

How to Answer, “Why Should We Hire You?”

It’s almost inevitable that sometime during a job interview an applicant will be asked the following question: “Why should we hire you?” This is a challenging question for any applicant, but especially difficult for those entering the workforce.

If you are prepared, this is like getting a slow pitch right over the middle of the plate. This is your chance to deliver all your key messages. This is your chance to reinforce the interviewer’s positive first impression of you (or reverse a negative first impression).

David Boeckmann, who conducted more than 2,000 on-campus interviews for Procter & Gamble before retiring, says most applicants are not prepared to hit the softball pitch. As founder of Stellar Interviewing Concepts, Boeckmann advises college students how to prepare for an interview.

Any employer, Boeckmann believes, is looking for three characteristics in an employee: the ability to get things done, the ability to solve problems, and the ability to work with other people.

Boeckmann advises students to catalog their life experiences according to those three categories. Even though they are young and may not have much work history, they can still find life experiences that demonstrate their ability to get things done, solve problems and work with others. Perhaps they headed up a food drive at their fraternity or sorority, maybe they were a leader on a sports team or in their Scout troop, or maybe they organized a litter cleanup in a local park.

Maybe your achievements are more personal and private – for example, you taught yourself how to draw or paint or maybe you started a diet and exercise regimen and lost 40 pounds.

Here comes the pitch: “So, why do you think we should hire you for this position?”

You are in your home run stance and ready to hit. So you say: “Well, I imagine you are like most companies and are probably looking for someone who can get things done, solve problems and work well with other people. I am that type of person. For example...” Then you begin to tell stories about yourself that will illustrate these characteristics. Give one example to illustrate each category. Your ability to get things done is perhaps the best place to start. For example, maybe you worked your way through college, taking a full course load each semester while holding two part time jobs. You kept all the balls in the air and graduated with a respectable grade point average.

You also have worked well with people. If you’ve worked part-time, perhaps your employer asked you to lead a team of employees to implement a new product pitch, show others how to use a new cash register or train new waitstaff at the restaurant. If this is your first step into the work world after getting your degree, you may mention that before you got so busy working your way through school, you always participated in church or school activities, were in the school play and enjoyed working on the homecoming float.

Speaking of the float, you recall the year when you approached some local merchants and asked them if they would donate some paper napkins to stuff the wire mesh. By taking that initiative, you saved the class treasury \$250. These are not earth-shaking achievements, but they were to show an interviewer what type of person you are. Boeckmann says these types of stories will lead to give and take with the interviewer, getting him or her engaged in discussion and ultimately remembering you from the pack of candidates.

He calls these illustrations CAR stories (context, action and results) and you are the star. He says now is the time to talk in first person. Don’t be afraid to say “I.”

C is for Context. What role did you play in the story? “I was a member of the blood drive committee, and I saw a need to communicate...

A is for action. “...so I suggested the following ways to reach potential donors...

R is for results. “...and we got more enrollees that year than ever before, up 30 percent over the previous best year.”

If the stories are succinct and interesting, you will be able to illustrate that you have what it takes to make the same type of contributions to this company if they hire you.

Many applicants tell rather than show. They’ll say something like. “You should hire me because I am hard-working, honest and very interesting in your company.” That’s a swing and a miss. Nearly any candidate can say that. The slow pitch is your chance to show that you have what the company wants.

Career Builder. “How to Answer, “Why Should We Hire You?” 2004. <No longer available online.>



Produced by the Newhouse Career Development Center | Updated August 11, 2017