
Seven Things to Tell an Interviewer
Joe Turner, Career Coach

Many years ago when I hated what I was doing for a living, I was encouraged by my career coach to write down several short stories about times and events in my life where I influenced the outcome. I was stumped at first, but after a few days, I came up with more than 15 pages of stories of times in my life where I influenced the outcome and either grew myself and/or bettered the existence of either myself or others around me.

So what does this have to do with a job interview?

If you read other books on job interviews, you'll notice they feed you lists of interview questions and answers to memorize. An interview is not an interrogation, however it's a conversation. To make it that way you need to come armed with a multitude of small stories about both your business and personal lives.

When you go into an interview, you need to leave your nerves at the door. The best way to prepare is to be yourself. The best way to be yourself is to tell your own story (or stories).

This is especially great for the competency-based interview being used more today. In a traditional interview, the interviewer will ask you questions focused on whether you have the skills and knowledge needed to do the job. A competency-based interview goes further by asking you additional questions about your character and personal attributes that can better determine whether you fit their corporate culture. These are called "behavioral competencies."

A competency-based interviewer will spend about half the interview on your job skills, and about half on your behavioral competencies. He or she will be looking for evidence of how you have acted in real situations in the past.

An employer wants to find out:

- Are you an asset or liability? In other words, will you make money or save money for the company?
- Are you a team player? Will you fit into the corporate hierarchy or be like sand in the gears? Can you take and give (if appropriate) orders?

- Will you fit into the company culture? They don't want prima donnas.

The best way to show these traits is to take the initiative and have several personal stories that you can tell, taking maybe 30 to 90 seconds each.

You may want to start by developing your stories around these seven areas:

1. Times where you either made money or saved money for your current or previous company.
2. A crisis in your life or job and how you responded or recovered from it.
3. A time where you functioned as part of a team and what your contribution was.
4. A time in your career or job where you had to overcome stress.
5. A time in your job where you provided successful leadership or a sense of direction.
6. A failure that occurred in your job and how you overcame it.
7. Any seminal events that happened during your career to cause you to change direction and how that worked out for you.

I want to emphasize that an interview should not be an interrogation. It should be a conversation between two equals. When you accomplish this you come away a step closer to your goal of landing the job you really want, because...

It's the conversation that wins an interview, and it's the conversation that wins the job

To have a conversation, have your stories ready.

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