

## TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF



Most interviews start with the *tell me about yourself* question. Understanding why you are being asked this question, and developing and practicing your response you will be able to use it as an opportunity to position yourself for a successful interview.

So why do most interviewers ask *tell me about yourself* at the onset of an interview? For a number of reasons the most important of which is to see how candidates handle themselves in an unstructured situation. An interviewer wants to see how articulate the candidate is, how confident he or she is and generally what type of impression the candidate would make on the people within the company. Interviewers also want to get a sense of what the candidate thinks is important.

Starting with this question also gives the interviewer those minutes - and it should only be 2-3 minutes - the time to do a visual assessment of the candidate. Shoes polished? Nails manicured? Hair neat and clean? Attire appropriate? You must never underestimate the value of dressing the part. And because not all interviewers are skilled interviewers it provides a few minutes to familiarize themselves with your resumé.

Instead of fearing the *tell me about yourself* question start to see it as an opportunity to describe yourself positively and focus the interview on your strengths and qualities; the qualifications that make you a good fit for the job and for the company. This is your brand or personal story.

### **The deciding factor in getting a job offer may simply be how well you conduct yourself during the interview.**

The wrong response to this question is asking the interviewer "What do you want to know?" or "Where do you want me to begin?" Both are clear signs that the candidate has not prepared for the interview and possibly not prepared for the job. The more appropriate response is to focus on what most interests the interviewer and highlight your most relevant qualifications.

The interviewer wants to know that you can do the job, that you fit into the team, what you have accomplished in your prior positions and how can you help the organization. The key to all successful interviewing is to match your qualifications to what the interviewer is looking for. **This is your opportunity to use your personal branding statement.**

When highlighting your qualifications tell a brief story about your attributes or use an example. Stories and examples are more memorable but more importantly, past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior and using stories and examples are strong indicators of how a candidate will perform on the job.

### **Practice to be natural**

Answering the *tell me about yourself* question requires that you write out your personal branding statement or summary of qualifications you want to tell to the interviewer, practice it so that you can be brief, to the point and natural. There are benefits to practicing your answer. First, it demonstrates that you know how to manage your time. A sought after quality by employers. Second, it gives you the 2-3 minutes to observe the interviewer (remember they are observing you). Candidates can pick up important clues about the interviewer and company's culture that can be used in the interview. Interviews are two way conversations that can flow easily when the candidate is natural.

*Tell me about yourself* is not a question to be feared. Properly answered, this question puts the candidate in control setting the tone and direction for the rest of the interview.

TOUGH QUESTION SERIES

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