

Interview TMI: Make a long story shorter

Written by Julie Desmond
Tuesday, 19 June 2012 15:54

Something everyone knows, but it's nice to be reminded: People who interview people for jobs enjoy asking questions. They do it naturally, and enjoy it, actually. So, the next time you're in the interview hot seat, refrain from telling lengthy, exquisitely detailed stories, and instead let the interviewer lead the conversation.

Example: Why are you looking for work? Option A is to give a twitter length, high level explanation. "I want to take on more responsibility, which isn't available where I'm working now." Option B is to open a blank, 500 page notebook, dip your quill pen in the ink jar and begin to fill in the pages with an answer such as, "When the company was founded in 1932, the owner hired his daughter, who hired her son, who passed the company along to his brother, who just hired his completely inept nephew as my manager. If I don't marry into the family, I can't advance, and I really love the spouse I have now..."

Eventually, the succession story will reveal itself. But keeping the conversation more broad initially means the interviewer gets to lead and ask the additional questions that interest him or her; the interview stays on track. He or she might ask, "What types of responsibilities do you have now?" Suddenly, we're discussing job skills and accomplishments, instead of whining about a promotion deal gone bad.

Practice pays off. If you are slightly tech saavy, you can practice using a twitter window. It will automatically tell you when you've used too many characters, forcing you to rethink your statement. Use it to develop answers for these common interview questions:

- Why are you looking for work? Rehearse your answer in front of a mirror.
- What do you do in your current position? State your title and brief summary of your duties.

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- What salary are you expecting? Say, "My W2 last year was ___." If you had zero earnings last year, just say so as an explanation as to why you are open to any pay range right now.

Additional questions are sure to follow. The point of a short answer interview is not to withhold information. Rather, it is meant to guarantee that the person who interviews you gets the information he or she needs in order to feel great about giving you a job offer.

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