



## **Don't Seek to Get Hired, Seek to Solve Problems**

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CEO's, supervisors and owners of businesses don't want or need another employee. The recession has made money tight and many employers want to reduce their staffs rather than add to them. However, every single owner, supervisor and manager desperately needs people to help solve their daily problems. If you can help a business owner solve problems by improving efficiency and profitability, you will get hired, even if they have to let someone else go to make room for you. Learn to solve problems and people will stand in line to hire you.

Start by looking at the top three to four companies within the industry you are passionate about, have a deep set of skills in, or is in your local area. Ask yourself, “What do I have to offer these companies,” and “What problem's do they have that aren't being successfully solved?”

Next, talk with customers, suppliers, former customers and the general public and find out what these companies need to do to set themselves apart from their competitors and become great. Ask people to provide you with 1-3 examples of what they like and dislike about these companies. Your questions may look something like these:

- How could company X, Y and Z provide better service or products to its customers?
- What product or service is company X, Y and Z providing exceedingly well?

- How is it that company X is able to provide this outstanding product or service over and above the other two?
- In what way's could company Y and Z quit dropping the ball and improve their service or product?
- Given these shortcomings, how could they gain your trust and business again or more often?
- What do the employees of company X, Y and Z think of their employer or specific management team?

When doing your research, try to find 3-4 successes and 3-4 areas for improvement. These are just example questions to get you started. It's best to create between 6-8 questions.

Your objective at this stage is to become *the person* with a deep understanding and knowledge about these companies. In essence, become the specialist in your chosen field and in your local region. Since you are not affiliated with any one company, but simply doing "market research," people are more likely to provide you with honest answers (be professional and 100% confidential. Tell the people you interview that you will not disclose names, just *themes*).

Once you start to compile the information you will see patterns, themes and trends. If you truly get involved and think about solving the needs of the consumer and work backwards to what the owners, supervisors and managers need to do to fill that need, you will find the *golden nuggets* of information that your future boss would love to know. Your research may unearth a better way to provide customer service, a unique problem to be solved, a niche to fill or a new way to market the business in this challenging economy. Once you have gathered your

information and highlighted the trends that your new prospective boss will salivate over, it is time to contact her or him.

Your true leverage at this stage is that you are separating yourself from the herd by *adding value* to the organization up front. You have proven yourself, as someone who can think and provide solutions to problems, can be proactive and is willing to work.

Your final step is to get the face-to-face interview and provide your nuggets of information.

Happy hunting.

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