

Show Me The Talent: Do you have the stuff to get the job done?

Being asked into the boss's office can be unnerving. Particularly when she asks you to sit down and then closes the door. Maybe it's because today lots of us are worried about losing our jobs.

The good news is that despite a national unemployment rate of 5.8 (February 2003) the unemployment rate for the Stamford/Norwalk metropolitan area is only 2.8 (December 2002) according to the most recent reports from the US Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The bad news is that's a lot of people looking for work.

While finding a new opportunity is the first step to a new position, meeting the potential employer often is the deal breaker. Unfortunately, barring extraordinary circumstances, like natural disaster or getting married, not many situations are more intimidating than a job interview. There are a few things, however, you can count on to help you get

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through.

First remember that the person doing the interview probably finds the process as intimidating as you do. Second, be prepared.

Being prepared used to be simpler. You were expected to dress appropriately. Arrive on time, make eye contact, etc. If you were a real self-starter, you probably did some research on the company and were ready to answer the most commonly asked questions. (Things like "Why should we hire you?")

If you haven't looked for a job in a while, however, you may not be prepared for a newer process: the behavioral interview. This method is used to predict how well you will be able to perform on-the-job.

Behavioral interviewing is based on the idea that your past behaviors will likely be repeated under similar circumstances. For instance, if you've been able to motivate one sales staff, you will probably be able to motivate another sales staff. Examples from your past, give a potential employer the opportunity to predict your future performance in comparable situations.

In behavioral interviewing, each candidate is asked the same set of questions. Questions designed to find out if you have exhibited the behaviors she is looking for in a previous setting. During the process, you will be asked to give examples of how you have handled a variety of work situations. For ease of comparison, most interviewers will rate the candidate's on a pre-determined scale using numbers or grades such as good, average or bad.

Generally, candidates are asked an open-ended question

which may begin with "Can you give me an example of . . ." or "Tell me about a time when you . . ." The employer is trying to find out what you did in a particular similar and what were the results of your actions. Depending on the position, questions may cover several areas including: your relationship building/communication skills; problem-solving abilities; values and work ethic; and management experience.

If you haven't encountered behavioral interviewing yet, you probably will in the near future. Because past performance is a good indication of future behavior, many employers are using the behavioral interview model. So get ready.

Before you go to your next job interview make a list of your skills. Write down your five to ten strongest abilities. Highlight any skills that are relevant to the position you're interviewing for. Once you have this list, come up with at least one concrete example for

each skill. For example, if you have great communication skills, have an example of how you negotiated a deal or developed a relationship or got your team to compromise.

Interviewing is a difficult process for you and the employer. You are trying to land the job. Your potential boss is trying to determine who is the best person to handle it. If you can demonstrate your talent, make her see that you have the abilities needed to do the job; the more likely it is you'll be hired.

Annette Richmond is founder of career-intelligence.com and principal, Richmond Consulting Group which provides guidance, workshops and seminars on a wide range of career-management and work-related issues. She can be reached at arichmond@richmondconsultinggroup.com or 203 838-0067.