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What to say when asked tell me about yourself

Rather than dread the question, think of it as a self-promotional invitation you mustn't let pass you by. People are not asking for your chronological history, but they do want more than your name, rank, and serial number. Whether you are in a job interview, meeting a new contact while you build your network, or talking with your big boss on a video conference for the first time, this is your moment to shine. It is an opportunity to give your two-minute advertisement about your background, your accomplishments, and the importance of what you do.Your goal is to turn the question into the beginning of a deeper conversation and a deeper relationship. So keep these three key pieces of your response ready: Engage the audience, establish credibility, and tell people why they should care. Then tailor your reply to the person who is asking. Find ways to connect your experience and expertise to their interests.Engage the audienceResist the urge to lead with your title and organization unless you know that will stand out. Instead, give a short, illustrative explanation of what you actually do. Make it an interesting conversation starter. If it points to anything going on in the news right now, even better. Everyone you talk to is different. If you have researched their background or learned something through talking with them that relates, find a way to tie your work to a common area of interest. For example, "I'm a cybersecurity expert, helping companies respond to the recent SolarWinds hack and other growing threats." "I'm starting a new advertising agency so we can focus on the more nimble, creative approach I loved when my last agency was still small." These introductions give your interlocutor the opportunity to ask questions that lead to an in-depth conversation. That gives you the opening to follow up in more detail about what you do and how it relates to the other people in the conversation.Now is the time to share what it is about you that people should want to know. Describe highlights from your work experience, life experience, or education that set you apart and demonstrate your knowledge in this area. This might include the inspiration that led you to this line of work, what you studied at your university, a big project you worked on, or places you have lived. What makes you uniquely qualified to do the work that you do? For example: "I'm excited that I can combine my engineering degree and my experience running marathons to develop new technologies for prosthetics." "My two years with a management consulting firm in Hong Kong gave me unique insight into the impacts of political swings on the U.S.-China trade outlook." Tell people why they should careInclude some version of, "This is important because . . ." At this point, you have offered a conversation starter and discussed your expertise. Now use big picture concepts explain why they should care. For instance: "Artificial intelligence is helping us in so many ways and has incredible potential to do more. My work will help protect our privacy in the process." "Working from home in the pandemic is causing a wave of mental health challenges. The online mindfulness programming my company offers gives workers a chance to get away even when they can't get away." The most important part of responding to the inevitable question, "So, tell me about yourself," is to be prepared. If the brand name of your company or your university will pop, put it out there up front. If your life experience, awards, or projects you have worked on demonstrate your value-added, make sure to include them.To build your confidence around this response, it's a good idea to film a practice round on your phone ahead of time—and watch it back so you can adjust if needed.Remember that the best thing about this open-ended question is the opportunity it gives you to highlight your best features and why what you do matters.Eileen Smith is a public speaking coach, former diplomat, and founder of Spokesmith. She helps business executives, policy experts, and rising professionals deliver their message in daily and extraordinary events. While this is often among the first questions asked at the start of the interview, the goal of the interview is not to become best friends or to hear your read your resume. Their goal is to determine if you are a good fit for their job, so your best strategy is to focus on this employer and your fit for this job. This is an opportunity to market yourself as a qualified candidate — presenting yourself as the "solution" (right candidate) to their "problem" (a job to fill). report this ad What You Do NOT Tell Them I call this question a "spider web" because if you simply tell someone about yourself without planning or context to the target job for which you are there to interview, you could give away all kinds of information that leaves them with the impression that you are: Over-qualified Under-qualified Ditsy or naive Unprepared for the interview (so not really very interested) Simply a risk for the company Most people talk about what they know, ramble on about where they live, kids, llikes/dislikes, but, remember, THIS IS A JOB INTERVIEW. Sharing details about your personal life is not appropriate or smart. An employer isn't going to select to hire you because you have such cute children (causing you to miss work), a wonderful husband or wife (causing you to miss work), or interesting hobbies (causing you to miss work). Your goal is to avoid answers that give away personal information about yourself, particularly because some of that information might take you off the top-candidates list. What You DO Tell Them: the Two-Part Answer to Tell Me/Us About Yourself The best way to answer this question? Focus on this opportunity! Tell them about your accomplishments and experience that make you an ideal candidate for the job you are seeking. This is not an invitation to tell your life story or share any secrets about your current or former employers. Put yourself in the employer's shoes — what would you want to know if you were them? Emphasize what will make you stand out as qualified for the company and for the job. Break your answer to this question into two parts: 1. How/why you are qualified. Summarize what you have done that qualifies you for this opportunity. Don't recite what is on your resume or job application, but don't assume that the interviewers, who may have been interviewing several candidates, will remember all of your qualifications. Start with your current/most recent job, and present the most significant highlights, the ones that would be most relevant to this job. These are the qualifications that make it clear that you are a very good candidate for the job. Add other relevant details and accomplishments that demonstrate you are qualified for this position. MORE: Read top recruiter Jeff Lipschultz's tips for analyzing job descriptions — 3 Steps to Interview Success: Build Your Interview Checklist.] 2. Why you have applied. Focus on advancing your career. Stay away from reasons that are not clearly career-related. Emphasize the opportunity to move forward in your career without saying that you are dead-ended in your current job. Focus on the future — this opportunity and your career, demonstrating your interest and enthusiasm for the job and the employer: This job really interests you because... This job is the logical next step for your career. This employer is one of the best and a place where you have always wanted to work. Avoid the purely personal reasons. Do NOT say: You want to work closer to home because your kids sometimes get out of school early and you want to be able to be there with them. You are too tired from the long commute to enjoy life. Your boss is a jerk and you want a better job. This is where you must tread very carefully and not say anything that might be interpreted as trashing your current/former employer. DO tell them how well you fit, using the 2-part answer, above. Don't spend more than 30 to 60 seconds answering this question. Sample Answer Someone seeking a management position with a local branch of a transportation company might say: (Why You Are Qualified) I am currently the Team Lead for ABC Freight Company in this area, reporting directly to the District Manager. During the last 9 years, I have progressed through positions of Package Loader, Courier, Dispatcher, and Team Lead. In my current position, I have had the opportunity to complete numerous management training programs, provide supervision and leadership to all positions within the station, and participate in special projects in conjunction with Senior and District Managers. My team includes over 50 drivers, loaders, and couriers and includes Big County. Since I was born and raised in this county, I have an excellent knowledge of this area as well as the 2 neighboring counties — North County and South County. I enjoy being a Lead and the opportunity to empower and motivate my team. Last year I was awarded "Top Lead" for greatest team gains in productivity. (Why You Applied) I believe this experience and training has prepared me to take the next step and pursue a management position with XYZ Trucking. This company has a reputation for excellent management. This opportunity looks perfect to me, and I look forward to working with the best. Yes, this person prepared and practiced his response in advance. Smart move! As you can see from this sample answer, this individual: Emphasizes the tangibles that qualify him for the job, from his knowledge of the local area, long-term tenure with the employer, and recognition for management results within the industry. He does not focus on fluffy stuff or personal information, but paints a picture as to why he is a perfect candidate for the job. He also looks forward to advancement in his career, seeking a management position with this new employer. [MORE: Smart Answers to Interview Questions.] How to Prepare for This Job Interview Question Fortunately, this question is one of the easiest job interview questions to prepare for. KNOW YOURSELF in terms of qualifications for the job and match for the company: Carefully review the job description to note where you meet or exceed the requirements. Research the company. Identify, catalog, list, and review your successes and accomplishments. Identify and list your relevant expertise, strengths, and unique value. Write out your 2-part answer, as described above. And, practice, practice, practice so you sound natural and confident. Then, you will be ready to put yourself in the employer's shoes, and emphasize what will make you stand out for the company and for the job. [For more tips on preparing for a job interview, read Pre-Interview Preparation so you will have a solid understanding of the position and the employer.] The Bottom Line With advanced planning and practice, you can know your target employer and how to sell yourself for the job. "Tell me about yourself" then becomes a positive and fun exercise in demonstrating your value and getting one step closer to winning that great new job! Your preparation for this question will also work well for the "Why should we hire you?" question. More About Successful Job Interviews: Answering the Common Job Interview Questions: Questions About You: Handling Special Career Situations: Questions About Them: Questions for You to Ask Them: Interview Preparation: About the author... Laura DeCarlo is recognized as the career industry's 'career hero' making a difference to both job seekers and career professionals as the founder of Career Directors International. She possesses 11 top-level certifications in resume writing, career coaching, and career management; 7 first place resume and job placement awards; and has written three books on interviewing and job search including Interview Pocket RX, Interviewing: The Gold Standard, Resumes for Dummies, and Job Search Bloopers. Follow Laura on Twitter at @careerhero. More about this author... "Tell me about yourself" When you are asked this common question in an interview, the best answer is one that outlines your main selling points for the role and explains why you are interested in the job now. When you focus on your relevant qualifications for the job and can convince the interviewer that you are ready for the challenge, you have an excellent chance of at least making the hiring manager's shortlist. On the surface, "Tell me about yourself" seems like a simple question to answer, yet it is one that interviewees dread. The main reason is that interviewees are unable to determine what the hiring manager is looking for. However, if you prepare well enough for the job interview, you will be shocked by how easily you sail through your answer. Why Interviews Ask You the "Tell Me About Yourself" Question From the interviewer's perspective, this query is one of the best for finding out if a candidate is suited to the role. It is worth remembering that the hiring manager wants to like you; it behoves them to find the best candidates for the sake of their reputation. The idea behind "Tell me about yourself" is just that. The goal is to get you talking about yourself in a way that reveals enough information to mark you down as a 'yay' or 'nay' for the job. It is typically one of the first questions asked, and it helps colour the interviewer's impression of you from the beginning. How to Answer "Tell Me About Yourself" You can use the most frequently stated do's and don'ts in job interviews to help you avoid ineffectively answering any interview question. The don'ts when answering this particular question can be summed up like this: Regurgitate your CV Being too modest OR too arrogant. Including irrelevant information such as your favourite colour or wine. Discussing aspects of your career that have little or no relevance to the role or industry in question. You need to answer this question with laser-like precision, and it is a much simpler task than you think. The best answer to any common interview question is short and succinct. You may need to inject just enough personality to get the hiring manager to like you but resist the urge to ramble, brag, or hide in your shell. A great answer involves the following facets: Details 'Who' You Are: Begin by outlining who you are professionally and throw in a couple of strengths. Provides an Overview of Your Skills: Your interviewer may not remember your CV, so remind him of your talent by highlighting a few key skills that make you a good fit for the job. Explain Why You Want the Job: If we're cynical, the main reason to get a job is to pay your rent and not starve to death, but the interviewer already knows that! Instead, outline that you want a new challenge and believe the company and job offer it. Sample Answers For the "Tell Me About Yourself" Interview Question "I have had seven years of experience working for a top London financial firm as a technical project manager. Two years ago, I led a project that ultimately developed a multi award-winning trading platform. Now, I am seeking a role at another fast-paced firm to apply my problem solving and technical skills at a fast-rising IT firm such as this one." "After spending five years in retail, I moved into the healthcare space because I have always possessed the ability to bring people together through good communication. I spent the next three years as a manager and believe that my skillset would make me ideal for a role in administration. As a result, I switched careers four years ago and now operate as a dedicated health administrator." "I am an account executive at Johnson's and have been tasked with looking after the firm's biggest client. Before that, I worked at a major advertising agency that handled two of the country's top three healthcare brands. Although I enjoyed the work, I now wish to focus on a single healthcare company, which is why the position at Acme Limited is so exciting for me." Things to Avoid When Answering "Tell Me About Yourself" Perhaps the biggest mistake interviewees make when answering this question is to go off on a tangent. The result is an answer that is an incoherent and rambling mess. You know it is a common interview question, so there is no excuse for not creating a 'scripted' answer and sticking to it. Remember, it is usually one of the first questions asked, so there is little danger of repeating information already mentioned in the interview. In any case, here are a few things you should avoid mentioning: Religious or Political Affiliations: It is said that if you don't want to fall out with someone, avoid discussing religion or politics. You have no idea if the interviewer shares your views, so it is best to keep a lid on it. Personal Information: This means anything you wouldn't ordinarily tell a stranger. It also relates to information about your family. Hobbies: Unless you have a hobby that is directly related to the job, it is best to keep your love of stamps or trainspotting under wraps. There is also a danger that a passion for a hobby could backfire. No company wants to take the chance of hiring someone that could miss work due to their obsession with a hobby. Frequently Asked Interview Questions Related to "Tell Me About Yourself" While the following questions are not necessarily the same as "Tell me about yourself," they are all designed to gain a greater insight into 'who' you are personally and professionally. "Describe Yourself" "Why Would You Like to Work for Us?" "What Makes You Unique?" "Outline What You Do in Your Current Position." "Where Do You See Yourself In 5/10 Years?" "What Motivates You?" "What Are You Passionate About?" "Why Should We Hire You?" "Why Do You Want This Job?" "Why Did You Leave Your Last Job?"

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