

Interview Workshop

Now this is time where you have to shine and prove yourself that you qualify for the job. Think of yourself as a car salesman and you have to sell yourself to the hiring manager. What are the things you are proud of, what do you know, what is your education background, what have you done in the past, how do you match for this position. You need to speak of all these features to sell yourself.

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- **Employer/Manager (10 minutes)**
 - **Company overview**
 - **Job overview**
 - **Interview process**

Usually the interview last for an hour. You will get a call from the hiring manager or you will be on-site meeting with him (lets call him Russell). Introduce yourself to everyone. Tell them that “my name is Imran Afzal and thank you so much for your time today for this interview”. Then from here the hiring manager (Russell) will introduce himself or others if there are more people on the interview panel. The first 5-10 minutes will be utilized to give you the company overview e.g. What does the company do, how long they have been in the market, what have they achieved. Make sure to research on the company as well before the interview. This will tell Russell that you are interested and have done your homework.

Next thing Russell will tell you about the job itself. He will go over the quick description of the job, what they are looking for, why they are looking for, the number of people in the team and what they will expect from the new person. Make sure to write this part because this information will help you answer according to their requirement. e.g. if Russell mention that we are looking for someone who is also a team player or someone who can improve the documentation etc. then later you can say that you have worked as team or have done a lot of system documentation. If you are in-person then make a mental note about this.

Before Russell start asking you question he will mention about the interview process. He will layout how the interview will be conducted. How much time will be spent on the technical questions, how much time will be spent on the behavior questions and then in the end there will be some time allocated for me to ask any questions. Explaining the interview structure is what great hiring managers do to stay on track.

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- **Tell me about yourself (5-10 minutes)**

Ok so all said all done. Now one of the favorite question every hiring manager asks. "Tell me about yourself". You should take anywhere from 5-10 minutes to answer this question. Now this is the opportunity to sell yourself. You should break down your answer into 5 categories

Category 1.

Start by introducing yourself by saying, My name is Imran Afzal and I am Systems Engineer by profession. My expertise are Linux, VMWare, Windows, technical training, project management etc. so basically list a quick summary of your skills.

Category 2.

I have been working with Art Vandaley industries for the last so n so years as a system administrator. If you are not working in IT then say "I have been working on my Linux lab for the last 6 months along with my full time job as Sales associates in Bloomingdales."

If you are already in IT then go over a quick summary of everything you do. E.g. build servers, managed them, provide 24x7 support, troubleshoot system related issues and so on.

If you are not in IT then really quickly go over your day to day task but don't spend more than 20-30 seconds on it. Focus more on the technical side e.g. work on POS systems or sometimes also troubleshoot technical issues. If you don't do any technical work at then don't lie about it. Move on to mention about your Linux lab. How you started and how many hours you spent to learn, how many hours you spend each week to manage it break it and troubleshoot it different issues.

Next mention your previous job if you had one. Again go over a quick summary of your daily tasks

Category 3.

After your experience tell Russell about your education background. Which college you went to and what was your major. If you majored in accounting or any other concentration aside from Computers then now is the time to tell why you decided to move to IT. Perhaps better future, better job market, you started likely it more when you worked one day with your friend or whatever your reason is.

Category 4.

Now in category 4 bring up your interest. Like... on your spare time you like to play soccer, watch movies, help around the house in washing dishes or cleaning the house. Tell him what you really enjoy doing in your spare time. Once again don't make up things, trust me you will feel proud once you are done with the interview regardless you get the job or not.

Next and last category 5.

Tell Russell why you want to leave your current job to apply for this. Perhaps your contract with the existing company is coming to an end, or you are looking for career advancement where you can apply your technical skills or you simply want to start your career in IT. Then tell him that you have worked as a team player in the past the outcome was excellent. Give a personal example like your friends don't like to go out without you because they like your company. Mention about your documentation skills because remember he brought this point during the initial conversation. Ask yourself what is that one quality you have that your competitor don't and tell that to Russell.

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- **Why do you want to leave or what are you looking in your next job (2 minutes)**

Now you have covered this question in your last category 5. Many time hiring manager will include this question with “Tell me about yourself question”

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- **Behavior questions (15 minutes)**

These type of questions are one of the way for Russell to find out your personality whether you are the right fit for this type of environment. It can take anywhere from 15-20 minutes to answer them. He will ask you questions like:

- How do you handle a difficult situation
- How do you meet your goal if you face an obstacle
- How do you handle difference of opinion

Now remember you don't have to be in a corporate environment or to have an IT job to answer these questions. We face these type of challenges almost everyday, with our family, friends, or during a situation which is un-related to any relationship. E.g. you are at the airport and you are given the 2 options either wait for the 2nd flight which will leave 8 hours from now and get you to point B in 2 hours. Or you can rent a car and drive for 6 hours. Which one option is better for you and why picked one on the other. So think of situation like these and answer these questions accordingly.

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- **Technical questions (25 minutes)**

Now let the fun begin. You will be asked technical questions back and forth for 20-25 minutes. Sometimes technical questions are made up of a situation e.g. What if you have to run a script at night but you are not available at night, how would you manage...of course schedule the job with crontab right.

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- **Any questions for us (5 minutes)**

Now once Russell and the team done asking technical questions now its your turn to return the favor. Ask them questions like:

- what is a typical day looks like for this position
- If it is a contract position ask if there is a possibility to become permanent. This will show that you are committed
- How will you measure the success of the person you will hire

These are a few question example you should ask Russell

Now before you say your good byes and shake hands you should say a closing statement. Anything that will stay with Russell and will keep reminding of you when he interviews other candidates. Now what could that be? Well of course it all depends on you and what you are good at. As an example you can say:

- Before I leave I want to say one thing. If you ask me something and I don't know the answer....then I will tell you that I don't know. But I promise you that I will work on it and get the answer for you.
- Before I leave I want to say one thing. I might not be the smartest or most technical person but I one day I will make you proud of your decision for hiring me
- Before I leave I want to say one thing. I might not meet all the requirement of this job but I definitely being loyal to you and will be there whenever you will need me.

Let me tell you a little secret about my career. Long time ago I went for my first job interview. The hiring manager met me and hired me without asking my any technical questions. Now keep in mind I did not have any experience or Linux skills for that matter. A few weeks later after I started my new job I asked my Manager why didn't you ask me any technical questions when I came for the interview? He said because of your attitude. I knew you were hungry to learn and willing to do whatever it takes.

So what I learned that day is...its not what you say... its how you say it

