

The most dangerous questions in a job interview

What do you think is the most dangerous question in a job interview? Is it the question about the reason for the job change, salary expectations, personal weaknesses or even the biggest failure in your career? Or is it a nonsense question like: «What would you be if you were an animal?» No - you can expect and prepare for all the sensible questions. And the nonsense questions are best smiled away.

Peter Näf

The most dangerous questions are the ones that are not asked.

As a headhunter, I had two difficult lessons to learn: the first was to endure silence in the job interview after my question and not to drown it out with follow-up questions if the candidates took their time to answer. The second lesson was to keep asking applicants questions until I understood what they did in their job. As a young headhunter, I was initially afraid that experienced candidates would think I was incompetent if I didn't understand them the first time.

Even complex things can be told in a simple way

Over time, I had learnt to keep asking questions until I had a clear picture. After all, I have a good grasp of things and anyone who knows what they are doing should be able to explain it clearly. Some time ago, however, this uncertainty struck me again: During an outplacement, a highly qualified specialist explained to me what he does for a living based on a concrete project. His presentation was a difficult-to-follow mixture of sales,

narrative and personal statements. Despite repeated follow-up questions, I couldn't get a clear picture. To make matters worse, we were talking in English, which was not a native language for either of us. My impatience grew and at the same time my insecurity - I felt a bit lost and embarrassed to ask again.

No questions do not mean understanding

When I revealed my discomfort to him, he told me that his explanations were always well received in job interviews. Apparently, no one ever asked comprehension questions. But he was also rarely invited to a second round. I therefore suspected that his interviewees didn't dare to ask questions if they didn't understand something. After all, he was at the top of his field and many of his interviewees were probably not at the same level. He was also a mature personality with a natural authority. Persistent questioning requires good self-confidence on the part of the recruiter.

In the end, we removed sales arguments, evaluations and personal statements from his descriptions. The result was stories about his impressive experiences that were also understandable for non-specialists.

Tell your friends or acquaintances about your experiences and ask them for honest feedback on whether they have understood your descriptions. Or book a job interview training with me;-). Because good storytelling needs to be practised.

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