



301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions

By Vicky Oliver

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"As valuable for the executive going into her umpteenth interview as for the college grad seeking his first real job."

-Richard Zackson, Business Coach, Professional Coaching Network

In today's job market, how you perform in an interview can make or break your hiring possibilities. If you want to stand a head above the rest of the pack, 301 Smart Answers to Tough Interview Questions is the definitive guide you need to the real, and sometimes quirky, questions employers are using to weed out candidates.

Do you know the best answers to:

- It looks like you were fired twice. How did that make you feel?
- Do you know who painted this work of art?
- What is the best-managed company in America?
- If you could be any product in the world, what would you choose?
- How many cigars are smoked in a year?
- Are you a better visionary or implementer? Why?

Leaning on her own years of experience and the experiences of more than 5,000 recent candidates, Vicky Oliver shows you how to finesse your way onto a company's payroll.

"Everything I always wanted to know about job interviews but was afraid to be asked."

-Claude Chene, Senior Vice President, Head of Business Development, U.K. and Europe, Sanford Bernstein & Co.

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Editorial Review

From the Author

Vicky Oliver is an award-winning copywriter with X years of experience at brand name, top tier advertising agencies in Manhattan. She would confess how long she's been in the field, but that would go straight to her age-something she feels strongly that one should never reveal on a job interview. As a freelance writer, Ms. Oliver has written extensively about unemployment and the job search, appearing on the front page of the New York Times Job Market Section, in Adweek magazine, and on Crain's New York Business website. Ms. Oliver has also worked with more than 5,000 professionals who have emailed her for advice on their job hunt and has given seminars on the topic at The Writer's Voice in Manhattan.

About the Author

Vicky Oliver is an award-winning copywriter with several years of experience at brand name, top tier advertising agencies in Manhattan. Ms. Oliver's numerous articles have appeared in the New York Times "Job Market" section, Adweek magazine, and on Crain's New York Business website. She lives in New York City.

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Excerpt from Chapter 1:

An old adage tells us "there are no stupid questions." If only there were no stupid answers!

If you are tired, underprepared, or overly nervous when you meet your prospect, your chances of performing well decrease dramatically, and even "softball" questions can seem ridiculously challenging. So first, study really hard. And then, sleep really well. (If you have no idea why this is important, it's time to go back and read the Introduction of this book. And tsk, tsk for skipping it in the first place.)

A great first impression is made in an instant. When this is the case, your interviewer may ask you, in so many words, to put yourself in his shoes, and convince him to hire you. If you are lucky enough to find yourself in this situation, first, relax, and then, resolve to knock your interviewer's socks off. Nothing's going to stop you from landing this job!

1. If you were hiring someone for this position, what qualities would you look for?

A. I would look for three main talents, Alex:

1. The ability to solve problems;
2. The ability to nurture strong working relationships; and
3. The ability to close deals.

A candidate who possesses all three qualities would make the ideal associate new business director.

Let me tell you a little bit about my background. I "grew up" on the account side, and for seven years, helped companies like Revlon and Stoli Vodka solve big problems-such as how to position themselves in an increasingly fractured, competitive environment. Revlon, which for years had been the number one cosmetics company, was nervously watching its market share erode. Stoli was in a similar situation, due to Absolut's strong presence in the marketplace. I helped Stoli launch some new flavored vodkas, and the company soon regained valuable market share. Stoli rewarded me by offering me a job working on new product development. And I switched over to the marketing side for the next two years.

In marketing, having good people skills was mandatory. I had to beg vendors and suppliers for more shelf space. I had to chat up bar, restaurant, and hotel owners, and convince them to prominently display our vodkas.

I also wined, dined, and played golf with CEOs, CFOs, and owners of all different types of companies. So I know that I will be extremely resourceful when it comes to attracting new business to your company.

2. What would you like me to know about you that's not on your resume?

A. Well, Pat, I have the right mix of interpersonal and work-related skills to be a successful commercial real estate agent. A lot of people think that being a good saleswoman is simply a matter of being outgoing. But this is only part of the equation. You also need to be able to solve real problems for companies.

What if the space that you're showing isn't in the ideal neighborhood? You've got to persuade your prospect that the value of the property will overcome the inherent drawbacks of the location. What if the commercial space doesn't have as many windows as the company's current property? You have to help your client envision a different way to carve out the space, if only to muffle the complaints of the top executives. You need to be able to think, not just in terms of square footage, but also in terms of "profit per foot" for the company in question.

Above all, it's critical to seal the deal. For the past four years, I was among the top five closers at a large, commercial real estate company.

3. Let's say that I offer you a job. Please tell me how the company will benefit.

A. I am an expert on LED and rotational signage. I have been selling huge, LED signs to stadiums for the past five years. This has involved not only a great deal of technical expertise, in terms of understanding the technology that goes into our product, but also the ability to compare and contrast our offering to others that are less expensive to implement and maintain.

I've had to convince large groups of people, who are not technically inclined, to spend the money for a quality product. I always promise them tremendous service on both the front and back end, and then follow through. As a result, my clients have been very pleased with my performance.

Your company will benefit from my expertise on three counts: 1) I will train your sales staff how to close on deals more quickly and profitably, 2) I will share my extensive contact base with your company, and 3) I will reorganize your service department to be more "hands on." Then, your customers will give your company those glowing referrals that will lead to even more new business.

4. Why should I hire you?

A. Well, Martin, as we've been discussing, your company's website could probably benefit from a complete overhaul. For a first website, it's not bad...It covers all of the pertinent information that you want your customers to know about your business. But I agree with your own assessment, and feel that your website could be more inspired. You need some technical help with links, and I know how to come up with the key words and phrases that will bring a lot more web traffic to your site.

I think that a more creative flash opening, along with some music and graphics will keep customers on your site longer. It would be helpful to have something there that was continually updated in real time, perhaps some company news, or even games that would reward people for learning more about your services.

I've created twenty websites for all different companies, and one of them is in a similar line of business. I'd

love to show you that website, so that you can get an idea of what's possible for your company. Can we hop onto your laptop right now?

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Toni Williams:

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David Ashworth:

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Betty Abbott:

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