

Generations



Finding the perfect job

By Peg DeMarco, Special to the News Herald

It's that time of year when colleges and high schools will soon be congratulating their graduates and the job market will quickly fill with eager young people looking to land a super job. So, I thought it might help to do a little research on preparing for an interview in today's business world.

According to Hays Recruiting Experts, one of the first topics an interviewer will approach is a simple, "Tell me about yourself." Because of its vague nature, you'll either tell your entire life story and put the interviewer to sleep, or simply show off your diploma and get nowhere. What the interviewer really wants to know is how you got to where you are and how suitable you are for the role and the company. So, open your answer with what first drew you to answer the ad, tie it into what you've studied or worked at, and end it with what you hope to accomplish should you be offered the job.

Occasionally, an interviewer may ask for a time when you implemented an innovative idea successfully or something to set you apart from everyone else. It doesn't have to be as intricate as developing a new computer program to save mankind, but something you may have done in grade school to improve the operation of a task such as setting up an afterschool lawn mowing program for the elderly.

Are your skills up-to-date and relevant to the job? Not only does the interviewer want to know that you have a keen interest or passion in the field, but also that you are always eager to learn with extra reading, classes or taking advantage of mentoring opportunities.

"Can you tell me about a time when you failed?" That's a tough question to tackle, but I've been asked it in the past and the word "fail" typically puts candidates on the defensive. The worst thing that you can say is that you have never failed because everyone has failed at something at some time or another. It can be a missed deadline or a time when you were late for an appointment. Follow it up with what you did to ensure that it didn't happen again.

The interviewer might ask you to describe your ideal job and it isn't a trick to see if you read the job description. It's to determine if you would be happy in the role you're applying for. Not every job is right for every person and the interviewer knows that.

A popular interview question is, "How would your friends describe you?" Are you friendly, a good listener, willing to work hard to get the job done, the type of person to pitch in and help others, dependable, and anxious to learn new things? These are all attractive attributes to mention.

What type of salary are you looking for? I hate this question, but it's used frequently. Your interviewer should know the industry standard for your role and level of experience, so make sure that you do before you're in the hot seat. If you're still in the early stage of the interview process and don't feel that you want to negotiate, you can always say that you want to better understand the company and the role before commenting on salary. A little stall tactic, but it sometimes works.

Most of the time, the last question is, "Do you have any questions for me?" This is your chance to end the interview on a high note by showing a genuine interest in the role. Keep an open mind for any new questions which may have cropped up during the interview and don't be afraid to ask them.

Hays Recruiting mentions that interviewing should be a two-way street and occasionally an interview can put you off from accepting a job when it's offered to you. For instance, did the interviewer bad mouth the company's competitors or the person that you're replacing? Interviewers should be professional, and they should know that their job is just as much about selling their company to you as it is about assessing you for a role.

If the interviewer can't demonstrate career progression and present a clear path, it could be time to consider a quick exit. Did the interviewer mention the team in a positive way? If your interviewer is barely able to scrape up a smile when you ask if he or she enjoys his or her job, or it's evident he or she doesn't, it could be time to worry.

If no one at the company looks happy, smiles, or pleasantly greets you or says goodbye, don't take it personally. That's another clue to keep job hunting!

Peg DeMarco can be reached at pegdemarco@earthlink.net.