

Cleverness Can Backfire

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Well-meaning job seekers sometimes get too creative when making their cases to potential employers, such as the candidate who said he was "allergic to unemployment." The contrived allergy and other wacky pitches were revealed by hiring executives in a recent survey by Accountemps, a large staffing service for financial professionals.

Creativity Can Backfire

The group of 150 senior executives offered several other examples of candidates going too far in their attempts to stand out:

- "One candidate said that we should hire him because he would be a great addition to our softball team."
- "A candidate sang all her responses to interview questions."
- "One individual said we had nice benefits, which was good because he going to need to take a lot of leave in the next year."
- "An applicant once told me she wanted the position because she wanted to get away from dealing with people."

The statements above reflect poor approaches to an interview question that is very common: "Why should I hire you?" Career experts offer several alternatives that can help job candidates respond more successfully.

Break It Down

Richard Phillips, founder of Advantage Career Solutions in Palo Alto, California, suggests a three-step approach that flows from the job description: Begin your answer by listing the top three to five requirements of the job as you understand them, based on your research and what you've learned in the interview. Summarize how your skills and experience will enable you to make a significant impact in those areas. Finish by stating your interest in the organization. Keep it short and sweet.

Talior Your Story

Joe Turner, who wrote "Job Secrets Unlocked!" and runs [jobchangesecrets.com](#), suggests that you prepare your best "story" to answer the question by showing how you will go the "extra mile." "Here is where you recant that story of exactly how you worked 60-hour weeks, acquired new skills, or whatever it took to distinguish yourself and meet the challenge head-on to successfully make the sale, save the project, rescue a client, or whatever it was," he says. "If you can monetize (put a dollar value on) the end result, your story will only be that much more dramatic. Since no other candidate can duplicate your own personal story here, you'll make a memorable impression."

Run With Your Ideas

During the process of researching the employer and preparing for the interview, think of what you might do if you had the position, advises Carla-Krystin Andrade, author of "Kick Start Your Job Search." "Perhaps you have an idea for a new feature for their product or a new process that is relevant to the position," she says. "This is the perfect time to tell them about this idea and show them how you would bring value to the position if they hired you."

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