

INTERVIEW TIPS: HOW TO ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT LACK OF INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

What do you say if you get this question in an interview: “Gee, (your name), I’m concerned about your lack of experience in the (blank) industry”. If you retort with “Yeah but...” and “You don’t understand...” followed by “Let me prove you wrong.” I doubt you will get the job.

No one has ever gotten hired by proving the interviewer wrong. I think we all understand that intellectually, but in the heat of the moment, with a dream job on the line, we don’t always think rationally, if at all. Even the best of us can get defensive when challenged. It’s part of our self-preservation mechanism as human beings. But, it has no place in an interview, not if you want to be hired.

Important Points:

1. Lack of experience is rarely a deal breaker for landing a position. If that is the reason used for getting passed over, its often a veil for another concern that the interviewer may be reticent to divulge.
2. How you respond in the interview is a good indicator of how you’ll respond to peers or employees who question your lack of experience in a field they’ve been in all their lives.
3. Your interviewer is paying close attention to if you respond defensively to this or any other potential liability question.
4. There are other skills, etc. the employer values more in a candidate that more than compensate for the lack of industry experience.

Here’s an easy, three step way to respond to the raising of a perceived liability.

1. **Defuse the concern by seeming to agree with it.**

“I can understand why you might feel that way. If I were in your shoes, I might feel the same way.”

Your interviewer will be pleasantly surprised that you have tactfully agreed. Who is in control of the conversation now? You are!

2. **Now redirect the conversation.**

“...but am I correct in assuming that what you’re really looking for, is someone who can

come in and develop/implement _____?

Don't assume you know what the "Hot Button" is. Always verify. Don't say "If I'm correct..." - you could be wrong. Always ask, "Am I correct...?"

3. **Finally, get the "Buy- In."**

"If I can demonstrate that I've done that and can do that for you, would that lessen your concerns?"

Not, "Would that change your mind? That's too confrontational. Instead use "Would that lessen your concerns".

Close the deal with a story about similar accomplishments you have had: "let me tell you about what I was able to do for my last employer in that area."

Describe the situation in detail; share what action you took, and then end with the concrete results.

Using the above process helps you to respond, rather than react, and keep yourself, and the interviewer focused on the key "hot button" skills that mirror what they are looking for!