

## [Tell me about yourself](#)

By Terri Ferrara



The dreaded question at an interview, usually one of the first questions, is "Tell me about yourself." My clients want to know: How much does the interviewer want to know from one simple question? Do I keep my answer short? How much personal information should I include or should I only stay focused on my career? What key information is he or she looking for? I am a little nervous...how do I appear confident and at ease?

The interview can be such an unknown process and key factor for being hired!

Actually, 'Tell me about yourself' is a fantastic question to be asked since it can help steer some of the later questions that may be asked. It can be a wonderful vehicle to build rapport and, when answered well, will really help you be viewed favorably by the interviewer. Now, the converse is true too. If not answered well, it sets the stage for a lackluster interview and the interviewer, when underwhelmed this early in the process, may have already formed an opinion about you—that the fit is not there.

Bob Kuller, CEO of *Process Powered Consulting* wrote regarding the 'Tell me about yourself' question, "I am not looking for answers that can be found on a résumé or in a cover letter. I want a candidate to tell me what I do not know or cannot see from the résumé. I want to know what is exciting about you." Bob added, "If the candidate does not answer well, he or she is starting the interview from 50 feet under and that's a difficult place from which to recover."

Interviewers want to know what sets you apart from all the others. They want to like you and want you to answer this question well.

Suggestions:

- Keep your answer to a maximum of 3 minutes
- Start out sharing a brief sentence or two on your personal life
- Share your interests and what you love to do (with the position in mind)
- Share what is motivating you to seek a new career opportunity at this point in your life
- Include the big view of career highlights rather than the small stuff
- Incorporate **key** achievements, awards, certifications, and licenses
- Share why you have chosen to pursue their organization
- Close by asking "I'd love to hear more about what you need for this position. For instance, what do you consider the most pressing projects or issues I'd be tackling in the first 90 days on the job?" (Closing question by Susan Whitcomb, Careers Expert)
- Pick and choose from the above suggestions what works best for you
- Practice your answer out loud several times

Susan Whitcomb, author of [Interview Magic](#), gave a **key principle** to think through when preparing your answer. "First, sift everything you say through the relevance filter. Ask yourself, 'Is the information I'm sharing important to the interviewers? Will the information make them think more or less favorably of me?'"

"Whatever you talk about needs to be done with confidence and in a way that creates a bond," writes Shelly Goldman with *Goldman Group Advantage*. Shelly also shared, "Tonality and body language are important factors to be considered. Experts suggest that 93% of the reason people are hired has more to do with body language and tone than the actual words used. Words are important but **the way we deliver them is key.**"

To gain confidence, role play with others and then ask for their honest positive and constructive feedback. Read books on interviewing. Or, you may want to explore working with a Career Coach who is an expert in the interviewing process.

At Summit View Career Coaching, we offer expertise, coaching, and role-playing in preparation for an interview. For more information, email me at [terri@summitviewcareercoaching.com](mailto:terri@summitviewcareercoaching.com).

I'm passionate about *you enjoying your Monday as much as Friday afternoon*. Packages are offered on career exploration, job search strategy, strengths identification, career branding, networking, résumé & cover letter expertise, interview preparation and jump-starting a new position. For more information, go to my website at [www.summitviewcareercoaching.com](http://www.summitviewcareercoaching.com) or email me at [terri@summitviewcareercoaching.com](mailto:terri@summitviewcareercoaching.com).