

## 4 Tips to Tackle Hard Interview Questions Head On

Interviewing.... Just mentioning that to some people can cause anxiety or apprehension. Even though I have been with Career Options staffing firm for more than 15 years, I remember an odd interview question that I received while searching for a teaching job. “Lisa, if you could title a book after yourself, what would it be and why?” I was doing very well up until this question and then I just blanked. Really blanked.

As a staffing company, we are often asked how to prepare for some tough interview questions. While the following questions may not be as unusual as the one I received twenty years ago, they can still be difficult to answer.

**Tell Me About Yourself** – While it seems like a basic and easy question, it can be confusing where to start. They are not looking to hear about your birth or grade school days. Instead, most companies are looking for a two-three minute summary of who you are, how you got there, and why you are a strong candidate. It could be something like “I grew up in the Neenah area and have been part of the community for most of my life. After completing my degree for Business Management at Madison, I have been lucky to have had 3 rewarding positions. These positions have increased my knowledge in the accounting and purchasing areas, while exposing me to some management components as well. They have brought me here today for the chance to interview for your challenging role of Accounting Manager.”

**Behavioral Questions** – These could be any of the following: “Tell me about a time when you experienced conflict. Explain a time when you disagreed with a manager. Give an example of how you handled a stressful situation. Or, give me an example of how you failed at a task.” Here, companies are trying to understand how you handle a problem and what you do to resolve issues. It is essential to have an example of each of these areas before you interview and how you positively worked through the issue. Do not be negative or talk poorly of others or you could leave a negative impression. One possible reply may be, “Last year, I was asked to lead a large project with another employee. Due to his busy schedule, he was repeatedly canceling our strategic planning sessions at the last minute. Without our direction, it was causing the others in the project to fall behind. I asked to meet with the other project leader, and at first, he was defensive. I listened to his frustrations regarding the struggle to lead 4 projects simultaneously. I asked how our team could help lesson his

workload to allow time for him to commit to our project. By working together, all projects were completed within the deadline and he never missed a meeting moving forward.”

**Why did you leave your last employer?** - This can be difficult if you were downsized or terminated. It is essential to be positive so you don't appear bitter or disgruntled. If you were terminated, don't be vague in your response or blame others. Be direct, positive and explain what you learned. “I had a great career at X and was doing very well. Last year, they moved me into sales and I was very excited. However, due to several mergers, I lost 2 of my direct trainers. After 3 months, I was let go for not reaching the sales quota. This was very disappointing since this has never happened to me before, but I learned something valuable during this experience. I excel in inventory management and supervisory roles, and I have found that these areas are the best fit for me. That is why your role truly excited me – it combines my strengths and allows me to do what I love!”

**What motivates you?** Here, the company wants to know a bit more about your character, interest in the field, and work ethic. It is different for everyone. For me, a possible response may include, “My parents have strong work ethics and enjoyed their careers. They believed in doing their very best every day and encouraged my education path. Striving to do my best and the love of finding the right match between a candidates and client is truly motivating to me.”

Prepare for those tough interview questions now and succeed during your interview!