



## Questions You Need to NAIL!

### Why have you been out of work so long?

Having to even answer this question hits many of us in the stomach very hard. We want to work, are eager to work and for many who have not been working in some time, it takes a huge toll on our self esteem and self worth, so being asked this makes us want to respond in a way that wouldn't go over very well in an interview. I understand that completely and this article is meant to give you some good information to help you come up with a positive response.

Let's start with some background information. During the recession, many talented people were let go and in certain business sectors such as manufacturing and IT they have struggled to find work because those sectors took such a hard hit in the economic turndown. However, along with those talented people, there were many people in companies with long service that were let go under the guise of recession but they had been low level producers for years and this was a great reason to move them out of organizations. Both the high level producers and low producers still could be out of work and were apparently let go for the same reasons.

How is an interviewer to tell them apart? They are looking for someone to fill the job; they want the best fit for their company. They know both these types of candidates are out there. They need to tell them apart. In some cases, they won't even accept a resume with gaps but if they are willing and they come across two resumes with gaps in employment, the following points may be something that will help them distinguish between them. To have your resume stand out you should ensure:

- ◆ A **solid resume** with accomplishments that match what they are looking for
- ◆ You give the recruiter an understanding that you have been **productive** since you last worked (i.e. volunteer work, schooling etc)

When they call for an interview they will be looking for:

- ◆ **Confidence** in a person – from their voice on the phone, to their grooming when they meet, to their handshake, to how well they communicate
- ◆ **Clear responses** to their questions

Your self esteem and confidence have probably taken a huge beating if you've been out of work for a long time. It can show from the first minute an interviewer speaks to you. If you have a concern that this may be a problem for you, this may be the time to enlist some support to ensure you have met the above points.

To respond to this question appropriately, you need to help the recruiter understand that your prolonged job search has partially been by your own choice but also that you haven't been sitting around waiting and being unproductive. What I mean by that is if you have certain skills that you want to continue to use, you will be taking longer anyway to find the right fit in this economy.

Let's use IT support for example. Many companies are outsourcing their support overseas which leaves fewer roles and many candidates, so naturally this type of job is harder to obtain.



**Your response to this question could be something like:**

"I lost my job in the middle of the recession and I made a conscious decision not to jump at the first opportunity. I wanted to work for a company where I could do my best work so I've been selective about where I have applied. I've taken some upgrading on x, y and z and I've been volunteering at ABC group because I wanted to keep my skills current and use my new ones. I know that when I land a job, it will be the right match for both the company that hires me and myself."

I encourage all my clients to get out and find volunteer opportunities, work that supports an interest or hobby or skills upgrading for two reasons. The first is to demonstrate your willingness to contribute and learn and second to keep our hearts and minds productive. It in turn keeps our spirits up. I've had many clients who find volunteer work that interests them and it turns into a job they love and sometimes even a new career. You never know where the next opportunity comes from.

I've had a request for another question and I'll bump it to next week. It is "You appear to be overqualified for this role, why does this one interest you?"

Take care,

*Lotte*