

Tips from an American Interviewer

Lindsay: Okay. So speaking of interviewing in the US, there are some things that we wanna (want to) kind of be aware of. Right? What do you guys think? I mean how...? What is the best way to respond to this question, "Tell me about yourself." It's the most common interview question.

Rebecca: I think it's a really hard one because they can always read your cover letter. Always read your resume. So you need to bring something extra to the... to the table, excuse me. And um, I know I'm guilty of kind of reciting some things that are on my resume, but there are other things that I **bring up**, like where I'm from. I think that some employers, in my experience, have been more like surprised or impressed with the fact that I'm from California and now I'm living 3,000 miles away.

Lindsay: Interesting.

Rebecca: And I've been to all these places and I have interned in different cities across the States and its... like so I have all

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this other background and experience and they can't see that from a resume, so when it comes to that question, it's like you really need to tell your story, like where you're from.

Lindsay: Yeah. Yeah.

Rebecca: It's not necessarily like about what you've done in the workplace.

Lindsay: I don't know though. I feel like sometimes,

you know, having been in the position of an interviewer, sometimes you haven't seen the cover letter or the resume. You know you... you've sent it to them before, but that person might not have taken the time to see it or they're in a rush, so I... I think... I think where you're from and who you are is important, it helps you make that connection with the interviewer. But you also want to be clear about, you know, why you're there and kind of what experiences you have and kind of what you want out of it.

Lindsay: Right.

Lauren: Yeah.

Lindsay: Right. Excellent. Great. Two different perspectives. That's fantastic. It sounds like the most important thing is kind of

really just showing how you're sort of unique. Right? Just...I would say just making yourself memorable to that person.

Lauren: Yeah, absolutely. It's about that connection, whether that comes from your professional background or your personal story. You know, either way you want to just make sure they know who you are.

Lindsay: Right- that they remember you. Great. Okay. So how about the next one... So, uh... Another trick... kind of a trick question sometimes. What are your weaknesses? I mean, so Lauren, you, in the last dialogue, you answered that really well by saying that you were detail-oriented.

Lauren: Yeah.

Lindsay: Why is that a good sort of...?

Lauren: Well, I think you always wanna (want to)... You always wanna (want to) know yourself. I think when employers are looking for you know, new hires, whatever function it might be, they really want somebody who's self-aware.

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And so this question comes up often as a way to say, you know how... Yeah sure you're great. You know you wanna (want to) spend all this time telling us about your accomplishments, but give me the **flip side**. We're all not perfect. That said, they also don't want to hear that you're a disaster.

Lindsay: Yeah, right. You want to **leave that out**.

Lauren: So you know, an answer like, "I... I work too hard. I'm too detail-oriented. I over communicate. I collaborate too much with other people." You know things like that, um, can be weaknesses, but they can also be strengths. So they're good things to say to let them know that that's the way you work, but at the same time, you know, hopefully you can **spin it** as... and yet nonetheless, here is how this is going to be useful to you as my employer.

Lindsay: Yeah. And you know that employers do like people who pay attention to details. I mean we all need someone who's detail-oriented in the office, even if the employer isn't necessarily.

Lauren: Right.

Rebecca: Right.

Lindsay: So that makes a lot of sense. How about the next one, Rebecca? What do you think? So the question "Why do you want to work for us?" That's really important. How would you answer that question in an interview?

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Rebecca: Well, ahead of time, definitely research the company, like a lot, as much as you can before you go in there and you could... in my experience anyway, I've always thrown in points about, you know saying "I really, you know, aspire to work within a smaller environment where everybody has a creative mind and its entrepreneurial sort of um, mentality and I... I find that really fascinating and that to work with people who, you know, come from that kind of background or maybe working in an environment where people maybe don't come from the same background. So that way it's a very eclectic group." And like bringing up points like that, if you know something about the people who work there or something about um, the company that kind of brings together a particular type of person, I think that can be a strength to bring up as well, then of course what interests you about the job. Know everything about the position, and you know, bring in your personal story and also your

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um professional background and apply it to what you can actually do for that company and for that position, you know, bringing in whatever type of ideas that you have that might be new to the table or even if you are the only creative person who might work at that organization or the only person who...

Lindsay: Yeah. Yeah.

Rebecca: ...you know, is from California. It's like, you know, everyone has something different to bring to the table and it's um... you can always spin that in a way for, you know, what interests you about it or you know why you want to work for the particular company.

Lindsay: Ok cool...Lauren any thoughts on that?

Lauren: Yeah and I think that question gets harder when you're making some kind of switch, whether it's geography, industry, function. You know when you look at your resume and it says one thing and you're talking to somebody and it's somewhere else. So I think that's really important to address **up front** when you're answering that question. So, you know, if we live in Boston now and we want to work in California, you... you know, what interests you in this company? Well, you know, this, that, the other,

and it's in California. You know put that in front of their face and let them know you're interested in making that switch, even if, you know... You already have the interview, so they're interested in talking with you. Just make sure that, you know, they know you're willing to make that other part of the change.

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Lindsay: Right, because it's a bit of a liability for an employer. Right? They want you to stay if they're going to hire you.

Lauren: Absolutely.

Lindsay: So you really need to **connect the dots** and make sure that they really feel that you're the right person for that. That you're going to **fit in** with the company and the location.

Rebecca: And something too that I had just thought of in the process of being interviewed for different internships um, in my... like in my previous professional experience and people say "Oh, well how much do you know about the company?" If you happen to not know a whole lot, I

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found that a nice response is to say, "You know what, I'll be honest and say I may not know as much as a lot of other people, but that's the thing, like I want to go in and I want to learn as much as I can about the company. I want to go in and like I have the skills and the qualifications to meet the requirements, but I want to be pushed to my... like my ultimate level. I want to actually feel more and like be able to do as much as I

can

Lindsay: Yeah and that's not a quality that everyone has. Not everyone has that learner's mind, that beginner's mind, that sense of really wanting to go after things.

Rebecca: You have to be passionate to like meet the qualifications and go even further than that.

Lindsay: Awesome. And then the last question is, you know "Where do you see yourself in five or ten years?" Again, potentially a trick, potentially a trap. And so what did you say in your answer?

Lauren: I... I.. we were focusing on an account management position and I talked about how it would be great to be leading that team possibly in another geography, but I

think what they're asking here is number one, do you understand a little bit about the career in the industry. So do you have a sense of, you know... so many of us, especially when we're interviewing, we are ambitious. We're looking for a change. We're looking for a new

job, but they also want to know, "Okay, but where do you want to go next? Are you doing this for, you know, ten minutes? Or do you want to be President of the universe?" You know it's like "Whaddya (what do you) mean?" So I think it's a great chance to kind of show, you know, where these different careers can go. And even if it is a change, you... you know I had friends who would maybe go to law school and work for a law firm and know that they wanted to do it for five years and then go and be a defense attorney, you know, but that was, you know, that... in that field, is an appropriate career path, so I think it really depends on... on the industry you're going to.

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Lindsay: Interesting. Awesome. Awesome.

Rebecca: Some things to avoid in that question would be of course like bringing up "Well you know I see myself having a

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family in the next five or ten years," because, you know, while that may be true that's not something you want to bring up in a conversation with an employer because that, you know, might lead them to think that you might leave the position in five years on maternity leave, and or paternity leave, you know depending on your gender. And so it's...

Lauren: For most employers in the States, it's actually illegal

for them to directly ask you about your...

Rebecca: Right, but that's why then like you can't bring this up...

Lauren: Yeah, so it's... it's irrelevant to this. Right? You wanna (want to) for right now you want the job, you wanna (want to) work for the company. Focus on how you can help them and why you're the best person for the role.

Lindsay: Solid. Thanks guys.