

CONSULTATIVE INTERVIEWING

THE GOAL OF AN INTERVIEW

What is your goal in an interview, i.e., what outcome do you want?

Consultative Interviewing

Finish this sentence:

My goal during an interview is _____

1. A. Show you're the right person for the job?
2. B. Get a second interview?
3. C. Get a job?
4. D. Something else?

Abandon the mindset that you are there to show the employer that you are the right person for the job.

FORGET CONVINCING!!!

As a hiring manager, if I feel you are trying to convince me to hire you, I'll quickly end the interview and your résumé will get filed per retention policy.

Why?

The goal is to find out if both of the following statements are true:

1. You can solve problems the employer has
2. The employer can solve problems you have

Consultative Interviewing

Employment is an economic exchange

1. **Economic exchanges are Value exchanges:**
2. 1. What you have is worth more to me than to you
3. 2. What I have is worth more to you than to me
4. 3. You and I are willing to consider a trade
5. Later each party will discover whether the solution each offers is worth the price each requires
6. (Salary Negotiation)

ECONOMIC EXCHANGES

Employment relationships are economic exchanges, and economic exchanges are exchanges of value.

Value is subjective: The same slice of bread has more value to someone in a 3rd world country than it does to any of us.

So the value proposition needs to be fleshed out between you and the employer. That's the interview

- A. The employee provides something the employer needs (skills, knowledge, time) and the employer is willing to pay for it in the form of money, benefits, etc.
- B. The employer provides something the employee needs (money, lifestyle, personal fulfillment, etc.) and the employee is willing to pay for that by giving up part of his or her life, being subjected to stresses, etc.
- C. The employer and employee agree that the value of what they receive will be greater than the value of what they provide, so each side wins.

But here's the kicker:

No One Wins If Either Side Feels It Was An *Equal* Exchange

Both Sides Must Feel They Received *More* Value Than They Gave

Later on in the process you'll discover whether the solution each of you can intend to supply is worth the price each of you intends to demand. That's called Salary Negotiation.

INTERNALIZING THIS

If we don't internalize this, we're going to make huge mistakes.

So here's the question again:

Consultative Interviewing

My goal during an interview is to discover if...

What I have to offer is valuable enough to the employer...

AND

What the employer has to offer is valuable enough to me...

For us to make an exchange.

What is your goal in an interview, i.e., what outcome do you want?

My goal during an interview is to discover if...

What I have to offer is valuable enough to the employer...

AND

What the employer has to offer is valuable enough to me...

For us to make an exchange.

****THIS CHANGES THE WHOLE CONVERSATION****

If I were talking to hiring managers I would advise this:

Do away with the silly stock questions like

- "What is your greatest strength/weakness" or
- "Where would you like to be 3 years from now" or
- "What would you do if you had a brick?"

One of two things will be true of the applicant's reply:

- (1) They will stumble and fumble because those questions don't have very good answers, or
- (2) They have been coached or read books and articles that teach them how to answer those questions in a way that frankly strips the questions of any value.

Get to the meat. You and the applicant each have things you can provide and things you need. Can each of you provide what the other needs?

Back To Job Seekers:

Advice: If you are asked stock questions like that, think quickly of how you can **tie your response back to providing value**, then provide your response, and then keep talking to steer the conversation back to the exchange of value.

It is critical that each side's needs are met. Inadequate attention to this results in either costly employee turnover or costly employment turnover.

(My Consulting Story) THE WRONG APPROACH

When I began consulting, the only sales experience I had was selling one Kirby vacuum cleaner, and that was to my grandmother (my Mom wouldn't buy it).

I knew zilch about selling. In fact, I hated the thought of selling because I associated selling with manipulation: The seller uses tricky language and shiny things to get the buyer to believe an inflated claim about the product so that the buyer will pay as much as possible for it. I associated selling with automobile dealer commercials.

I felt I had too much integrity to be a salesman, so when I met with business leaders I simply told them all of the things I could do for them. I expected them to respond with which of those things they needed and then I would work out with them how much it would cost and when we could start. That is the lame approach I took.

And I went hungry for 11 months. No exaggeration here.... I went live in early January and didn't begin working for my first client until the week after Thanksgiving. Fortunately, that first engagement was huge, or I would have gone under quickly.

What was different in November? CURIOSITY

Curiosity is at the heart of consultative selling.

- Not expertise
- Not answers
- Not ideas or programs.

It's curiosity. What do you do when you're curious about something? **You ask questions.**

In fact, for anything that is complex, you don't just ask an initial set of questions, do you?

You dig.

You excavate.

You look not only at the surface, but you explore nuances and tangents.

When you're really curious about something, you learn everything you can about it.

So if I had to describe consultative interviewing in one word, that word would be CURIOSITY.

If I had to describe the consultative approach in one word it would be QUESTIONING.

My Consulting Story (Continued)

I met that first client at a meeting that had nothing to do with business. It was a Thanksgiving breakfast for a religious organization that I attended with my father 3½ hours away from home.

Consulting and business were far from my mind.

A gentleman sitting across the table from me asked what I did for a living and I said I was a Business Consultant. That was the end of that... until the following Tuesday when he called me (got my number from Dad). He had just bought a company for \$200MM and had some questions. He asked questions and I asked questions in response.

By the end of a 45 minute call, I knew a lot about the challenges he was facing and had identified ways I could help him. He hired me for 2 months, and in those 2 months I netted \$100,000.

SELFLESSNESS

I later figured out that the main problem with the way I had been selling was that I was self-centered. I don't mean I was arrogant or cocky. I mean that I was thinking about what I needed (a sale) and how to get it (convince).

Consultative selling techniques are rooted in the *selflessness* of the salesperson rather than selfishness.

It's not about proving your product or service is the best, it's about finding the solution that's right for the customer. This isn't always the easiest path for sales leaders and their teams, but the results can be remarkable.

I'm going to break down that idea for you here in relation to job interviewing.

First, let's start with a fundamental question:

Q: What prompts a company to advertise a job opening?

A: A need which, in every case, is a problem to be solved.

So during the interview, you have 2 jobs:

1. Uncover the problem or problems they want to solve, and
2. Determine if you can help them solve it.

There are six activities in the consultative sales process. They are sort of sequential, but they are not linear (you'll likely go back and forth between them frequently):

1. **RESEARCH** to identify talking points: Learn everything you can about the company beforehand.

The Consultative Interviewing Process		
1	1. Research	7 Identify talking points
2	2. Ask	8 Fill Your Research Gaps
3	3. Listen Actively	9 Probe: It's All About Them
4	4. Demonstrate	10 Share Your Stories / Achievements
5	5. Qualify	11 Associate Their Problems With Your Skills
6	6. Close	12 Move Them Toward A Decision

1. **RESEARCH** to identify talking points: Learn everything you can about the company beforehand.
 - a. Fully digest the job ad with a critical and analytical eye.
 - b. Find any company reports that you can locate
 - c. Find meaty portions of their website, social media pages, etc.
 - d. Use LinkedIn to determine who their leaders are and how long they have been there
 - e. Do the same for other employees' backgrounds and tenure.
 - f. Research current trends in their industry.
 - g. Search online for any news about the company or its leadership.

2. **ASK** questions to fill in gaps in your research
 - a. Don't hesitate to shoot off an email before the interview asking just a small number of questions about the company, but be sure they are not questions you should be able to find answers to yourself.
 - b. In the interview, don't hesitate to say "I was researching your company and industry, and I found such-and-such, but it was missing some detail. Could you tell me more about such and such? This spotlights you as being a serious candidate who is genuinely interested in the company, not just a job. It also establishes a small relationship and puts you top of mind.
 - c. When you are at the interview, the interviewer will ask you pre-prepared questions. These are usually high-level questions. Find ways to dig deeper into the questions so that you can begin uncovering the reasons this hire is happening.
3. **LISTEN**
 - a. Practice active listening. That might mean asking for additional details about something the interviewer said. It could even be empathetically connecting something they say to something you've encountered or solved in the past – but **DO NOT MAKE IT ABOUT YOU!**
 - b. Take notes, or if you are a bad note taker as I am, make it look like you are taking notes.
4. **DEMONSTRATE**
 - a. Everything up to this point has been about them. It is time for you to gently take the focus. You have just learned about their needs and pain points – why they are interviewing you, why they are hiring someone.
 - b. Now it is time for you to show that you can solve their problems. Now is time to talk about what you have accomplished elsewhere ***that is related to their points that you've identified.***
 - i. Don't give it all away. Say just enough that they recognize your ability to help
 - ii. You are now going to show them what solutions you have for their problems.
 - iii. Stated differently, you are going to show them the value that you want them to consider paying for.
 - iv. It is not wrong - and can be powerfully helpful! –to say right up front the areas from your conversations where you are not particularly talented or experienced.
 - v. No need to hide it; it will come out eventually.
 - vi. In fact, it's best to **LEAD** with what you lack in relation to what you and the interviewer have discussed. Often they will tell you it's not all that important or they even might say they would consider providing some training in that area (but don't you ask for training).
5. **QUALIFY**
 - a. You will do this frequently throughout, but at this phase it is special and intense.
 - b. If you've followed the process well up to this point, it will be clear whether you and they have the potential to solve each other's problems.
 - c. The most effective way I know to do this is to turn the conversation to the problem itself
 - i. Review what you've learned
 - ii. Ask questions (if you haven't already) that will reveal (**AND HIGHLIGHT!**) **urgency.**
 1. How urgent is the need? What are the rewards of resolving it?
 2. What are the consequences of putting it off?
6. **CLOSE**
 - a. At this point you can choose between two things:

- i. Thank them for their time and say something like “I’m not sure I’m the right person for this role because...”
- ii. Ask for the close, such as
“This seems like a great fit to me. Do you agree? What are our next steps?
Or
“I’m really happy we were able to talk through these things. I am anxious to get started.

So let’s recap. What stands out to you?

What have you learned today that you will use for your next interview?