

**“HOW TO STRENGTHEN YOUR  
INTERVIEWING SKILLS”  
WORKSHOP**



**“Your Best Ideas Deserve Your Best  
Words”**

**PRESENTED BY  
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DISTRICT 84 DIVISION E  
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# Preparation and Persistence Will Lead To Success

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Interviews are like mountains we must climb to the job we need and want. Here are two quotes from a history making mountain climber.

Sir Edmund Hilary – 1<sup>st</sup> to climb Mount Everest

“You don’t have to be a fantastic hero...to compete...You just have to be sufficiently motivated to reach challenging goals”

“It is not the mountain we conquer but ourselves”

# Understanding the 'format' of an interview

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## **LESSON #1 – HOW TO 'STRUCTURE' AN IMPROMPTU RESPONSE**

# Discussion Points

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- Understanding the 'format' of an interview
- The typical interview questions
- Preparing answers before the interview
- Setting goals
- Controlling anxiety & nervousness

# The Typical Interview Questions

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## **LESSON #1 – HOW TO ‘STRUCTURE’ AN IMPROMPTU RESPONSE**

# What An Interview Is & What An Interview Is Not

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## An interview is:

- A sales call
- A test drive of your abilities
- An opportunity for interviewer to probe 'deeply' into your work life, the decisions you have made
- An event where you can control your input but not the outcome
- An opportunity for you to turn a one way communication into a two way dialogue

## An Interview Is NOT:

- Simply a conversation with a friend
- Time for you to monopolize the conversation
- Something to fear

# 5 Typical Interview Questions

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1. **Tell me about yourself**
2. **What are your strengths & weaknesses?**
  - Tell me a situation where you achieved a goal and how you did it
  - Tell me about a situation where you were disappointed and did not reach your goal
3. **Why do you want this job?**
  - Why are you the best person for this job?
  - What do you know about our company, and this role and how you might fit in?
4. **Why do you want to leave your current job?**
  - Why did you leave your job?
5. **What is your management style?**
  - What is your work ethic?
  - How do you get along with others?
  - What would your colleagues, subordinates, bosses say about you?

# Questions You Can Ask The Interviewer

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- If I were to be offered this job what do you think my top 3 priorities would be in my first 90 days?
- What are the next steps after this interview?
- May I have one of your business cards or your email address?
- How long have you been here? What do you love about the job / company?
  - This gives the job seeker a chance to gain some insight about the organization and get the interviewer to open up. The candidate can use this opportunity to build an emotional connection with the interviewer.
- Do you have any concerns about my ability to fill this vacancy?
  - If the interviewer is honest, this will get the candidate a chance to immediately overcome the objection and reconfirm their ability to do the job.
- Ask for the job! Express your sincere interest in the position and your firm belief that you can accomplish the critical needs of the position.

\*\*\* An interview is an opportunity to make an emotional connection with the interviewer. Many managers add staff members based not only on their ability to get the job done, but also on how well they think the candidate will work and relate in the group. Many decision makers hire candidates that they like and can picture themselves spending 40+ hours per week with.

# Preparing Answers For The Typical Questions

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## **LESSON #1 – HOW TO ‘STRUCTURE’ AN IMPROMPTU RESPONSE**

# Review Your Life & Work Experience

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- In an interview you are trying to win at two levels
  - Skill level – You have what it takes to do the job
  - Personal level – Others can count on you to get the job done
- For all interview questions you need to know what you have accomplished and how you did it
  - Start with most recent achievements
  - Also, identify 1 or 2 major achievements from the past
  - Did you accomplish these by yourself or with other work associates?
- Identify personal stories or anecdotes if they are relevant to the job and to the question asked
  - Do you have a specialized interest that you have been good at for a long time (science, writing, designing, math)...if it is highly relevant to the job at hand weave it into your response
  - Does any of your personal experience convey leadership, persistence, discipline, teamwork...make sure you know these stories inside out
- You need to answer each question in two to three minutes
  - Let the interviewer ask you to continue, to say more

# Setting Goals

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## **LESSON #1 – HOW TO ‘STRUCTURE’ AN IMPROMPTU RESPONSE**

# Set Intermediate Goals

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- Your primary goal is to get the job but you cannot control the outcome
- You can control your responses during the interview and you can make a favorable impression
- You don't want to have the experience of 'not getting the job and also not doing well during the interview
- Set intermediate goals that let you know you have done well
  - Get across at 3 – 5 of your best accomplishments
  - Keep initial answers under two minutes
  - Arrive at least 10-15 minutes before interview begins
  - Remember interviewer's name & title
  - Get interviewer's business card
  - Control nervousness

# Controlling Anxiety & Nervousness

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## **LESSON #1 – HOW TO ‘STRUCTURE’ AN IMPROMPTU RESPONSE**

# 7 Tips to Control Anxiety & Nervousness

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- 1. Prepare**
  - Learn about company
  - Write down answers to typical questions before the interview
- 2. Be Prompt**
  - Lateness increases stress
- 3. Relax**
  - Breathe deeply and slow down your mind
  - Relax your shoulders – area of most noticeable tension
- 4. Role Play**
  - Practice interview with friends, colleagues, Toastmasters
- 5. Focus on intermediate goals**
- 6. Focus on the question asked not the one you wished was asked**
- 7. Smile (as appropriate during the interview)**

# STAR Method

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## **LESSON #2 – HOW TO STRENGTHEN & ORGANIZE YOUR RESPONSES**

# STAR Technique

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<b>Situation or Task</b>	<b>Be Specific</b> Give enough detail <b>Relevant</b>
<b>Action Taken</b>	<b>Describe Action Taken</b> Tell what you did do, not what you might do
<b>Results Achieved</b>	<b>What Happened?</b> What was Accomplished? What did You Learn?

# Examples of STAR Responses

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Tell us about a time you had to use written communication to persuade and/or inform.

- I recently have been involved in our Make it Possible workshops that teach financial education to teens in high school. I was asked to write an executive summary for our CEO to persuade our Zone to continue our push for this program. I wrote an article that highlighted the benefits of our program, and explained that since it began in 2008, we have reached over 2,000 youth and educated them on the importance of credit, good credit history, and how to be financially responsible and how something like a cell phone bill can affect your ability to purchase a home later in life. My article persuaded our CEO to continue with the program, and my article was also published in an external journal online.

Tell us about a time you had a conflict with a co-worker.

- I had to write proposal to change a policy for how our team handles tracking our customer impact. I asked for input from all my team members. Because one individual was out of the office, she was unable to reply, but I had a deadline to submit my proposal by. When that individual returned, they felt I had purposefully excluded them and were very upset. I invited them to lunch, and I let her vent and then explained why and what I had done. After we had cleared the misunderstanding, we enjoyed lunch and returned back to the office ready to again to be a star team! Later she told me that the new tracking system had really helped her to be more efficient.

# Interviewing Do's

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- **Arrive on Time**
- **Show Enthusiasm**
- **Be Natural**
- **Listen**
- **Express Desire to Improve**
- **Stop and Collect Your Thoughts**
- **Write a Thank you letter**

# Interviewing Don'ts

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- **Volunteer Negative Information**
- **Use Negative Terms or Phrases**
- **Take Control of Conversation**
- **Stepping Stone Job**
- **Express interest in job before completion of interview**
- **Criticize Past Employers/Coworkers**
- **Say you are looking for any position**
- **Curse**

# Power Words

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- Accomplish
- Build
- Cause
- Create
- Expedite
- Excel
- Implement
- Launch
- Persuade
- Resolve
- Schedule
- Transfer
- Transform
- Update
- Upgrade
- Work

# How To Respond to Behavioral Questions

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**Behavioral Questions should be answered using the STAR method**

# Sample Interview Questions

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- **Behavioral Questions**

- Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.
- Describe an instance when you had to think on your feet to extricate yourself from a difficult situation.
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used good judgment and logic in solving a problem.
- Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Give an example of a time in which you had to be relatively quick in coming to a decision.
- Describe a time when you had to use your written communication skills to get an important point across.
- Give me a specific occasion in which you conformed to a policy with which you did not agree.
- Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
- Tell me about a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to get a job done.
- Give me an example of a time when you were able to successfully communicate with another person even when that individual may not have personally liked you (or vice versa).
- Sometimes it's easy to get in "over your head." Describe a situation where you had to request help or assistance on a project or assignment.

# How to Turn Around a Negative Situation:

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- “No matter how you're feeling, keep your personal woes out of the interview process. Instead, always exude an upbeat attitude. For example, if you were laid off, instead of lamenting the situation, you might say the experience prompted you to reassess your skills, and that's what led you here. You want to demonstrate resilience in the face of unpredictable obstacles.” - [http://finance.yahoo.com/career-work/article/106924/The-Interview-That-Will-Bag-a-Job;\\_ylt=AkdUb\\_U6I82nM6QqKJSeyTMazJV4](http://finance.yahoo.com/career-work/article/106924/The-Interview-That-Will-Bag-a-Job;_ylt=AkdUb_U6I82nM6QqKJSeyTMazJV4)

# Examples

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- “My resume reflects that I have had several jobs within the last year. I get hired to fix a situation and then once completed, I find another job looking for the same skills. How do portray my abilities and value that I add?”
- -You are a firefighter! You possess the strengths of decision-making and problem solving skills. You add value to every experience and opportunity because you fight those “fires” and issues and in turn, provide a new workflow or process that yields results and expectations exceeded.

# Examples

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- “Tell us about a conflict with a co-worker or supervisor.”
- **DO NOT** say, “I’ve never had one” - yeah right, no one is perfectly in harmony with their entire office. But do be strategic in sharing (do not throw your supervisor under the bus, and do not share fights with spouses). Example (again, note STAR method)- Two weeks ago, I was assigned to a group project. One of my co-workers and I disagreed on how the Excel spreadsheet should be set-up. After some frustration, I decided to sit down with them one-on-one and discuss both of our perspectives. The result of this was that we combined our approaches and came up with an excellent Excel spreadsheet that attained approval to move forward.”

# Examples

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- “What are your weaknesses?”
- -**DO NOT** use weaknesses such as overachiever, perfectionist, people-pleaser. To the interviewer you will either come off as self-unaware or just not genuine. Take the time to think of one item you can improve. Example (note-STAR method)- One of my weaknesses is giving presentations. In order to work on this, I have joined Toastmasters and attained a mentor. I have also continued to place myself in situations that force me outside of my comfort zone, further developing my presentation skills. The result of this has been that I am now more comfortable giving presentations.

# Application After Workshop

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**Interviewing is Just Like the Table Topics Session in the Workshop**

# How to Get Started?

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- **Prepare For Your Interview By Doing the Following:**
  - **Select 8 to 10 sample interview questions that:**
    - ✦ **Best Represents What You Have to Offer and Explains Your Transferable Skills Effectively**
    - ✦ **Are most relevant in your industry or job**
    - ✦ **Could be questions that you may find difficult to answer**
  - **Write a 2 to 3 minute speech on each question by:**
    - ✦ **Creating a clear beginning, body with 2 to 3 main points and a strong summarizing summary**
    - ✦ **Use the STAR Method and Be Concise**
    - ✦ **Get Advice on your Responses and Rewrite as necessary**
  - **Practice Delivering these Short Speeches**
    - ✦ **Use your Toastmaster Club as an opportunity for Practice & Feedback**
    - ✦ **Get Advice on How to Improve Delivery**
  - **Ask a Fellow Toastmaster for Advice**