Interview Fitness Training
A Workout with Carole Martin

Updated Inside Secrets for Your Job Search

The Interview Coach
Exercises, tools, stories, and more
Prepare to be a stronger contender in the job market!
INTERVIEW FITNESS TRAINING

A Workout with Carole Martin

THE INTERVIEW COACH
INTRODUCTION

As with any workout/fitness training you must make a commitment in order to improve your skills. The exercises in this book will be more effective if you are willing to put in time and energy and take an active part in the process - to build up your interview muscles.

The interview is a type of performance, or presentation. You will need to do some preparation and have a rehearsal. You will need to put forth effort into your exercises to become a stronger presenter. The goal is to be prepared and natural.

If, after doing the exercises, you would like to practice with a professional, I will welcome the opportunity to work with you. If you have any questions regarding the exercises or book content, feel free to call my toll free number at 1-877-647-5627.

This workbook will

help you

- focus on your strengths and what you have to offer a company
- prepare your success stories to answer those difficult behavioral questions, e.g., “Tell me about a time...”
- script your answers to difficult questions
- have a stronger impact on others

give you

- more power in the interview process
- confidence and a feeling of being prepared
- methods to answer questions effectively
- the mind-set to be more selective and in control
- skills necessary to negotiate a better offer
- permission to not get an offer after every interview

Now, let the workout begin!
TESTIMONIALS - 
WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Jennifer Robin, Image Consultant
Author of Clothe Your Spirit
Carole Martin’s positive approach makes the interview process seem like fun. She has a special gift for making each reader feel worthwhile. Her book is utterly professional and very helpful.

Reviewer Kim Draper, BookReviewClub.com
The night before the interview we all have the same feeling in the pit of our stomachs, dread. Yes, that is the word for it. No need to have all those feelings anymore, Carole Martin has written a wonderful book on learning how to trample the interviewing anxiety bug. This is a very in-depth book that can teach you how to breeze through a job interview with flying colors. She teaches you how to release your anxieties, relaxation tips, and how to learn from your past interview mistakes. But Ms. Martin does not stop there. She actually teaches you how to market the product, and that product happens to be you. You are the product, and you are trying to sell yourself to the interviewer so they will hire you.

This is one book that all of us need to read at least once. She has valuable tips and question-and-answer sections for the beginner to the novice interviewee. Take the time to read this one today, you never know when you might need it.

Reviewer Warren Thurston, eBook Reviews Weekly
All people seeking employment can learn how to improve their interview skills. Techniques are available that will help to improve their prospects of getting jobs. Carole Martin’s book is an excellent source to guide people in the right direction.

A reader from Colorado Springs, CO
I’ve been through many interviews. This workbook hits all of the important points, reviews the obvious and gives new tips and ideas to help get the job. I’ve aced my interview because I followed Ms.
Martin’s advice. I like her real-life scenarios and humor. I highly recommend the book.

**A reader from Carlisle, PA**
Takes the guesswork out of the interviewing process. I have always been afraid of interviews, but now I have no doubt I can get the job I want! Made me completely confident in myself, I may surprise a lot of interviewers now that I know what they expect. Great book!

**Thank you from San Diego, CA**
I just returned from an interview with the federal government and can’t thank you enough for all your help. I purchased the manual three days before as a “last attempt” to feel secure, and it really put me at ease about the whole situation...how to relieve that fear, prepare, etc. I nailed it!

**New VP Jeff B.**
I met Carole after reading an article in which she was interviewed. I did some due diligence and was comfortable working with her after verifying her media credentials. I was able to see that she has been an authority on interviewing for many reporters and journalists. When I initially contacted her, she spoke with me at great length about my situation without any money or commitment on my part. This made me very comfortable. She sent me several emails with worksheets to prepare for our mock interview. The exercises were extremely helpful. I then had a one-hour session with her via telephone where she interviewed me, and we listened to it and critiqued it.

I have never been concerned about an interview, but this position was for more money than I had ever earned before, so I was a bit nervous. After our session, I asked Carole if we should get together again before the interview to make sure I had really nailed down my responses. She said that it was not necessary and that I was plenty ready for this interview. That made me very confident, knowing that she could have easily billed me for another hour, but instead she said I was ready. I flew out three days later for my interview and heard back one week later that I not only got the job, but also the territory
they had previously insinuated I probably wouldn’t get, plus a signing bonus that was not previously on the table. Seeing they had upped the ante beyond the originally discussed salary without being asked, I decided to counter their offer, and they responded with even more money in less than a day.

I highly recommend Carole to anyone who wants to greatly improve their chances at landing a new position.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## PART ONE

### INTERVIEW ANXIETY ................................................................. 1
- Everybody Gets Nervous .......................................................... 2
- What Past Interview Experiences Can You Learn From? ............... 4
- Relaxation Tips ........................................................................ 6
- The Interview as a Two-Way Process ....................................... 10
- Interviewing With a Consultant Mind-Set ................................. 12

### THE PRODUCT – YOU ............................................................. 15
- What Do You Have to Offer? .................................................... 16
- Motivation .............................................................................. 26
- Behavioral Interviewing - Past Behavior, Future Success ............. 34
- Your Success Stories ............................................................ 36

### THE PREPARATION ................................................................. 41
- “Tell Me About Yourself” ........................................................ 42
- Prepare for Salary Questions .................................................. 49
- How to Deal With Difficult Questions ...................................... 62

### FREQUENT INTERVIEW CONCERNS ........................................ 71
- What is an Illegal Question? .................................................... 72
- “Do You Have Any Questions?” .............................................. 75
- How Do I Dress for the Interview? ......................................... 82

### THE RULES OF SALARY NEGOTIATION ................................. 85
- The Principles of Salary Negotiation ....................................... 87

### AFTER THE INTERVIEW .......................................................... 91
- Follow-Up Letters .................................................................. 96
- Follow-Up Format Example ................................................... 98
- What’s Next? ......................................................................... 100
PART TWO
INTERVIEW WITH CAROLE MARTIN.......................................................... 103
   Q&A – Interview Secrets and Tips.......................................................... 104
CONCLUSION....................................................................................... 143
   Practice, Practice, Practice.............................................................. 144
   About the Author............................................................................. 148
   Other Sources.................................................................................. 150
PART ONE
INTERVIEW ANXIETY
EVERYBODY GETS NERVOUS

It’s OK To Be Nervous

It would be nice if your heart didn’t palpitate, your hands didn’t sweat, and your mouth didn’t go dry, but most people, even executives, experience one or more of these symptoms when they interview. But here’s the good news: it’s OK to be nervous. Let me repeat that. It’s OK to be nervous, and it is essential for you to accept the way you feel.

It is very unrealistic to tell yourself you should be different from the way you really are. It just makes you feel worse about yourself. By shifting your thinking to self-acceptance, you feel more in control and more confident almost immediately.

What’s the Worst Thing That Can Happen?

For many people the worst thing that can happen is “rejection” - not getting an offer. It is a common fear. Who wants to be rejected? It’s much more desirable to be the “rejecter,” the one to say, “No thank you. I don’t think I’ll take your job offer.” Did you ever think that maybe that job wasn’t right for you? That maybe you weren’t being objective about the process? That you just wanted an offer - to be accepted? Try to look at the process from another perspective: as a learning experience.

Face the Fear

What is making you feel nervous? What is it you fear? If one of our greatest fears is rejection, and one of our greatest needs is acceptance, going through the interview process is like walking on hot coals.
According to author Susan Jeffers, Phd. (Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway),

“The only way to get rid of the fear of doing something is to go out... and do it.”

“The only way to feel better about myself is to go out... and do it.”

Some things are out of your control - don’t take them personally.

An Interviewer’s Story

Conducting interviews for an accountant position, and working with the accounting manager, I found a woman I thought was a wonderful match for the position. I sent her forward to meet the manager.

The manager contacted me later that day. I inquired about the candidate. She replied, “I liked her.” She then said, “But I’m not going to hire her!” I was taken aback. “Why not?” I asked.

“Because she looks exactly like my aunt. And I hate my aunt. And I could not come in here every day and look at her face!”

That candidate was rejected, not because of anything she did or didn’t do, but because of a strange circumstance.
WHAT PAST INTERVIEW EXPERIENCES CAN YOU LEARN FROM?

Facing the Fear

“Last time I wasn’t prepared, and I just tried to wing it. This time I’m going to get my act together and prepare and practice.”

“I was caught off-guard when I was asked what I was looking for in the way of a salary. This time I’ve done my research and homework, and I’m going to be prepared.”

---

Releasing Anxiety - Name Those Fears

Spend some time thinking about and identifying your anxiety. Write down your issues, or answer the questions below. Write anything else that makes you nervous. By looking at what is making you feel anxious, you can begin to deal with the “monster” and begin to practice accepting your feelings or changing your thinking.

What do you fear most about the interview?
What’s the worst thing that can happen?

What questions do you fear?
What are your biggest stumbling blocks?
Difficult questions?

Have you had past successes with interviews? What went right?

What didn’t go so well?

What do you want the interviewer to know about you?

Your strengths?

What do you want to soften or avoid?

Are you concerned only about the end result of the interview or are you checking out the company as well?
RELAXATION TIPS

Breathing

Relaxation needs to be practiced long before you enter the interview. Try this easy breathing technique to relax.

Breathe in through your nose, filling your stomach with air. Hold for a few seconds and then exhale through your mouth, making a swooshing sound. Repeat again and again until it becomes a natural response to release tension.

Practice this anytime you want to let go and relax or are feeling tense. You could even do it in a quiet manner while waiting for your interviewer.

Yoga, meditation, and relaxation therapy are other great ways to learn how to relax and gain control.

Our greatest fear is that we will not be able to cope. It’s OK not to get an offer.
Damp Hands

The interview almost always begins with a handshake. “Hello, I am Susan Cook,” says the interviewer, and she extends her hand. It is now your turn to extend your hand in return. But your palm is damp.

Should you:

A. Quickly wipe your hand on the side of your pants or skirt?
B. Stick out your damp hand?
C. Keep your hand to yourself?

None of the above is very desirable.

Try These Tips:

1. Arrive at the interview 10-15 minutes early (always a good idea - NEVER LATE!).

2. Go to the rest room and run cold water on the insides of your wrists for a few minutes, and breathe - relax. In the case of cold hands, try running hot water to warm your hands. The insides of your wrists are very temperature-sensitive. This remedy can last up to half an hour. Try it and see if it works for you.

3. Anti-persperant gel deodorant can be used like a hand lotion on your palms. People have reported that their hands stay dry, soft, and smell good. (Try this tip before the interview day to see if it works on your hands.)

Firm Handshake

It is important that your grip demonstrates confidence. A firm handshake, not a bone-crushing grip, will indicate self-assurance.
Reach your hand out palm sideways and grip the hand, web to web. Try it, you will see that your hand closes over the palm of the hand. When you squeeze the fingers, it can hurt, especially if you are wearing rings.

**Seven Steps Toward Making a Good Impression**

1. Appearance counts. When you look good, you feel good. Make sure you look groomed and neat. Check odors (good and bad). Too much cologne or perfume can be a real turn-off.

2. Your clothes and accessories should be conservative and neutral. Your clothes are your packaging and should not take attention away from you as the product.

3. Non-verbal communication sometimes conveys a stronger message than verbal communication. Sit or stand up straight (like your mother always told you).

4. Eye contact and smiles can indicate a confident and upbeat attitude. This is a good opportunity to demonstrate your social and interpersonal skills.

5. The handshake sends a strong tactile message. Your grip should be firm (show some sign of life - even men with women) - but not bone-crushing.

6. Your voice and the volume of your speech convey a strong impression. Whether it is a phone interview or a face-to-face interview, it is important that you speak with enthusiasm and energy.

7. Your vocabulary reveals your communication skills and ability to interface with people, especially people you’ve not met before.

When you get off on the right foot, the interview will flow easily. This is one impression you cannot leave to chance.
According to studies done over the years, people evaluate one another using the three “V’s” –

- 55% Visual (Your appearance)
- 38% Vocal (Your voice)
- 7% Verbal (What you say)

**Worst Case Scenario**

Marilyn is nervous about her interview as she sits in the lobby. Anyone watching can see the signs - her foot is tapping rapidly, she is muttering to herself (obviously rehearsing her lines), and she is slouched down in her chair. When she spots the interviewer coming down the hall she stands, but as she does the magazine on her lap falls to the floor. When she bends to pick it up, she knocks over her portfolio and papers fall out. The interviewer stands to the side observing her behavior. He is thinking to himself, “This woman is a basket case. She doesn’t look like the kind of person we want representing our product line.”

When Marilyn does pull herself together, she holds out her hand, but her handshake is weak. This interview is already headed in the wrong direction.
THE INTERVIEW
AS A TWO-WAY PROCESS

A Conversation

Begin to think of the interview as a conversation - a conversation with a purpose. The interview should be two-way and interactive.

Instead of focusing on the end result, you need to learn to listen.

Missing Out on a Great Opportunity

What parts of your body are not used effectively in the job interview?

If you said, “Your ears,” you are correct. Most people fail to “hear” what is going on in the interview.

If you think interviewing is only about answering questions, you’ve been missing the point. You’ve also been missing an opportunity to gather valuable information. Most people go into the interview thinking and worrying about how they will answer the questions, and they forget that they are there to find out about the job and the company. They forget to listen, observe, and read between the lines.

Here are some benefits you receive by improving on your listening techniques:

1. You hear where the emphasis is placed by the questions asked, and general talk about the company.

2. You begin to pick up clues from the conversation, so you can ask questions and ask for clarification.
Listening carefully and reading between the lines will help you to decide whether or not you want to work for this company, in this department.

When all you can think of is the answer that you will be giving, you miss a premium opportunity to garner information about the situation you are about to enter. Turn up your listening and intuitive skills. Read between the lines! You’ll be surprised by what you hear.

**You are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you!**

“I always thought of myself as a goalie at a hockey game when I interviewed. My job was to return those pucks - to be like the defense.” Jim - Public Defender.

Wrong, Jim!

Your job is to listen and ask questions and to send some of those pucks their way. Find out if this is a good place for you.

---

**True Story**

A young woman walked into an interview with an older man. He indicated to her that she should sit across from him at the desk.

He then proceeded to tilt his chair all the way back and put his hands behind his head (a very intimidating posture). He asked her, “So, why do you want to work for my company?”

She leaned forward in her chair and said, “Well, that’s why I’m here today - to find out if this would be a good place for me to work.”

The man sat up straight in his chair, looked her in the eye, and the interview continued, as two professionals having a conversation.
INTERVIEWING
WITH A CONSULTANT MIND-SET

Tell Me About Your Problem

Interviewing with a “consultant” mind-set can help you. Take the
time to analyze what the company is seeking, not just what is written
in the ad posting or job description, but what it will take to get the
job done, and done well!

Consultants listen and analyze the problem. They think of possible
solutions to the problem.

Listening is the key. Most people like to talk and don’t really listen
well. Listen to what the interviewer(s) talk about; what is asked and
what comments are made. Does the conversation revolve around the
employees, the employees’ work, the customer? This should give you
clues as to what is the most important product and the company’s
values. What are the issues/problems? Do they have a mission
statement? Is the statement relevant? Do you hear evidence of the
mission being supported by the work?

Some interviewers will tell you more than others. Sometimes you
have to read between the lines - not everything will be said. Use your
intuition!

It is important for you to
prepare questions to ask them.

see page 75
True Story

The applicant was interviewed for 90 minutes by two interviewers. At the end of the interview, the interviewers asked if she had any questions. “Yes,” she replied. “On a scale of one to ten, where does morale stand in this company?”

The interviewers looked at one other and replied, “A seven.”

“So, there are some issues?” she asked.

“Yes,” replied the interviewers.

“From the questions you asked me, it sounds like you two are very overwhelmed and need someone to come in and hit the ground running, right?” she asked.

“Yes,” they replied in unison, “at last someone understands our problem.”

“I can tell you that I have been there and done that, and there wasn’t anything you said today that I haven’t experienced before. I think I can make a difference from the beginning if you hire me,” she said.

She got the job! She had listened to the problem and let the interviewers know that she understood the problem and was ready to be the solution. It was a win/win situation for everyone.
The Equation:

Employer has a problem - work to get done, issues to deal with, problems to solve.

You may be the answer to the problem - you have the skills, background, experience, and attitude.

Challenge: to convince the employer that you can bring added value to the equation, to help with the problem.

Solution: A win/win for everyone.

Sell yourself as the solution to the problem.
THE PRODUCT – YOU
WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER?

Most people say they feel really uncomfortable bragging about themselves. That figures, because we have been told since we were children, “Don’t brag.” But the job interview is not the place to become modest about your achievements. It is, in fact, the place to talk about them with pride.

*Myth - “The Best-Qualified Candidate Always Gets The Job!”*

You have to create the perception that you are the best candidate. Saying “The best-qualified candidate always gets the job,” is like saying “The best product always captures the market.”

This is not always the case. Not only must the product be the best, but it must be perceived to be the best. Perception is the key. If you are best qualified but not perceived to be the best, you may lose your opportunity. Let the interviewer know you are the best qualified! If you can talk about your skills in a convincing manner, you are the one most likely to get the job.

A change of focus will help a lot in this area. Begin to think of yourself as a PRODUCT! When you are considering buying a product, you want to know what it has to offer. What do you have to offer?

One way to think about your skills is to divide them into three categories:

**Knowledge-based skills** – are skills learned through Experience or Education:

Computer Programs/Languages; Graphics; Writing Skills; Training Skills; Management Experience; Sciences: Chemistry, Biology; Coaching Skills, Sales Experience; Leadership Training; Project Management; Operations; Marketing; Event Planning; Policy
Development; Legal Expertise; Strategic Planning; Liaison; Mediator; Product Management; Research Skills; Business Acumen; Mechanically Adept; etc.

The next category of skills is known as Transferable Skills or General Skills. These skills are not necessarily taught in any classroom. They are learned skills through maturity, development and experience.

These can be the skills that set one candidate apart from the others. These skills are often considered as “non-essential” or softer skills. This is an unfortunate thinking because when examined a little closer they can be considered “added-value” skills and can also be essential to the success of the person’s performance. In fact, most performance issues are around the “general” skills rather than the knowledge-based skills.

Transferable skills

These skills can be thought of as “portable skills” in that you can take them with you to almost any job. They are broad-based and usually learned or acquired through experience:

Communication; Listening; Decision Making; Judgment; Initiative; Planning; Organizing; Time Management; Leadership; Work Ethic; Interpersonal Skills; Common Sense; Social Skills; Creative Ideas; Sees Big Picture; Analytical; Accountable; Reliable; High Standards; Resourceful; Action-Oriented; Intuitive; Problem Solving; Good With Numbers; Gets Along Well; Articulate; Handy; Artistic; Envisioning.

Personal Traits are the qualities that will determine a fit in the company, the department or the position.

Personal Traits – are attributes that define a person’s personality:

Dependable; Strong; Team Player; Versatile; Patient; Friendly; Energetic; Formal; Loyal; Self-Confident; Dynamic; Practical;
Sociable; Persuasive; Responsible; Sense of Humor; Cheerful; Good Attitude; Aggressive; Assertive; Determined; Honest; Humble; Productive; Conscientious; Curious; Enthusiastic; Precise; Detail-Oriented; Compassionate; Efficient; Emotional; Rigid; Open-Minded.

**Standing Out From the Other Candidates**

“How can you make yourself stand out when there are so many other candidates looking at the same job?” The answer is “focus” - focus on what makes you unique.

Let’s assume that you have an outstanding resume and that you make it to the top of the stack of resumes of people to be called for an interview. You, and maybe nine or ten other equally qualified people for the position, that is.

Because companies have so many candidates to choose from, they are interviewing more people so that they can select the “best.” When you are lucky enough to be invited to an interview, it is essential that you be ready to sell yourself, to let the interviewers know what makes you unique, what added value you can bring to the position. In other words, tell why you are the best person for the job.

By doing some basic preparation, you can determine your uniqueness and where you should focus your attention. The first step in this process is to identify your five strengths. These strengths are the areas where you do very well.
Identifying Your Five Strengths

This may take some thought on your part. What are your strengths? Think about previous performance appraisals. What was said or written about you? What would your co-workers or ex-bosses say about you?

- List the skills and experiences you have that would be required in the type of job you are seeking. For instance, a technical job would focus on programs, languages, platforms, etc.

- Give some thought to those skills in which you excel, those that are referred to as the “transferable skills.” These skills can be taken with you to any job you hold. Examples of these skills are your communication and people skills, or your time-management and project-management skills, or your ability to build strong relationships, or your ability to influence others.

- Lastly, think of the personal traits that make you unique. Maybe you never miss deadlines, or perhaps you are willing to do above and beyond what is asked, or perhaps you have a great attitude. (Don’t dismiss these traits--many people have been fired for negative personal traits rather than for lack of knowledge).

When you have identified your five areas of strength, make a list of those strengths and some examples of when those strengths have helped you achieve results on the job. It will be essential that you can not only identify your strengths, but that you also have examples and stories of times when you demonstrated those strengths in the past.
The next step is to look at the job postings and ads. In fact, look at several job postings that would be of interest to you. Your goal is to find key words and phrases. For this exercise, don’t limit yourself to geographical location. Look at jobs of interest located anywhere.

When you have several postings, read each word and sentence carefully, taking notes as you do. What are they looking for? What words appear consistently in almost every posting?

In summary, by narrowing your uniqueness to five basic points, you can guide the conversation to include this information. By focusing on five strengths, you will be prepared with examples of times when you have used these strengths.

When you walk out of that interview room, your interviewers may not remember all five of your points; but if they remember even two of the points that make you unique, you will be ahead of the game!
Read the job posting three times.

- Read the first time for content.
- Read the second time for words – vocabulary. What words appear consistently in almost every posting?
- Read the third time and read between the lines - what would it take to get this job done? What are they looking for?

Now, take a piece of paper and divide it in half. On one side of the paper write, “What they are looking for,” and on the other side, “What I have to offer.” Each time you apply for a position, it will be invaluable for you to know how you stand against what they are looking for. This exercise will help you see how close a match you are and where you should focus.

Your next step is to add your uniqueness to the “What I have to offer” list. Some postings will list additional skills required, which makes it easier for you to see what is important to them.

An example would be, “Must have excellent communications skills, strong organizational skills, and be a willing team player.”

If these words appear in most of your posting examples, then make sure that these are a part of your focus.

Can you work these words and your five strengths into the interview to demonstrate your fit – and then some? It is your challenge to do just that to make yourself stand out in the crowd.
NEW TOOL TO CREATE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND FOR THE INTERVIEW

There’s an easy way to uncover what sets you apart from the crowd, uncover your arsenal of unique advantages, and form them into a powerful, impactful personal brand that will instantly launch you ahead of the competition and land you in your dream job.

All with the push of a button!

For the first time ever, I’ve taken the proven coaching process I walk my clients through to help them uncover the unique edge, unusual advantages, and extra benefits they have to offer employers and put it into a powerful, incredibly easy to use software that will help you unlock your own job winning edge with the push of a button!

In a matter of minutes, this software will walk you through my step-by-step personal branding process.

When you’re done, you’ll have a ready-to-use, completely custom tailored “cheat sheet” of interview answers - injected with your job winning traits and unique advantages that will instantly set you apart in the hiring manager’s mind.


USE YOUR FIVE FINGERS TO REMEMBER©

- While you can’t bring a “cheat sheet” into the interview – you can bring your fingers.

- Use your fingers as a “tool” to help you to stay focused.

- The thumb (strong base) education and experience;

- The pointer finger (directed) your expertise or knowledge of the job;
• The middle finger (to the point) your strength – transferable or personal;

• The ring finger (loyalty) people skills, communication, “whatever it takes” attitude;

• The little finger (weakest) personal/engaging/interesting about you – or how the combination of all these traits together makes you unique.

**True Story**

One client told me she drew a picture of her hand. She wrote a single word in each finger of the drawing so that in the event that her mind went blank during the interview she could grab her hand and remember the one word.
What Makes You Unique?

Think about and write down the skills you have used in past jobs (only the ones you want to use in your next job). Name at least seven to ten in each category. What do you have to offer from your last job? From your previous jobs? From your education? From your volunteer work? From your life experiences?

Identify Your Knowledge-Based Skills – skills you learned from experience and education.


List Your Transferable or Portable Skills – skills that will work in different industries and jobs.

(Communication, Planning, Time Management, Problem Solving, Customer Service, Teaching, Coaching, Creative, Researching, Selling, Follow-Through, Resourcefulness, Attention to Detail, Skilled with Numbers, Innovation).

Think About Your Personal Traits – the qualities that make you who you are.

(Flexible, Friendly, Dependable, Good Attitude, Reliable, Calm, High Energy, Patient, Self-Starter, Organized, Easy to Get Along With, Quick Learner, People Skills, Goal Directed).
Although your resume is certainly impressive, I'm concerned we may not have a good fit here.
MOTIVATION

What Are You Looking For?

It is important that you think about what you want. Think about when you have been most satisfied with your career. Also think about when you have been least satisfied? Was your last job satisfying? What would you have liked more of? Less of? Take the time to give this exercise some thought. It could make a difference in your job satisfaction. How can you find the right job if you don’t know what you are looking for? Hopefully, we learn from our past experiences – positive and negative.

Q. When have you been most satisfied with your career?

Why?

A. “That would have to be my last job where I…”

“The reason I was satisfied is because I was doing…”

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

Think about the various jobs you’ve held. Which were the best remembered? Which were those you would just as soon forget? If you can’t think of jobs, think about projects. If you are a new grad, think of classes you’ve taken which have been of particular interest.

Answer the questions on the next page.
1. When have you been most productive, energized, and content with your work?

Why?

How can you look for this in your next job? What questions can you ask to try to discern whether this is the place for you?

2. When have you been least satisfied? Miserable? Unhappy? Hated going to work?

Why?

What questions could you ask in the interview to try to find out more about the culture and the work environment at the company you are interviewing with? How can you avoid getting into a similar situation again?
Matching Your Qualifications With Their Needs

When you read the ads/postings carefully, you will notice that there are some words included in every ad for your type of job. An example would be ads for an Executive Secretary where the word “confidentiality” appears consistently. If you were to apply for that particular position, you would want to be sure to include the word “confidentiality” in your resume and cover letter.

Read job postings carefully looking for the words that are repeated or stand out as being the most important factors to perform the job. These words are called the “key factors” or the key competencies required to do the job.

By practicing to identify key factors in job postings or ads that are of interest, you will begin to notice patterns. What are the common words used in almost every description? What are they looking for? What qualifications are listed? How do your skills match up against their requirements?

A good exercise is to take a piece of paper and write down the words that appear repeatedly. Notice the frequency of particular words. These “key factors” for the type of jobs that you are applying will become pertinent to your preparation for the interview. These words will also be an indicator to the interviewer that you know the “lingo.” If they use industry words, you should include those words.
FIT? THEIR NEEDS - YOUR QUALITIES

Take a job description (a classified ad or job posting will work as well). Looking at the job description, compare the company’s needs with your experience and qualities. How do you stack up? Where are your shortcomings? Can you show how you learn quickly or bring added value to the company from the start? Write some ideas in answer to the following questions:

What Are They Looking For?
(Key Factors)
WHAT I HAVE TO OFFER
(What makes you unique?)

Do you have other qualities that will replace those required -years of experience vs. education? Do you fit at least 80% of the requirements?
The Words You Use Send a Strong Message

The words you use to express yourself say more about you than you think. In fact, your vocabulary and the use of appropriate words say more about you than the message you are trying to communicate. You are judged by the words you use. When you are looking for a job, it is not only important to use the “right” words and language - it is essential.

It begins with the writing of your resume and continues in the way that you answer the questions asked in an interview. Each industry uses “key words” or “lingo” for each position. In order to be prepared, it will be important for you to research these words and use them appropriately. If you do, you will sound more knowledgeable and “in-the-know.”

How will I know which words are “key”?

Key words are found in job postings/ads. For each position there are common words that describe what is required for a job. Job postings are a list of qualities and skills employers are looking for in a candidate, their “wish list.”

Here is an example of common words used in postings for an Executive Secretary position: (six postings were used).

- “Confidential” (used in all six postings).
- “Ability to proofread and edit” (used in all six postings).
- “Excellent written and verbal communication skills” (used in four of six postings).
- “Organized, Attention to detail” (used in all six postings).
- Other words used included, “Discretion,” Judgment,” Self-starter,” Scheduling,” “Prioritize,” and “Multi-tasking.”
If you are applying for an Executive Secretary position, these are the key words to include in your cover letter and resume. Electronic resume scanners will seek out these words to select your resume as qualified for the position. If these words are missing, your resume may not be selected. These are also the words to use in the interview that will make you sound like someone who is a good fit for the position.

The right words can make a big difference in a single statement: more concise and to the point, more powerful and impressive. Finding the “key” words will make your statements more powerful. Speaking the industry lingo, you will be taken more seriously as a candidate worthy of a job offer.

How will I know which words are “key”?  

Each industry uses common words to describe what is required for a job. Descriptions are a list of qualities and skills employers are looking for in a candidate - the “wish list.” By making use of this information and using key words you can reveal yourself as a match for the “ideal” candidate.

Specific industry “talk” differs from industry to industry. In the Sales industry words such as “territories” and “quotas” are used. In the Health Care industry the words are medically directed: “diagnostic tests, therapeutic procedures, patient management plans, etc.”

Where do I find these words?

- A good place to start is with job postings. Common words are used to describe the requirements needed for each job. By printing out several postings you will begin to see the “key” words repeated over and over. The only criteria for finding these words should be that you are interested in the job and not limiting your search by location. (http://jobsearch.monster.com/).
• The Occupational Information Network - O*NET™ OnLine - http://online.onetcenter.org/ - is a complete list of occupation keywords, SOC codes, Job Families. This site also lists skills required – basic skills, social skills, experience and tasks required.

Researching words will pay off when you begin to write your resume or prepare your interview script. Of course, you would never use a word just to impress your interviewer. Knowing the definition behind the word is what will convince the interviewer that you know what you are talking about.
BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEWING - PAST BEHAVIOR, FUTURE SUCCESS

You Say You’re Good - Prove It!

Skilled interviewers use behavioral interviewing techniques to screen out candidates. But what does that mean?

In order to find experienced people, employers are asking interview questions based on past behavior as an indicator of future success. In other words, if you can demonstrate through examples, especially recent examples, that you’ve had success in certain areas at a previous time, you will be looked upon as a possible candidate for success in a future position.

*Past behavior is an indicator of future success - if you did it before you can do it again - good or bad.*

The questions asked in behavioral interviewing are different from traditional interview questions. A traditional question might begin with a statement like, “What would you do if...” You can use your imagination with that type of question and spin a tale.

Not so with behavior-based interviewing. An example of a behavioral question would be, “Tell me about a time when...,” or “Can you give me an example....” The interviewer is looking for specific examples of how you handled situations.

Your tendency when asked a question like this might be to say, “I do that every day - it’s what I do.” But the interviewer using behavioral interviewing is looking for specific examples of how you performed. The interviewer might say, “Can you give me an example of a time when you handled a dissatisfied customer?” It is now time for you to tell your success story. Your stories should include the situation, what you did, the action you took, and the result or outcome.
Employers are looking for employees who have experience and skills. They are listening for examples of past successes and how you handled failures. Your examples will demonstrate your experience with people, your flexibility, and your willingness to grow with the job.

If the interviewer does not use this interviewing technique, you can still tell your stories when appropriate. As an example, you could say, “I’d like to tell you about my customer service experience that I think would be important in this job.”

By preparing for the interview with an exercise recalling your past stories, you will be able to think of examples ahead of time and not be caught off-guard. There is nothing worse than going home after an interview thinking of all the things you could have said. Your stories don’t necessarily have to be about paid work. Examples of volunteering, community work, or your education can also be effective. Try to make the examples specific to the type of position you are applying for, and be sure the stories are true stories. This is no time for fairy tales.

You say you’re a hard worker. Prove it. Give me an example.
YOUR SUCCESS STORIES

Telling the Whole Story

Writing your success stories is the most important step toward interview preparation. The first step of this process is to determine which factors are crucial to the position for which you are applying. Look at a job description or a posting such as the one below, and determine what it would take to get the job done.

What crucial factors would you be looking for if you were recruiting for this job? What skills and traits would it take for success in this position?

Customer Service Representative

Seeking a self-motivated individual with professional communication skills. Must have customer service experience with the ability to work with internal and external customers using good listening skills. Knowledge of the Internet and MS Office products is a must.

Some key words in this ad that you may have identified are:

- Communication skills
- Professional Attitude
- Listening skills
- Self-Motivated
- Customer Service experience
- Computer skills.
The next step is to write experience stories around these factors. One of the easiest ways to prepare and remember stories is to use an acronym - SPARE. It’s a lot like writing a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Situation, or Problem. What is the basis of the story? State the situation or problem at the beginning of your story. It should be brief and concise. What was the situation?

Action. What you did, your actions. (Beware of the pronoun “we.” It can take away from your part of the action). This part of the story should include some movement and detail.

Results. What was the outcome or ending to the story? (The end is an important part of the story, which a lot of people neglect to add.) The story does not always have to end in a success. Overcoming adversity and beginning again is also a trait that employers are looking for in a candidate.

Enthusiasm. Tell the story in an interesting way, adding details that bring color and interest to the story as though you were telling it to someone at a party (in professional language).

Using a Success Story

An interviewer looking for a Customer Service Representative may ask a question like,

“Describe a situation when you had to handle an angry customer and make a quick decision about the action taken.”

This would be your chance to tell one of your prepared success stories.
Model Answer

Situation or Problem

“I can remember a woman who called and was yelling about a malfunction of a machine that had cost her an order.”

Action – What I did was....

“First, I listened very carefully; then I calmed her down by asking her to explain the details of the situation.

I then repeated the problem back to her and confirmed that I understood the problem.

I assured her I would call her back that day. I did some research on the problem and the dates and discussed the situation with my supervisor. I recommended that we adjust the customer’s bill based on my findings, and my supervisor agreed.”

Result

“I called her back that day, as promised, and she was very satisfied with the adjustment. She even wrote an e-mail to my supervisor telling him about my excellent and professional customer service.”

Enthusiasm

“I really liked solving her problem. I felt like I had done something worthwhile when she thanked me and apologized for chewing me out.”
What traits can you pick up from the story?

- good customer service
- communications skills
- listening skills
- follow-through
- initiative
- research skills
- problem-solving.

If you were recruiting for this position, would you be interested in this person?
Look at the job description or ad posting for the position you are seeking, and select the key factors - what it would take to get the job done.

Using the SPARE format, write at least 5-10 stories about each factor identified. Focus on the factors they are seeking and show them you have what it takes because you have done it before.

**STORY TEMPLATE**

**Situation or Problem (20%)**

**Action (60%)**

**Result (20%)**

**Enthusiasm (+)**

“When it comes to interviewing several acronyms are used to tell stories, some that you may have encountered in other books or training courses you’ve attended. They all refer to a beginning; a middle; and an end to your story.”
THE PREPARATION
“TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF”

Where Do I Begin? Where Should I Focus?

The #1 question asked in most interviews is “TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF” or some form of that question. “How would you describe yourself?” or “Tell me about yourself and your background and how it relates to this position.”

**Beginning:**

Tell about your years of work experience - your most recent work, skills, and achievements - some of your knowledge-based skills and how you used them.

**Transition:**

Emphasize your transferable skills, your strengths. What do you have to offer? What can you bring to this position? What are your accomplishments?

**Current Situation:**

Describe what you’re looking for now. What type of work have you enjoyed? What qualities have motivated you before and are you hoping to find again?

**EXAMPLE #1:**

**Beginning:**

For the past six years, I have been in the electronics industry working on computer systems. Two years ago I was promoted to lead technician and currently supervise four testers and technicians.
Transition:

My strength is problem solving. I take an analytical view of what is happening and work through the process by trying various solutions. I work well independently or as a member of a team. I have worked in fast-paced environments most of my life, and I am very goal-oriented and deadline-driven.

Current Situation:

I am looking for a position as a lead or coach where I can effectively work with a team to bring in results that contribute to the bigger picture or bottom line.

EXAMPLE #2:

Beginning:

I am a person who enjoys problem solving. For the past six years I have been working on projects and problems involving software design. In my last position I was able to solve a design problem that had been around for more than a year. As a result, the company was able to sell a product that had been delayed for a key account for over $2 million.

Transition:

I enjoy thinking “outside of the box” and coming up with new ways to look at old problems, either on my own or as a team member. Customer service and follow-through are skills I pride myself on. I have made some long-lasting relationships with customers by building rapport through trust. I enjoy making people feel special, no matter what size the account.
Current Situation:

It is important to me to do work that makes a difference, no matter what my role. I am looking for new challenges in the software industry. I’d like to find a place where I can bring what I have learned and apply it to new situations.

This is a short personal statement – that you can use in a quick introduction to a person when time is of the essence. It is also commonly called “your elevator speech.” It should take one minute or less to say.
YOUR PERSONAL STATEMENT

Prepare a brief but concise statement that would take one minute or less to say. This is the oral version of a summary you might use on a resume.

**Beginning** - (experience - overall/recent)
Three sentences

**Transition** - (highlight your strengths)
Two sentences

**Current Situation** - (present - looking for now)

**IMPORTANT:**
Practice this statement until it sounds smooth, not stilted or rehearsed. Use a tape recorder or a coach to practice, practice, practice.
Why Should We Hire You?

This is another broad question that can take you down the wrong road unless you have done some thinking about what to say ahead of time. This question is about selling yourself. Think of yourself as the product. Why should the customer buy?

Wrong track –

Spencer answers by saying, “Because I need and want a job.”

That’s nice, but the bottom line here is, “What can you do for us?”

Mariana says, “I am a hard worker and really want to work for this company.”

The majority of people think of themselves as “hard workers” – and, why this company?

Right track –

Tom’s answer to this question is, “Because I am a good fit for the position.”

Getting warmer – more detail, please.

Sharon answers, “Because I have what it takes to solve problems and do the job.”

This is the best answer so far. Expand on this and you’ve got it.

Develop a Sales Statement.

The more detail you give the better your answer will be. This is not a time to talk about what you want. It is a time to summarize your accomplishments and relate what makes you unique.
Exercises

Product Inventory Exercise

The bottom line of this question is “What can you do for this company?”

Start by looking at the job description or posting. What is the employer stressing as requirements of the job? What will it take to get the job done? Make a list of those requirements.

Next, do an inventory to determine what you have to offer as a fit against those requirements. Think of two or three key qualities you have to offer which match what the employer is seeking. Don’t underestimate personal traits that make you unique – your energy, personality type, working style, and people skills.

Compare and Contrast

Another exercise that can be quite helpful is the Compare and Contrast exercise.

What are the similarities between this job and the job you are currently performing (or past experience)?

What are the differences (shortcomings) between this job and the job you are currently performing (or past experience)?

You may be surprised at how many similarities there are between the jobs.

You may also find that the differences aren’t as big as you thought they were.
The Sales Pitch – You are the Solution

From the list of requirements, match what you have to offer and merge the two into a summary statement. This is your sales pitch. It should be no more than two minutes long and should stress the traits that make you unique and a good match for the job.

Example:

“From our conversations, it sounds like you are looking for someone to come in and take charge immediately. It also sounds like you are experiencing problems with some of your database systems.

With my seven years of experience working with financial databases, I have saved companies thousands of dollars by streamlining systems. My high energy, and quick learning style enable me to hit the ground running and size up problems rapidly. My colleagues would tell you I’m a team player, who maintains a positive attitude and outlook. I have the ability to stay focused in stressful situations, and can be counted on when the going gets tough. I know I would be a great addition to your team.”

What makes you unique?

Completing an exercise around this question will allow you to concentrate on your unique qualities. Like snowflakes, no two people are alike. Take some time to think about what sets you apart from others.

“Never miss deadlines.”
“Bring order to chaos.”
“Good sense of humor.”
“Great attention to detail.”

Let the interviewer know that you have been listening to the problem and have what it takes to do the job – you are the solution to the problem.
PREPARE FOR SALARY QUESTIONS

_Don’t be caught off guard!_

**Know the Market - Know Your Worth**

“Could you tell me what salary you are looking for?”

“What are you currently making?”

“Your salary need is clearly out of our range. Are you still interested in pursuing the position?”

“Would you be willing to consider a cut in pay?”

Questions concerning compensation can be asked as early as a phone screening. A part of your preparation should include some work on how to answer the questions regarding salary before the interview even begins.

The rule here is, “Delay the subject of salary as long as possible.” If you name a number this early in the process, you will set the line for future negotiations.

Tell your interviewer that you feel it is premature to discuss the subject of money until you have more information about the position and the responsibilities involved. Ask him or her, “Could you tell me the range budgeted for this position?”

**Research**

It is important that you do your homework before you go into the interview. YOU MUST KNOW YOUR WORTH.

- What is the going rate for the position?
• Compare like positions, years of experience, responsibilities, region.

• Check out Web sites, associations, colleagues.

Think about buying a major purchase, like a car. What research process would you go through? Blue book? Check the classifieds to find out the going rate for the model and year? Check with mechanics? Read Consumer Reports?

The same process applies to researching the job and salary. Take some time before you go out to buy.

**Web sites with salary information:**

http://www.salary.com  
http://www.jobstar.org  
http://www.salaryexpert.com  
http://www.wageweb.com

For more Web site resources sites see Page 151.

**Know Your Bottom Line**

What is the lowest salary you are willing to accept (no matter how terrific the job!)? Do some calculations. Figure out what you want and what you need to maintain your current lifestyle or to improve your current lifestyle. Know when you have to say, “No, I can’t accept the offer at that salary.” See exercise “Figuring Your Bottom Line” on the next page.
A client of mine was interviewing for a position in the high tech industry. When he was interviewed by the CEO, he was asked, “What do you want in the way of salary?” His interviewer told him it was not his policy to play games about salary.

The man answered, “Somewhere between $50,000 and $60,000.”

He called me to say he had received an offer from the company for $60,000. “Good for you!” I exclaimed. He said, “No, I did some research and found out with my credentials and experience I am worth $70,000.”

“So why did you say $50 to 60 thousand?” I asked.

“Because they caught me off-guard,” came his reply.
**FIGURING YOUR BOTTOM LINE**

What Do You Need to Keep Up Your Current Lifestyle?  
To Improve Your Lifestyle?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fixed Monthly Expenses</th>
<th>NEED</th>
<th>WANT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent/Mortgage Expense</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities (Gas, Electric, Water)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance (Medical, Life, Home, Auto)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loan Payments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Card Payments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellular Phone Bill</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Provider</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed Monthly Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variable Fixed Expenses</td>
<td>NEED</td>
<td>WANT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal/Household Items</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses/Recreation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel/Vacations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memberships/Dues/Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings/Investments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Dental Care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charitable Donations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Fixed Monthly Total                     |      |      |
| Fixed Monthly Total (from previous page)|      |      |

**WHAT YOU NEED/WANT TO EARN**
Dealing with Salary Questions During the Screening

Can you imagine meeting someone for the first time and asking the person: “What do you expect in the way of salary?” That is exactly what happens more often than not in the interview process.

What do you do when the interviewer asks you the question, “Could you tell me your salary requirement?”

Here are some sample answers to fend off the question.

“I’d be glad to talk salary at the appropriate time, but I really don’t have enough facts at this time to discuss salary. I would be interested in hearing what the range budgeted for this position is.”

Or, you could say:

“Throughout my career I have never found two jobs to be exactly the same. I think I’d be putting myself at a disadvantage if I put out a salary number without knowing what was going to be expected of me.

Maybe you could tell me what you typically pay someone with my education and years of experience to do this job?”

If the representative pushes for a “ball park” or “what you are making now,” you could say something like:

“I’ve done some research and I can tell you that an acceptable range for someone with my years of experience and education is (name a range). Is this along the lines of what your company pays?”

By being prepared you will change your position and you will not feel like your back is up against the wall. You will be able to talk “ranges and going-rates” – and not fear revealing your hand or losing out on a “better offer.”
But, what if the representative is having none of your vague answers and pushes you for your “current” or “last salary?”

This is another situation where you have options. You could –

- Give them a number – your base salary - (big mistake)
- Give them a number – factoring in your current benefits/bonus package – (better answer than giving them your base alone – the entire “package”)
- Try to postpone the answer to a later date or give them a range. (the best of the three options)

Here are some possible answers.

“I’m sorry but I’m just not ready to talk salary without some more information from the company and what the job will entail so that I have something to compare with. Rather than go back and forth, the range I would be interested in is $ ---to $------.”

(Make sure that it is a wide range and that the bottom number is acceptable in case this number ends up to be the offer.)

Or, you could say something like:

“The base salary that I received in my last job was combined with an extremely generous benefits package and bonuses, I would have to hear the details of the package that you offer in order to compare.”

Use your own words.

Take time to script some possible answers that you would feel comfortable with if asked this type of question in a screening or interview.

Take time to script this answer before you receive the call. You should feel comfortable answering this question in your own words.
The Negotiation Dance

One step forward; one step back; step together, and back again.

To perform the dance steps you must have a good sense of balance. Knowing your value and your worth will help you feel more confident about staying in step during the negotiation process. The employer takes the lead and you follow, staying with the rhythm. You move together through the process; aware of the other, taking care not to step on one another. The dance is never confrontational or harsh, but smooth and in harmony.

It Begins

It is not uncommon for the first step to begin on the phone. The interviewer asks for your salary requirement, or what salary you are currently making.

You take a step back and try to postpone this discussion until you have more information.

“Could you tell me the range budgeted for this position?” Or, “What would you typically pay someone with my background and experience?”

Postponing the salary discussion is the best step for you, at least until you have the information needed. By doing research ahead of time, you will feel confident knowing your worth. (See, http://salary.monster.com.) There is a point when the range, or your expectations, will be revealed, but it is better to wait for the interviewer to lead and give out the information first.
The Offer

If the employer determines that you are right for the job, they will take the lead and make an offer. It is now your turn to move the dance to the next stage. But, first you must evaluate the package. Take into consideration the –

**Base rate** (always the top priority) – timing of annual reviews;

**Alternative compensation** – bonus, commission, stock options, profit sharing;

**Benefits** – premiums for insurance, paid time off, matching, working conditions;

**Other perks** – car, education reimbursement, training, laptop computer.

Basic calculations will tell you how closely the offer meets your needs, values and worth.

The Negotiation Tango

You call the hiring manager and tell her how delighted you are to receive the offer, however you have some questions and concerns. Scripting your dialog ahead of time will give you confidence to be succinct regarding what you want.

“Based on my eight years experience in this industry, my MBA degree, and my proven ability to raise funds, and build teams, I feel that the base rate offered is low. Is there any flexibility here?” you ask.

In stride with you, the hiring manager asks what you have in mind. And, because you have done the pre-work, and know your value and worth, you are able to sell yourself based on what you will bring to the company.
“Based on the research I have done, I feel someone with my experience and background should be in the upper level of the range we have been discussing.”

Hold your position - count to 10. Silence is a strong tool in the negotiation. She waits through the silence and then tells you she will get back to you. She is in sync with your movements – she wants you in this position. You’ve presented your case well.

The Final Steps

Whether you are negotiating for more money, or for some other perks: benefits, a bonus or commission, more stock options, training or education - the rules remain the same. Let the employer lead and you follow, maintaining your own sense of balance. By preparing and researching ahead of time, you can feel more empowered in this process – as a partner in a dance – moving with the flow. The rhythm of the negotiation should be smooth, moving toward the final step – acceptance and agreement – a win/win situation for all.

On-the-Spot Offers

What if they make me an offer and want an immediate decision?

Some employers make on-the-spot offers. It is always a good idea to take time to think the offer over. Once you have accepted, it is too late to negotiate any terms of the agreement. If pressed for a decision, tell the employer that you have a personal policy of taking 24 hours to think over major decisions.
Negotiating the Offer

NOT ALWAYS AS GOOD AS IT LOOKS – Take some time to evaluate the offer.

Have you ever negotiated an offer? If not, you are not alone. Most people DO NOT negotiate salary. They accept what is offered.

Nicholas received an on-the-spot offer and was thrilled. This was the job he wanted and he was anxious to get started. He was going to get more money, and a bonus. What more could he ask for?

When he got home that evening, he sat down with pencil and paper and began to evaluate the offer, and what he was getting overall. He was not only shocked by what he discovered, but wished that he could go back and talk about some of the issues. But, he had signed on the “dotted line” that afternoon.

Once you sign the offer letter, you have essentially signed a contract. It is too late to go back and negotiate. Never accept an on-the-spot offer, unless it is absolutely out-of-this-world. It is generally wise to evaluate what you are gaining and losing.

Nicholas was offered $55,000 per year, with a hiring bonus of $5,000 paid in two payments over the next six months. This was a $5,000 a year increase from what he was making on his last job, and a bonus to boot. An extra $10,000.00.

When he and his wife looked over the benefits package they discovered that he would now have to pay the insurance premiums for his dependents. His last employer had paid the premiums for the entire family.

-$350.00/per month - $4200 per year
His new vacation package offered two weeks time off, accrued over the next twelve months. His former Bonuses are earned based on performance, and given as judged appropriate.–$962.00 one week’s vacation pay.

Nicholas was receiving a 6.5% yearly bonus, based on company earnings in his last position. His new company does not have a planned bonus as part of the salary. Bonuses are earned based on performance, and given as judged appropriate.

–$3250.00 per year – lost bonus

His former employer matched 50 cents for every dollar contributed up to 6% on his 401K account. This company does not match funds. –$1500.00 per year (based on 6% contribution).

His calculations showed a minus of $10,000 a year from his new offer, based on cost of insurance premiums, lost bonus, and lost matching 401K contributions. He wasn’t quite so thrilled with the offer anymore.

At least he got that $5,000 hiring bonus, which will cushion the fall. What he didn’t anticipate was the higher tax rate on “special” checks that was deducted from the bonus money. These higher rate taxes can run as much as 41.5%.

Nicholas got the job he wanted, and maybe that is worth more to him than the money difference. But, it would have been wise to make the decision with all the facts before signing the offer letter. He may have been able to negotiate another $5,000 to compensate for the benefits differences. Or, given the higher tax rate, negotiated for an increase in the hiring bonus.

It is always best to take some time to reflect on the “total package.” Benefits can be worth another 29-50% of your salary. There are other factors to consider – more challenging work, better company, more
opportunity – and, it may be worth giving up dollars now to invest in your future. The decision, however, should be thought through before rushing ahead.

If pressed to give your answer to an offer on-the-spot, always stall for time. Tell them that you need to do some calculations and think about it. There is only one window of opportunity to negotiate your terms of employment. Once you say “Yes!”, the window closes.

Make sure you take the time to consider all your options
HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

The Most Dreaded Question of All

There is a formula for difficult questions called the Sandwich Technique.

(+ ) Begin with a positive statement

(-) Slip in the negative (or weakness)

(+) End with a positive statement

Q: WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES?

A: (+) My strengths are my energy and enthusiasm. I have a proven track record for working above and beyond what is asked of me.

(-) My weakness is that I get impatient when I don’t get the data I need to do my job because someone else didn’t meet a deadline.

(+) I continue to work on stronger communication skills so that I can deal with and understand people who don’t have the same work ethic.

This answer works because we can all work on our communication skills, particularly when it comes to being understanding of someone who is not pulling his/her weight. This is not the time to reveal a time-management or planning problem. Think of something you would like to improve about yourself. Be careful of sounding like a workaholic or a perfectionist – and always have a story ready (SPARE - page 37) to back up your statements.
ANSWER WITH A SANDWICH

What is your greatest strength/weakness? Practice writing out your answer - be sure to sandwich the negative with an emphasis on the positive.

(+)

(-)

(+)

---

Dear Interview Coach

An email was received that read:

Dear Interview Coach,

I don’t know what to say when asked, “What are your weaknesses?” I don’t have any weaknesses.

The reply:

Dear God,

We all have weaknesses!
10 MOST CHALLENGING JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

There is no way of predicting which questions will be asked in an interview, but by reviewing the “most common” questions you will begin to focus on how to present yourself in the most positive manner.

“Tell me about yourself.”

“Why are you leaving your current/last job?”

“Why do you want to work here – in this company? In this industry?”

“What are your strengths?”

“What are your weaknesses?”

“What are your goals?”

“Tell me about a time when you......”

(the interviewer can ask you for an example from your resume or from something you said about yourself.)

“What would you do ‘if’?” (These are questions about how you think.)

“What is your salary requirement?” “What is your current salary?”

“Do you have any questions for me?” (the interviewer)?

“Just for fun --- “If you were an animal, which one represents you best?”
1. “Tell me about yourself” --- or “Why should we hire you?”

Prepare and know your product – YOU! Summarize your experiences: “With five years experience working in the financial industry, and my proven record of saving the company money, I could make a big difference in your company. I am confident I would be a great addition to your team.”

2. “Why are you leaving your current/last job?”

This question is almost a certainty. If you are unemployed, put your leaving in a positive context: “I managed to survive two down-sizings, but the third round was a 20% reduction in force, which included me.”

If you are employed, focus on what you want in your next job: “After two years, I made the decision to look for a company that is team-focused, where I can add my experience.”

3. “Why do you want to work here – in this company? In this industry?”

The interviewer is listening for an answer that indicates you’ve given this some thought, and are not sending out resumes just because there is an opening. Doing research should give you plenty of reasons about why you want to work there. As an example, “I’ve selected key companies whose mission statements are in line with my values, where I know I could be excited about what the company does, and this company is very high on my list of desirable choices.”

4. “What are your strengths?”

What makes you unique? This will take an assessment of your experiences, skills and traits. What makes you stand out? After your assessment, bring it all together in a concise manner: “I have a unique combination of strong technical skills, and the ability to build strong customer relationships. This allows me to use my knowledge, and break down information to be user friendly.”
5. “What are your weaknesses?”

The most dreaded question of all. Handle this question by minimizing the weaknesses and emphasizing the strengths. Stay away from personal qualities and concentrate on professional traits: “I am always working on improving my communication skills to be a more effective presenter. I recently joined Toastmasters which I find very helpful.”

6. “What are your goals?”

Sometimes it’s best to talk about short-term and intermediate goals, and not lock yourself into the distant future. Something like, “My immediate goal is to get a job in a growth-oriented company. My long-term goal will depend on where the company goes. I hope to eventually grow into a position of responsibility.”

7. “Tell me about a time when you......” (the interviewer can ask you for an example from your resume or from something you said about yourself).

The types of questions that are asked using this technique are used to find out how and what you did in the past and the skill sets you used in the process - if you did it before you can do it again! They are called “behavioral questions.”

The difference between a behavioral question and other questions is what the question asks for. This type of question will be very specific.

For example when asked, “Tell me about a time when you solved a problem,” the key words are “a time.” This answer calls for a “specific” example of a “specific” incident.

8. “What would you do ‘if?’” (these are questions about how you think).

When traditional or “situational questions” are asked they usually include the word “if.” When “What would you do if...” questions are asked, you can use your imagination to come up with an answer. For example, “What would you do if you had a problem to
solve?” The word, “if,” is the clue word that indicates the interviewer wants to hear your thought process - how you think through a problem. This question does not require a past experience example.

9. “What is your salary requirement? “What is your current salary?”

It is to your advantage if the employer tells you the “range” first. Prepare by knowing the “going rate” in your area, and your bottom line or “walk away” point. One possible answer would be: “I am sure when the time comes we can agree on a reasonable amount. In what range do you typically pay someone with my background?”

10. “Do you have any questions for me?” (the interviewer).

At some point, usually at the conclusion of the interview, you may be asked, “Do you have any questions?” A common answer to this question is, “No, I think you’ve covered everything very well.” This is the wrong answer! You have passed up your opportunity to ask some critical questions that may make a difference as to whether you want to work for this company.

11. Just for fun --- “If you were an animal, which one represents you best?”

This type of psychological question is used by interviewers to see how you think quickly, or what perception you have of yourself. If you answer, “A bunny,” it will make a soft, passive impression. If you answer, “A lion,” you will be seen as aggressive. What type of personality would it take to get the job done? What impression do you want to make?

These are the questions that come up most often. They are among the toughest because they require forethought, and because they are about you and your thoughts and experiences. By anticipating and scripting the answer to these questions, you will become more focused and prepared.
1. “Tell me about yourself” --- or “Why should we hire you?”

2. “Why are you leaving your current/last job?”

3. “Why do you want to work here – in this company? In this industry?

4. “What are your strengths?”

5. “What are your weaknesses?”

6. “What are your goals?”
7. “Tell me about a time when you......” (the interviewer can ask you for an example from your resume or from something you said about yourself).

Write an example of a behavioral question from a factor that is important to the job you are seeking --- ex., Problem Solving Skills, or – A project you managed.

8. “What would you do ‘if’?” (these are questions about how you think).

Ex - “What would you do if you had to deal with an irate customer or coworker?”

9. “What is your salary requirement? “What is your current salary?

10. “Do you have any questions for me?” (the interviewer)?

11. “If you were an animal, which one would represent you?” (This is a fun question – that actually gives me a lot of information about you. Chances are that you will never be asked a question like this. BUT, I have heard stranger ones than this.)
FREQUENT INTERVIEW CONCERNS
WHAT IS AN ILLEGAL QUESTION?

- How old are you?
- Do you have children?
- How is your health?
- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Have you ever been arrested?

Illegal or improper? That is the question.

Technically, it is illegal for an interviewer to ask anything personal that is not directly job-related. Off-limit questions include, but are not limited to: information regarding your age, marital status, country of origin, religion, sexual orientation, and health status. Almost any legal information about you is illegal in the job interview.

Example

The female candidate was asked, “Do you plan to have children?” She was taken aback by the question and wasn’t sure how to answer.

She had three choices:

A - To answer the question honestly even though she did not want to.

B - To tell the interviewer it is none of his business and the question is illegal.

C - To deal with the concern behind the question, ignoring the illegal question itself.

How would you answer the question if you were the female candidate?
The best answer is “C.”

An appropriate answer from the candidate might have been, “Whether or not I plan to have children in the future is not really relevant to my career. I plan to work and have a career no matter what happens in my personal life.”

Why is this type of question asked in an interview? Why are interviewers concerned about your plans to reproduce, your marital status and your retirement plans? It’s simple; they want to make sure you are the solution to a problem, not the source of more headaches.

When the female candidate was asked her plans regarding future motherhood, the interviewer may have been trying to determine whether she was in for the long-term or just until the company could pay for the birth of her firstborn. It is clearly a discriminatory question, one that would probably never be asked of a male candidate, and it is illegal!

When you are asked this type of question, consider that you have options as to how you will answer.

D - You can answer the question and move on. (This may not feel good, but how important is the question to you?)

E - Don’t answer the questions when asked. (This may feel good, but they may take offense and consider that you may be a “trouble maker.”)

F - Think about the reason behind the question itself. (Best option if you can think the question through).

G - Consider the source and the nature of the question. (Do you want to work for a company that asks this type of question in an interview?)

There are some exceptions to some personal questions asked, which might be confusing.
Legal Personal Questions

Have you ever been convicted of a crime?

Depending on the type of job you are applying for, this could be critical. The question is usually stated in a more specific manner - “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?”

Can you show proof of your eligibility to work in the United States?

Every new employee, regardless of place of origin, must provide such documentation during the first days on the job.

Can you perform the job’s essential functions with or without reasonable accommodation?

This question must be accompanied by a job description covering the essential functions.

The concerns behind these questions are relevant to the job’s requirements and performance. As an example, if you have been convicted of embezzlement, you will probably not be considered for a job handling money. The concern is that you had a problem in your past that could be a problem again.

The interviewer wants to know if you can report to work and do the job. Any information that could be enlightening is important, but the interviewer’s questions should focus on the job and your qualifications to do it.

By becoming aware of illegal questions, you will be prepared to deal with them if confronted in an interview. Pre-interview thinking and preparation can spare some embarrassing or uncomfortable moments during the interview.
“DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?”

Questions You Should Ask

At some point, usually at the conclusion of the interview, you may be asked, “Do you have any questions?” A common answer to this question is, “No, I think you’ve covered everything very well.” This is the wrong answer! You have passed up your opportunity to ask some critical questions that may make a difference as to whether you want to work for this company.

But, what questions are appropriate?

When Marianne was asked if she had any questions at the conclusion of her first interview she took this as her chance to find out about vacation accrual and sick leave. She began asking about the days allowed and when she would be able to start taking them. The interviewer was taken back. “Is this what this woman cares about? Time off? This doesn’t sound like someone who will come in and get the work done,” the interviewer thought to himself. Clearly, Marianne had asked the wrong questions. Or, perhaps the right questions at the wrong time.

Timing is key. The first round of interviews is about discovery: finding out about the job and the company, not about the benefits, or raises. Good questions to ask in the first round are about the job content, the company culture, the future of the company.

David had prepared his questions, and was ready when the manager of engineering asked if he had any. “Yes, I do,” was his reply. “What types of projects would be forthcoming over the next six months?” The manager was eager to tell David about the prospects for future business and the plans for future growth. This discussion prompted more questions from David, and the interview ended half an hour later, after a lively exchange, and on a very upbeat note. David’s question was appropriate and timely.
But, what about those other questions about benefits, stock options, time off?

Later, as the interview process unfolds, there will be time to ask about the benefits and practical matters. Often the Human Resources department will provide you with a brochure, or packet of information. Obviously, you will need this information to assess a package in the event an offer is made. But, all in good time!

The interview should be an exchange of information. What does the company want, and what do you have to offer? But, also what do they have to offer, and what do you want? It is important that you express an interest in the company and the work being done, not just “what’s in it for me?” By asking questions you will demonstrate investigative skills, and that you are particular about the company you work for, and that you are not going to take just any offer that is made.

It is also important to consider whom you are talking to. The Human Resources person is the one likely to know about job descriptions, qualities being sought, the morale or the company culture. The hiring manager, your future boss, is the person to ask about the department, the team you will be working with, the challenges of the job.
Questions NOT TO ASK in the first rounds of interviewing.

Questions about salary, stock options, vacation, holiday schedule, benefits.

Don’t ask questions that have already been answered in the interview.

Don’t “grill” the interviewer – it’s ok to ask about the person’s background, but as an interested party, not an interrogator.

Questions TO ASK in the first rounds of interviewing.

Ask for a copy of the job description.

Ask why is this job open?

What qualities are you seeking in the person for this job?

What is the next step? When will you make your selection?

Prepare five or six questions before the interview and take them with you. When the time comes for you to ask questions, make sure you are ready to find out some important information.
Questions For You To Ask

1. Ask questions that came up during the interview. In other words, if they have talked a lot about a certain thing - “databases” - make sure you ask some questions about databases. “It seems from the questions you asked me, or from what I am picking up today.... Could you tell me more” - or some other question you want clarified that came up during the interview. (Read between the lines).

2. “Do you have any doubts that I can do this job?”

3. “Is there any additional information that I can provide to you that would convince you that I am the best person for this job........”(drum roll) because I believe I am. (only if you believe you are) Isn’t this kind of like “closing” or “asking for the sale?”

These are all according to the situation and your interviewer.

4. Don’t forget to summarize if you get the chance - “What I would bring to the position (one minute summary of your 5 points).”

Your Values? Fit?

Think about what’s important to you in a job. Advancement, challenge, fun, life balance? Remember, you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you.

The key is the FIT!
PREPARE A QUESTION LIST

Would you go on a first date without asking any questions? Begin to think of the interview process as the start of a relationship. Prepare five to ten questions to ask during the interview.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.
Frequent Interview Concerns

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.
Read Between the Lines

Rose was interviewing for a position as a recruiter when she came across this unusual situation.

The interview had been progressing smoothly until the department head asked if she had any questions. “Yes, I do,” she said. “As a potential recruiter, I was wondering how I could convince people they would want to work for this company.” The interviewer gave her a rather bland answer, which bothered Rose. She was going to have to sell people on this company if she were to succeed in this role. The interview went on to other subjects, and time passed quickly. At the end of the interview, Rose was asked if she had all of her questions answered. “No, not really,” she said. “I still have a question as to why someone would want to work for this company.” The department head was hesitant, then replied, “Let’s postpone that discussion for another time.”

Rose left the interview somewhat dissatisfied and assumed that she had pushed too far with her questions. The next day she received a call from the Human Resources manager with some surprising news. The decision for the position would have to be postponed as the department head who had interviewed her yesterday resigned from the company that morning!

It became clear to Rose why this man had not wanted to sell her on the company.

Sometimes you have to read between the lines. Turn up your intuition!
HOW DO I DRESS FOR THE INTERVIEW?

What image do you want to create? Image is not about being pretty, or having expensive clothing, or even a perfect body. Image is about feeling good about who you are. If you know you look good and are expressing yourself positively, that thought will boost your confidence and in turn affect the way others react to you. The reverse is equally true. If you feel shabby and ill at ease, others will react negatively to you.

Depending on the job and the industry for which you are interviewing, you should dress according to the image that you want to project and what is appropriate. Some candidates are choosing to dress down to project a friendly, more youthful appearance. Each company has its own culture, and what is casual for one company might be unacceptable for another.

If it is possible, go the day before to the place where you will be interviewing and stand outside at lunch time or after work, and watch what the employees leaving the building are wearing. Choose slightly more formal than what you see. After all, you are not one of them yet, and everyone will be aware you are dressing for the interview.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Ranges from a suit (with tie for men) to a jacket and slacks (no tie). Women can wear slacks/pants suit or skirt as appropriate to the position.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working casual</td>
<td>No jeans or t-shirts - usually khakis and a collared shirt, jacket or sweater.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>Any type of attire as long as it is tasteful - no gross or slogan t-shirts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really casual</td>
<td>Anything goes - no rules as to attire - including the wearing of shoes (the dot-com attitude).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An Interviewer’s Story

When I walked into the lobby, I was struck by the starkness of the woman I was about to interview. She was wearing a black suit and stiff white blouse. She had very pale, almost white skin and a lot of bushy, black hair.

She appeared stiff and not the personality type suited for the particular position for which she was applying.

During the interview I asked her, “If I were to ask your co-workers to describe three positive qualities about you, what would they say?” She lit up for the first time during the interview and said, “They’d say I was the life of the office; that I had a great sense of humor; and how much they enjoyed being with me.” I sat there with my mouth open. This woman had clearly misrepresented herself by what she had chosen to wear to the interview. She was trying to look very professional, but she went a bit too far. I had made the wrong judgment based on the image she portrayed.

Dress to reflect who you are.
Don’t try to be someone else in an interview.
WHAT IMAGE DO I WANT TO REFLECT?

What impression do you want to leave?

- What image reflects success to you?
- Consider your favorite newscaster or successful person. What does he or she wear?
- Go through magazines or catalogs and look for pictures of people who appear to look successful to you. What are they wearing? Do you want to project that look?
- Make a collage of the pictures of professional people you chose. See if a certain look or pattern begins to develop. Is that your desired look?
THE RULES OF SALARY NEGOTIATION
**WARNING:** Take time to consider your options before you begin to negotiate. Salary negotiation can be difficult at best. Once you begin to negotiate an offer, you must be willing to hang in there if your terms are not accepted. The way the negotiation unfolds may set the tone for your future employment with the company.
THE PRINCIPLES OF SALARY NEGOTIATION

1. You can’t negotiate anything until you have an offer. Don’t go there - yet.

2. Know your walk away point – when you can’t afford to take the offer.


4. Know what you want – the whole package and their priorities.

5. Know when to move forward and when to step back – the dance.

THE RULES

To say that money is a touchy subject is an understatement. Most people dread the subject, particularly in a job interview. By doing some preparation, some basic research, and following a few rules, you will feel better about dealing with the subject.

Rule #1 – He who mentions a dollar figure first, loses.

Wait until the subject is approached. Then answer that you are open on salary and are looking for an opportunity, or that you would like to postpone that discussion until later in the process. This is a good time to ask what salary range is budgeted for the position. If you are asked what your former salary was, you might state that you would like to hear more about the responsibilities of the job before you compare salaries, or that there were circumstances in your other job that kept your salary below market value. If you are asked what salary you are looking for, depending on where you are in the interviewing process, state that you think it is too early to discuss salary and you would like to hear more about the job before you discuss the particulars of money.
Rule #2 – Never try to negotiate until you have an offer.

You are in a far stronger position to negotiate after you have the offer. Your chances of getting a higher salary improve if the interviewer is convinced you are the right person for the job. This falls somewhere between “They want you” (they’re ready to make an offer) and “They got you!” (you’ve signed on the dotted line, and it is too late to go back and start over).

RULE #3 – Do not accept on-the-spot offers.

Some employers make on-the-spot offers. It is always a good idea to take time to think the offer over. Once you have accepted, it is too late to negotiate any terms of the agreement. If pressed for a decision, tell the employer that you have a personal policy of taking 24 hours to think over major decisions.

RULE #4 – Always get the offer in writing.

Too many people have been burned after negotiating a sweet deal, only to find that when management changes, there is no record of the negotiation. Get it in writing! If you negotiate a change, make sure you get a new offer letter or an addendum memo.

RULE #5 – Keep it friendly.

The tone of the negotiation should never be confrontational. You should be aiming for a win/win situation.

RULE #6 – Consider your position before making deals.

If you cannot settle on a salary, perhaps an early performance review/salary increase can be negotiated. Sometimes you can negotiate on vacation or benefits. The answer is always “NO,” unless you ask the question.
RULE #7 – Focus on the base.

It is in your best interest to negotiate the base salary first. Your future raises will be affected by this sum, not to mention Social Security, unemployment, life insurance, etc. The employer’s hands are sometimes tied due to internal salary equity. You may be asking for more than some of the current employees are making. Sometimes you will be offered a hiring bonus. Beware, they are usually taxed at a higher rate.

**TIP: SILENCE.** It is a powerful tool if used at the right time. Most of us are uncomfortable with silence. If you are offered a dollar amount repeat the amount and then be quiet. Reflect for a moment. Count to five or ten. See what happens!
AFTER THE INTERVIEW
HOW DID YOU DO?

**ASSESSING THE INTERVIEW - YOUR PERFORMANCE**

As soon as possible after the interview, you should sit down and write, or use a recorder, to get your thoughts out. Just let them flow - dump it all out.

**This exercise is for your eyes or ears only!**

What is your gut reaction to the process you just went through?

How do you rate your performance? (On a scale of one to five - five being the highest.)

What do you think the interviewer(s) thought of you?

What reservations did you hear from the interviewer(s)? spoken or unspoken?

Do you want to work for this company? Why?
What reservations do you have about working there?

Did you address these reservations to your satisfaction?

What looks exciting?

What could you have done differently to be more effective?

What do you still have to find out about the company? Job? Compensation? Benefits?

Let it all go and then walk away from it. Put the writing away or turn off the recorder, and forget about the whole thing. Hours later or the next day, pick it up again and read or listen to what you had to say. Are you still feeling the same way? (See exercise on Page 94.)

**IMPORTANT:**

After you complete this exercise, it is the time to write your follow-up letter(s) in accordance with your feelings and reactions. See “Follow-Up Letters” page 96.
FIT? YOUR NEEDS
THEIR SITUATION AND CULTURE

Complete this exercise after the interview. This part of the equation should be about your values. What’s important to you in the job? Does this job fulfill your needs? Is this the right job for you?

What I Want and Need
What They Have to Offer

Doing the exercise is only part of the process. You will now have to step back and do some serious thinking and evaluating.

- Do you want to work for this company?
- Are you picking up vibes that things are not quite right?
- Will you have job satisfaction there?
- Is there a career path?
- Will you have to compromise some of your needs/values?
- Will you fit into the corporate culture?
- Is this the place/job for you?
FOLLOW-UP LETTERS

Can Be the Make or Break Point

The “Thank you for the interview” letter is a good way to put yourself in front of the interviewer(s) one more time. Sometimes the follow-up letter can be the tie-breaker between you and another candidate. The follow-up can create goodwill that sets the tone for your future interactions with your potential employer.

You should send the letter within 24 hours of the interview while the experience is still fresh in your mind as well as in the interviewer's.

Make sure the letter is a professional letter that reminds them of the qualities you can bring to the company - your added value. A handwritten letter or note is also acceptable. However, save the printed greeting card for a more appropriate occasion.

Each interviewer has his or her own agenda and should therefore receive a separate letter/email. This is an opportunity for you to address whatever concern you picked up during the interview - overcome the objection.

Example:

If you were asked, “I see you don’t have direct experience in this field,” let them know about your transferable skills and how they apply to this job: “I pride myself on the fact that I can adapt and learn quickly. For instance, I transitioned into the sales department at my last company with very little hands-on experience. Yet I was able to make my quotas in record time and even became sales person of the month in the first quarter.”

Conclude with your interest in working for the company. Ask for the job - and use enthusiasm!
This is also a time to let the interviewer(s) know that you are excited and enthusiastic about the opportunity, and why. What were the things you liked about the company? The culture? The product, service, research, cutting-edge technology? The mission of the company? Why would you want to work for this company?

This is not a time to talk about the benefits - salary or perks that will benefit you. This is the time to define what you like about this particular company and position.

---

**A Success Story**

The interview did not go well for the introverted man. He had a difficult time expressing himself and talking about his qualities. His application had been put in the “reject” pile at the end of the interview.

He really wanted that job and knew he hadn’t done well in the interview. He sat down and wrote a very detailed letter to the interviewer telling him why he should be selected for the position and listing the values he could bring to the company.

When the employer received the letter, he was impressed and took his resume and the application out and considered it again. The man was called in for a second interview that went much better. He was eventually offered and accepted the job.
FOLLOW-UP FORMAT EXAMPLE

Dear Interviewer. A separate letter should be sent to each interviewer - addressing interests or concerns.

Your reaction to the interview. “I left the interview with a million ideas going through my head regarding your company and the challenges of the job.” Or, “I came away from the interview feeling confident that I was the solution to your problem.”

Why you want this job. “After talking to you and the other team members, I was impressed with the company’s view of future technology.” Or, “I have set my sights on working for a company that has the type of culture and mission such as yours - in particular your attitude toward the employees working as a cross-trained team.”

What you would bring to the company. Restate your qualifications - “The added value(s) I would bring to this position would be my ability to solve problems using my past experience and analytical skills, particularly working within tight deadlines.” Or, “I have several reasons to believe I am the solution to your problem...” List the skills and experiences you have that will bring a solution to the job’s problems or challenges.

Ask for the “sale.” Do you want the job? Let the interviewer know, “I am really excited about the prospect of joining your team and want to be considered as an interested candidate. I know that I would be an excellent fit for the job based on my past experience and what I can bring to the job, and on my future goals.”

Sign-off. “I look forward to talking with you further regarding this opportunity.” Or, “Thanks again for the interview, I felt very comfortable talking with you and I was impressed with your handling of the interview process.”
To Email or Not to Email

What about sending the “Thank you” by email?

This is a somewhat controversial issue.

It is ok to send a thank you by email - not politically incorrect. But usually a hard copy sent by regular mail would be the best choice, mainly because the interviewer(s) will have something in hand and tangible to remind them of you and your qualifications.

However, if you get the sense that speed is of importance, then an email would be the fastest way to communicate. One of the problems with email is that it is overused in companies and may not get read. Or if it is read, it may not be remembered unless the reader takes the time to print it out.

You will have to use your judgment based on the situation.

A Virus Story

Email from someone who sent follow-up emails.

“Upon completion of a recent interview, I hurried home and sent out thank you letters to each of the interviewers via email. It has come to my attention three days later, that the letters I attached contained a virus. I am not sure if I should resend a clean copy of the letter and run the risk of closer scrutiny or not send anymore and risk appearing sloppy. Can you provide any guidance in this matter?”

BEWARE OF VIRUSES.
THEY CAN STRIKE ANYWHERE AT ANY TIME!
WHAT’S NEXT?

The Most Difficult Part - Waiting

Often at the end of the interview, the interviewer will tell you what the next step is in the decision process. If that does not happen, you may ask, “Could you tell me what the next step is?” You may get a clue as to whether you will be included in the next round. Or, can you expect an offer in the near future?

Don’t be surprised if you don’t hear back within the time promised.

What if they said they’d call and they haven’t? Regardless of what is said, things don’t always work out as promised. This is one of the most difficult times in the whole process - the waiting. Be patient. There could be a hundred reasons why it is taking so long.

If one or two days have gone by beyond the time you were told you could expect a call, it would be acceptable to call to find out the status and if you are still in the running for the position. Again, don’t be surprised if you leave a message and don’t get a return call. This seems to be the norm. If you don’t hear back, move on. For whatever reason, you may no longer be under consideration; it is best to go forward and not look back. Every once in a while you might receive a call well after the expected time; at that point it will depend on your status and what has happened in the meantime whether you say, “No, thank you” or move forward. Timing is unpredictable in such dealings. Don’t take it personally.

Some applicants have called the company after a rejection and asked for feedback on the interview and qualifications - why they didn’t get the job. Most of the time you won’t get a true response because of a fear of legal ramifications. The answer most commonly received is, “We found someone who had direct experience.” But every once in a while, someone will take the time to tell you what was missing or
what you could have done differently. It is worth a phone call if you would like some feedback.

If for some reason, you decide to decline the offer made, follow through with a professional call to say the offer didn’t work for you at this time. You never know when another opportunity may come up at the same company. You don’t want to burn any bridges.
PART TWO

INTERVIEW WITH
CAROLE MARTIN,
THE INTERVIEW COACH

BY KEVIN DONLIN,
GUARANTEED RESUMES
Q&A – INTERVIEW SECRETS AND TIPS

Kevin: Almost all of our interview is going to be talking about timeless techniques that work in any economy. But right now, Carole, what’s going on out there? What are you hearing from interviewers and from job seekers, alike?

Carole: The job market is a competitive place and what they’re going to have to do is prepare. There’s no doubt about it. You can’t wing interviews anymore, folks.

What you’re going to have to do is look at what you have to offer – assess yourself. And there are many ways of doing that.

One way is just to write down a list of what you have to offer in the way of skills.

But the best way to do that is to take a job posting – any job posting that is like what you are looking for.

Take a piece of paper and on one side of the page, write what you are looking for, what you have to offer on the other side of the page, and compare because some of the job postings are writing on the posting,

“If you do not have the main qualifications for this job, do not bother applying!” I think it’s really important that you show them that you are as close a match as possible.

Once you do get selected, let’s say your wonderful resume comes to the top – which is good because some companies are receiving hundreds of resumes daily. Let’s say, yours is one of the top 10 and you actually get a phone call – consider yourself a success at that point, believe me!
When you get that phone call, you have to differentiate yourself from the other 10 candidates that are going to be called before or after you. So again, assessing your skills - knowing your product - thinking about yourself as a product is going to be key in this market.

**Kevin:** Do you think people should prepare something along the lines of an elevator speech so that they’re ready when the phone rings? Should you have something sitting there, a little script you can follow?

**Carole:** Absolutely. I think one of the keys any time you’re looking for a job is to organize. I think you should have somewhere in your home or office, if you happen to be employed, but I prefer the home, some kind of a binder or a box, or some kind of a system where if someone calls you – it is easily accessible.

Let’s say the phone rings at 7:00 one night while you’re eating and it’s an interviewer or a recruiter, whatever you want to call this person. And they say, “I’d like to talk to you about the job you applied for.”

My advice is to say, “Can you hold on for a moment, you caught me at a bad time?”

And go get your box, your binder or whatever it is and have some kind of script and information in front of you. That’s for over the phone.

Now in the face-to-face interview, obviously, you’re going to have to be prepared.

It is very important that you have an answer to the question, “Tell me about yourself.”

Whether they ask the question in that particular way or not – it is an implied topic – what do you have to offer?
You need to be able to answer that question. You need to know the five or so strong points that you have to offer.

**Kevin:** That’s so critical, the record keeping. I just spoke with a client last week. She had a call from an interviewer, asking about the job she had applied for. She didn’t keep any records. She didn’t remember what the job was. She didn’t call them back. She had no idea why they were calling her. She missed out on an interview that way because she didn’t keep records.

**Carole:** A missed opportunity.

You must have a tracking system of some sort. And if someone calls you and it is a bad time – ask if you can call them back.

Some people put their cell number on their resume. I don’t know how you feel about that, Kevin, but your cell phone can ring at any time. You’re at the checkout at the supermarket and your telephone rings, and this is a headhunter or a recruiter, or interviewer calling you, and you’re going to have to talk. So put it on your own grounds and say, “Look, you’ve caught me at a bad time. Can I call you right back?” Or, “Can you hold on for a few minutes?” or something like that, and bolt from the store. But put it on your own terms because if you try to wing it like this woman obviously did and didn’t keep track, get the name, get the information, you’re the loser.

**Kevin:** That’s a great insight, being able to exert control. You don’t have to dive into an interview right away if you’re at the checkout counter at the Piggly Wiggly because you’re just not prepared. So yeah, telling them, “It’s a bad time; may I call you back?” is that going to be effective, do you think?
Carole: I absolutely think so. Get their phone number, obviously. Don’t wait for them to call you back because you could lose them. But definitely put it on your grounds. One woman told me she negotiated her salary walking around K-Mart with Blue Light Special going on. I think that’s a very ineffective position and certainly not in your favor.

Kevin: Let’s talk about before, during and after interviews overall here. Looking at before the interview happens, what is the one most effective thing that applicants can do to prepare for upcoming job interviews, whether it be on the phone or in person?

Carole: Well again, they have to know their product. You should start thinking of yourself as a commodity. You’re the product that you have to go out and sell to the market. It’s a different market than it was three, four years ago, when they were coming to you. You’re out there, competing.

I’ll give you an example, at the supermarket, I went and counted the different kinds of cereals. There were over 100 boxes with different types of cereal in them. What makes one cereal box more attractive to you than another? First of all it depends on what you are looking for --- fiber, low fat, sugar content....? What’s different than the others? Why would someone be attracted to what you have to offer?

Certainly, your resume is going to make a difference. That’s the packaging. But what’s inside? What do you have to offer? It’s really important that you know, inside and out, what you have to offer.

One pet peeve of interviewers is that people don’t know how to tell them what they have to offer. They’ll say, “Well, what are your strengths?” And the person will sit
there and look at them. And you need to rattle off five strengths. Your strengths are not only your knowledge-based strengths, those that you’ve learned through education and experience, but your transferable traits, the ones that you can take with you to any job. These are traits like communication, which just happens to be the number one trait that employers are looking for - excellent communication skills - written and oral.

Other transferable traits are your people skills, your problem-solving skills, your time management skills, all those skills are skills that you have. Do not take them for granted because they are basic skills.

And then lastly, your personal traits, what makes you unique? Whether you’re friendly, attention to detail, whether you’re a hard worker, which is a word that’s overused. Don’t use “hard worker.” Flexibility is a really important one to employers also. But it’s important for you to prepare to know what you have to offer.

Then work on a script to answer the question - “Tell me about yourself.”

There are certain basic questions, and once you have the answers to those prepared, you’re going to be able to answer a whole list of other questions.

You can find the questions and how to answer the top 10 common questions asked in interviews in my workbook or go to my website – www.interviewcoach.com.

Kevin: OK, great, we’re going to talk about some of those questions in just a bit to give people a flavor for what they should be preparing for. We talked about what we could be doing before an interview. How about what’s the most important thing you could be doing during an interview, whether it be on the phone or in person?
There may be some differences there, but what’s the best thing you could be doing during a job interview?

**Carole:** Well during the interview, you are judged on the way that you communicate, so you’re going to have to make sure that you feel comfortable. And one thing that goes on before the interview, but it takes place during the interview, as well, is that you’re nervous.

And you have to think about that, what’s making you nervous? Sometimes you know the answer, but people freeze up during the interview. One of the ways to get around that or get over that is to try to change your thinking about the interview.

When you go to an interview, you are simply going into a conversation. And in the conversation, you should engage the other person. What I find is that most people think they have to perform. And although I do think it’s a presentation, I don’t think you have to be anyone other than yourself. And I think it’s important that you engage the person as you talk. It’s just a conversation. Let them know what you have to offer here.

It’s very important to listen, listen, listen. This is probably the most underutilized skill in an interview, and that is those two ears you have hanging out of the sides of your head, it’s really important that you listen.

Listen to the questions asked.

Listen to the kind of questions they’re asking you, the subject matter, and listen to what’s not being said.

Read between those lines.

It’s extremely important to turn up your intuitive. Check for clues around you. Look at the employees that are
walking through the lobby. What do their faces look like? Do they look stressed and unhappy or are they smiling and engaging? Is this a place where you would want to work?

Kevin: OK, great stuff there. What about after the interview is done, what’s the most effective thing you can do after an interview to kind of cement the good impressions you’ve left in the employer’s mind?

Carole: Well, leaving the interview, one of the questions you should ask is, “What’s the next step?” And if they tell you, “We’re going to be interviewing 10 more people,” or whatever they tell you, “We’re going to make the decision by Friday,” whatever it is, run with the ball and go home. Before you go home, stop - stop anywhere and de-brief yourself.

Write down all your thoughts:


Also when you’re doing that, write down some of the things that you picked up. When you get home, write a follow-up letter. I don’t mean just a “thank-you” or “it was nice to meet you letter,” but a letter that’s meaningful, one that says, “I’m really interested in your company because . . . and this is the reason I think I’m a good fit for the job.” Put down some of those key skills.

If they ask you, for instance, a lot of questions about customer service, then you should write something about customer service. Pick up on the clue and say, “One of my outstanding qualities is my ability to work with customers and to formulate long-lasting relationships.” So
key into what their agenda was. And if you’re interviewed by multiple people, try first of all, to get their cards, so you get the spelling of their name correctly, and their title. But also, make a little note to yourself, what did they ask you more about, what was their focus because each person has a different agenda they bring to the interview. And write a separate letter to each person.

Kevin: Well that’s good. I hadn’t thought of that. Every person’s unique, and the interviewers are included. Each of them are going to be looking for different things. So you could tailor your follow-up letters accordingly, based on the notes you’ve taken and the impressions you’ve got.

Carole: Absolutely.

Kevin: That would really set you apart. Well that’s good stuff. I’ve heard it said that you ought to be trying to close the sale at the end of a job interview; you ought to ask for the job there. What’s an effective way to really end that interview and put yourself in the best position to get hired?

Carole: Well if you have an aggressive, outgoing personality, you can say, “I love what I’ve heard here.” Maybe not on the first interview, maybe a second interview. But, “I love what I’ve heard here, I’m ready, I’m willing. When can I start?” That’s probably the most aggressive closing you can do, but not everyone’s personality suits that.

Also, depends on your interviewer - you’re going to have to read your interviewer.

What kind of rapport have you built with this interviewer? Being aggressive will work for some people but doesn’t work for other people.

One of my favorite questions at the end of the interview is to say:
“Are there any doubts you have that I can do this job?”

And sometimes, you’ll get, “Well, you seem a little weak in this area.” If they say that, then you need to say, “Well, I can see where you might have picked that up, but let me explain to you how quickly I learn. In my last job, I . . .” and give them an example.

**Kevin:** In sales talk, I guess that’s trying to overcome objections.

**Carole:** That’s right. And this is about sales. That’s a good point, Kevin, it’s exactly about sales.

**Kevin:** And that’s great. By asking that question, you’re going to be uncovering possible objections in the mind of the interviewer. And while you’re there face-to-face, you get a chance to overcome those objections and position yourself strongly to get that job.

**Carole:** Right, right.

**Kevin:** That’s a great way to do that. I’m always interested in what’s going on in the mind of the interviewer, and you’ve interviewed thousands of people from the other side of the desk, as a professional interviewer, yourself. I’m going to ask you a series of questions here, and I’d just like your insights on what’s really going through the interviewer’s brain. For example, you hear a lot said that the decision whether or not to hire you is made in the first 30 seconds or so when they first meet you. Is that accurate?

**Carole:** Well, I happen to disagree with that because as an interviewer, I have made snap decisions and they have been incorrect. But certainly, an opinion is formed the minute you walk out into the lobby as an interviewer and you see the candidate wiping his or her hand on the side
of their pant leg, you know that they’re nervous, you get an immediate impression.

But now I go out and I extend my hand, and we shake hands. A handshake is very important. It’s very important and it shows some confidence. Give me some life back there. The best way to handshake is to put your hand straight out, thumb up and zero in, focus in or land in web to web. And then, squeeze, not too hard, the thickest part of the hand. I don’t know if I’m explaining this well.

**Kevin:** Sure, by web to web, you’re meaning the quick of the thumb and the pointing finger?

**Carole:** Right, right, thumb straight up, web-to-web. A wimpy handshake, some people tell me, can turn them off right from the beginning. You have to show some confidence. Look in the person’s eyes and smile. Say, “How do you do? Hi, I’m Carole.” “I’m Kevin,” whatever. So that’s number one.

Your body language and how you’re sitting in the chair when the interviewer walks out shows something, you know, if you’re slumped over. And if you don’t give them eye contact, they’re going to think. “Well, this doesn’t look like a person I want out calling on my customers. I want someone who’s confident, looks perky and can represent our company to the best. That’s number one, first impressions.

And then, engaging, again, the conversation. You do have to make a little bit of small talk usually while you walk to the office. Let the interviewer take the lead. I think the interviewer’s style is important – if they don’t talk to you, don’t talk to them, except to ask a question or two. Let the interviewer lead.
Kevin: How about, in terms of things that may irritate an interviewer, you talked about a wimpy handshake being one. What are some other top turnoffs that can really derail an interview? What should people keep in mind they ought to avoid in a job interview?

Carole: I just wrote an article for Monster on this very subject, and I interviewed a bunch of interviewers and asked them. I got some interesting comments. I’ll share some with you. One is smell. And smell is not only bad, but good. One guy told me that a woman came in with such strong perfume on that he could barely breathe. And it was the perfume that his ex-girlfriend wore, so it brought back bad memories, and was just a real bad thing. Certainly, check your body odor, and your bad breath turns them off, so smells are important.

Communication, too little leaves the interviewer exasperated because they’ll ask you open-ended questions, which means that these are not one answer expected questions. They’ll say, “Tell me about a time . . .” or, “Can you give me an example?” And the person will just kind of say, “Oh, we do that all the time or something like that,” one little answer. They want you to engage. Again, they want you to give them something to work with. And then, there’s the communicator that says too much and won’t stop talking.

So what I’m going to give you is a rule of thumb, and that is, your answer should be anywhere from two to three minutes long. And if their eyes glaze over, you’ve lost them, so forget it. Just stop talking.

Kevin: You’ve got to be gauging their reaction.

Carole: Exactly.

Kevin: It’s a give and take situation.
Carole: Definitely. Like any social situation. When you’re talking to someone, it’s a give and take. The interviewer should be talking 20 percent of the time, and you should be talking 80 percent of the time. However, once in a while, you get a chatty interviewer and the tables are turned. In that case, you’re going to have to say, “Let me tell you a little bit about myself.”

Let me give you some other pet peeves.

Lack of focus, going off on another subject again, not listening to the question. Remember, listening skills are really important, and making sure you’re giving the interviewer what they want.

Eye contact, that drives them nuts when you don’t look them in the eyes.

Street speak or slang, apparently, some people say “aks,” instead of “ask” and things like that. Make sure you don’t call them, “You guys,” or things like that. I think people do understand that you are nervous, but I still think you should try to be as articulate and prepared as possible.

Can you imagine giving a presentation in front of a group and not having your information together? That’s the equivalent when you go into an interview, if you haven’t at least prepared to think about what they would be asking you.

Kevin: What are some effective and easy ways people can practice? Do you suggest they record their voice on a tape recorder or videotape themselves, or just practice with a friend? And if so, who should they be practicing with? What’s a good one or two ways to practice this kind of stuff?

Carole: Well, I’ll tell you the best way is to hire a coach like . . .
Kevin: Like you.

Carole: And what I do is I put people on speakerphone and then, I record what they’re saying. And then, we play it back and we talk about it, what’s strong, what’s not.

Let me tell you a way I find is effective, in particular to practice, the “Tell me about yourself” speech. Call yourself on your cell phone or your home phone. If you’re going to do it on your home phone and other people are going to be able to hear this, be sure and warn them because they’re going to think you went over the edge. But leave yourself a message. Just say your little two-minute or less speech into your message on your cell or your home phone. And then, put it away for a while. Don’t listen to it, let it sit.

And then, a few hours later, next day or whatever, listen to yourself. Listen to yourself and be as objective as you can. Try thinking in terms of what other people are hearing. Is your focus where you want it to be? It’s very important that you focus on what you say. Is it what the interviewer or the employer is looking for?

You have many skills. What do you want to focus on?

And I think mock interviews are great. I think if you can practice with someone, even if it’s a friend or family member, they may not be as objective, but yes, get some feedback, practice out loud, hear yourself. If you don’t have anyone else, yes, use a tape recorder.

Kevin: Do you ever suggest going down to a temp agency, even if you have no intention of working there, just to get face-to-face with someone and practice some interviewing skills?
Carole: That’s a good thought. I hadn’t really thought about it, but why not?

Kevin: If you have the time. If you’re between jobs, especially. I’ve had people say, “I’m interviewing for this job, even though I have no intention of taking it, just to get some interview practice.” Has that been effective?

Carole: Yes, that’s different than going to an agency. Yes, definitely, I would say that you’re kind of wasting their time, but they’re kind of wasting yours. Sometimes maybe it’s fair play, but if you have a company you really want to work for, before going there, if possible, timing is critical, but yes, do a few practice interviews. It’ll give you that chance to critique yourself, to rate yourself - do that little report card on yourself, especially if you’re rusty. If you haven’t interviewed for a few years, you may need a little smoothing out around the edges.

Kevin: I hear that all the time from clients, “I haven’t had an interview in five, ten, fifteen years, but just get me into the interview and I can ace it.” And I just cringe at that.

Carole: Eww!

Kevin: People are trying to wing it, right?

Carole: Well, think about dating. If you haven’t dated in a long time, maybe you’re going to need a couple of dates to get your moves back, you know?

Kevin: That’s a great analogy, less threatening. Coming into an interview with facts, figures and research has always been important in my book. How do you suggest people research a company before they go in? What should they be looking for? What should they talk about in an interview?
Carole: They should have as much information as possible on the company, and there’s no excuse in today’s world with the wonderful Internet. You can put a dot com on the end of almost every word and get some kind of a company website. So they definitely should know enough to ask intelligent questions and to be able to understand when they start talking about some of their products, what exactly their products are. I don’t think you have to preach to them that you know about the company. They already know about the company. But make intelligent comments that show that you have done some research.

Kevin: Let’s talk about some questions in specific detail, the questions that people are most likely to hear. If we have time, we can go further into this, but if we had to pick maybe the five most commonly asked questions and their answers, especially questions that throw people, there’s “Tell me about yourself,” “Tell me your weaknesses and strengths,” and “If you were a tree, what would you be?”

Carole: If you were a tree, that’s everybody’s worst one.

Kevin: Let’s start with the hardest one to answer, the one that throws people the most. What’s the one question that people just should know it’s coming, prepare for this and this is tricky? What would you suggest?

Carole: I want to go back to; “Tell me about yourself,” because it’s very open-ended. A good interviewer really listens to what you’re focusing on. And it sort of sets the tone for the rest of the interview. It is as if you are representing yourself, with a Polaroid snapshot. Saying, “This is who I am and this is what I look like.” I think that really is probably number one.

Kevin: How long should that answer be?
Carole: Less than two minutes. And two minutes is a fair amount of time if you’ve timed yourself. Most people will talk for a minute and a half or so.

Kevin: So “Tell me about yourself.” Is that likely to be the first question out of the interviewer’s mouth? Or what’s going to come out first, do you think?

Carole: The, “Tell me about yourself,” can be asked in a number of ways and you can use the same answer. They could say, “Why should we hire you?” “What differentiates you from the person that just walked out the door?” “Why do you think you’re qualified for this job?” When I say, “Tell me about yourself,” it’s about getting your arms around what you have to offer, where you want to focus, and what’s important for them to know about you.

For instance, I make great soup, but you don’t really want to know that unless you’re going to come to lunch or dinner at my house. So I wouldn’t mention it in an interview. But I do have a background in human resources, and that probably would interest you, depending on what types of jobs I’m going for.

Kevin: So should you come up with a different variation of it for each job you’re interviewing for?

Carole: No.

Kevin: Do you think one size fits all?

Carole: I think you should tweak it. Again, the focus is really important. If they’re looking for someone – I’ll go back to the customer service, and you’re a techie guy, but this one’s going to emphasize end-users, then you should emphasize not only your technical skills, but your customer service skills. Another job may only be technical
and no customer contact. Then, put more focus on your expertise as a technical person.

**Kevin:** OK, so “Tell me about yourself” is something that’s going to definitely come in most interviews. What’s a second difficult question that people ought to prepare for?

**Carole:** Well, definitely, the strengths and weaknesses one. That’s going to come from your assessment. What are you strong in? That’s usually easy to come up with, although some people have a hard time with that.

Five or so things that you’re especially strong in.

The weakness question is difficult. I’m going to give you my advice about weakness and that is don’t go to anything personal.

One guy I worked with wanted to say he was shy. Well, chances of him changing his personality type from shy to extroverted is very unlikely, so why go there? Go with, “You know, one thing I consider very important in a company is communication skills, and I feel that my communication skills are very good. But I’m always striving to improve them. And one of the things I’ve done is I’ve signed up with a Toastmasters group to improve.

So whatever your weakness is, show that you’re working on improving it.

**Kevin:** That’s a great thing to look at because I’d tell people to turn that question around and make it into a strength. Another answer typically, some people may say is, “Sometimes I find myself so caught up in a project that I work too hard.”
Carole: That’s getting kind of old. I think even Dilbert has something he makes fun about that. You’ve got to be careful about giving the pat answer.

Kevin: Well, that’s good. That’s something people ought to be aware of. Especially being out of the job market ten or fifteen years, you may be thinking that that’s still going to be a valid answer when, in fact, that may be changing now.

Carole: Yeah, for instance, I ask people to tell me three positive things about yourself or something. And one that comes up probably 75 percent of the time is, “I’m a hard worker.” What is exactly a “hard worker”? You want to be careful not to get too trite in your answers.

Kevin: Do you suggest people have ways to back up their claims? Should people have facts and figures ready to back up those kinds of claims? Could you say, “I’m a hard worker,” and you could say, “Because I’ve been awarded as the number one rep the last three years running.” Would it work if you were able to prove a claim like that?

Carole: Absolutely. Don’t say anything, ---- anything --- on your resume or in your interview that you can’t back up with an example or a story. And what Kevin just said I think is great. Not only say, “I’m a hard worker because . . .” and give some kind of a reason you said it.

Let me tell you another trick I think is very important about selling yourself, and that is third party endorsements. Bring in someone who isn’t in the interview that can talk about you. For instance, say something like, “If you were to ask my boss, he would tell you that I’m one of his hardest workers, that I have stayed as late as 1:00 in the morning working on a project when we’ve had a crunch.”
I didn’t say that, my boss said it. It really comes over very strong.

**Kevin:** I’ve had clients bring in letters of recommendations or great performance reviews. Is that something of value that you could bring to the interview to kind of push it across the desk and say, “Here’s what somebody else said about me”?

**Carole:** I’d be cautious about that, with the written word, because your interviewer may or may not have time to look at that. I’d use it as appropriate. And the timing of using it is very important.

**Kevin:** So it’s kind of a case-by-case scenario thing?

**Carole:** I think so.

**Kevin:** What would be a third difficult question people ought to prepare for?

**Carole:** One that throws people is, “What is your salary expectation?” And they really don’t know what to say about that. And what I’m going to advise is to put it back on them and say, “You know, I don’t know enough about the job yet to talk about salary. Is there any way you could tell me the range budgeted for this position?”

And try to get them to name a number.

The general rule is he who names the number first loses because you draw the line. But try to avoid the question if you can. If they put it back on you, say, “From the research I’ve done...” and you will have done some research before going into that interview, “...it looks like it’s between $40,000 and $50,000. Is that about the range you had in mind?”
And if they ask you what you were making in your last company, again say, “I really can’t compare my last job with this job until I have more facts.” Because what if in your last company, your last job, you didn’t supervise anyone, and in this job, you’re going to be supervising five people, that’s a difference.

Kevin: That’s a great way to turn the table.

Carole: It’s apples and oranges.

Kevin: Good, and I might add, folks, that Salary.com is a great place to go research these kinds of levels. Are there any other good websites for researching salary expectations?

Carole: Salary.com is one of my favorites, but Wageweb.com, Salary Center Monster.com are others.

Kevin: That’s all good stuff

What if you have a problem – like you’ve been laid off and out of work?

Carole: I think you should be prepared to answer that question, particularly if you’ve been laid off. If you say, “Well gee, I was laid off,” the interviewer’s left with the question, “Why you?” But if you can put it in some kind of a context:

“You know, the company I’ve been working with has been going through some tough times over the last couple of years. They’ve gone through five rounds of layoffs and my department finally got hit. So far, the company’s laid off 20, 30, 40 percent of their workforce, and my department was hit hard. Seven out of the ten of us got laid off.”
That puts it in a much bigger context than just saying, “I got laid off.”

Kevin: That’s a great way to look at it because the expectation of the employer is if you were laid off, you may have been dead wood.

Carole: Right.

Kevin: If you were downsized during a merger or acquisition, you may have been dead wood. So putting it into a bigger context like that, that’s incredible. That’s a great way to reframe that question. How about some other reasons you’ve left? If someone has been fired and you’re asked, “Why did you leave your last job?” what do you say if you’ve been fired?

Carole: Having been fired is a tough one and it comes up all the time. Let me start out by saying somebody gets fired every day. It is not the end of the world. It’s not reason to just think you’re never going to get hired again. You’re going to have to get your confidence back up and analyze what happened. OK, maybe it wasn’t your fault at all. A lot of people write to me and say, “My boss was a jerk and this happened and this happened,” and yadda yadda.

I think no matter what happened, you have to be able to look the interviewer in the eye with full confidence and say, “Look, some things occurred in the company and I’m not going to go into detail because there were some hard feelings, but I can tell you that it was not based on my performance.” Or maybe it was based on your performance. But whatever it is, “I’ve learned from that experience, I take responsibility for my part in it, and I’m willing to move forward. And I can assure you that that type of thing isn’t going to happen again.”
The interviewer really doesn’t care that you left, for whatever reason you left the job, whether you got fired or whatever. What they care about is whether this pattern of behavior is going to repeat itself when you come to my company? Past performance equals future success. If you did it before you can do it again.

**Kevin:** There ought to be a way you ought to answer that question to show whatever happened before is not going to happen again.

**Carole:** Absolutely, and scripting it ahead of time, very important, very important. Feel confident. If your eyes go to the floor and you look ashamed, you talk very quietly; they’re going to wonder what in the heck went on? Is this person so beat up they’re not going to be able to perform here?

**Kevin:** Yes, that’s important. It’s not enough to have the right answer. The delivery is critical, too. From practicing, you’re going to gain confidence and you’re going to deliver it better.

**Carole:** Right.

**Kevin:** Robert DeNiro never goes in cold. He prepares.

**Carole:** Movie stars are a good example because if you’ve ever heard them interviewed personally, they’re very inarticulate, but when they’re on a screen, they’re like wow! Al Pacino is one, in particular, I’m flabbergasted when I see him interviewed in person.

**Kevin:** So treat your next interview like the biggest stage play of your life, perhaps.

**Carole:** Yeah, be dynamic, be energetic. Bring energy with you. Very important. Bring some energy with you. Drink an
extra cup of coffee. Don’t get jittery, but bring some energy.

Kevin: For some folks, that could be, yeah. We’ve talked about you’re laid off, you’re fired. If you just flat out quit your last job, maybe it wasn’t challenging enough, how can you recap the fact that you quit, you’re between jobs, you quit your last job looking for something better? How can you answer that question positively?

Carole: That challenge wasn’t challenging enough is probably one of the weakest answers because what does that mean? I’m bored with what I was doing? I think it’s important to replace that word, “challenging,” with the real reason behind what it is.

“I’ve reached the top of my potential there, I really want to take on a new focus.” Something a little stronger than “challenge.” I remember I interviewed one guy and he said he was looking for a challenge no less than five times. When I got off the phone, I thought, my God, I don’t think we can challenge this guy. He was, “Challenge, challenge, challenge.”

Kevin: So those are some ways to answer the question, “Why did you leave your last job?” What if there’s a gap in your employment? You’ve been out of work for six, nine months. If someone says, “What have you been doing?” how do you confront gaps in your employment?

Carole: Well you’re going to have to prepare, again, an answer. Hopefully, you’ve been doing some reading, you’ve been doing some traveling. The hardest one is when people take time off, when women take time off to have babies. You really don’t want to disclose that to the employer because you don’t want this to be a factor in the decision-making. So what you want to do again is script and think about your answer. “I had an opportunity to take some
time off and I did some things I had always wanted to do. It’s time now. I’ve discussed what I want to do. I’ve made some very firm decisions.”

You want to sound like you’re in charge. “I’m ready to come back, I’ve made a decision. I’ve made a list of 10 companies and you were one of the 10 companies I really want to work for.” By the way, a little flattery in this whole process goes a long way.

**Kevin:** OK, if done correctly. What about people who just are always nervous about interviewing? We talked about practicing as maybe one way to dispel the nerves. What’s the best thing to suggest to people who do always feel nervous about interviewing?

**Carole:** I think it’s OK, to be nervous. I think, first of all, accept your nervousness. Most people, most people, the greatest majority of people get nervous before an interview. And I think that once you’ve accepted that you are nervous and use that nervousness, take those butterflies and use them as energy.

Some people are going to have to do a little more than that. They’re not nervous, they’re terrified. And to them, I’m going to suggest things like I’ve heard people who overcame fear by taking Yoga classes, have gone through some desensitization training, or learned to use biofeedback. One guy wrote me and asked me if there was a pill he could take. Absolutely not. I mean, think about this, what’s the worst thing that can happen? Face your fear.

There’s a book I like called, “Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway.” I like that a lot. That’s a good theme to think about, “Feel the fear and do it anyway.” You’ve got to think about what’s the worst thing that could happen? I’m not going to get this job, right?
They're not going to boil you, they're not going to kill you, they're not going to eat you. You may not get the job. For every date you went on, you didn’t get a marriage proposal or a steady relationship. You’re going to check these people out and they’re checking you out. It is extremely important that you go in with the attitude of I’m just going to go find out about these people. I may not want to work there. If you talk to some guy or woman, and he or she is a real jerk, maybe you wouldn’t even want that job. I know in today's culture and economy, it’s very difficult to think, in terms of, “I’ll take anything, I am desperate.” And let me tell you, that’s the worst way to go into an interview. It's that desperate man or woman you know that’s looking for a mate. And they almost repel people just on the fact that they are so desperate.

Kevin: Your attitude.

Carole: Use the attitude, “I’m going to check them out. OK, if I get this job, I’ll be happy.” But to be desperate is not a good way to start the whole process.

Kevin: I think it will definitely show in your voice, in your mannerisms. Yeah, the desperation has to go. You have to get that under foot and approach the interview from a position of strength, even if you have to talk yourself into it.

Carole: You do have something to offer. These folks have a problem. They want someone to come in and do the work. Let them know you are the solution to the problem, that you have what it takes.

Kevin: Here’s one other question I wanted an answer to. This would throw me. The question, “If you were a tree, what would you be?” Or, “If you were a fruit.” How would you prepare for something that off the wall?
Carole: I don’t think you do prepare. These are real weird questions. They’re kind of like sensitivity questions. And I’ve heard everything from, “What if you were a cheeseburger, what part of the cheeseburger would you want to be?” Another one, “If your mother and father were hanging off a cliff, which one would you save?” which are pretty bad.

I don’t think you can prepare for those and I think you just do the best you can. It’s kind of a personality preference question because for instance, a cheeseburger, some people say, “I want to be the meat because I think that’s the center of the whole.” Some people say, “The cheese because I think it gives it the flavor.” I don’t think there’s a right or wrong answer. I think it tells you a little bit about yourself.

Also remember that no one question is going to make or break your interview. There’s usually a pattern that develops. While you’re talking, I’m getting a picture of you, and everything you say adds to the picture. So that’s the important part that you be sure that my picture is complete. Make sure that you’re focusing in on five or so things you want me to know when you walk out of that interview.

Kevin: Yep, have those points in mind. Make sure you do get them across.

Carole: Absolutely.

Kevin: What about behavioral interviews? You hear a lot about those kinds of interviews. Briefly, what is a behavioral interview and how should people prepare for that?

Carole: OK, the typical interview question is, “What would you do if . . .?” If I asked you that, you can spin me a tale, “Well, I’d do this and I’d do that.” A behavioral questions
is, “Tell me about a time..., or, can you give me an example?” When the question is formulated like that, they want a specific example. So you have to go back into your repertoire of experience and think about a time when you actually did something like this.

I can give you an example of a way not to answer it. “Well, I do that all the time.” No, no, that’s not specific enough. I need a specific answer. A specific answer would be, “Well, I worked with this customer at my last company and the problem was she was angry about our service.” Now that’s the problem. And then, I go into action. “The first thing I did was to ask some questions, and next I.... And then I ...... and the results were. Problem, Action, Result. And there’s a gazillion acronyms that go along with that technique – SQR’s STARs, etc., but basically, it’s:

“What it is about? What was it that you were doing and why?

“What you did about it.” – the action.

“And what the conclusion was” - the result.

Kevin: So typical behavioral questions would be, “Tell me about a problem, or tell me a time you were angry.” Are there typical kinds of those that come up in an interview?

Carole: It depends on the job. For instance, if I was hiring a customer service person, what do you think would be a question that I would ask them? You’re going to handle customers all day. Some of them are going to be angry. So I would probably ask them, “Tell me about a time when you had to handle an angry customer.” So the question comes from, again, that job posting, what will it take to do this job?
Kevin: So that’s important, really, to have that job posting and reverse engineer it, as it were, work back from it to what they’re looking for, and to help you anticipate what they’re going to ask you about, wouldn’t it?

Carole: Absolutely. I think the job posting is a piece of gold they give you. Read between the lines, read it over and over, look and see what they’re looking for. If they’re asking on that job posting for someone who is organized and they use the word, “organized,” three times and you don’t say that you’re organized or give them an example, you just missed a wonderful opportunity.

Kevin: Well, that’s important. I’ll be passing that along to clients. Let me give you a controversial question here. I don’t know if you’ll have an answer. If you’re an interviewer, what are some things that typical interviewers or people on the other side of the desk don’t want us job seekers to know? What’s some secret thing that’s going on in your mind on the other side of the desk?

Carole: Well, the interviewer, believe it or not, wants to hire you. They want you to be the solution to their problem. They’re tired of talking to people and finding out that they’re not the right person. So number one, they’re really on your side. They really want you to succeed.

Number two, they make decisions very quickly and sometimes, give you the courtesy of a half-hour interview, when actually, they’ve already made a decision, whether you’re the right or wrong person from the very beginning. And that’s unfortunate. That’s not a very good interviewer. They should give you the benefit of the doubt until the end of the interview.

The third thing is that sometimes, the job is already filled, it’s out of your control. And they go ahead with the interview for different reasons. One is affirmative action
reasons, political reasons and all kinds of things. Some companies have to post the job internally first. And sometimes, it’ll be promised to someone. But they still go through the process.

Let me give you my best example, and this is an important thing for you to remember. I was interviewing for an accounting manager. She wanted an assistant. And I found a woman who was very good. I sent her in to be interviewed by the accounting manager. After the interview the accounting manager came out and I said, “So what did you think?” And she said, “I thought she was good.” She said, “But I’m not going to hire her.” And I said, “Why?” And she said, “Because she looks exactly like my aunt - and I hate my aunt, and I can’t come in every day and look at her face.”

Now that woman probably went home and thought she wore the wrong color suit, probably thought she answered the questions wrong. Maybe she had bad breath, maybe she didn’t shake hands right. She could have beat herself up all over the place. But the truth of the matter was it was completely out of her control. Sometimes, it is going to be out of your control, and this is maybe what the interviewer doesn’t want you to know, that it’s nothing about you at all, and let go of it, just let go. Go in, do the best you can, and then, let it go.

**Kevin:** Is it fair to assume that a lot of interviewers are going to be somewhat unprofessional like that, they’re not good at this? Even going into a fair-sized company with an HR manager there, are a lot of these people just not good at interviewing effectively? The interviewers, I’m talking about.

**Carole:** Yes, I think that’s true. I think there’s a lot of, lot of, lot of bad interviewers out there. They really don’t know
what they’re doing. They’re almost using their gut to hire you, whether they like you or not. There are three basic questions here. One is, “Can you do the job?” Well, if you’ve got a good resume and it got to the top of the pile, you’ve got good credentials and they maybe asked you a few questions about the job, you probably can do the job.

Number two, “Do we like you? Are you going to fit in?” Now this is another thing you don’t have a lot of control of. Maybe everyone in the department’s really extroverted and they’re looking for someone introverted or vice versa. You can’t control that. But you can make an impression that you’re the kind of person they would like to work with. Show them that we can get along really well. Try to show them you have a bonding. Sometimes, you’re interviewed by your colleagues. Let them know that you’re a team player, that you really are the kind of person they’d like to work with.

The third question is, “Can we afford you?” This is the salary question and you have to postpone that as long as possible.

**Kevin:** What about in-demand skills now or in any job market? Earlier, you mentioned communication skills, everybody’s looking for those. What are some, maybe two or three skills that if you have them, you ought to be ready to emphasize during an interview?

**Carole:** Well, I think today and always, communication skills are really key. I think it’s almost like 47 percent in some cases. You can be the most brilliant person in the world, but if you can’t communicate it to someone else, it’s not going to do much good. Communications are definitely important.

Flexibility is really an important one because in today’s game, the rules of the game are “change”, and you know
that. One of the questions we didn’t talk about was, “What are you going to be doing in five years?” My answer to that is if you can guarantee me I’ll still be sitting at this same desk with the same company name on my business card, I’ll be happy, because there’s so much change going on.

**Kevin:** Is that going to be a valid answer today or could that come across . . .?

**Carole:** It’s kind of a wisecrack answer, but it’s my answer. I just happen to think that’s a stupid question.

**Kevin:** Right.

**Carole:** For a better answer to that question, you can have a short-term goal and a long-term goal. I think that’s the best way to approach that answer.

Let me see, some of the other skills, getting along with people, working with diversity because we know our world is changing. There’s a lot of different cultures coming together, and that’s important. I think, again, those personal traits of just being an all around good person, versus just being a very one-way thinking person and only knowing one aspect. I think the generalist is becoming important, that you not only know your specialty, but you know a few other things, too. And I think that’s important, what can you bring to the position? What added-value can you bring? What else can you bring that would enhance the job — speak another language — work on certain technology? I think that’s important.

**Kevin:** Let’s go back to that one question, that always irritated me whenever I was interviewing, “Where do you see yourself in five years?” I’ve heard some people say, “I want your job.” They’ve given that answer, with mixed
results. What’s a good answer to the question, “Where do you see yourself in five years?"

**Carole:** “Where do you see yourself in five years?” “I want your job,” could be a very threatening answer. Some industries, sales industries, for instance, like that answer, “I’d like your job,” because it says, “You move up, I’m ready to take your place.” But that’s a very tricky question and I probably wouldn’t use it, especially if there’s an age difference. I think that could be very egocentric, threatening, etc. So I’m going to recommend doing a short-term goal and a long-term goal. Don’t get too specific about anything. Be kind of general.

But certainly, saying, “Right now, my short-term goal is to find the kind of company that I can get into, join a dynamic team, and really make a contribution in the kinds of things that I like to do, for instance, problem-solving, getting to the meat of a problem and then, really working with customers.” Or, “My long-term goal is to move up within that organization and become a leader at some point, whether a manager, supervisor or whatever, but at some point, I want to use my people skills and really work with people at a different level, coach them and improve them.”

**Kevin:** That’s a good way to do it without hemming yourself in, painting yourself into a corner. That’s a great way to approach it. A lot of clients of mine and people in the job market, the first encounter with an employer is a phone interview. Are there specific ways you should prepare for a phone interview as your first interview with a company?

**Carole:** Phone interviews are tricky. They’re good and they’re bad. The good news is you get to have cheat sheets in front of you. Don’t get so wrapped up in your cheat
sheets that you can’t talk, but certainly, like the “Tell me about yourself,” I definitely don’t recommend reading it, I think you should sound spontaneous and conversational. I don’t think you should sound like a robot. But you could have some pointers to make sure you are covered. You could have your resume in front of you, things like that.

The other thing they’re judging you most on besides your answers is your voice and your enthusiasm. Is your energy level and your enthusiasm good – real? Some people are so low-key, hard to hear, they don’t have any sense of energy. So you want to make sure you’re energetic and sound like someone they’d really want to hear more from. You want to sound “passionate” about the job.

Kevin: I advise people to stand up when they’re talking on a phone interview.

Carole: That’s a good idea, very good idea.

Kevin: Anything else about phone interviews that people should know?

Carole: Again, let me tell you, there’s two kinds of phone interviews. One is they’re going to call you in the middle of dinner type call, 7:00, “Hi, I’m Carole, and you applied for our job three weeks ago.” And you go like, “What?” Again, put it on your own terms. Say, “Can you hold on just a moment? You caught me at a bad time,” or, “Can I call you right back?” However, you want to handle that. But go get your stuff, go get that job posting, go get the resume.

And by the way, and Kevin can tell you this, if you have multiple versions of your resume, make sure you keep track of who you send what to because this is another thing. When you talk to that person on the phone screen-
ing make sure you are talking about that resume in front of you - with that job posting.

When I did phone screening I’d say, “I’m calling about this particular job - do you remember that you applied for this job?” And they’ll say, “Well, it’s been a while now, could you read it to me?”

Kevin: That’s a killer.

Carole: It’s irritating. The second kind of phone interview is they’ll do this quick little screen, ask you the basics, and then they’ll say, “I’d like to set up a longer telephone interview with you.” And that will be, “Can we set up an hour tomorrow at 1:00 or whatever time?” And then you will have a full interview. This is a cost-saving, time-saving thing companies do before they bring you in. This is happening more and more. So again, get your cheat sheets out, be prepared, be enthusiastic, answer those questions because this is going to be the difference between you getting a face-to-face or the interview ending here.

Kevin: Let’s talk a bit more about what you’re hearing from folks nowadays. What are some typical things when people go in the interview and say, “Darn it, I just screwed it up”? What are some common mistakes you’re hearing people saying, “I wish I would have done this differently?” What are two or three things people are wishing they had done differently in an interview?

Carole: I think they feel they weren’t able to compete with the competition, that they weren’t feeling like they were expressing themselves strongly enough. They didn’t feel like they did a good enough job of selling themselves, basically, and that goes back to preparation.
I will tell you something that I am hearing a lot from candidates, the one thing I hear more than anything else, and that is they think they did a good job. The interviewer at the end of the interview says, “We’re going to make our decision by Friday. I will be calling you.” And guess what? Friday comes and goes and no call.

Kevin: So what should people do at that point?

Carole: Well, I would recommend letting a few more days go by. You have to realize to you, it’s the end of the world. You want to know what’s going on? To them it’s business as usual.

So after a few days beyond what they told you, call and ask, “Is the job still open and what is the status of the job? Am I still under consideration?” Don’t be surprised if you get a voice mail message and don’t be surprised if you don’t get a phone call back. It’s rude behavior. Candidates are so frustrated with this; they’re going up the wall. Some of them are interviewing several times and never even hearing whether they got the job, and it’s filled by somebody else. I find this behavior extremely rude. Expect it, don’t take it personally, even though it’s about you. But try to call back a couple of times, try to get that information. If you don’t hear anything, give up and move on. There’s a fine line between persistent and pest.

Kevin: Do you suggest people also e-mail, fax and mail their follow-ups so that they hit them different ways?

Carole: Let me tell you about e-mail. I think e-mail’s perfectly fine and if they’ve been communicating that way all along, that’s fine. I think e-mails are overused in some companies and they don’t read them all. Number two, there’s no hard copy. And number three, I got an e-mail from a guy who said, “Help me, I inadvertently e-mailed
all my interviewers a virus when I sent my follow-up; what should I do?” So those are my three thoughts on e-mail.

The snail mail takes longer, but it can be more effective. I would really put some time and thinking into this letter. I think it’s one more opportunity for you to put yourself in front of the interviewer and present your strengths.

**Kevin:** Yeah, because e-mail is so cheap, easy and fast, people kind of put all their eggs in that one basket and say, “Well, I e-mailed them.”

**Carole:** I think it’s fine, but I just think keep in mind that those things are against you.

**Kevin:** Anything else you’re hearing, in terms of common mistakes, wish they would have done this or that differently from people?

**Carole:** I can’t think of any right at this moment. Making sure they shake hands at the end of the interview. I think they’re mostly complaining to me about the interview or just beating themselves up.

**Kevin:** I see, so kind of there’s a lot of rude behavior out there.

**Carole:** Or if they just got nervous and they’ll write and they’ll say, “I froze up; what should I do?” Those kinds of things happen all the time. Here’s the three C’s, cool, calm and confident. Those are really important. Be cool, be calm, and for whatever you do, feel confident. You do have something to bring to these people. Don’t forget, they are the ones with the problem, not you. You’re going to come in and tell them that you are the solution to their problem.
Kevin: Do you think prior preparation or practice would really avoid a lot of the mistakes that people end up coming to you after the fact with?

Carole: Absolutely. When I practice with people and I hear the way they’re presenting themselves, I say, “Oh my gosh!” Let me give you an example. I said to one guy, “Tell me about yourself.” And he said, “Well, I’m your average kid that just graduated from Yale.” And I said, “Oh, wait a minute, how many people from your high school went to Yale?” He said, “Me.” I said, “OK, let’s take out the word, ‘average.’” I said, “You’re sitting there in a suit going for a job, so you’re not a kid anymore, so let’s start over again,” that kind of thing.

Kevin: So it’s important to go outside. It could be with you, The Interview Coach, or it could be with a trusted friend or former co-worker. But do you think getting some outside advice, some outside input on your interviewing skills is going to be critical?

Carole: No doubt about it. Gets your confidence back up. If you are prepared, you will feel more confident. If you feel more confident, you will do a better job interviewing. If you do a better job interviewing, you will beat out the competition and end up with a job offer.

Kevin: Well, that’s good stuff. I think one final question, if I forget everything else I’ve heard in this past 50 or so minutes, what is the one piece of parting advice that you would give me that’s really going to help me set myself apart from other people competing for the job because the job market’s very tight right now? What’s the one best thing I should remember that’s going to help me ace that next job interview?

Carole: I think it’s thinking of yourself as the product, going in and selling yourself as the product, knowing what your
product has to offer, making sure that you have what the buyer is looking for and tell them that you are the solution to the problem. I think that will make a difference. And if you can bring something extra, boy, let them know that, too.

Kevin, I’d like to end with one of my favorite quotes, and it comes from an unlikely source, Bruce Springsteen, “The Boss.” He says when he goes on stage, the most important thing is to give a great performance. And he’s going to give the performance of his life, do the best job he possibly can. And then, he stops and says to himself, “Hey, this is just rock and roll.” So what I think you should do is go out there, do the best job you can, let them know everything you’ve got, do everything right and then say to yourself, “Hey, it’s just an interview.”

**Kevin:** That’s good stuff, Carole, putting things in perspective. I’ve been talking with Carole Martin, The Interview Coach from Monster.com. You can reach Carole at her website. Carole, do you have some other information, how people can get a hold of you, perhaps?

**Carole:** I do, I do. We do a 10-minute free assessment with people from my coaches. We like to hear about your situation and then, what we can do for them – give them feedback and focus --- and confidence - to help them get that job offer they deserve. And if you go to my website – www.interviewcoach.com - we will set up an appointment with you and we can talk.

**Kevin:** Very good. Carole Martin, a pleasure speaking with you today. A lot of great tips for folks out there in the job market. It’s been a pleasure speaking with you. Thanks so much.

**Carole:** Thank you. I wish you all the best!
CONCLUSION
PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Keep Up the Good Work!

As after any workout you may feel overwhelmed (sore muscles). Don’t despair. It will get easier after the groundwork is done. It is very important that you continue to work out. Practice, practice, practice, and become stronger, smoother, and more comfortable.

The goal is not to become over-rehearsed and stiff, but to be prepared and natural. Can you imagine an actor going into a performance without a rehearsal? This is your time to prepare and rehearse.

It is important that you continue to work on your communication skills. If you feel you need one-on-one help, consider working with a professional, or work with a friend or relative who will give you positive and constructive feedback. It is also important that you practice the right way. If you keep practicing, but are repeating mistakes, you will not improve. Think about a tennis or golf swing - it takes a pro to show you the right way.

Maybe you won’t get a job offer every time, but preparation will greatly improve your chances and your confidence. Treat each interview as a new learning experience. You may even begin to enjoy the process - some people do!
I invite you to get my Complete Interview Coach Program at http://www.interviewcoach.com

And get a free

1-on-1 phone coaching session with a certified Interview Coach

If you want to cut your job hunt time down drastically, and make sure you are thoroughly prepared to ace every question thrown at you, my Complete program - with a live phone coaching session - will give you the extra edge you need to beat even the most well qualified, well spoken candidates and score the position you’ve been dreaming of!

http://www.interviewcoach.com
"For the first six months of my job search, I received only slight interest from perspective new employers. Then all of a sudden, in April, I received three requests for interviews all occurring in one week. Oddly enough, when I received my wish for an interview I panicked. I found you through the Internet and immediately called. You never pressured me into spending any money or buying your book like some high-pressure sales person. You gave me valuable feedback through mock interviews and suggestions on how to evaluate my strengths and weaknesses.”

“After going on the three interviews, I received two offers. By completing the exercises in your book, I was able to make the best career decision for my needs. There was an initial offer of $58,000, but your coaching taught me how to successfully negotiate an additional $7,000, and a performance review after months 6 and 12, which will further increase my salary. There is no way the dollars invested in your program can thank you enough for all the assistance you gave me. Most important to me is that you were extremely patient and professional. Knowing you better now, I realize just how busy your schedule is, but you never rushed me through this process. I would strongly encourage anyone interested in presenting themselves at their best to a potential employer and negotiating the best compensation package, to invest in your program. You have made a friend for life.”

Robert Green, “New” General Manager
FORMULA FOR A STELLAR INTERVIEW

1. Prepare
   - your personal statement
   - your stories (5 or 6 or more)
   - your questions to ask

2. Research
   - your salary needs
   - your worth in your market
   - your bottom line

3. Practice
   - with a friend
   - with a professional
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carole Martin, M.A.

Carole Martin is a professional interviewer, coach, and an expert on the subject of interviewing. In addition to managing her business, www.interviewcoach.com, she has been an interview expert and writer for Monster.com for the past three years.

Her unique background includes over 15 years of Human Resources Management experience and a Master’s degree in Career Management. She has worked in technical and non-technical industries, in Fortune 500, as well as start-up companies.

Martin coaches job seekers on the phone and in person, as well as conducting workshops for people recently laid off from their jobs. She also coaches the MBA students at the Haas School of Business at U.C. Berkeley.

Her education includes a Master’s degree in Career Development from John F. Kennedy University in Pleasant Hill, California, where she is an adjunct faculty member teaching interviewing skills to counselors. Her undergraduate degree is in Communications and Public Relations from San Jose State University (achieved at age 40). She has been certified as a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) by The Human Resources Certification Institute, and has received training at the Coaches Training Institute. She is a certified Behavioral Interviewer.

Martin has been recognized as an interview expert on CNN-FN TV and many radio shows, both in the US and Canada, as well as the BBC. She is frequently quoted in newspapers and magazines - New York Times, LA Times; Men's Health, HR Magazine, Smart Money, Self Magazine, Parents magazine, Employment Management Today, Details, and Employment Review.
She is the author of internationally acclaimed, “Interview Fitness Training,” “Boost Your Interview IQ,” “Perfect Phrases for the Perfect Interview,” “Boost Your Hiring IQ,” “The Complete Book of Perfect Phrases for Successful Job Seekers” and coming later this year “Perfect Phrases for Writing a Job Description”.

Her life’s motto, “It’s never too late to make a change,” are words she believes in and lives.
OTHER SOURCES

BOOKS

Boost Your Interview IQ, Carole Martin
A virtual interview - 50 questions with 150 possible answers to test your interviewing ability. Exercises to create your stories - invaluable for the “Behavioral-based” interview.

Perfect Phrases for the Perfect Interview, Carole Martin
Hundreds of Ready-to-Use Phrases that succinctly demonstrate your skills, your experiences, and your value in any interview situation.

Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway, Susan Jeffers, PhD. For anyone who is feeling powerless and dealing with anxiety.

How to Win Friends and Influence People, Dale Carnegie
My personal favorite. A book that transcends the decades with current principles of how to interact with other people.

How to Work a Room, Susan RoAne
The ultimate guide to savvy socializing in person and online - a must in networking.

201 Best Questions to Ask on Your Interview, John Kador
A must for anyone seeking questions to ask in the interview.

The Career Change Resume, Kim Isaacs
A great source of information on making that career or industry change.

Never Be Late Again, Diana Delonzor
Seven cures for the punctuality challenged.

Find the Bathroom First, Roy Blitzer
Start a new job on the right foot.
**SALARY RESEARCH WEBSITES**

**www.salary.com**
Of the salary-type sites I’ve seen, this is the most straightforward. You can select the job title by geographic region, even down to the zip code if you want, and immediately get a salary range in graph form. There are also good job descriptions.

http://fairway.ecn.purdue.edu/ESCAPE/stats/salaries.html
For engineers.

**www.psrinc.com/salary.htm**
For MIS Professionals.

http://www.wageweb.com

http://www.jobsmart.org
For salary info across multiple fields and geographic locations.

http://www.salaryexpert.com
INTERNET DISCUSSION GROUPS

http://groups.yahoo.com/
You can keyword search this database of e-mail based discussion groups, or browse the categories.

http://www.linkedin.com/
Most people use LinkedIn to “get to someone” in order to make a sale, form a partnership, or get a job. It works well for this because it is an online network of more than 8.5 million experienced professionals from around the world representing 130 industries.

http://groups.google.com
Participate in discussion forums and newsgroups. Use Advanced Search to locate topic related forums.
RESOURCE SITES

Securities Exchange
http://www.sec.gov

The Online Information Authority
http://www.hoovers.com

Company News Releases
www.businesswire.com

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

http://www.tribe.net
http://www.friendster.com
http://www.orkut.com
http://www.facebook.com
http://www.twitter.com
http://www.classmates.com
http://www.stumbleupon.com
A Quote From “The Boss”

When I walk on stage, I’ve got to feel like it’s the most important thing in the world. Also I’ve got to feel like, well, it’s only rock and roll.

Bruce Springsteen

When you walk into that interview, feel like it’s the most important thing in the world.

But then think to yourself, it’s only an interview!