



## Questions You Need to NAIL!

I've had some great feedback from the initial newsletter in this series and two new questions have been requested.

They are:

- ◆ Tell us about a time when you had to make an unpopular decision. What was the outcome?
- ◆ What was the toughest decision you've ever had to make?

These are both great questions and I will gladly answer them in week 6 and 7. I encourage you to think of questions you've been asked or are afraid of being asked and send them in. Then instead of hitting "delete" after you read them here, save them either in their own "Questions You Need To Nail" file or print them and put them in a binder. If...no...not if...but when...you are in the situation of either responding to questions in an interview or creating your own for an interview, you will be ready. As a Career Coach, HR Practitioner, friend, parent, partner etc. the best advice I can give is prepare as much as you can...our careers span 40 years (unless we hit that \$50Million jackpot that's still out there!!!). These newsletters make it easy for you!

### What Makes You the Best Candidate?

Sometimes this question can appear slightly differently as well. It can also be something like "Why should I hire you?" Let me start with a brief personal story to highlight the impact of this question. I began my career with little experience working for a fabulous company where I learned, grew and contributed for over 20 years. I remember my initial two interviews for an advertised "Payroll Clerk" job and although I was very nervous, they were easy compared to what we go through today. "Just take me as I am" we all thought. I'm sure many of us have experienced that.

During the interview with my future boss, we chatted about personal stuff (it was ok way back then, most of the conversation was around cats...she had them and I had them!) just to get to know each other. It really broke the ice.

Then the bomb hit....she asked me 5 Payroll related questions. For each one my response was "No" – I haven't done this or I haven't done that. I had worked on different systems but I knew the fundamentals of payroll. After the 5 questions, she asked me why I thought I was the best candidate. My answer to her was that I knew the fundamentals of payroll, was able to learn quickly and I liked cats! The interview ended abruptly and she left the room. The Personnel Representative (Personnel...now I'm dating myself!) came back immediately and offered me the job. I was blown away as I was sure I didn't get the job, but to my pleasant surprise I did. Why? I was the best candidate that my future boss saw. I convinced her of that...not slim pickings by any means but I had what she wanted...a good mind, understood payroll concepts, the ability to learn, a sense of humour but most importantly she wanted someone who didn't know anything about their payroll system! You see, she had hired someone in the past who was "trained" but not to her liking and it caused her a lot of grief. Her criteria now was someone she could train not re-train! Or in her words, she wanted someone who knew nothing! (I like my version better LOL!). Her plan worked!

The reason for this example is to demonstrate how to instantly sell yourself or lose the opportunity. In the first article I introduced 3 steps to support you with the first question and how important they were. They continue to have importance throughout the interview...and your career. They are:

1. Understand what you are great at and learn to speak about it confidently.
2. Research the company, understand their needs and challenges; find out what the role entails and what the interviewers needs are.
3. Take the first opportunity to find out about immediate priorities within the role.

I surely didn't know my boss wanted someone "who didn't know anything" and had a sense of humour but I did know from the job ad that they were looking for someone who knew payroll, could learn quickly and I also knew the company wanted employees who would stay with them. Even though I was very nervous, I was able to present that with confidence.

When you know a company's greatest needs and wants and articulate solutions for that, it will give you an advantage over other candidates because you will give them a more powerful reason to hire you over anyone else.

When asked this question, walk through each of the position's requirements as they have been presented and let the interviewer know how you meet them. For example, three separate areas of need could be:

- ◆ Report Writing
- ◆ Machine Operator
- ◆ Increasing sales in a new company

"As you have described you need someone who can write detailed reports with recommendations on the finding of inspections. You've indicated you need someone with demonstrated experience in this field. This is where I've spent a significant amount of time. Over my x years in this field, I've inspected xxx buildings and written detailed reports for companies in x, x and x areas with recommendations for change including costs. These reports also go to government regulating bodies for approval. In majority of cases, I received full approvals right away and the best part is that most of these clients return again when they have a similar need."

"From what you've shared with me, you need someone who has mechanical ability, understands the production environment and is able to work well in a team. While working with x company for 20 years, I operated x number of machines with x, x and x capabilities. With each operation, new skills and technology had to be learned. As we constantly had to meet our production quotas, learning quickly was essential. Also, each machine had its own personality and understanding how to get the best from it took a solid understanding of what it's capabilities were and manipulating it to that capacity. We also always knew that meeting our own quota was only part of the equation. It took the entire plant to get jobs out on time. Working in different areas of the plant and understanding our products, we all helped each other out to meet out deadlines."

"As a new company, you need someone who can generate sales from the ground up. I believe I have the experience you are looking for. In the last two jobs I have had, I have been responsible for new account sales. In one case I met my targets earlier than expected and in the second case I exceeded my targets by 10%. I am able to repeat this with my solid contacts, relationship selling ability and truly believing in the product I am selling."

These examples all started with a confirmation of their need. They are varied and demonstrate that you can adapt your experience to any type of interview. Taking the time to understanding your skills is vital. I encourage you to do that starting **now**. You too can stand out from the crowd! Even if you are not looking for a new opportunity at this moment, get good at these answers to help you understand your value in your current role.

*No more can we get by with liking cats and knowing nothing! LOL*

Next week we will cover the question my clients cringe at "What are your top three strengths?"