

## ***Communication Skills: Lecture No. 24***

### **Module 8**

### **Lecture 3**

## **INTERVIEW SKILLS**



In this lecture, I will focus more on the skills that employers are looking for and the kind of questions you should be expecting as a prospective candidate.

## What are Employers Looking for?

### LEADERSHIP OR INITIATIVE

Leadership quality, especially, your ability to take initiative, is what your employers are basically looking for. They would like to know whether you are a self-starter—someone who accomplishes things on one's inner motivation. They will be assessing you for the current position as well as your potential to assume higher responsibility. In this context, prepare yourself to answer the following questions:

- **What kind of extracurricular activities have you been involved in?**

Since the extracurricular activity that you are involved in will tell so much about your leadership quality, employers are curious to know about this. Thus, if you organized a major event, it would tell them about your ability to collect money by impressing sponsors, motivating people to cooperate with you, your planning skills, and your overall coordinating abilities. Even if you have only organized minor activities such as coordinating a local group discussion program, conducting quizzes, they will reveal certain administrative traits of your personality.

- **Describe two or three accomplishments of which you are particularly proud of. Explain why you are so proud of them?**

The answers to these questions will vary according to the individuals and the jobs accomplished by them. However, the answers will demonstrate one's work ethics, commitment, and level of responsibility. For instance, conducting a major event successfully, in the absence of the actual in-charge (due to an illness or accident), will throw light on one's ability to rise to the occasion.

## MOTIVATION AND GOALS

Apart from just leadership skills, your employers are looking for your motivations and goals, which will be evident from your research and development activities. You should have set realistic career goals based on your research and development plan. If asked, you should be able to discuss those goals within the context of the organization that you are interviewed for. In this relation, you may be asked questions like:

- **Where do you see yourself in the next five years?**

To answer this, you should have thought of your life ambition and chalked out an action plan for the next 25 years. You should know what and where will you be in the next 5 years in order to reach what you want to be after the 10<sup>th</sup> year and so on. It does not matter whether you will be able to achieve your target within the time period; what matters is whether you have an idea of where you are going—a sense of direction—because only when you know where you want to go, you will develop focus and dedication.

- **What made you choose your major?**

Although computer science and electronics engineering subjects have high salability, you cannot say that you chose them as your major ones because you knew they would fetch you lucrative job offers. Employers really look for someone who is passionate about whatever subject s/he has chosen because they know that the person will have in-depth knowledge in it. Besides, if you are passionate about your subject, you will intrinsically relate it to your inner goals and aspirations.

## COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Your communication skills will exude through you in many subtle ways from the way you speak, the way you dress, the way you carry yourself, the way you sit, the way you shake hands, and even the way you keep quiet. Your communication skills are evaluated by your current presentation skills apart from your past track record where you have proved your efficacy.

- **Communication Skills include:**
  - **active listening**
  - **writing skills (reports, memo)**
  - **giving presentations (oral, PowerPoint)**
  - **explaining complex ideas in a simple manner**
  - **resolving conflict**

In addition to *knowing your company*, and *knowing yourself*, you need to *know the questions* that are likely to be asked. Often in interviews certain questions are repeated frequently; knowing them and preparing yourself to answer them instills confidence in you. Please note the following questions and train yourself to give appropriate answers.

### 3. Know the questions

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you applying for this job?
- What do you know about this job or company?
- What are your major strengths?
- What is your greatest weakness?
- What type of work do you like to do best?
- What are your interests outside of work?
- What accomplishment gave you the greatest satisfaction?
- How does your education or experience relate to this job?
- Where do you see yourself five years from now?

- What major problem have you had to deal with recently?
- Do you handle conflict well?
- Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?
- What are your goals in life?
- How do you plan to achieve those goals?
- If I were to ask one of your professors to describe you, what would he or she say?
- What were you favorite classes? Why?
- Why is your GPA not higher?
- How has your education prepared you for your career?
- Are you willing to travel? How much?
- Is money important to you?
- What kind of salary are you looking for?

Let me briefly give you some tips for handling some of these questions.

### TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

This is one golden opportunity to create a good impression at the start itself. So, do not mumble your name—say it with confidence and go on with other details. After from telling your name, background, and briefly describing your CV, you should be able to relate your main objectives and goals to the job you are interviewed for.

You should also add a personality dimension that tells much about you rather in a single sentence as an optimistic person: *I try to look for opportunities even in tough situations.* However, you should be ready to back up such claim when you are asked to provide with an interesting example.

### **WHY ARE YOU APPLYING FOR THIS JOB?**

A silly and immature response to this question is saying that you applied for this job because of the high pay package. You need to assert that it is rather because of brighter career opportunities that the job can offer than the financial prospects. You can also say that you, being a challenge loving person, will enjoy higher responsibility that the job provides.

### **WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THIS JOB OR COMPANY?**

Another golden opportunity to impress your employer. You should have done enough research on the company by this time to talk anything about it. Whether it is the CV of your employer, or the product line of the company, its current problem, competing product, rival company—your knowledge on them will create the impression that you already have become an integral part of the company and you selecting you is obvious and indispensable.

### **WHAT ARE YOUR MAJOR STRENGTHS?**

Whether you like it or not, you need to point out five of your merits and limitations in the prescribed format of a short resume demanded these days before attending an interview. Nonetheless, do not randomly fill the format with qualities that do not typify you. Also you should not ask your teachers or friends to tell about your strengths. The employers are not just looking for your strengths but in knowing whether you are really aware of them. They will further probe these ones in your interview—so be prepared to highlight them with practical examples.

### **WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESS?**

A leader with a clear vision is aware of his strengths as well as weaknesses. He knows the factors that will help him achieve success and those obstacles that will lead him to failure. That's why employers are keen on knowing your limitations. However, there is nothing to be feared about because you can honestly list your limitations and identify the one that is most troublesome as the greatest weakness. In the interview, you can explain why it is the most troublesome and what steps have you been taking to overcome it.

Interestingly, if you probe deeply, you will realize that often our limitations are our merits in extremes. For instance, your strongest merit may be that you are a perfectionist. Yet, that could

lead to your greatest weakness—procrastination. Thus, on the one hand, you can point out procrastination as your greatest weakness, on the other, you can explain how your perfectionist attitude is causing delay in finishing work in time. Adding to it, if you can reveal some of the positive steps you have been taking to overcome your limitations, it will leave a good impression.

### **What type of work do you like to do best?**

Here again, be honest and tell the interviewers the kind of work that absorbs you—things which you love to do without looking at the watch frequently.

### **What are your interests outside of work?**

It's a good chance to share your hobbies and extracurricular activities. If you are involved in social service and help volunteering organizations that are involved in blood donation, saving wild life, planting trees, etc., sharing it will certainly give you some extra credits.

### **What accomplishment gave you the greatest satisfaction?**

The accomplishment can be professional, extracurricular, or personal. It should demonstrate your ability to take up a challenge activity (like learning a foreign language, developing a software, breaking a bad habit) and to prove yourself that you could successfully complete it.

### **How does your education or experience relate to this job?**

While you try to find ways of applying the knowledge you gained from education to the job at hand, you should be able to justify if you have changed the track of your career.

### **Where do you see yourself five years from now?**

As mentioned before, by asking such a question, the employers want to check your goals and ensure that they can be connected to their company's objectives.



### **What major problem have you dealt with recently?**

You cannot say that you never had any problems. It would be better if you could highlight one professional/technical problem you faced and describe how efficiently you overcame it. Even sharing how you made quick alternate arrangement for a big party arranged on open ground that was spoilt by heavy rain that poured unexpectedly will illustrate your organization skills and presence of mind.

### **Do you handle conflict well?**

#### **Have you ever had a conflict with a boss or professor? How did you resolve it?**

Saying that you are a gem of a person and you never had any conflict with your boss or professor is not going to get you any reward. Nonetheless, your ability to demonstrate a conflict you had with your senior/professor and the wise way you resolved it will give you some credit.

### **What are your goals in life? How do you plan to achieve those goals?**

Ideally speaking, your goals for career and goals in life should be complementary. Thus, performing well in the interview and joining the post should be one of the first steps towards achieving those goals. You will gain credibility if you can give a concrete plan for achieving those goals.

### **If I were to ask one of your professors to describe you, what would he or she say?**

Think of at least one professor who appreciates your talents, skills, and motivations. S/he should be able to say that you are *hard-working, persistent, committed, dedicated, sincere, trust-worthy*, etc.

### **What were your favorite classes? Why?**

Your favorite classes will also tell so much about you. If you are an engineering student, and your favorite subject happens to be psychology, it shows your interest in understanding the human mind unlike most technological students who tend to treat human beings as machines.

### **Why is your GPA/Marks not higher?**

This is a tricky question. You need to justify by giving valid reasons—mostly illness. In some rare case, you can say for instance that your passion for an extracurricular activity (robotics, for instance) distracted you from studies.

### **Are you willing to travel? How much?**

It is important that you give an honest answer here. Giving incorrect answer assuming that you are satisfying the interviewer will only put you in dangerous situations that you will regret later. By nature, some people enjoy travel and will not mind any amount of travel involved in their job. But if you get some allergy on travel that will induce vomiting, you should inform them candidly. The employer can then think of placing you in a sector that involves no travel.

### **Is money important to you? What kind of salary are you looking for?**

These are tricky questions; you need to answer them discreetly. Money is important in life though it is not everything in life—this should come out clearly from you. Your demand for an exorbitant amount as salary can reveal your greediness and over-ambitious nature.

I will discuss more typical questions that you can expect in an interview and explain how you can deal with them in the next lecture.

## FURTHER REFERENCES

### Further References

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