

“Achieving Your Career Objectives”

Interview Training Aid

Outline of Tracks #3, #4 & #5

Introduction

Over the last 20 years our RC Search corporate clients have been telling us about our candidates' interviewing mistakes.

We have used this client feedback to create an interview training aid designed to help our candidates prepare for and deliver the “best interview of their lives”.

You can listen to this interviewing aid on our CD entitled “Achieving Your Career Objectives”. We will be happy to e-mail you instructions on how to listen to this CD over the Internet or the telephone.

The following outline lists the key points that are addressed in tracks #3, #4, and #5 of this CD interview training aid.

Who Is Selling What to Whom in an Interview?

An interview is a reciprocal sales call. The candidate is “selling” his/her experience and skill sets to the client interviewer.

Once the client is convinced that the candidate is an on target applicant, the client will “sell” his/her company's benefits to the candidate.

Thus the candidate must “sell” first.

Three Homework Assignments to Better Sell the Candidate's Skills and Experience to the Interviewer/Client

We ask each candidate to prepare three homework assignments in order to “sell” their candidacy to the interviewer/client.

Homework Assignment #1 – The Beautiful Baby Opening Statement

Homework Assignment #2 – The Partial Client List

Homework Assignment #3 – Due Diligence Questions

Homework Assignment #1- The Beautiful Baby Opening Statement

All of our corporate clients are pleased that our senior successful candidates are open to exploring a new opportunity.

These clients **do not** want to hear a long explanation detailing why a candidate is unhappy in his/her current role. These clients **do** want to hear a complete explanation detailing why the candidate is interested in “exploring” the client company’s career opportunity.

Thus we suggest that our candidates prepare only a short, concise description of why they are considering leaving their current company. This description should stress the success the candidate has had at his/her current company and briefly describe the conditions at the company which are impeding the candidate’s continued success.

We also suggest that our candidates prepare a lengthier list of “beautiful baby” reasons explaining why the candidate is interested in “learning more about” or “exploring” the client company opportunity.

This list of “beautiful baby” reasons will demonstrate to the client that the candidate has

- done his/her homework in learning about the company and
- is excited about the possibility of joining the company.

This candidate “excitement” is crucial because the more the candidate likes the client company the more the client/interviewer likes the candidate.

We **are not** suggesting that at this stage of the interview that the candidate is ready to accept an offer from the client/interviewer. We **are** suggesting that at this stage of the interview the candidate must express why he/she believes that the interviewer’s career opportunity **could** be the candidate’s correct next career move.

List of Beautiful Baby Reasons a Candidate Wishes to Explore the Interviewer/Client’s Career Opportunity

The candidate’s list of “beautiful baby reasons” should address several of the following client company elements:

- . technology
- . market space
- . product’s compelling ROI value
- . client list
- . sales growth
- . financial backing
- . management team strength
- . competitive advantages

The list of “beautiful baby reasons” should also address several reasons why the interviewer/client’s company’s career opportunity matches the candidate’s personal aspirations:

- . desire to fill the role the client is attempting to fill
(For example, if a client is attempting to fill a 100% bag carrying individual quota role, the candidate must express a desire to fill such a role. If the candidate speaks of a desire for sales management role the client/interviewer will in most cases immediately discard the applicant’s candidacy.)

- . desire to continue or start to sell the type of software solutions the client company is offering

- . desire to work with a company similar in size to the interviewer/client’s company

(For example if a candidate is interviewing for a position with a small pre IPO company, the candidate could speak about a desire to work in a small company environment that lacks bureaucracy and where he/she will have great visibility and impact)

(If a candidate is interviewing for a position with a larger company, the candidate should speak about a desire to work in a company environment where there are deep financial resources, large client bases etc.)

When to Deliver the Candidate’s Beautiful Baby Reasons

We recommend that the candidate deliver some of these “beautiful baby” reasons at the beginning of the interview and deliver additional “beautiful babies” at the appropriate times throughout the remainder of the interview.

How to Best Develop the Candidate’s Beautiful Baby Reasons

The best way to develop these “beautiful babies” is to study the interviewer/client’s web site (download white papers etc.), Google the interviewer/client’s company and review the RC Search Client Company Corporate Overview and Search Blueprint.

Homework Assignment #2 – Partial Client List

The best predictor of future success is prior success in a similar domain.

Thus if a candidate wishes to convince an interviewer that the candidate will be successful in the role the interviewer wishes to fill, the candidate should “prove” to the interviewer that the candidate has previously been successful in a similar role earlier in his/her career.

The most powerful “proof of success” for a sales or pre sales candidate is a list of sales they have directly achieved (in the case of sales) or supported (in the case of pre sales).

Consequently we suggest that candidates prepare a list of significant sales they have achieved over the last few years. We feel that the list should contain a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 significant sales.

We are attaching a copy of our Partial Client List Template to serve as an example of an appropriate format.

Concrete Sales Examples Serve As Success “Proof” Statements

The candidate should use the concrete sales examples on their Partial Client list to “prove” that the candidate can do what the client wishes to achieve.

Consider the following examples of sales “proof” statements:

If the client is seeking a sales candidate who can “cold” call, the candidate should choose one or two sales from his/her Partial Client list that began with a cold call.

If the client is seeking a sales candidate who can develop strong client relationships, the candidate should choose sales from his/her Partial Client list where the candidate sold multiple times to the same client (either for the same employer or multiple employers).

If the client is seeking a sales candidate who can effectively sell to senior clients (“C”, VP and Director levels), the candidate should choose sales from his/her Partial Client list where the candidate closed a sale after working extensively with the Director of this, the VP of that, the CIO and others.

Homework Assignment #3 – Due Diligence Questions

Due diligence questions are candidate questions the answers to which would determine if the candidate would accept or decline an offer from the interviewer/client.

Reasons to Ask Due Diligence Questions

There are two reasons why it is incumbent upon the candidate to prepare a list of due diligence questions before he/she begins an interview:

First – a candidate should not accept an offer from a new employer before the candidate is convinced that the new opportunity matches the candidate's objectives.

Second – if the candidate has no due diligence questions, then the interviewer/client frequently decides not to pursue the applicant's candidacy. The interviewer/client reasons that if the candidate has no due diligence questions the candidate will pursue any job offer and is not truly interested in their specific opportunity.

Types Of Due Diligence Questions to Ask

We recommend that a candidate ask due diligence questions that address where the candidate has been “burned” earlier in their career.

Candidates who have joined companies that have run out of money should drill down on the new potential company's financial solvency.

Candidates who have joined companies where the software solutions have not been competitive should drill down on the new potential company's software features.

Candidates who have joined companies with maniacal micro managers should drill down on a new potential hiring authority's management style.

Candidates can ask any kind of due diligence question they wish other than questions concerning compensation issues. Candidates should ask compensation questions much later in the interview process when the interviewer/client is drooling over their candidacies.

When to Ask Due Diligence Questions

It is important to understand when to ask due diligence questions during the interview.

Our hiring authorities tell us that they will not answer candidates' due diligence questions until the hiring authority is convinced that:

- the candidate has the skill sets and experience the hiring authority is seeking
- the candidate has a sincere interest in exploring and then pursuing the role that the hiring authority wishes to fill.

Thus, the hiring authority will accept due diligence questions from the candidate only after the candidate has successfully “sold” his/her experience and skill sets to the hiring authority.

Consequently, we recommend that a candidate ask due diligence questions only when the interviewer/client asks him/her to do so. This usually occurs at the end of the first or second interview.

When the interviewer/client asks for the candidate’s questions, we recommend that the candidate present several categories of questions and allow the client/interviewer to select a category (just like Jeopardy!)

For example “Yes, Mr/Mrs. Interviewer, I have questions concerning your company’s finances, your solution suite, the sales territory, your management style.”

After the interviewer/client selects the category he/she wishes to address, the candidate should pose his/her subcategory questions.

Examples of Sub Category Questions

Sample Subcategory Financial Solvency Questions

- is the company profitable
- is the company at break even point
- does the company expect to raise additional VC backing (if pre IPO)
- what is the monthly dollar burn rate
- how much money does the company have in the bank

Sample Subcategory Territory Questions

- what is the territory (geographical or major accounts)
- has the sales territory been worked before
- is this a replacement or an expansion position
- are there any established clients in the territory
- are there any referenceable clients in the territory
- are there any new sales close to closing in the territory

Sample Subcategory Product Questions

- is the product up and running
- does the product have all the bells and whistles the clients are seeking
- how does the product compare to competitors’ products
- are there new products coming out of beta

Sample Subcategory Management Style Questions

- how do you interact with your senior sales subordinates on a daily, weekly, monthly basis
- what sales results do you expect in the short term medium term and long term
- what is your management style?

How to Ask Due Diligence Questions

It is important that the interviewer/client view the candidate as upbeat, enthusiastic, energetic and optimistic.

No VP of Sales or Pre Sales wants to hire a tired, burned out, negative candidate.

At the same time the interviewer/client wants to hire a senior candidate who has “been there and done that” and knows the possible pitfalls he/she will face in selling or supporting the sale of the interviewer/client’s products.

The interviewer/client wants the candidates to ask difficult “zinger” questions that reflect the candidate has encountered and overcome problems in his/her former companies.

How to Ask Zinger Questions and Yet Appear To Be Upbeat, Enthusiastic and Optimistic

If the candidate asks an interviewer/client zinger questions like

- “are you a micro manager”
- “does the company have enough money to meet its marketing and sales goals”
- “what makes you think that a prospective client will buy a \$200,000 solution from a small pre IPO company like you”
- “how can you compete against your much larger competitors”

there is the possibility that the interviewer/client will view the candidate as negative and defeatist.

However, if the candidate prefaces his/her zinger questions with a positive statement, the interviewer/client will view the candidate as **positive** and **able to ask** probing questions that reflect strong previous experience.

Samples of Positive Up Front Statements Preceding Zinger Questions

“Your company raised \$10 Million in VC funding last year. That is very impressive. Tell me how much of this money is still in the bank? What is your monthly dollar burn rate?”

“Mr. hiring authority you have a very impressive management background. Marilou and Mel speak very highly of your experience and success. Tell me, how do you interact with your subordinates on a daily, weekly, monthly basis? What are your short term, medium term and long term sales results expectations?”

“Your company has a long list of Fortune 1000 clients. That is very impressive. Tell me is the product up and running at these clients’ sites? Will these clients serve as referenceable clients? Will these clients purchase more of your software?”

Structuring an Interview to Use the Ammunition Developed In the 3 Homework Assignments – Beautiful Baby Opening Statement, Partial Client List and Due Diligence Questions

All of our interviewer clients tell us that

- they want to know why a candidate is interested in exploring their company's career opportunity

and

- they want the candidate to qualify and close them during the interview. These interviewer/clients believe that if the candidate can qualify and close them in the interview process they will be able to qualify and close their prospective software clients.

We recommend a 4 step interview process that satisfies both of these interviewer/client's objectives:

Step 1 of the 4 Step Interview Process

Step 1 – Begin the interview by delivering a few beautiful baby statements that demonstrate why the candidate is interested in exploring the company's career opportunity. Deliver additional beautiful babies at the appropriate time through the remainder of the interview.

Step 2 of the 4 Step Interview Process

Steps 2, 3 & 4 of the interview process are all open ended questions designed to qualify and close the interviewer/client.

Step 2 – Ask the interviewer/client the following open ended question in one form or another: “What are the ideal skill sets and experience are you seeking for this position?”

Listen closely to the interviewer/client's list of desired skill sets and experience. Show the interviewer/client how you have each experience or skill sets in 2 ways – first state the number of years you successfully performed the experience or skill set and second provide one or two concrete sales examples from your Partial Client List that demonstrate the requested experience or skill set.

Step 3 of the 4 Step Interview Process

Step 3- Ask the interviewer/client the following open ended question “Do you have any questions or concerns about my ability to hit the ground running in the role you are seeking to fill?”

Listen closely to the interviewer/client's description of the element(s) he/she believes you are missing. We call these missing elements – Career Voids.

It is important to get these Career Voids on the table during the interview so that you can respond to them before the interview ends.

Respond to any Career Void with a 2 stage answer. In stage 1 you show the client/interviewer how your past experience is similar to the career void. In step 2 you show the client/interviewer how quickly you came up to speed with new software, ROIs, verticals etc.

Example: “Yes you are correct. I have not sold Instant Messaging software before. However I have sold solutions of similar size, similar technical complexity, with a similar ROI and a similar price point to a similar purchasing audience.”

“I have the ability and desire to come up to speed quickly with new software, markets, and verticals.. When I joined my last company I had never sold their type of software into their preferred verticals and yet I became their top sales representative after 6 months.”

Step 4 of the 4 Step Interview Process

Step 4 - Ask the interviewer client “What is the next step in the interview process?”

This simple question is important for 3 reasons:

First, it demonstrates that you would not leave a sales situation without closing the prospective client to the next step in the interview process.

You would never leave a prospective software client without asking about the next step in the software sales process (would you like to sign the contract, speak to a reference client, see a prototype, etc.).

Similarly you should never leave an interviewer/client without closing him/her to the next step in the interview process.

Second, it demonstrates that you are excited about the interviewer client’s opportunity. The more excited you are about the client company the more excited the interviewer is about your candidacy.

Third, you really want to know what the next interviewing step is – a visit to headquarters, additional telephone conversations, etc.

Due Diligence Questions

After the candidate sells himself/herself to the interviewer client, the interviewer client will ask the candidate if he/she has any questions.

This is the time to pose the questions described above on Page 5 in the Due Diligence Questions section of this outline.