need to be shocked into recognition of the downside risk. Let me emphasize that these observations are not the casual opinion of the author. In meetings and interviews with many hundreds of executives, our consultants have spoken to dozens who have been involved in counteroffer situations. In less than 20 percent of the cases, the acceptance of such an offer worked out satisfactorily. The overwhelming majority of the executives we have talked to have expressed regret; based on the negative results I have talked about above. They have admitted that it is difficult to see the pitfalls while their current firm is “courting” them to stay. The situation is just too emotional. Remember, the new employer considers you a winner. They are the ones willing to pay a premium for our services and start you out in a higher position. The reasons for making the job change are rarely strictly financial and those reasons will still be there.

The best advice is to make the change you have agreed to, and don't look back. Keep relationships with important people in your old organization intact, but politely deliver the firm message that you have decided to move on. If it is made clear that you are not open to renegotiation, you may be able to prevent the counteroffer attempt, and save embarrassment for all concerned. You decide which way you will end up a winner.

For more tips and tricks visit the Headhunter's Secret Guide



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SAMPLE RESIGNATION LETTER

Date

Joseph Candidate
838 Marian Way
Atlanta, GA 30069
(770) 517-2660

Mr. Jack Smith
Director of Human Resources
The SearchLogix Group
2950 Cherokee Street
Building 1000
Kennesaw, GA 30144

Dear Jack:

I have enjoyed and appreciated the time that I have worked here at ____ (Company) ____.

It has been a valuable experience; however, I have elected to accept another position elsewhere and will be resigning effective ____ (Day, Date) ____.

I have made a commitment to my new employer with regard to start date, so I can not extend beyond the customary two weeks notice; however, I will work diligently during this time to ensure a smooth transition.

I would greatly appreciate your respect of my carefully considered decision to make this change by not attempting to influence me to do otherwise. I am certain it is in my best interests to make this change.

Again, it has been a pleasure being associated with you and ____ (Company) ____.

Respectfully,

Joseph Candidate



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“HOW TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN YOUR NEW JOB [5 USEFUL TACTICS]”

By Sunitha Narayanan

Drum roll, please! You have landed your first or new job. Congratulations! You are on your way to be career happy. But, wait, did you know that accepting an offer is only the tip of the iceberg? Recent research by Leadership IQ, a global leadership training and research company suggests that 46% new hires fail within the first 18 months while only 19% achieve success.

Raise the bar as you grow and begin this exciting journey of your life. I am going to share simple, practical ideas you can use right away to build career happiness on your first job. Consider it my gift to you as you begin a remarkable career!

Awesome Idea 1 – Be a savvy subordinate. Observe, observe and observe some more. Then, ask intelligent questions that help you understand what matters to your boss and colleagues. Your job is to make your boss successful. Offer your skills to give superior work EACH time and ask for projects. What are some “hot buttons” for your boss? FACT – 17% hires lack motivation to learn and excel.

Brilliant Idea 2 – Be likeable and approachable. Image matters – dress sharply, learn unwritten rules of acceptable behaviors and build your career reputation with integrity and discipline. Approachable behaviors include being pleasant, managing emotions and taking the time to know your colleagues. Cheerfully accept unwelcome tasks. How do you handle disappointments? FACT – 23% hires are unable to manage their emotions.

Grand Idea 3 – Be open to making mistakes. You will make mistakes. Mistakes help you show ownership, create solutions and build skills. So, accept feedback with grace, take responsibility to make changes and don't make the same mistake again, again and again. Recognize direct and indirect signals that people are giving you about your competence, skills, character and commitment. What might help you handle mistakes? FACT – 26% hires can't accept feedback.

Splendid Idea 4 – Be self-aware. Continue to reflect on and assess your personal and work values as well as your interests and skills as it relates to the culture of the organization. If you suppress your personal values you can compromise who you are and what you can contribute to the organization—this will lead to career unhappiness. What criteria can you use to know what is going well for you and what is not? FACT – 15% hires have the wrong temperament for the job.

Impressive Idea 5 – Be a life-long learner. Build your knowledge and talent. Stay current with trends in your field. Be an early adopter of new technology, processes and skills. Share generously and build expertise. Invite new learning opportunities. Stretch your mind. Become involved in your professional organization. What kind of learner are you? FACT – 11% hires lack necessary technical skills.

You are the person MOST invested in your future. Go ahead and own your career happiness – it is worth it! I wish you career abundance.