

From the Heart...

...Life Skills for Today's Family

By Sharon L. Benedict MS, CLC



Career...what was your first job?

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Thinking back to that first job, was it paper delivery, babysitting, lawn mowing? More typically, we assume our first job was flipping burgers, or serving popcorn and coke at the movies. Yes, the paper delivery and babysitting may have been before you were 16, and the others once you got your driver's license.

Yet, all played very important roles in your career attitude, work behavior, and future career choices. George Bradt, Contributor for Forbes, Leadership section, *Top Executive Recruiters Agree There Are Only Three True Job Interview Questions* (April 27, 2011), reported that most top executives believe there are only three true job interview questions:

1. Can you do the job?
2. Will you love the job?
3. Can we tolerate working with you?

Bradt asks us to "Think back, every question you've ever posed to others or had asked of you in a job interview is a subset of a deeper in-depth follow-up to one of these three key questions. Each question potentially may be asked using different words, but every question, however it is phrased, is just a variation on one of these topics: Strengths, Motivation, and Fit."

The first may focus on technical skills but also includes leadership and interpersonal strengths. The second “will you love the job?” question doesn’t imply that you get paid because you work hard. It actually means you will work hard because you enjoy their environment and challenges associated with the work.

The third questions seems to be somewhat edgy. “*Can we tolerate working with you?*” may not make you feel very comfortable by the time you get this one. The value of this question points to the essential ingredient of being a “cultural fit” within the organization. Kevin Kelly, CEO, Heidrick & Struggles offers us insight into what a “cultural fit” means. “. . .The perception is that when (senior leaders) come into the firm, a totally new environment, they know everything. And they could do little things such as send emails in a voicemail culture that tend to negatively snowball over time. . . 40 percent of senior executives leave organizations or are fired or pushed out within 18 months. It’s not because they’re dumb; it’s because a lot of times culturally they may not fit in with the organization or it’s not clearly articulated to them as they joined.”

For the interviewer, he or she needs to be clear on what “strengths, motivational and fit insights” to look for before going into the interviews. Now that you have an idea of what the key questions are when sitting in front of your potential boss, how about some prep work to get to that point?

If you are the interviewee, be prepared to give examples of your strengths specifically related to the job and/or problem/challenge posed by the interviewer that he expects you to solve. Research the organization prior to interview—their

organizational structure, management team, financials, whatever is pertinent to you getting the job and demonstrating you did your own homework.

Know what motivates you about this particular organization and how you fit. Keep in mind any possible differences between “. . . your own preferences and the organization’s Behaviors, Relationships, Attitudes, Values, and Environment (BRAVE). But remember that interviews are exercises in solution selling. They are not about you.”

You are the one to make the problem solving connection—between the problem and you being the solution and the best fit for their organizational culture. One important caution is don’t try to be someone you are not, either by personality, skills, and life goal motivations. Be true to who you are but also be enthusiastically, genuinely willing to work together to achieve the organization’s mission and goals.

I encourage you to read Bradt’s full article and the many linked materials on what “onboarding” and other valuable tips needed after you land that job (<http://www.forbes.com/sites/georgebradt/2011/04/27/top-executive-recruiters-agree-there-are-only-three-key-job-interview-questions/>). No matter whether you are being interviewed to flip burgers or be the top manager of a Fortune 500 company, your response to these three questions will hopefully demonstrate you can do the job, love it, and not only be “tolerated” but “thrive” as a leader and team player.

Sharon L. Benedict, MS, ACC, is a certified life wellness coach-consultant, specializing in life skills, wellness, and creative arts development for individuals, businesses and organizations. She welcomes your questions and comments and can be contacted at seekreachachieve@gvtc.com.

From the Heart. . .

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Career...job hunting hurdles

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What have been your job hunting experiences? Did you get the job fast on referral, or did you spend months pumping the physical and cyber pavements even before you got a bite? And what of all the job hunting tips out there . . . did they seem to help prepare you to shine?

Not all job hunting tips and techniques are equal. Some will help you strike it rich with a job. Others may just leave you discouraged after so many tries through the months, maybe even years coping with this still struggling economic climate.

Yet, there are some basics that need to be considered in any job prospect. Troy Johnson, Tory Johnson, CEO of Women For Hire, and Workplace Contributor for ABC's "Good Morning America," offers some of those basics in *Avoid These Mistakes and Impress Hiring Manager* (Aug 3, 2010). First, landing the interview can be tough in itself. Once that's done, Johnson advises us not to *Overwhelm the Interviewer*. Bringing too much information to the interview can give the impression you are ready to "take over the place." This is particularly risky for older, more experienced applicants when you are applying for lower level position.

Another common mistake is you are *Unable to answer questions about the past and future*. Ted Sakis, operations director, InMotion Hosting, finds that many people can't answer, "What have you been doing since you lost your job?" nor can they explain their five-year plan." This is particularly important when you have been out of work for some time. Johnson says to avoid statements like "Looking for a job" or "Cruising the Caribbean." You may find it works much better if you say you have been volunteering while seeking work, taking a class to advance your skills. And your five-year plan ". . . should relate to the work you're pursuing."

Another pointer to avoid is *Exhibiting over-confidence*. "Dan Black, America's director of campus recruiting at Ernst & Young, says a great resume and terrific experience doesn't mean much if the candidate is smug or overly cocky in the interview. He also cautions against mentioning competitive offers from another company during a first interview since it's too early to negotiate."

There are many job applicants who *Fail to ask smart questions*. This mistake emphasizes that "Interviewing is a sales process—you're selling yourself. The best sales people ask questions, and interviewees should too."

Applicants often find themselves *Overlooking the details*. Among many so-called pet peeves, applicant must not show up late or say you got lost. Do a test run before the day of the interview. Another is not bringing your resume and say you emailed it to the interviewer. And never confuse one company with a competitor.

During this tough economic times, *Revealing desperation* is one thing to definitely avoid. “A skilled interviewer can get you to let your hair down and reveal stuff that you shouldn't talk about. Financial woes and trouble finding work have no place in the interview process. Keep your personal situation private.”

Johnson advise against *Behaving informally*. “Believe it or not, some candidates get way too informal—offering bear hugs, fist pumps, or chest bumps after the interview. Others will ask the interviewer to grab drinks after work or become friends on Facebook. You want to connect professionally, but not nearly as informally as these actions suggest.”

Criticizing former employers should always be avoided. “Nothing good will come of it because recruiters wonder if you're criticizing the old boss, might you do the same about them?”

When stepping into the interviewer office, be careful you don't slip up by *Mistreating the receptionist*. In most situations, all the staff “. . . have a say in the process, so treat everyone with great respect. Assume you're being watched and judged from the moment you enter the offices.”

Another last but not least important is to say thank you. *Skipping the thanks* for the interview with a thank you note “. . . is just as bad as sending one with typos or mistakes. Don't be generic; customize the note to reflect the conversation and to share additional details that build on the discussion.”

Which interviewing mistakes have you found yourself doing? I know for myself, overwhelming the interviewer and becoming nervous when asked about a gap in my resume have stumped me in years past. No matter how young or

senior you may be, these basics hold true for us all. In the next article, we are going to venture into the entrepreneur's world. Are you thinking of starting your own business? Three foundation basics are needed from the very start of that idea—Courage, Commitment, and Cash.

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Career...are you entrepreneurial?

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Thinking of starting your own business and venturing into the entrepreneur's world? Three foundation basics are needed from the very start of that idea—Courage, Commitment, and Cash.

The very definition of entrepreneur is “the owner or manager of a business enterprise who, by risk and initiative, attempts to make profits.” In other words, this is a person who is willing to help launch a new venture or enterprise, and accept full responsibility for the outcome.

Are you ready for the ups and down of your courage, commitment, and cash flow? If you are, here are a few more basics to get close to. First, an entrepreneur is a leader and demonstrates leadership qualities by selecting the right help or management staff. Management skill and strong team building abilities are essential for successful entrepreneurs. So, know your own personality style and those you may be working with. I recommend DISC personality system. Then ask any prospective staff person to also take a DISC.

Second, are you ready to innovate and have a liking for risk-taking. Some of the key characteristics of an entrepreneur is highly creative, innovative, introduces new technologies, increases efficiency and productivity, and

generates new products or services. Entrepreneurs are catalysts for economic change with the ability to imagine new solutions through finding opportunities that bring profit or rewards.

Third, does the physical, financial, relational environments you currently have support starting a new business and the entrepreneurship required? If not, what changes need to happen to get a good start?

Fourth, do you know there are different types of entrepreneurs? According to Harvard Business Publishing interview with John Elkington, "Key Traits of Social Entrepreneurs," there are Social Entrepreneurs who are "...motivated by a desire to help, improve and transform social, environmental, educational and economic conditions. Key traits and characteristics of highly effective social entrepreneurs include ambition and a lack of acceptance of the status quo or accepting the world 'as it is'."

A Serial Entrepreneur always comes up with new ideas and starts new businesses. This entrepreneur has a higher propensity for risk, innovation and achievement. Vivek Wadhwa, in "Is entrepreneurship just about the exit?" (<http://techcrunch.com/2010/06/12/is-entrepreneurship-just-about-the-exit/>), a Lifestyle Entrepreneur "...places passion before profit when launching a business in order to combine personal interests and talent with the ability to earn a living. Many entrepreneurs may be primarily motivated by the intention to make their business profitable in order to sell to shareholders. In contrast, a lifestyle entrepreneur intentionally chooses a business model intended to develop and grow their business in order to make a long-term, sustainable and viable living

working in a field where they have a particular interest, passion, talent, knowledge or high degree of expertise.” These entrepreneurs are often self-employed to keep more control or start a business from a hobby they love.

Which one do you think you are? No matter how you see yourself, be sure to get the lay of the land in whatever industry you are entering. Doing your homework, taking your time, and knowing the right time to step out are key components for any aspiring entrepreneur. And by all means make sure you love doing whatever you are investing your life, courage, commitment, and cash into.

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Career/Money Matters . . . keeping the tough times positive

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My daughter recently posted on her Facebook, "Oh Monday! This week I will work 53 hrs for the first time since I've moved to Calif. I'm tired just thinking about it. I have 5 different jobs...one of my new fellow employees asked...are you Jamaican? No...but I am trying to keep the attitude that this is normal; that it is a blessing; and that somehow it will enable me to keep the roof over my head...food in my belly, and keep the man off my back."

Does anyone relate here? I bet there is. And "keeping the man off my back" can mean just about anything, depending on how you see it. It could be those "credit collection callers," or a relationship you just broke off, or even the man you are still married too and tries to control all the purse strings (and doesn't want your input either).

None of this sounds like much fun does it? Ask any local small business owner how their business is doing. Most may say, "Just great" even when their business and life aren't. Who wants to have the word get around anyway? The word will eventually be so stretched out of reality that the owner will eventually end up hearing that he's going out of business when he is definitely not. Yet, for

those business owners who may be your best friend, they may confide in you that business and life aren't going so well. Your friend may even be thinking about closing up shop or moving to another city. Your friend loves living where he/she is but is struggling to make it all work.

How do you help your friend or that business owner so things will get better and they will stay in town? Sometimes, only a kind word such as, "I really love your store and your products. You always have just the right thing I was looking for." Or, you may just make their day by sharing, "Whenever I come into your store, you and your staff are always so kind and attentive. I wanted you to know how much I really appreciate the courtesy and your willingness to help me with my request or problem."

Have you done this lately for someone who just may need that kind of encouragement before they decide to close their doors? If not, how about today or sometime this week? Do you have any idea what a small business owner has to juggle to stay open? Here's just a few: Lease/mortgage on the building, utilities, staff wages, marketing/advertising, keeping inventory up-to-date and desirable to buyers, keeping shop and inventory organized, nice and clean shop and restrooms (didn't think I would mention this did you? Clean restrooms happen to be very important to customers and clients!).

Then let's add all the other money matters such as yearend FIT taxes, business property inventory taxes, state sales tax, use tax. Then include the cost of an attorney and CPA to make sense of it all for the business owners' benefit.

So, when you walk into that favorite shop and are greeted with a smile and excellent service, it just might tell you that whoever owns that business already knows how to stay positive and help their staff do the same. When you compliment them, also ask the owner what's their secret for keeping such a positive attitude about their business and life. Their gems just may be a life-changer for yourself as well. And if your favorite shop is struggling, ask how you can help and become a life-changer for your discouraged business owner and friend.

For those who are working more than 50 hours a week like my daughter, I encourage you to adopt her attitude ". . . that this is normal; that it is a blessing; and that somehow it will enable me to keep the roof over my head...food in my belly, and keep the man off my back." May I add . . . "make all the difference in getting through tough times to better times ahead." You just may start singing that classic Jamaican song (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02zOk_LOCKY), "Don't worry, Be Happy!"

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Money . . . when it's just not there

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All of us look at our bank account, and at times give out a plaintive sigh. Yet, there is a world of difference between the person who has "some" money and those who definitely have an empty bank account. No matter which one reflects your situation, the negatives in life seem to always increase and even loom large on our horizons.

Remember the song, *Money, Money, Money makes the world go around?* Yes, in so many ways and unable to count how many, this is true. But when you really get down to the basics, is it really the top world turner? Yes, we all have to eat and have a roof over our heads; and that takes money. Think about what you might consider the real world turner.

Check out what my daughter again recently posted on her Facebook. "some days....I like to daydream about what it would feel like to have someone to love on...ya know those sweet nothings I hold inside to myself...the hands that long to heal and cook and love for two...let the rhythm of love move you today. Express it somehow...to someone. Whether it's the little ole lady crossing the street or your best friend. The best cure for loneliness is to give. Everyone needs a little more love in their lives. Don't' be stingy with your love!"

Maybe, just maybe, this might be the real deal that keeps the world going around? Who do you know that may be struggling with the money just not being there? There is one thing for sure. Even if you can't hand them some money, you can offer them a loving hand and heart in some way that may very well turn their life and world around.

Slow down this week enough to see and really hear what is happening around you in your neighbor's world, or even that co-worker next to you. And don't leave a simple "I feel your pain" comment. Search your heart for the right words and actions to forever change their thoughts that continually say they are all alone and lonely; and no one really understands what's going on. You don't even have to dig for the details. They may not want to give them to you anyway. But you know you can feel their struggle just by being in the same room with them.

There's your opportunity to do what my daughter encourages us to do. To step into that "rhythm" start with getting to know that person next to you. Be willing to understand their point of view, their struggle...even if they can't see all the blessings around them at the moment. Just be that genuine listener who isn't there to "fix them."

You are there to discover just the right words and action to offer them. You will then share in their discovery as they begin to see the bigger picture of those blessings in their lives that are actually sustaining them. And only moments ago, they couldn't get past "I don't know where I'm going to get the money to live on, pay my bills, and feed my kids."

Remember, there is always someone near you that is having it tougher than you. So, whether you lack some money or don't have any in the bank at all, look at what you do have right in front of you. Then reach out and see what you both discover together.

Part of sharing that "rhythm of love" is being prepared to possibly work hard together to nurture that relationship, and help your friend's situation as well as your own. Remember that other song, made famous by John Lennon, that told us "all you need is love?" While it's a memorable song, it isn't the whole picture, just as money isn't the whole picture. Remember Gone with the Wind? Well, Scarlett and Rhett were never quite in sync, were they? We all have habits that can grate on any relationship.

So, with respect and humility you can encourage each other to grow. This means appreciating and accepting each other for the wonderful, unique human beings you both are. This is the only way genuine love and lasting relationships flourish as you embrace new adventures together.

You may not have much money, even an empty bank account; but together look around you. What do you have right in front of you? . . . your family, friends, skills yet to be set in motion, possessions to sell that you never really used anyway, and a whole list of new possibilities on the horizon just for you and that one standing in front of you.

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