

CxO INTERVIEW TACTICS ACTION CHECKLIST

- ✓ What you are trying to establish in an interview
 - Making a connection
 - Making a good impression
 - Reinforcing that good impression with stories
- ✓ Most important thing to do on the phone or in person is LEAD the interview with by asking them to explain the position to you and share with you what kind of person they are looking for. Take notes on what they say. These are your talking points for the interview. Do not deviate from them.
- ✓ Don't overshare. Stay on point by talking about what THEY need vs. all the things you can do. Chances are you will be able to do much more than the initial needs discussed. This is a common occurrence with experienced professionals.
- ✓ Use discretion when talking about skills they have not asked for yet that you might possess. For example, you are strong in process improvement but they have not brought it up, ASK FIRST – how important is process improvement in this role? If they respond favorably tell your story.
- ✓ Answer their questions with questions of your own 25% of the time. Example, you answer their question and then add: since we are on the subject or since you brought it up – can you tell me more about ___ ? This increases the connection between you and your interviewer(s) and shows you are fully engaged.

Possible age related questions include:

- ✓ What are your 5 year goals?

You can answer: I am looking for a long term employment opportunity – stability is definitely a value I can bring to the position. If you like you can

follow up: is stability important in this role or can you share with me what your preference is for long term commitment in this role?

Briefly Script Out How You Will Answer:

IF: you are coming out of a retirement or hiatus, industry change or long job search – Develop a short script of what you are going to say and practice it.

✓ Problem: Concerned about age discrimination and almost embarrassed to be an older worker.

✓ Solution: Concentrate on seeing thatAge is an Advantage!!! Age, experience, a grounding in the real world are all your allies--as long as you have the tools to stop age objections in their tracks.

✓ Problem: Seen as a overqualified flight risk

Solution: ...becomes senior manager who misses being in the field and is ready to commit long-term to adding value right where the action is.

✓ Problem: Isn't up on current trends

Solution: Stay ahead of the curve with creative thinking while offering a foundation in communications and business that younger workers just don't have (In this digital age with social media, many younger people are great at figuring out the bits and bytes, but they lack skills needed to engage customers in meaningful dialog).

✓ Problem: Might need too much personal time to deal with family issues

Solution: Communicate the need to provide for family is extra motivation at this career stage or family is grown and (I) enjoy being able to pursue my career with new vigor.

- ✓ Problem: Too expensive

Solution....worth it! Because when you do things better, the company makes much more money. ROI.

Solution: Flexible – speak of compensation in broad terms (north of 6-figures, have been between 80k and 200k in the last several years – don’t get pinned down to a figure!).

Which Challenges Above Do You Resonate With?

Additional scripts – below are several script ideas to to help you get creative and tailor your own. When it comes to “tell me about yourself” and why (this position) you definitely want to write out what you want to say and practice it. The rule of thumb is to keep it short and positive.

Here are several examples:

How to address coming back out of retirement.

- ✓ Write out what you want to say and practice it.
- ✓ The rule of thumb is to keep it short and positive.

Here is an example:

“When I sold my company I was looking forward to two things only: spending time with my family and playing golf. After a couple years of enjoying that I realized that I was still passionate about, and had contributions I wanted to make relative to my career.”

“The time I recently took off has been a very enlightening experience for me in that I realized what a truly positive force my career has been in my life - from working with a team to tackling the challenges. I don’t think I fully appreciated that until now.”

How to address up leveling or looking:

“I have enjoyed my time with company X – and the challenges of the successes I have helped them achieve such as ___ and ___, has been very rewarding both personally and professionally. However the last couple years I have felt a desire to move up to ___ position and the structure of our company isn’t such that it will support my ambitions and so I decided to embrace this window of opportunity and that is why I am here today and very excited to learn more about this opportunity.”

How to address shifting career gears.

“It has been one of my biggest life achievements to be able to act for so many years as a Global VP of Marketing and I am proud of my positive contributions. In the last 5 years I have reflected that although my role is deeply satisfying and challenging, it does not come without its stresses and I miss the hands on (sales, day to day operations, managing a team that...). After careful consideration I have decided to repurpose my strengths in a ___ role so I can focus the remainder of my career enjoying doing something I deeply love.”

“I enjoyed my past position as Chief Operating Officer” for company X, but during that engagement I realized I really missed the day to day operations and the teambuilding – two of my best strengths. I am taking this window

of opportunity to fulfill that desire – and that is why I am currently pursuing Operational roles vs. another C-Level position.”

How to address re inventing yourself.

“These last few years I have had this pressing thought in my mind that out of all the things I have gotten to enjoy – I most love to do _____. And so now I am vetting positions that will allow me to immerse myself in that so I can really fulfill my passion for ___ and rise to the fullness of my career potential.”

“I always knew I wanted to _____, but in the past the timing just was not right. Now I have more flexibility to make this transition and time to commit to training and I am so excited to finally have this opportunity to do what I have dreamed of for so long .”

Briefly Script Out How You Will Answer:

How to address money:

This can be tricky if you are interviewing for a higher, different or lower position then you may have held in the past.

- ✓ Try to defer money questions during the first interviews when the focus should be on the value that you bring, not how much “you cost”.

- ✓ Happy to discuss money but hoping we can determine if this might be a possible fit first, is that okay?
- ✓ Glad you brought up salary – obviously that is important as are benefits. Since we are on that subject could you share the details of your benefit package with me?
- ✓ Check salary.com for comps for the position you are interviewing for – look up the geographical area the position is located in too.
- ✓ Use a wide range when discussing your salary. Stating you made exactly \$172,500 in your last position is very risky since it pins you to a number (you better hope that is the number they had in mind too – budgeted for their position!).

One easy method of calculating a wide range is:

- Base salary from 5 years ago
- Add benefits (car, bonus, insurance, perks)
- Base salary today
- Add benefits

You may find yourself with a range of 50k to 150k this way.

So you could say:

For the past several years my total compensation package has been between 50 and 150k – since we are on the subject – did you have a range in mind budgeted for this position?

You can also say:

- My total compensation has been:
- North of 50K
- North of 6 figures
- In the low 6 figures

- North of 500k
- Etc...

The more of a discrepancy you feel there may be between what you did before and what you wish to do now – requires more careful consideration of how you will clearly and simply answer their question without seeming you are hiding anything. You can say:

My compensation for the last several years has been in the multiple six figure range (this could be \$150 or \$400k for all they know!) but my primary goal right now is to focus on this ___ role which – I realize by doing a little preliminary research is somewhere in the (high 5 figure) range. I understand that – that compensation both works for me at this stage and will afford me the opportunity to land a role I truly want to be in!

Or you could say:

In the last several years by total compensation has been in the mid five figure range. I realize there is a differential there relative to this (type) of role however I wanted to interview for this position because this role is absolutely perfect for me because it allows me to contribute my ___ skills while also aligning with my lifestyle. I hope you don't mind me saying this but I really want this position and I see myself working here!

Or you could say:

"In the last several years by total compensation has been in the mid five figure range. I realize there is a differential there relative to this (type) of role however I wanted to interview for this position because I have wanted to move into this industry for a long time and finally I am at a stage where I can do it. I do have a desire to ultimately move into a ___ role in your industry. Do you feel if I prove myself to be a high achiever in this role that opportunity might be there for me? I hope you don't mind me saying this but I really want this position and I see myself working here!"

Briefly Script Out How You Will Answer Money Questions:

If you are confident, positive and purposeful you can turn these meetings into value=bringing powerful interviews that result in multiple offers!

- ✓ *Question: Tell me about yourself: One minute. Write out and practice. Don't use dates. Consider starting from the 20 year mark.*

Briefly Script Out How You Will Answer, "Tell Me About Yourself":

- ✓ *Question: why do you want to work here? Mention what you like about the company. Engage, lean slightly forward in your chair .I am excited about this position.*
- ✓ *Interviews down to 3 finalist are often decided by who is the most excited about the position. These are tipping points.*
- ✓ **Questions about energy level: What do you do for fun? How do you handle fast paced work environments?**

- ✓ Best answers are those that show off your aligned virtues such as anything athletic and your volunteer activities.
- ✓ If your health has not been good you can of course choose not to mention that.
- ✓ Some clients have triumphed over health scares and it is part of their story and they like to use them in interviews. This includes stories such as turning ones life around after a heart attack and going on to run marathons. If you have a story like this – congratulations! Just run this answer by a couple trusted friends and make sure they think this is a positive addition to your interview and ask them to help you “tweak” your story so it is impactful and positive.

Briefly Script Out How You Will Answer Questions Relating To Helath And Energy Level:

At the end of the interview you can and should ask if you can ask a few questions.

The most critical questions you must ask at the end of the interview is:

- ✓ Where do we go from here?
- ✓ When do you expect to make a hiring decision?
- ✓ Based on our meeting = do you feel I am a good fit for this position?

- ✓ *Can you tell me about the last person that was in this role – where are they now and what were their key strengths. What in your opinion could they have done better?*
- ✓ *Best thing about working for this company?*
- ✓ *How would you describe the corporate culture?*
- ✓ *Describe the kinds of people that thrive here?*

List Your Favorite Closing Interview Questions:

Build Your Value

- ✓ *Focus on building value and solving problems. Remember to be fully engaged in back and forth conversation. Show you care – both in your appearance and in your questions. Share your accomplishments in the form of stories.*

List Any Self Care or Appearance Areas (if any) You Would Like to Improve In Preparation For Your Interviews:-----

Inappropriate Questions

- ✓ *If any age questions come up or something is asked that sounds inappropriate do NOT get defensive. Handle with grace. Diffuse by saying: I understand how you may feel that way... then when you have neutralized their question redirect by stating: correct me if I am wrong but aren't you looking for someone who can....*

Behavior based interviewing:

- ✓ *These are the “tell me about a time” questions.*

You can prepare for this by studying the job description of the positions you hope to interview for. If leading transformations or process improvement and conflict resolution for example are primary requirements then simply figure out a time you lead a transformation, solved a conflict (such as turning around a bad situation, upset client or a division or a disagreement with your boss or improved a process in whatever you specialize in: training, admin, operations etc..). Be sure to start with the result – what happens when you do what you do (i.e.: I saved a \$5M account partnership in South America by....)

List 3 Strengths/Skills In Your Industry That May Be Used In the Form of A Behavioral Based Question:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

My friend and best selling sales author Jill Konrath wrote a GREAT article on sales strategies in 2019. It was so good and so applicable to any first meeting that I took her article, altered it to gear to executive interviews, removed parts that were not applicable and have shared it below. Its so wise and insightful I know you will appreciate it. Please read on:

How to ensure a great executive interview...one that leads to that critical next step.

Like many interviewees, you probably feel an overpowering urge to cram as much as possible into your first interview. Your interviewers “need to know” about your value points, competitive differentiators, top-notch skills, unique methodology and leadership traits.

So much to cover. So little time.

The Speed Backlash

Whoa! Slow down. Interview panels who receive massive information dumps unconsciously erect barriers to derail your efforts. This is not what they want from you, yet it’s what they typically get.

How do you know you're getting a speed backlash? Your prospect may do one of the following:

- They tell you that everything is fine with the department or company –even if they’re dissatisfied.
- They raise seemingly stupid, inconsequential reasons why changing from what they’re doing now won’t work
- They ask about your compensation—and then tell you it’s either too high or there’s no money in the budget.
- Or, they thank you for the update and promise to contact you—and then never get back to you.

These points are often the result of trying to do too much in one meeting.

Company leaders may distrust your motives when you do most of the talking. And, despite all your good intentions to thoroughly educate them about your leadership skills they don’t “get” it.

Slower Strategies for Faster Results

One of the most uncomfortable things for interviews to do is to s-l-o-o-o-w d-o-w-w-w-n. It's totally counter to our highly driven, results-oriented skills as leaders.

Yet that's exactly what top performers do. Gaining your audience's trust is a slow, deliberate process. It takes time to:

- Demonstrate that you're an invaluable resource.
- Build a business case for bringing you on board.
- Help your audience navigate a complex decision process.
- Beat out competitors, especially internal candidates.

Knowing this, you can put together a one-step-at-a-time strategy that advances the process much faster than if you try to do everything quickly.

It All Starts With That Crucial Initial Meeting

How you prepare for your upcoming conversation is a huge factor in its success. Don't just hop on the phone, log onto an online meeting or show up for the interview. Planning for success involves these "don't-miss" steps.

1. Research

Learn as much as you can before your initial conversation. Review the company's website, LinkedIn/social media profiles. Read industry trends. Study executive personas.

Also, make sure to reflect on similar companies. Some questions to consider include:

- What were their goals/objectives?
- What issues/challenges were they facing?
- What gaps existed between where they were today versus where they wanted to be?
- How has the current person in the same role you are being interviewed for helped them achieve their objectives? What results have they realized?

2. Establish a logical next step

Ask yourself, "What can I realistically hope to accomplish in my initial meeting?" You might say that you'd like to close the deal, but as you know, that's not going to happen.

Most sales today require multiple meetings with a variety of stakeholders. Interest needs to be piqued, business cases developed, competitors evaluated, buy-in achieved and much more.

The initial meeting is really about creating curiosity—enough so that the company wants to investigate more ... or include others in a follow-up conversation... or do some sort of analysis.

That's the logical next step. Doing just this is enough.

But then the question becomes, "What creates curiosity?"

3. Share something interesting

One of the best ways to pique the company's interest in you is to give a real-life example of a time you did something similar to solve the same kinds of issues they are having:

- Holds a similar job (COO), working in a similar industry (Manufacturing) and at a similar-sized company (\$500 million revenue).
- Was trying to achieve similar objectives.
- Struggled with some of the same issues/challenges.
- Chose to hire you to solve the issue.

Make the company the hero of the story. As a result of choosing to hire the company achieved these results ... then share them.

Remember, you are the solution/the product/a brand/a tool. I don't mean to sound impersonal but it's good to remain in the place of understanding that people are going to hire you because of what it will do for them and impact their company. And that's why you showcase a company who achieved their desired results by hiring you.

Or ... you could share emerging trends or research that impact the company you are interviewing with and is relevant to the value points you offer.

4. Plan your questions

Questions are key to your ultimate success. They demonstrate interest and concern. Prospects feel you're more knowledgeable when you ask good questions.

Good questions also provide insights into the company's needs and their hiring process. Finally, they're the basis for developing strong relationships.

Plan at least ten questions ahead of time. Write them down so you don't forget to ask them.

Let the company interviewing you know that you've invested time preparing for this meeting and that you have questions to ask that will help them determine if your skills may "make sense" for their company.

YES .. This Takes a Lot of Work

It's not FAST. Sometimes it's painfully slow.

In fact, it might be so uncomfortable for you that you're tempted to skip some or all these steps. But you must realize that the companies hiring process can't be short-circuited.

If you go too fast, problems are guaranteed to arise, causing your opportunity to evaporate into thin air.

If that happens, you'll need to find new interview opportunities. And that takes effort too. All those phone calls and emails you need to send. Over and over. Hoping to get another interview.

Executive interviews should employ the art of delayed gratification. The slower you move, the faster the decision. Why? Because you're doing things right.