

## Q1. Tell me about yourself.

**TRAPS:** Beware; about 80% of all interviews begin with this “innocent” question. Many candidates, unprepared for the question, skewer themselves by rambling, recapping their life story, delving into ancient work history or personal matters.

### **BEST ANSWER:**

- Start with the present and tell why you are well qualified for the position.
- Remember that the key to all successful interviewing is to match your qualifications to what the interviewer is looking for.
- In other words *you must sell what the buyer is buying. This is the single most important strategy in job hunting.*

So, before you answer this or *any* question it's imperative that you try to uncover your interviewer's greatest need, want, problem or goal.

To do so, make you take these two steps:

1. Do all the homework you can before the interview to uncover *this person's* wants and needs (not the generalized needs of the industry or company)
2. As early as you can in the interview, ask for a more complete description of what the position entails. You might say: “I have a number of accomplishments I'd like to tell you about, but I want to make the best use of our time together and talk directly to your needs. To help me do, that, could you tell me more about the most important priorities of this position? All I know is what I (heard from the recruiter, read in the classified ad, etc.)”

Then, *ALWAYS follow-up with a second and possibly, third question*, to draw out his needs even more. Surprisingly, it's usually this *second* or *third* question that unearths what the interviewer is *most* looking for.

You might ask simply, "And in addition to that?..." or, "Is there anything else you see as essential to success in this position?:"

This process will not feel easy or natural at first, because it is easier simply to answer questions, but only if you uncover the employer's wants and needs will your answers make the most sense. Practice asking these key questions before giving your answers, the process will feel more natural *and you will be light years ahead of the other job candidates you're competing with.*

After uncovering what the employer is looking for, describe why the needs of this job bear striking parallels to tasks you've succeeded at before. Be sure to illustrate with specific examples of your responsibilities and especially your achievements, all of which are geared to present yourself as a perfect match for the needs he has just described.

## Q2. *What are your greatest strengths?*

**TRAPS:** This question seems like a softball lob, but be prepared. You don't want to come across as egotistical or arrogant. Neither is this a time to be humble.

**BEST ANSWER:** You know that your key strategy is to first uncover your interviewer's greatest wants and needs before you answer questions. And from Question 1, you know how to do this.

Prior to any interview, you should have a list mentally prepared of your greatest strengths. You should also have, a specific example or two, which illustrates each strength, an example chosen from your most recent and most impressive achievements.

You should, have this list of your greatest strengths and corresponding examples from your achievements so well committed to memory that you can recite them cold after being shaken awake at 2:30AM.

Then, once you uncover your interviewer's greatest wants and needs, you can choose those achievements from your list that best match up.

As a general guideline, the 10 most desirable traits that all employers love to see in their employees are:

1. A proven track record as an achiever...*especially if your achievements match up with the employer's greatest wants and needs.*
2. Intelligence...management "savvy".
3. Honesty...integrity...a decent human being.
4. Good fit with corporate culture...someone to feel comfortable with...a team player who meshes well with interviewer's team.
5. Likeability...positive attitude...sense of humor.
6. Good communication skills.
7. Dedication...willingness to walk the extra mile to achieve excellence.
8. Definiteness of purpose...clear goals.
9. Enthusiasm...high level of motivation.
10. Confident...healthy...a leader.

**Q3.**

*What are your greatest weaknesses?*

**TRAPS:** Beware - this is an eliminator question, designed to shorten the candidate list. Any admission of a weakness or fault will earn you an "A" for honesty, but an "F" for the interview.

**PASSABLE ANSWER:** Disguise strength as a weakness.

*Example:* "I sometimes push my people too hard. I like to work with a sense of urgency and everyone is not always on the same wavelength."

*Drawback:* This strategy is better than admitting a flaw, but it's so widely used, it is transparent to any experienced interviewer.

**BEST ANSWER:** (and another reason it's so important to get a thorough description of your interviewer's needs *before* you answer questions): Assure the interviewer that you can think of nothing that would stand in the way of your performing in this position with excellence. Then, quickly review your strongest qualifications.

*Example:* "Nobody's perfect, but based on what you've told me about this position, I believe I'd make an outstanding match. I know that when I hire people, I look for two things most of all. Do they have the *qualifications* to do the job well, and the *motivation* to do it well? Everything in my background shows I have both the qualifications and a strong desire to achieve excellence in whatever I take on. So I can say in all honesty that I see nothing that would cause you even a small concern about my ability or my strong desire to perform this job with excellence."

*Alternate strategy* (if you don't yet know enough about the position to talk about such a perfect fit): Instead of confessing a weakness, describe what you *like most* and *like least*, making sure that what you like most matches up with the most important qualification for success in the position, and what you like least is not essential.

*Example:* Let's say you're applying for a teaching position. "If given a choice, I like to spend as much time as possible in front of my prospects selling, as opposed to shuffling paperwork back at the office. Of course, I long ago learned the importance of filing paperwork properly, and I do it conscientiously. But what I really love to do is sell (if your interviewer were a sales manager, this should be music to his ears.)"