



## **A great interview lasts an hour but feels like ten minutes.**

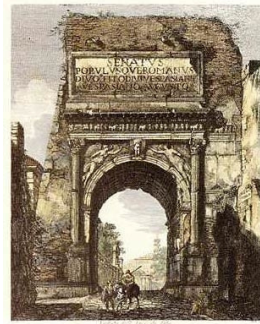
There are two different types of interviews. One is the interview that lasted ten minutes but felt like it lasted an hour to the interviewer. The other type of interview is the one that lasted an hour, but felt like it was ten minutes. Which one do you think the interviewer enjoys and is most likely going to lead to a positive outcome for you?

A great interview lasts an hour but felt like it was ten minutes

How do you achieve a great interview? By taking your experiences and putting them into clear, succinct stories with relevant outcomes. Don't regurgitate your resume. That's what the lousy interviewee does.

A great interview should be a stories describing who you are; your life experiences, your values, your gifts and weaknesses, and your philosophy. Typically, you have 30-45 minutes in which to clearly communicate why someone would want to hire you. You do not have the chance to come back and clarify your points. Therefore, for those of you who think you are a great interviewer --- and you do not need to prepare for it -- I can assure you the less you prepare -- the less the chance you will be considered for the

position.



Generally, interviewers do not enjoy the interviewing process-for a number of different reasons. For the purposes of this review, most people are extremely boring in an interview. Listening to a list of attributes, past employers, responsibilities, etc. does sound extremely boring doesn't it?

### **How do you answer the toughest question, “tell me about yourself?”**

Following is a true-life example of how I answered this question right out of undergraduate school. It may provide some guidance of how to answer this question. In the interest of brevity and clarity, notice there is no references to specific goals or accomplishments.

*I grew up in Pittsburgh with four brothers and a sister. The oldest four aren't a full year apart. I'm the second oldest and an Irish twin. Our home was filled with competition and hard work. I remember playing football a lot. My Dad was quarterback of his high school football team. When we played, the teams were my father and I against my brothers. My Dad was the quarterback and lineman. I was the receiver. My father was 6'2 and about 220 pounds. My brothers hated to lose. They still do. And I still love to win!*

*I was about nine years old when he said to me, “Ev I need to give you a few life lessons. I was your age when my Dad died, so remember these words. Do not expect anyone to give you anything. Whatever you need, you must work for. Life is not fair; do not expect it to be. A leader sets examples for others to follow. Demonstrate integrity, intelligence and perseverance. And no matter what happens, never give up.”*

I didn't really understand how important those words were at the age of nine. In retrospect, those words of wisdom have guided me throughout my life. The message profound, the impact dramatic. He taught us responsibility to help those that cannot help themselves. He taught us to never ever give up. He taught us to be the best we can be, and

to never settle for second best.

So I started my first business at nine years old, a newspaper route. I learned how to make a profit, build a business, hire employees (3 of my 4 brothers), and how to sell. I learned how to motivate and manage people. By the time I was 12, I had a babysitting empire, and contracted out extra work to my brothers.

I learned the value of mistakes and failure. My mother and father taught us the pursuit of excellence, and it became the foundation of my character, integrity, and values in life.

Take the time to write out your "tell me about yourself" speech. It should last about 2-3 minutes. What I didn't include in the above story are specific events related to my own personal life and how those accomplishments helped develop my character. Those are things you need to include in your story. Here's the important point. Take the facts and develop a story around the facts. Make it an interesting meeting for the interviewer so you stand out.

**You need to tell the interviewer:**

- What you can do for him.
- Who you are.
- What you bring to the organization.
- How you are going to help him achieve his goals.

If your answers to any question do not tie together your previous experience, your past accomplishments coupled with your traits, and simultaneously address his needs, then you have not communicated what's in it for him.

Tell the interviewer who you are by "coloring" your experience, talent, skill, accomplishments with specific examples of events that illustrate a point you are trying to make.



**These following questions will help you formulate very clearly your thoughts and help you respond with a well thought out and developed answer.** In an interview situation, you do not have the opportunity to go back and clarify a point. Therefore, preparation is critical for a successful interview.

By writing out your answers-----formulating your thoughts-----and preparing each answer in written form ----- will give you a well thought out and prepared presentation of who you are and what you can do for my organization. The interviewer may not even disclose his questions. Rather, he will look to you for providing him with an overview of what you can do for him and how you can solve his problems.

There are employers/executives that, frankly, do not know how to interview. They expect you to “read their minds” and come to the table prepared to discuss what you can do for them.

Therefore, do not assume because an interviewer/employer does not ask you questions, that he does not have any. On some occasions, you may be faced with an interviewer whose ego gets in the way of appropriately evaluating candidates.

Gender, age, personality, personal career issues that have nothing to do with you are brought to the table by the interviewer. Obviously, these issues can create a potentially negative environment. **DO NOT ENROLL YOURSELF IN THE INTERVIEWER’S ISSUES IN LIFE.**

Egocentric executives on the other side of the desk may not even indicate expectations for a meeting, or an interview. Sometimes these individuals expect a certain behavior, yet never establish clearly, what it is that they want to accomplish. Frequently, these types of interviewers will brush you off and you will never know why---generally, it is because they have absolutely no idea how to control an interview, or how to set the agenda.

Therefore, you are best served in situations where you are unsure of what the interviewer is looking for, or are unclear of his objectives and goals for the meeting, to ask him at the outset of the meeting, what he would like to accomplish during your meeting. Ask him how he would like you to help him accomplish his objectives and goals; if there is anything specific, he is looking for so that you can ensure that his time is well spent; and if there will be an opportunity at some point in the meeting for you to ask questions. Make sure you establish that he is to set the agenda for the meeting, not you

Remember - there is a big difference between an interview and a discussion

Speak to your strongest character traits and how they have benefited the organization through “stories” that demonstrate clearly who you are, how you work and how you think. Do not exceed 4-5 minutes in answering this question - but the interviewer should have a pretty good handle on who you are after answering this question.

The employer’s goal is to find candidates who is intellectually sharp, agile and can remain poised when a situation or the environment is difficult, hectic or chaotic.



**Bring the following with you to every interview:**

1. A copy of your resume
2. Copy of national standings, articles quoted in, etc.
3. A yellow pad of paper with your list of questions on it.
4. Research you have done on the company and their products.

**Questions written down you should be prepared to ask:**

1. Do you mind if I ask, how would you describe the culture here?
2. What would the perfect candidate look like to you - in terms of experience, education, talent and traits?
3. If you had to, how would you rank those things that you are looking for in a perfect candidate? For example, is education #1, or is experience #1.
4. In your mind, what would the selected candidate have accomplished in the first 6-12 months that in your mind would make him a success?
5. What do you think are the top three challenges a candidate will be faced with?
6. What qualities do you look for in the people that you hire?
7. What do you see as the greatest threat to the organization?
8. I'm curious, how did you get started in the business?
9. Do you mind if I ask how would you describe your management style?
10. Can you give me an idea of the organizational structure and how the candidate would fit in?
11. Why is this position open?
12. I'm curious, what is it that keeps you here—what do you love about our job?
13. Given the current market, technology becoming ubiquitous, where do you see potential for growth in the future?

14. In terms of having a competitive edge, what do you think will differentiate market winners and losers?
15. What's your vision for the future?
16. What are your top three challenges?
17. Can you describe for me the interviewing process?
18. Who will be involved in the decision-making process?
19. What is your time period?
20. Based on my background and our conversation today, is there any issue, concern, or question in your mind that would prevent me from being included in the next step of the process?



**What differentiates the best candidates from the average candidate is their level of preparation. It's your responsibility to make sure certain information is presented in an interview. How?**

The candidate will show up with potential solutions to the employer's problems. Sometimes the interviewer does not know what he needs to ask to determine whether or not a candidate can do the job, etc.-----so you need to be prepared to both ask the question and answer the questions-----by saying,

- “If you were to ask me.....”Can I do the job-----I would respond by saying.
- “If you were to ask me how I can help solve some of your problems.....let me review some of the potential solutions I have thought through. Of course, these solutions are without knowing the specifics etc.
- If you were to ask me how does profitability fit into my goals and achievements -- -I'd like to share with you my philosophy and a few examples of my bottom line orientation.
- If you were to ask me how I would fit into the company—both from a culture, style and attitude and work philosophy perspective, I would say.
- If you were to ask me.....what I bring to the table---why should your hire me----I would say....

Interviewers test:

Interviewers have different styles. Imagine your interviewer puts you at ease with his informal style. He tells you how impressive your performance and experience is. He sits back, with open arms and says, “What would you like to know about us?” Do you think that you landed the job -----even though there is 25 minutes left in the interview? This is what separates the winners from the losers. The interviewer is testing you-----IT’S A TEST!

You’ve just been given control of a block of time. The interviewer wants to see how well you use it. Have an objective - know what you would like to learn more about. Recognize that he is evaluating how you spend your time. An example of how you might spend the balance of your time is to say, “I’d like to take about ten minutes on each of three topics.”

“First, what would your expectations be of the selected candidate? Alternatively, what would the candidate have accomplished in his first year that in your mind would make him a success?

Second, perhaps we could review why I’m confident that the skills and experience on my resume fit well with your organization and this opportunity.

Third, I would like to hear how you chose this company, how your own career has evolved? Or what attracted you to this organization? What is it that has kept you here so long? Or to what would you attribute your low attrition, etc.?”



## How to blow an interview

Even the best candidates won’t get offers if they bungle their interviews with prospective employers or search consultant. The interview is the ultimate test of a candidate’s suitability.

This is where a candidate’s appearance, manners, charisma, communication skills, strategic thinking and fit with the company’s culture are scrutinized and evaluated.

A strong personal interview often can compensate for a weak resume. Candidates with superior credentials sometimes mistakenly believe that showing up and answering

questions is all that's required to secure an offer. Even if you've been solicited for the position, you easily can take yourself out of the running.

## **DON'T:**

- Do not exaggerate.
- Bad mouth or criticize negatively your current or past employers
- Go unprepared.
- Take credit for things you did not do.
- Do not be LATE. You should plan for accidents, traffic, etc. and give yourself double the time to get to the interview.
- Display bad manners
- Talk too little – answer the questions fully. Tonality and facial expressions are equally important.
- Appear disinterested -- enthusiasm for the opportunity & employer is critical. If you appear disinterested in anyway, you have LOST the opportunity, irrelevant of how qualified you are or how much you want the opportunity.
- If asked to submit something in writing - examples of work etc. you should have the requested work in the employer's hands in 1-3 days.



## **Research is required for you to be completely prepared for the interview:**

Think about whom you would hire? Is it someone who has done an enormous amount of research on you, the industry, the organization, etc.? Or would you hire someone that obtained company research, business plan, relevant information that would help a candidate secure an important position? Or would you hire someone who walked in and asked you what the company's objectives are? Or where are your offices?

Your professional level is such that if you have to ask the employer, interviewer, or even the search consultant one day prior to the interviewer, who the CEO is-----then the bar just blew by you----your lack of performance is red flag.

Research areas you should investigate, read, take notes, and have a thorough

understanding of the organization by doing at a minimum some of the following:

## **COMPREHENSIVE COMPANY RESEARCH**

### **1. Client Company Web site**

Research Company history, products and services, press releases for the one-two years, financial condition reference area, office locations, and career opportunities, (look for various position description and responsibilities). Review investor relations and/or services (should request an annual report ASAP), management profiles, product performance, fund management, company management, and technology overview. Long term; short term objectives, etc.

### **2. Other Internet sites to obtain research:**

- The **Edgar Database**, go to <http://www.sec.gov/> and get a copy the most recent 10K if the company is public. From the 10K report, you should evaluate and familiarize yourself with the companies' financials, executives, their backgrounds, legal and compliance issues, *strategic business development, their competitors.* etc.

- Bloomberg/Wall Street Journal
- Dow Jones
- Morningstar/Lipper

Various Professional Associations. I would also recommend you visit chat rooms associated with professionals associations and any of the rating services and request facts, perspective, interpretations, insight into the people, the culture and the organization. Competitors and vendors that have done business with the organization should also be interviewed. Due diligence is your responsibility.

### **3. Print media. Magazines, trade journals and newspapers:**

Research articles that have been written about the company, the executives, their strategy, etc. Include newspapers like the Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, and the New York Times. Research monthly and trade magazines such as Business Week, Fortune, Forbes, Newsweek, Money, Time, etc. You want to research what the media has published about the company, their strategy, etc.

However, all information should only be used as material that provides you with a base of understanding. The information you are seeking should include the person you will report directly to, colleagues and other support staff. You also want to understand the company,

culture, history and how previous employees have been treated, (treat this area with great caution, as the type of information is one's own interpretation). Investigate and question the companies' reputation.

#### 4. Exploring the opportunity and the company--first hand, research based on knowledge versus information based on gossip.

You do not want to make any career decisions based on second hand information or gossip. It is critical you understand that success is always going to be predicated upon the depth of your knowledge, including the hiring manager, the company and yourself. So never, put your career in someone else's hands.

Remember, anyone's opinion – is just that – their opinion. Not the facts. Gossip and opinions are not a foundation on which to evaluate a career decision. Also, frequently, fired employees or employees that have not been recognized for their talents or contributions, not received a promotion, or been at the right place at the wrong time will have a bias and perspective unique them. Carefully balance any information you obtain. Discretion is always an interesting way to understand a person's integrity and is the better part of valor.

The most successful people in this world are not necessarily the people who work the hardest, or are the brightest (though both help). But the most successful people are the professionals who understand how to leverage their career. Leverage. What is it? Why does it matter? Networking: What, why, who and how.

Successful people understand the power of networking, and secure relationships using various modes that right people in the industry know who they are and what they have accomplished. A highly professional, ethical search consultant is someone that can be your greatest cheerleader. They can be significant in the development of your career, thus keep them (carefully select consultants that demonstrate a very high level of professionalism and have proven their success by the executives they work with).



## **SUMMARY:**

The key to success is relatively simple. Success is finding and achieving your own special greatness in this world. Greatness in terms of having an impact on the world in ways you never dreamed possible.

Greatness in terms of evaluating life's opportunities based on the big picture. Greatness by courageous movements that expand horizons and move them outside of comfort zones and into worlds of uncertainty. But learning and sharing your greatness, thereby contributing to humanity – preparing and seeing your dreams come true, and teaching others how to do the same.

Greatness based on looking much further out in your career than one year or two years. Greatness in terms of being motivated by money not only for your family, but ultimately to help others generate their own greatness. Creating and giving to those who cannot help themselves, teaching courage and leading by example.

Greatness in terms of recognizing that risk is wonderful and complacency is hell. Leading by example and teaching others to believe in themselves. Greatness in how to lead and build a stronger foundation. Greatness in their commitment to integrity, intelligence and perseverance.

Greatness not in terms of dollars and cents----but in terms of responsibility and accountability. Greatness by seeking new challenges and inspiring others. Greatness in terms of the integrity of your word. Greatness because of your humility.

Ev Nucci is a serial entrepreneur and CEO of Nucci Consulting Group, a search firm that specializes in lift-outs and retained search in asset management. She spent the past three decades building high-performance organizations and started five companies, two with Fortune 100 firms. In 1998 she started working with the BlackRock founders and spent the next 10 years helping build the largest money manager in the world. Most recently she served as a consultant and Director to Armored Wolf, a global macro hedge fund. Ev's passion is building companies, her trademark is knowing talent. Other's are in the placement business--she's in the people business.