



Questions You Need to NAIL!

What are your Five Year Goals?

How many of us take time to reflect what we will be doing in 5 years? If you are like many and say “5 years from now, I can’t picture one year from now!” you are in the majority of people. When times are good, we believe they will continue in that manner and don’t give things a second thought. Then when trouble strikes we are left in confusion, which can be a very difficult and confusing place to be. From a career perspective I encourage you to really think about your 5 year goals for 2 very good reasons.

The first is that in order for you to take control of your career, you need to know where you are headed so if someone stops you and says.....”Come work for me here, I pay a lot more than they do”...you’ll know if it’s the right move based upon what you want for your career. Money means a lot; however, it shouldn’t be the deciding glittery factor that persuades you in making a significant career decision. You need to think about so many things here...industry, same type of job, promotion, change of scenery, new career totally, part time, entrepreneurial etc. Your choice is personal and should be thought through carefully.

The second reason you should know or have some idea of how to an answer this is that it is a question that employers may ask. The reason they ask it is to know if you have set goals for yourself, have ambition and/or to get a feeling whether you will stay with the organization or just meet your needs and leave.

A very clear example I can give you is with a company I was helping in recruiting for a very technical role. Candidates were hard to come by and the training period was 2-3 years before they would be fully competent out of college so the company was willing to train as long as they had they had the right foundational technical knowledge from the beginning. We interviewed a number of candidates and the one candidate the employer was thrilled about was the one I put the brakes on for. I agreed wholeheartedly that he was the most amazing candidate. He had the technical qualifications and personality to be great in the role and had demonstrated he had the skills; however, his 5 year goals were far beyond what the company could ever offer. It was clear from how he answered that question that he would leave as soon as he had what he wanted. The company put so much time and effort into training they realized he wasn’t the right candidate.

When they asked me to make the candidate the offer, I asked them to think about that question and his response. After a few minutes they did change their mind, we reassessed our candidates and found a good candidate that matched their needs and goals.



The difficulty is that you don't know what the employer wants but you do need to know what you want. Here are some tips for you:

- ◆ Try and get an understanding of the investment the company is making in hiring you. Is the training period long, how much time and effort has it taken to hire the right candidate, how difficult the job is, what level is the job at, what other complexities are there in the job. The more complexities the job has, the longer period of time the company will want to keep the candidate around. Understanding this will help you tailor your message properly.
- ◆ If you are too specific, you may sound too smug but if you are looking to grow in your career as many of us are, let the interviewer know that. (ex. *"I have great skills as an Account Manager and know there is a lot to learn in...this industry, company, product etc. so my interest is in taking the time to learn everything so I can be the best in the role. Within my longer term goals, I have an interest in growing into an Account Executive role."*) This is a very different message than something like *"I will be looking for an Account Executive position within 18 months and will be a National Account Manager within 4 years"*. While they are both ok, you need to understand what roles are available in the company and have some insight as to what the culture is as you don't want to over step your bounds in an interview.
- ◆ If you are too vague (without goals or direction) you will sound too weak or wishy washy.
- ◆ Reassure the interviewer that you are looking to make a long term commitment because (based on your research) this job is what you are looking for.
- ◆ Indicate that for the future, you believe that if you perform each role with excellence, future opportunities will take care of themselves.

When you are asked this question, try and craft your answer keeping these tips in mind. See how something like this works for you.

"I'm very interested in commitment to my next role. Understanding this position better, it's just what I'm looking for; it's what I really enjoy doing and am good at. In terms of the next five years, I'm confident that when I perform really well, opportunities will naturally open up and a progression to (next job you want) is something that interests me."

Next week, we'll cover "What salary are you looking for?"

Take care,

Lotte