



DIVERSITY TOOLKIT



Decoding Your Job Interview

Part of the Career Strategy Series

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Today's Webinar

- Setting the Stage – What does the company want?
- Know Thyself – Prepping your information
- Know Them, Too – Prepping with company information
- More Universal Questions – What do the questions really mean?
- After the Interview
- Additional Questions or Ideas?

A Little About Me

- In addition to my role as Executive Director of the NUDC, I am an executive search consultant, primarily placing senior executives in the non-profit arena.
- Recent searches have included Phoenix Art Museum, Santa Barbara Performing Arts Center, UC San Diego, Swallow Hill Music Association, and the Los Angeles Master Chorale.
- I also serve on the Board of Directors of Californians for Higher Education and Old Stories: New Lives.

A Little About You

When did you last interview for a position – internal or external?

- A. Within the last year
- B. Within the last 5 years
- C. I haven't interviewed in many years

More About You

Do you expect to interview for a position within the coming 12 months?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what is the biggest concern you have about how to approach the interview process?
(Type in chat box.)

What Does the Company Want?

Setting the Stage

Why Do Companies Use Executive Search Consultants?

- Interview processes using an executive search consultant represent the positions for which the company is willing make a significant investment. There is a priority on closing a search successfully – for the consultant and for the HR team.
- The processes may be somewhat different than other searches and the time spent with candidates also may be different.

Your Experience

Have you ever been a candidate in a search led by outside counsel?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever used a search consultant for your department or company?

- Yes
- No

What Does the Interview Accomplish?

- The executive interview process is really about allowing the company (and your potential boss) to get a sense of how you will perform if hired.
- **What your interviewers really want is to be able to imagine you in the position. And succeeding in it.**
- In your preparation for and execution of your role in the interview process, you can help them see this.

What Are We Looking For?

What are we testing/checking in the interview process?

- Strategic Thinking Capability
- Importance You Place on this Opportunity: shown by your level of preparation
- Knowledge of the Company: and where you can add value
- Emotional Intelligence: ability to pick up on cues
- Extemporaneous Speaking Ability: talking with little apparent preparation; talking with people you haven't met before
- Chemistry: fit with existing management team (and Board)
- Business and Personal Etiquette: ability to represent the company

This is what we mean by Executive Readiness

Make Each Answer Count

- As with most questions in life, there is a simple answer and a strategic one to interview questions.
- Of course it is imperative to be authentic in your responses, but you can also use each response to show your understanding of the company and your ability to help lead it.
- **You should also expect that with everything you say about a past job or a past supervisor, Board member or subordinate, your company interviewer will be thinking, “What will she/he say about us?”**
- Authenticity is extremely importance, but being strategic in your answers as well is like grabbing the brass ring.

Strategic Insights on You

Know Thyself

First Seek to Understand

- There are always a number of questions in an interview process that seek to get a sense of the essence of you. Your feelings and your motivations.
- I think of these as the “tell me why” questions.
- With every question you can pull from your essence to answer authentically but also to use your answers in a strategic way.
- Therefore, it’s important to know your own feelings and motivations.

Why Do You Want This Job?

Every interviewer will ask this of you in some way. Only you know what's motivating you to apply for this external or internal position.

- This is my dream job!
- I want to get out of my current situation
- I need more Hamiltons

Whatever the motivation, you must craft out the reason that you will be sharing with your potential employers.

And, remember, you want it to be strategic. Going the strategic route only works if you have done solid preparation and review in advance of the interview. If you have not, you can't fake your way to strategic.

Why Do You Want This Job?

Here are some answers I have received. What do you think?

- A. I need to make more money and this is a good opportunity.
- B. My family and I have always wanted to be in this city. And I am really interested in ACME organization.
- C. I think I would like to work at ACME organization. I can see myself succeeding there.
- D. I have followed ACME with great interest over the years. I would like to be part of its success and here is how I can see myself contributing.

Is there one of these that you would find most compelling from someone you were interviewing?

Who Has Been Your Greatest Professional Success?

- This is your chance to shine. Pick a success that not only highlights your great work, but shows your strategic ability.
- In other words, don't just say, "I increased sales in my unit by 25%." Tell how you came up with a strategy, led it to fruition and share the result.
- Be prepared with data about this success. It may have been a few years ago, so go back and research the numbers. The last thing you want is to be unable to recall the details of a successful project or initiative.

Claiming Success - The Use of “I”

- There is a lot of data that tell us that women tend to highlight teamwork when reporting success – using “we” much more than “I”.
- It is very important to temper this instinct. Most of us got a lesson in childhood about not bragging. But the executives who are considering your candidacy will wonder how involved you were in the success of your operation if you don't claim it.
- Find an authentic way in which you can be comfortable claiming your successes. You may have to practice this.
- For men, this can be the reverse. You can sound too self-focused and not able to lead if you don't acknowledge your team at all.

What Has Been Your Biggest Professional Mistake?

- This, again, is a chance for you to shine light on your self-awareness. And your authenticity and strategic thinking.
- Be ready to tell the interviewer about the mistake, and make it a strategic one. And to show what you learned from the experience.
- It can be very difficult to talk about our mistakes without feeling defensive, especially because the interviewer is likely to probe to see what you missed or how you could have done better. You may have to practice this a few times.

Rate These Mistakes

Here are some answers I've received.

- A. "I can't think of any."
- B. "This isn't a mistake I made, but one of my ___ (subordinates, supervisors, Board)."
- C. "Well, I've made a few in my time. This one was when I launched an initiative that we hadn't tested sufficiently. I thought we had covered all our bases, but we hadn't, and this is what I learned..."

Does one answer resonate more with you?

Why Are You the Best Candidate?

- This is a tough question, since it goes back to our “don’t brag” upbringing. Our friends at IBM have a saying, “quiet confidence,” about their corporate culture on this type of question.
- Here’s an answer I have found I like to hear. “Well I can’t speak for how I compare to your other candidates, but here’s what I can tell you about how I can add great value to ACME Corporation in this role.”

How do you answer this question?

(Please type in chat box)

What's the Worst Boss You Ever Had?

- This is a minefield question. I never ask it; I can usually get the information this would elicit through a different question.
- What we know is, we don't want to trash one boss before a prospective one who is imagining us working for her or him.
- One way to handle this is to share both good points and bad. “This boss was extremely (talented, smart) but we really weren't in sync around how to handle (customer relations, strategic planning), etc.

How would you answer this?

Please type in chat box.

How Do We Make All This Feel Natural?

- Personally, I like to write my answers to the questions out and review them until I am comfortable with them.
- If I have enough time before the interviews begin, I also enlist a family member or close friend to ask me these questions and any unscripted ones they can think of.

Being Aware of the Company

Know Them Too

Know Them, Too

- In order to show your strategic benefit to the company and your potential department/division, you must know about them.
- I have never seen a situation where candidate research on the potential employer was not appreciated.
- It is also **really** beneficial to do research on the people with whom you will be interviewing – including the search consultant.

Preparing for the Interview

- Annual Reports
- Rate Case Filings
- Investor Documents
- General Literature Search
- Industry Publication Search
- LinkedIn
- What other sources do you use? **(type in chat box)**

(And What They Mean)

More Universal Questions

Universal Questions

What are some questions you are asked at every interview?

(Please type in chat box)

Tell Me About Your Career Highlights and Your Reasons for Job Transitions

- This is the question where we let you tell us the story of your career. It is, to some extent, the narrative of you.
- **However, it also is a test.** Of course. We want to see if you can organize your narrative in a clear and concise way. If you can be strategic in what you learned from your past positions.
- We want you to tell us why you transitioned from one position to the next. **That's a test, too.** We want to see if you can share the reasons for your transition in a professional manner, without disparaging.

How Should You Prepare For This?

- At least 48 hours before the interview (longer if you have more notice), sit down with your resume and write a narrative of the experiences that have had the most impact on making you the talented, strategic executive that you are. Read it out loud to hear how it sounds. Use a stop watch. This narrative should be something you can do in 10 minutes and in 5 minutes, depending on the audience. Make edits to your document.
- Wait a few hours and give it another pass. Again, listen to what you are saying, are you highlighting the strategic nature of your career journey? Are you being authentic **and** professional?

What is Your Salary Requirement?

- This is one of the most difficult questions a candidate is asked. Often it comes early in the process, which can be disconcerting.
- Here's my advice. Do a competitive analysis. What are the people who would be your counterparts in other similar companies paid? What are the people who would be your lateral peers paid? Hoovers is a great resource for this information.
- There is a movement to remove this question from interviews in some states. However for now, I'd assume someone will ask.

How do you set your salary requirements?

(Type in chat box)

Questions

More to Consider

Learning From Our Fellow Men and Women

- “I can’t remember what year I worked there. Do you have a copy of my resume?”
- “Our CEO didn’t take my advice and they got what they deserved.”
- “I didn’t like working there. They didn’t understand me.”
- “Tell me about the products of your company? I haven’t had time to look at your website or annual report.”
- “I think you should consider having a mobile friendly site for your ratepayers.” (Interviewer is thinking, “We have had one for a year.”)

What Was I Thinking?

What is the most unwise thing you have said in an interview?

(Type in Chat Box)

The Interviewer Works for the Company

- Whether you are interviewing with a search consultant or with a company executive, always remember **that the interviewer's duty is to the company, not to you.**
- You should expect that there is nothing you tell the interviewer that she/he does not report to the company, if it is applicable.
- **Don't say what you don't want the company to hear.** Many search consultants take verbatim notes in the early interviews. We will tell you this. So, “don't write that down, okay?” after you just slammed your last boss is not going to be effective.

Everyone Else Works for the Company

- Most senior executive interviews will include interviews or “get to know you” sessions for you with C-suite colleagues and likely potential reports.
- It is important to keep in mind that these folks also work for the company. Whatever you say to them, should be something you would be comfortable saying to the ultimate decision maker.
- **It also is possible that someone with whom you are meeting would like this job, too.**

Now What?

After the Interview

When is the Interview Over?

- A. The interview is just during the day time. The social times are for us to get to know each other.
- B. The interview is over when I am in my hotel. I'm off duty if I run into someone in the gym.
- C. The interview is over when I get back to my house.

The Social Thing

A key component of the senior executive's job is to represent the company in social situations. Here is a little social quiz.

Situation: You're at a dinner with your prospective CEO and several potential colleagues. How much should you drink?

- A. As much as usual, you want to be social.
- B. Well below your limit – one or two at most.
- C. Don't ever drink in an interview setting.

Listen to Your Mom

- It's like your Mom said, always use your manners. "Please" and "thank you" are extremely important.
- If you are interviewing with a company that does business in Asia, make sure you present your card correctly and that you treat the cards presented to you correctly.
- **Thank you notes are appreciated and the lack of them is noticed.**
- As an interviewer what do **you** like to see in a thank you note from a candidate? **(Type in chat box.)**

Wrap Up

Be Ready for Interviews

- Know yourself and your experience
- Know the company and where you can add value
- Think and plan your answers to the expected questions, this will leave you better prepared for the unexpected questions
- Think and speak strategically and authentically
- Help the interviewers see you as the strong candidate you are
- Allow them to see your passion for the position
- Make sure you “ask for the order”

Time for Additional Questions

Type your questions into the chat box



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