

# 18 STEPS TO THE STRONGEST OFFER!

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*The impression you leave after your interview decides if you will get an offer and most importantly – how strong that offer will be. You NEVER receive a second chance to make a first impression!*

## ■ **Know what is on your resume and be honest!**

Being dishonest will show up either early in the interview process or within the first month of employment. Unlike a telephone interview, you will not have your resume in front of you during your face to face meeting. Knowing everything on your resume prepares you in case the interviewer refers to a specific point on the resume to ask questions.

## ■ **Review the Behavioural Event Interview material.**

Download this from our website and please call your recruiter if you have any questions.

## ■ **Dress for success!**

Dress conservatively, keep a large black notebook with a pad in it for notes, and be at least 15 minutes early!

## ■ **Bring plenty of resume and copies of your references.**

## ■ **Fill out the entire application form.**

Do NOT write “See Resume”. Put “N/A” in blanks that are not applicable.

## ■ **Break the ice.**

Introduce yourself by name and give a firm handshake. Pick an object in the room that you are familiar with and that you can use to strike up a conversation. This can be a picture of the person’s family, a unique item picked up while on a vacation trip that the hiring authority has in their office, or a simple trophy on display in the office. This is very important and sets everyone at ease. Immediately lead into the next step...

## ■ **Two minute presentation of yourself.**

Have a 2 minute presentation of yourself that reads like a quick story from beginning to end. Remember to sell the sizzle and not the steak here. In other words, present yourself as a solution finder by giving examples in your career of your career progression. Lead into the next step as soon as possible...

## ■ **MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION...”What challenges are you facing?”**

If you are in the middle of a phone meeting – it is imperative to ask this question. Write these responses down in detail in your notes. It is likely that you will revisit this later in the conversation. Having this information will help you frame pre-prepared responses when these challenges are brought up in your face to face meeting with them.

*Every job opening exists for 1 of 2 reasons:*

- 1. The employer is replacing someone*
- 2. The employer is expanding*

The challenges that they face have prompted them to invest 3 times your first year’s compensation to bring you onboard. This information is never found in any advertisement or job description. The strongest interviewers discover why the hiring authority wants to make this investment as early in the interview process as possible. This way can help steer the interview in your favour. The strongest offers are given to those that can bring the most value. By addressing these individual challenges using the STAR format (you can download this from our website), you will force the interview into a dialog, where you end up being a counsellor and demonstrate to the employer your value to them by addressing their challenges in real time.

## ■ **STAR format (Situation or Task, Action, Result)**

The purpose of the behavioural event interview is to look at your past performance as a gage to determine how you will perform in the future. As this technique becomes more popular, it’s important to remember that most managers have been exposed to it. They may be poor interviewers, but they are seeking clues on how your

past behaviour will affect future performance. Therefore, it is imperative to stay with the STAR format. (Download the sample Behavioural Event Interviewing Questions found on our website)

## ■ **The Hamburger Technique – How to handle getting stuck in a question.**

**Top Bun** – If you find yourself stuck where you cannot answer, then a simple, “That’s an important question” or “I’m glad you asked” will give you a few seconds to think of a great response. Reflect what they just asked back. This acknowledges the importance of their question by giving it validity and also that you seek to understand what they are looking for. Most importantly, it buys you time to think of a good response.

**Meat of the question** – Use the STAR format here.

**Bottom Bun** – A lead into the next statement for later reference you can tie into. It’s a great opportunity for dialog. The bottom bun is a more advanced technique but if you feel comfortable with it –go for it! This can be accomplished by asking questions such as: “Have you had challenges with\_\_\_\_\_?” “What other challenges have you had with\_\_\_\_\_?” Then do the STAR format here again.

## ■ **The weakness question.**

One of the most common interview questions is, “Where do you think you need improvement?” The most common responses are, “I am too detail oriented” or “I’m a workaholic”. Rather, it’s best to give a technical weakness least significant to the position. This demonstrates that you are honest while maintaining your value to the company and the persons charged with making the decision to hire you. Remember that a personality weakness of any kind cannot be addressed or corrected by your employer in the future. The wrong answer of any kind could put you out of the running immediately. A technical weakness is a matter of perspective and it’s expected. No two employers operate the same way. Each use different software packages and methodologies. It’s expected it will take your new employer time to bring you up to speed on policies, procedures and technical differences. Instead demonstrate that you are the person that can be brought up to speed.

### ■ **The future question.**

Another common interview question is, “Where do you see yourself in five years at this company?” We have found this to be the strongest response: “*A position where I am challenged and I can add value to the company.*”

### ■ **The money question.**

NEVER BRING UP MONEY OR BENEFITS OF ANY KIND AT THIS STAGE! This includes time off or vacation time. This is considered to be poor interviewing etiquette. The best way to handle this question is by being honest and saying, “This is what I made last year on my W2. I will consider your most competitive offer.”

### ■ **Why are you leaving?**

Many employers will ask this because they are interested to see how you regard your previous employer. They would also like to know if you are a counter offer risk. NEVER PUT DOWN YOUR PREVIOUS EMPLOYER IN ANY WAY. *This is poor interview etiquette and will certainly burn bridges and lead to a non-offer immediately.*

Here are 2 strong answers: “I owe this to myself and my family to explore this opportunity.” Or “At my current job I have the opportunity to do this \_\_\_\_\_. However I would like the challenge of working on \_\_\_\_\_”. (Now list the challenges they have addressed with the challenges question).

### ■ **Importance of asking questions.**

Remember that you are interviewing the company as well. Conventional wisdom says to listen 80% of the time and speak 20% of the time. We recommend a 50/50 dialog. It's not required to ask question in an interview, however asking questions demonstrates an interest in the employer and the position. Employers respond well to this. Here are some examples:

- ◆ What challenges are you facing?
- ◆ How will I be challenged?
- ◆ What opportunities do you have to learn and grow?

- ◆ What is the single common denominator you see among your most successful employees?
- ◆ What would you like done differently by the next person who holds this position?
- ◆ What direction do you want to take your group?

**Avoid “me” questions!** Such as:

- ◆ What is your vacation policy?
- ◆ How many sick days do you allow?

### ■ **Ask for the job! This is the most important step!**

Remember that whatever happens during the interview, **ASK FOR THE JOB!** In sales, if you don't ask, you will not receive. You are marketing yourself. If you are up against other candidates, this will easily set you aside as the most desirable one. The employer will appreciate the positive feedback. There are many ways to do this, for example:

- ◆ This is the position I am looking for. What is the next step?
- ◆ When can I start?
- ◆ I want this job.

### ■ **Thank them for their time.**

**ALWAYS** send a thank you letter to each person you interviewed with, thanking them for their time and consideration. Your recruiter can help you with this step, if necessary.

### ■ **Call your recruiter right after the interview.**

Before your recruiter speaks with the hiring authority, it is imperative that you call him/her to let them know what your thoughts are about the position, immediately after your interview. If you don't call, this can be construed as a lack of interest to both your recruiter and the hiring authority, which could cost you the opportunity altogether.

*Follow these steps and you will have an outstanding interview. Just remember that as in all negotiations, these steps will help you uncover whether or not this opportunity is right for you. If so – they will assist you in demonstrating the strongest way you can add value to the team you*

*want to join. Creating this win/win scenario will maximize your offer.  
Remember – have a plan before meeting, a determination that will be  
captured and a value that cannot be denied!*