

## **THE INSIDERS GUIDE TO COMPETITIVE INTERVIEWING BY PETER LEFFKOWITZ**

### **What Employers Look For In Talent**

- Employers don't care about what you did between 9-5 PM everyday at your job.
- Employers want to see a progressive track of how you moved from one position of responsibility to another position of greater responsibility and what results you had accomplished to garner those promotions.
- Employers don't care about problems you faced, they want to know the solutions you created for those problems.
- Employers want see precisely how your contributions improved the way things are done; caused cost savings or saved money; and increased revenue or productivity.

### **Five Steps To A Successful Interview**

1. **Proper Attitude – Must know who you are and what you bring to the table.**
2. **Arm yourself with info about the company and position.**
3. **Rehearse, Rehearse, Rehearse.**
4. **Let the meeting flow.**
5. **Follow up.**

### **Why You Are Seeking This Organization and This Position As A Next Step**

The proper way to handle why you are evaluating a new organization and a new position can be challenging and bit tricky. You must demonstrate why it is important to you that you are moving forward and not backwards. Moving forward with right organization and the right position for you are dependent on your ability to define and articulate your motivations.

- Make sure you are leaving your job because you are being magnetized towards something stronger instead of leaving your position because of the negatives.
- If you are not employed, approach the interview in a way that shows you are attracted to something that provides you the challenges to build your career. Also, demonstrate that you have a sincere interest in the organization and believe that your contributions will make the organization (or department) stronger or better than it is now.

### **Breaking The Ice**

Breaking the ice at the beginning of an interview with someone you've never interacted with can be difficult. Chemistry is a significant factor (if not the most important factor) in making or breaking an employer's choice to accept you into the organization. So, establishing rapport is critical. These options can be utilized to get the meeting started the right way.

- Find something in the office you can talk about. Picture of golf, sailing, kids, etc.
- Humor (Careful with this one. Not everything you say can be construed as humorous.)
- Gentle flattery. "I've been looking forward to meeting with you", "I am enthusiastic about meeting with you today", "I'm very interested to hear more about your role in this company and how it relates to this opportunity."
- Recent industry trend/news. Open with a quick tidbit of information about what's going on with the organization.

### **Common Question Asked From Employers**

Employers will start an interview in many different ways. It is important to identify what is important to the employer as soon as possible. This will permit you to quickly begin addressing hot points that will lead you down the right path.

*Question:* "Tell me something about yourself?"

*Answer:* "I would love to, where would you like me start?"

By saying this you get the employer to tell you where he really wants you to start. This will let you know what they are most interested in. If they ask about education, family, work, you can conclude what is important to them as well.

### **Words And Phrases You Can Utilize As They Relate To Your Work Experience**

During an interview you will be describing the experiences, background and skills you have as a professional. By incorporating these types of words/phrases you will be able better define yourself and what you have done. You should practice incorporating these into your responses.

#### **Action Words**

Planned	Created	Originated	Initiated
Conceived	Implemented	Formulated	Developed

#### **Leadership Words**

Organized	Directed	Lead	Supervised
Guided	Managed	Responsible for	Presided over
Coordinated	Built	Gave direction to	

#### **Results Phrases**

Lead to	Saved	Achieved	Supervised
Contributed to	Reduced	Provided for	Evaluated
Demonstrated	Collected	Increased	

### **Three Types Of Presentations To Prepare**

The employer may ask you to go a few jobs back and bring him/her up to speed. This is the easiest question to prepare for. The three following presentations can be prepared by you to clearly and concisely address this question asked by the employer.

- 1. Short synopsis:** 30 to 60 second overview of your career. Prepare a one page summary that covers your career in a 1, 2, 3 fashion. Memorize and rehearse the presentation so you can comfortably talk about the experience clearly and concisely. Example: "I started at ABC company and then moved up the ladder there before moving on to XYZ company where I did this and that, etc."
- 2. Dialogue about individual jobs:** After the short synopsis you must also be prepared to discuss each job individually. To prepare for this, take a full page for each job and write down all the pertinent facts. Discuss roles, responsibilities, accomplishments, and impact on company within each job.
- 3. Exploration of technical qualifications:** This is where the interviewer is going to ask very pointed questions about each position and how you performed technically. Prepare information about what you know from a specific technical standpoint. This will help you give precise answers.

## **Additional Interview Preparation**

- On a sheet of paper, write down a T account. On the left hand side write down the new responsibilities that are going to be required for the job you are interviewing for. On the right side of the T account write down the similar experiences from your work history that match. This will give you a correlation to refer to as you describe how you are a good match.
- Rehearse all answers and presentations so it will flow well during the interview. This will set you apart from the rest of candidates.
- Remember, you're only as good as your last job. So, be sure that you can demonstrate and convey that your recent experiences relate well to the new position.
- Be yourself and let your personality and style show during the interview. If you are not yourself during the interview, they decide to hire you, and two weeks later on the job your true personality comes through as one that does not work well within the employer's culture, you won't last long.
- Listen carefully to each question the interviewer asks and don't cut off their sentences.

## **What You Should Relate Your Experiences To**

Just about everything you tell the employer should relate to how you helped the organizations you've worked for. You must be able to show how your contributions helped save money or reduce costs; generate revenue/income; increase work-flow, productivity or efficiency.

## **Ask Quality Questions**

Candidates are also judged by the quality of questions they ask. It is important to ask good, business-related questions that, when asked, help set you apart. Employers will not only judge you by the impact of your accomplishments and contributions, but also by the intellect of your questions. Sample questions:

- What are the major short and long-range goals of the company? Of the department/group?
- What are the characteristics that the company feels are attractive about itself?
- What outside influences affect company growth?
- What business areas does the company excel at or has limitations in?
- What are some of the common denominators in the successful employees with this company? (This is a great question because then you know what they are really looking for in a candidate. You can capture what qualities the employer is looking for and then utilize the information for your next interview.)
- What areas within the company could use more developing?
- What would you add to or attract from the last person that had this job?
- Based on what you have heard from me so far, where do you think I could contribute?
- What is your greatest challenge right now?
- Please discuss the leadership style of the organization?

## **Concluding The Interview And Follow Up**

- After you've asked and had your questions answered, let the employer conclude meeting.
- Ask about timing of feedback and what the next steps are.
- Thank the employer for the time and attention. Send out thank you notes as soon as the interview is done!
- Organize your thoughts on how the meeting went and be prepared to present your thoughts to your recruiter.

## **Questions To Ask Employer**

What are the major short and long-range goals of the company? Of the department/group?

What are the characteristics that the company feels are attractive about itself?

What outside influences affect company growth?

What business areas does the company excel at or has limitations in?

What are some of the common denominators in the successful employees with this company?  
(This is a great question because then you know what they are really looking for in a candidate. You can capture what qualities the employer is looking for and then utilize the information for your next interview.)

What areas within the company could use more developing?

What would you add to or attract from the last person that had this job?

Based on what you have heard from me so far, where do you think I could contribute?

What is your greatest challenge within the company/department/team right now?

Please discuss the leadership style of the organization?

Please discuss the creativity/innovation levels of the team?

When the chips are down, how does the team react?

Additional

Questions: \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Notes:**