



# THE TOP 5

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QUESTIONS TO KNOW BEFORE YOUR NEXT INTERVIEW

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# The Top 5

Questions to know before your next interview.

## Interview Set

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This version was published on 2014-02-23



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# Contents

What Are Your Strengths? . . . . . 1

# What Are Your Strengths?

Variations of the question: What can you do for us? Why do you want to work here? Why should we hire you?

## BRIEFING

‘What are your strengths?’ is the SINGLE, most important question you will ever be asked during any interview.

Period.

Why? Put yourself into the shoes the employer. Each of them has a goal that they want to achieve, or a problem that needs to be solved. They also (most likely) have a good idea of what tasks/roles/jobs need to be done to achieve that goal. That could be to make more sales calls, provide great customer service, maintain the books, or take out the garbage. Whatever it is, you need to clearly demonstrate alignment between what they need and what you can do for them.

You may truly believe that your values align with those of the company; You may have dreamed about working for this company since you’ve been able to walk; Maybe you have the firm’s logo tattooed on your bicep. It doesn’t matter. From the interviewer’s perspective, it comes down to one thing: ‘What can you do for us?’

But wait!

Just about anyone can make a sales call, provide customer service or manage the books, right? Correct. There are likely MANY people who can fulfill the job requirements of the position you’re looking at. Which is why this important point needs to be made:

To set yourself apart, it's not enough to simply prove that you can do the job. There are dozens, perhaps hundreds, maybe even THOUSANDS of people who have applied to this exact position and have the technical qualifications.

Having the experience may be enough to get you the interview. However, if you want to get hired you need to prove that you will EXCEL at this job. In other words, demonstrate why you will be AMAZING in this particular position.

Your interviewers are smart. If you believe that you'll be mediocre at the job, they'll know. Save yourself time and energy, and figure out what it is you do best BEFORE you show up to the interview.

Can you list your top 5 strengths? Try it now.

If you're not 110% sure about what your strengths are, it's about time you found out. Check out the strengths-finding resource included with this eBook at <http://www.herofy.me/interviewsetpromo>. It's our gift to you. Use it before continuing.

Alright, so you've found your top 5 strengths and you're ready to roll.

## The ROADMAP

1. UNDERSTAND YOUR STRENGTHS
2. KNOW THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANIZATION
3. RELATE YOUR STRENGTHS TO THEIR NEEDS

When asked "What are your strengths?" an interviewer isn't looking for a laundry list of 3-word answers.

She won't remember all of them, and even if she does, she won't care.

What she wants to hear is how you can help her achieve her organizational goals. You may have the best people skills on the

planet, but if the job requires you to spend 90% of your time in the back corner of an office, alone, it's not going to help much.

The following is a step-by-step plan in preparing an answer for 'What are your Strengths?'

## **1 UNDERSTAND YOUR STRENGTHS**

It may seem obvious, and it may seem redundant, however, very few people can actually communicate their strengths clearly.

If you can quickly and concisely state what your strengths are, you will put yourself ahead of most job applicants. It follows that, the better you understand your strengths, the clearer you'll be able to communicate them.

Do you really know your strengths?

In under 30 seconds, verbally state your top 2 strengths and how they apply directly to the job you're applying for. Can you do it?

If you've done the Herofy strengths assessment included with this eBook, you're already ahead of about 50% of the pack. If you've gotten responses from friends, family and colleagues on where they see your strengths, you're already ahead of about 90% of job seekers.

Congratulations!

If you haven't done the Herofy assessment yet, what are you waiting for?

Refer back to page 3 for the link.

Take a look at those strengths, and the others you have identified on your own. Think deeply about specific situations where you felt you were 'in the zone' and using these strengths. Write down exactly what you were doing.

The more specifically you can identify what each strength is, the better you'll be able to convince others.

## STRENGTHS vs. SKILLS

What is a strength? According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, as strengths is “a strong attribute or inherent asset”. Notice the word ‘inherent’ which means “existing in something as a permanent, essential, or characteristic attribute”.

This is very important!

It means that a strength is not just something you pick up on a rainy weekend.

A STRENGTH is something you are NATURALLY good at.

It’s something that you’ve probably been good at for most of your life. You may not have always known it was a strength, but when you look back on the past, you can see how it was there all along.

This isn’t to say that you can’t develop, or build your strengths. On the contrary. It’s vital that you focus on turning your natural talent into a consistent strength. Building your strengths takes time and effort as well; but it will always come much easier than working on your weaknesses.

A SKILL, on the other hand, is the ability to do something that comes from training, experience, or practice. It’s something that can be developed whether you’re good at it or not, it just takes time and energy.

Strength = Analytical thinking (Ability to look at information and find patterns/trends and produce insights from them)

Skill = Creating charts in Excel Strengths = Communication (Ability to naturally express your ideas and thoughts in a compelling way)

Skill = Having an extensive vocabulary Strength = Empathy (being able to relate to other people on a personal level)

Skill = Mastery of proper customer service or sales protocol

Focus on your strengths, then supplement them with your skills in that area. If you’re a creative person (strength), talk about how you love thinking up artistic ways to present information. Then add to

it by mentioning how you taught yourself how to use Photoshop and Dreamweaver and have a few of the info graphics you created on hand.

By doing this, you are showing not only that you are naturally good at something, but that you've developed skills around this strength to make it an asset.

## **2 KNOW THE NEEDS OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Just as every person has needs, so too does each organization. By knowing the needs of the organization you are interviewing with, you can speak in a language that resonates with them.

How do you find their organizational needs?

The best way is to actually speak with someone within the organization. Look up the company on LinkedIn and see if you have any connections. Talk to friends, or research employees who work in the department you hope to get into.

It's often easier than you think to get a phone conversation or coffee meeting. Ask these people about what they do and what they are looking for.

If you haven't got time to meet with an employee or manager, do your research online. Find out what projects the company has recently been involved in, if they've changed the way they do things, or any news updates that have been published.

If you can't find much information online, you can always look at similar companies or industries. What industry conditions or trends could affect what type of people the company hires? What are their competitors doing?

If you still can't find any information, here is a basic rule of thumb as to what MOST businesses are looking for in candidates (\*disclaimer: most doesn't mean all):

1) Innovation: Can you help the organization improve it's process, lower costs or increase profits? Can you think of new ways to do things better and maximize results?

2) Energy: Are you the type of person people WANT to engage with (customers AND employees)? Do you bring an enthusiasm that lifts your team up?

3) Passion: Are you going to love what you do, or is this just what you do to pay the bills? Note: passion has a lot to do with your strengths and interests. If you've got natural talent and a keen interest in a particular area, you very well could have the formula for passion.

Tip: Convincing someone you're passionate about something requires knowledge of your strengths and interests.

These bits of information can give you insight into the strategy and mindset of the organization and it's leadership. The better you understand what is going through the mind of your interviewer, the closer you'll be to signing that contract.

### **3 RELATE YOUR STRENGTHS TO THEIR NEEDS**

Think back to a conversation you've had where the other person spoke only about themselves and their interests.

Got one?

How interested were you in what they were saying? If you're like most people, you were likely zoning out about half of the time. If, however, they were relating their experiences to something meaningful to YOU, you were likely paying MUCH more attention.

Think about what a job interview is. It's you talking about yourself.

Let's assume interviewers are normal people, just like you. They've got things on their minds, and problems to solve. If you want to connect with them, you need to make it clear where there is a

connection between what you do well, and what they are looking for.

When asked “What are your strengths?” during an interview, most job candidates will be able to state what they’re good at.

Most of them will also be able to give an example of a time when they used that strength (hopefully more than one).

If you can do these two things, you’ll be ON PAR with everyone else applying for the job.

So, how do you stand out from the crowd?

In a word, RELATE! Relate what you know about the needs of the organization with what you do best. Here’s a simple example:

Interviewer: ‘What is your greatest strength?’

You: ‘My greatest strength is my ability to solve complex problems. I am able to look at a situation from multiple perspectives, analyze the information in a logical way, and come up with alternative solutions.’

Interviewer: ‘When have you demonstrated this before?’

You: ‘At my last job, as a customer sales rep, I would observe the behaviour and demographics of customers who purchased goods in our store. I came up with a profile of our ideal customer, based on how much they would spend and how often they would purchase goods. I then highlighted several ways to market to this group, and presented them to my manager.’

Again, if you do define your strength and give an example, you will only be EQUAL to the other candidates. To GET the job, you need to STAND OUT! A great way to stand out is by relating:

Here’s the RELATE part:

You: ‘I’ve done some research and looked at your company, as well as your customer profile. I’ve noticed some similarities between your ideal customer and the ones I used to work with at my previous

job. I think I'd be able to use some of the same marketing ideas I've developed to improve your conversion rate.'

These answers are simple, but they illustrate the 3 elements to a great answer to 'What are your strengths?':

1. Understand your strengths
2. Know the needs of the organization
3. Relate your strengths to their needs

Perhaps you believe the 'RELATE' part will seem obvious to your interviewer and you don't want to be redundant. After all, they know the certain strengths they'll need to meet their needs, right?

You're right. However, most managers and recruiters tend to have a fairly narrow idea of what types of strengths and/or skills they're looking for. If you don't list them out in the way they're expecting, you may get looked over.

This is especially true if you're interviewing for a job in which you have no direct experience with.

If you can clearly and explicitly relate your strengths to the needs of the organization, you won't be limited to hoping your interviewer got the message.

This is an important point, so I'll restate it again:

The more clearly you show the connection between your strengths and how they can benefit the organization, the more likely you'll be to ace the interview.

The 10 most desirable traits that all employers LOVE:

1. A proven track record as an achiever. Make sure your achievements match up with the employer's greatest wants and needs.
2. Intelligence and management "savvy".

3. Honesty and integrity.
4. Good fit with corporate culture. A team player will mesh well with the other employees.
5. Like-ability, positive attitude and a sense of humour.
6. Great communication skills.
7. Dedication and discipline. The willingness to walk the extra mile to achieve excellence.
8. Clear goals and a definiteness of purpose.
9. Enthusiasm and a high level of motivation.
10. Confident, leadership-material.

### **Additional Example answers:**

“My strength is written communication. That’s what led me to pursue a BA in writing. Most recently, I had a chance to put my writing skills to work as a volunteer with Focus magazine. I did a great variety of writing projects while working there, including hard news articles and lifestyle pieces. I also compiled events schedules and assisted with layout design. In my spare time, I do a lot of personal writing, including fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction. I’ve even had a short story published in ‘The Prairie Review’. I’m particularly interested in trying kinds of writing that I’ve never done before. I think the more I learn about different styles, the better my writing will be. That’s why the work you are doing is so interesting to me. From the samples of the projects I’ve seen your office produce, I know you hold very high standards around written communication. These are some of the key aspects about myself and my experience that I believe would allow me to make a strong contribution to your organization.”

“I think my strongest skills are in research and writing. I used these skills during a co-op work term I completed with the Ministry of Children and Family Development. My job was to research provincial initiatives for preventing violence against women and

children over the last 3 years. I consulted a variety of existing studies and interviewed a group of women who had experienced violence. I then compiled the results into a draft report. As part of the same project, I helped create a mail out survey and collated the results with the other information I was collecting. The present position with your organization requires the same types of skills and focused attention.”