

TRANSLATIONS

by Bonnie Johnson, AgCareers.com Marketing Associate

WHAT KIND OF RESPONSES are employers REALLY looking for when they ask interview questions?! We hope to provide some translations and suggestions so you can eloquently answer these common and sometimes tricky questions.

TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

“Employers use this information to gain an understanding of what you are passionate about, what makes you tick and drives you,” said Sarah Rachels, Human Resources Director, Carolina Farm Credit. “Feel confident in sharing a story that will help us remember you over the others we are interviewing.”

Be wary of turning this into a 20-minute speech; keep it to a quick overview as it relates to the job. Don't delve into your hobbies or personal issues. Relate your answer to the skills that you can bring to the position.

“Articulate your story in a concise manner that is relevant to the job,” said Jessica Johnson, Talent Acquisition Manager, Lansing Trade Group.

WHAT IS YOUR WEAKNESS?

It is important to be honest and show a little humility. “I like it when candidates can tell me a weakness, as it shows they are self-aware,” shared Johnson.

“Continue your answer by sharing a specific time when you worked to improve a weakness,” said Rachels.

TELL ME ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU MADE A MISTAKE.

“Many employers promote a learning

culture and are understanding when an employee makes a mistake, as long as they take responsibility and learn from it,” said Rachels. Use an example that demonstrates that you can apply what you've learned from mistakes. “I want to know how accountable you are, and hear what you've learned from your mistake,” said Johnson.

WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN FIVE YEARS?

Research the company and know the career path. Johnson shared a response that impressed her: “I want to complete the MIT program and become a successful merchandiser, contributing to the organization as a whole.” It is important to be realistic and honest with the interviewer. If your goals and the organization's don't match, it might not be a good fit for either. “Turnover is very expensive to employers, and they want an idea of whether or not they can depend on you to utilize the countless hours invested in your training and development,” shared Rachels.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

Now is your time to gloat a bit and share an accomplishment. “Oftentimes having

a degree is a requirement for a position, so answering with ‘getting my degree’ probably isn't enough,” said Johnson. Did you pay for college by yourself? Did you receive a grant for research? Even if your example was a team project, describe your efforts and the results. Share goals that were accomplished or exceeded.

IT'S IN THE DETAILS

“Remember that an interview should be a two-way conversation,” added Johnson. Be prepared with your own questions to make sure the position is the right fit for you.

“I cannot stress enough the importance of researching a company before the interview,” added Rachels. No matter what the question, if you want to be a successful candidate, “Use specific examples whenever possible,” added Johnson.

As a college student or recent grad, you may think you don't have experience. However, your examples can be from school, part-time jobs, internships, activities or volunteer experiences. Keep in mind you are selling your “story” in the interview, and you are the author and expert!



Comic by Becca Schwartz