

## Creating Conversation in the Interview Dean Tracy

I am often accused, and guilty, of talking too much. In fact, my wife will tell people that I can call a wrong number and talk for 20 minutes! In business, however, a key element to success is knowing when to talk and when to keep quiet.

In my article [“You’ve Accepted the Offer - Now What?”](#), I advise readers to “Keep your mouth closed and your ears open during your first 30 days of employment.” The same is true during the interview process. It’s important that you allow the hiring manager or recruiter an opportunity to speak, and to ask you questions while discussing your qualifications for the job.

However, as with everything in business, it’s a fine line. The biggest mistake that a candidate can make during the interview process, is to address questions with one-word answers, such as “yes,” “no” or “perhaps.” I have actually seen this happen, and have been told by hiring managers that this is considered, by most, to be the beginning of the end for the candidate in the selection process.

As you interview, you must remember another of the main messages I like to emphasize -- “Lack of conversation reflects lack of interest.” Having said this, I have listed four simple questions below for you to ask in your interview. These questions are designed to prompt meaningful conversation in the interview while also allowing you to craft your answers in a way that sets you up as the strongest candidate of choice.

I encourage you to try these four questions in your next interview:

- 1. Why is this position available?**  
You want to know if this is a new position or if it is one that is being backfilled due to someone leaving. The way they answer this question will open the opportunity for you to learn more about the culture of the company. If it’s described as a new position, this suggests that the company is growing. If this is a vacant position due to a backfill, it will be a great way to learn why the other person is no longer in this role. This prepares you to properly answer the follow-up questions that they may have.
- 2. What are you looking for in a candidate in order for them to be successful in this role?**  
You want to know what the hiring manager’s expectations are for the person in this position. This will highlight the areas that are most important to the hiring manager in meeting their goals.
- 3. What are your “pain points” and what keeps you awake at night?**  
The hiring manager or recruiter will use this as an opportunity to share how busy they are and how much has to get done before month-end. This offers a perfect opportunity for you to address ways that you can confront these difficulties while using real examples of how you may have dealt with this type of specific challenge in the past.
- 4. Do you see any flags that would prevent me from being the perfect candidate for this position?**  
This is where you get to “close the deal.” By this point in the interview, you

both have had an opportunity to sense whether or not this is a match, given the dialogue and based upon the questions above. It is at this point in the interview where they may share their concerns, or they will tell you that you are a solid candidate. If they share any concerns, it gives you an opportunity that you may not have had otherwise to address these concerns with them, and put their mind at rest regarding your capabilities.

It's important that you carefully craft your replies to include examples of your success in previous roles. A good response will include a previous "Problem / Action / Result" that you may have experienced professionally in any of your recent positions. Tying your past experience to the current expectations will prove beneficial in highlighting your skills and capabilities.

Keep in mind that the hiring manager's answers to these questions will also reflect their individual degree of integrity. If they begin to talk poorly of the person that is no longer in this role or of the company as an enterprise, then you have a pretty good idea of what type of boss this person may be as they manage you and your tasks.

Of course, you will need to add your own flavor to these questions based upon your gut instinct, but, if asked properly, these questions may make the difference in receiving an invitation for another round of meetings.

Good luck and go get'em!

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