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Job Search Techniques:

2009 has gotten off to a very rough beginning with nearly 600,000 people unfortunately losing their jobs nationally in January.

When a company is adding staff in this economic environment, they will have perhaps hundreds of people vying for that one opening and will be very selective. In other words, companies have many more candidate options today, and it won't take much to disqualify someone, due to the sheer volume of applicants.

If you are one of the fortunate people to have an upcoming interview, now, more than ever, you must fine tune your interviewing skills, dress appropriately, rehearse and anticipate questions and answers. Maximizing your interview opportunity is critical, and being well prepared, could be the deciding factor in whether or not you land your next opportunity.

In addition to providing well thought out answers to questions relating to past employment, it is essential to allow the potential employer to assess all aspects of who you are. I'm not suggesting you put on an "Academy Awards performance", however, I am suggesting you alter your "presentation" permanently, utilizing this insight. If you pretend to be someone you're not, it will eventually catch up and perhaps cost you the position.

Below is common question we answer regularly:

Q. During an interview, what is the best way to handle salary related questions and how do I explain my relationship with my former employer, which ended badly? V. Weber-Coral Springs

A. Mainly, during interviews or even the offer stage, many people don't want to sell themselves too short by asking for or accepting less compensation, but at the same time, don't want to take themselves out of consideration either by asking for excessive compensation.

The best way to handle an interview question related to salary, especially if your compensation was higher than they are offering, is to be honest. If you're not, and they ask you to verify your previous compensation, you may have cost yourself that position.

May I suggest this response: "While employed at my previous company, my compensation was broken down into base salary and a performance related bonus. While I understand your position may not offer that level of compensation currently, if given the opportunity, I would be willing to showcase my skills and abilities and perhaps discuss an alternative structure in the near future". This type of response indicates your sensitivity to the current economic times and the confidence you have in your ability to prove and earn your worth.

The second part of your question, explaining your unfortunate departure from your previous firm, will require more diplomacy. If asked to explain in more detail, why you left, you again want to be honest, but **do not trash the company or supervisor, even if**

you'd like to! I would keep the answers rather generic, however, if they continue to probe deeper into your working relationship with your supervisor, **may I suggest:** "I left my previous company due mainly to slower sales. While I respect my previous manager, I felt that my professional goals were not aligned with the direction of the company. As we continue to move forward along the interviewing process, I assure you, my references can attest to my superior work ethic and team focused approach".

The common theme in both answers is honesty and confidence. Good interviewers can usually detect when someone is not telling the truth, or pretending to be someone that they're not. If you come across as someone with high integrity, competent, hard working and with transferable job skills, most perspective employers will consider you a viable candidate for their position.

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