

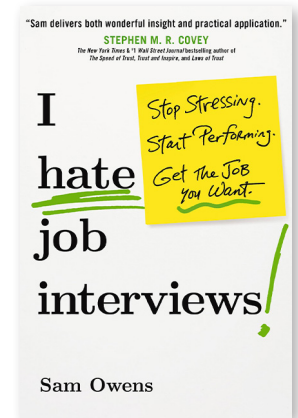


Executive Book Summaries[®]

I Hate Job Interviews

Stop Stressing. Start Performing. Get the Job You Want.

by **Sam Owens**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Interviewing is not easy. Getting competitive jobs requires going beyond surface-level interview tricks and diving deep into the mechanics of answering questions. In *I Hate Job Interviews: Stop Stressing. Start Performing. Get The Job You Want*, you will learn how to answer any question that can be thrown at you, from introductory to behavioral to scenario to illegal to just plain wacky. You'll first learn what to do before the interview: how to structure your preparation, how to build your confidence, how to get the right information, how to position yourself for the job, and how to most effectively practice. Then you'll be taken through the nitty gritty of how to answer any question that can come your way.

The focus of this book is solely on answering job interview questions because the job interview is the most consequential part of your job search. Other items, such as résumés, are of secondary importance and can be learned rather quickly. But not the job interview. No one can show up and do it for you, so it should command most of your time and attention. After reading this book, you will love job interviews, and you'll love them so much that you can't wait for your next one because you are a well-oiled job interview machine. You will feel deep in your bones that you can get any job you want, knowing you have mastered a skill that will serve you well for the rest of your career.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Replace negative interview myths with empowering truths.
- Apply practical techniques to prepare thoroughly for interviews
- Embrace discomfort as an important part of the interview process.
- Learn effective research, practice, and positioning for job interviews.

Convince Your Harshest Critic. Believing in Yourself Changes Everything.

If you want your interviewer to believe in you, you must first believe in yourself. You must know deep in your bones that you are an excellent candidate and that you will do a fantastic job once hired. Confidence changes everything.

The way to feel confident that you are an excellent candidate is to be an excellent candidate, and the way to be an excellent candidate is to prepare more than anyone else.

Embrace these three principles that will build your confidence and serve as your preparation foundation for the rest of this book:

1. Take out your mental trash.
2. Embrace the suck.
3. Commit to ten hours.

Take out your mental trash.

You can't feed your mind negative thoughts and expect to build interview confidence. Some of these bad interview thoughts—BITs:

BIT one: Some people are natural-born job interviewers and others aren't.

Truth: Job interviewing is a learned skill, not a born trait.

BIT two: Job interviewing is only for extroverts. Introverts have a disadvantage.

Truth: Job interviewing success is for those who want it bad enough.

BIT three: I wasn't qualified for the job, and that's why I didn't get it. It had nothing to do with how I interviewed.

Truth: You are qualified. You were selected to interview after they looked at your résumé and decided you were qualified. The truth is that you likely didn't get the job because you didn't interview well enough.

BIT four: Most interviewers make up their minds in the first five minutes of the interview, so I don't need to prepare for the latter part of the interview.

Truth: A 2015 study lays this myth to rest. Research from The Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychol-

ogy showed that, in fact, 30 percent of interviewers make up their minds within the first five minutes of the interview, 52 percent make up their minds between five and fifteen minutes, and the rest make up their minds after that.

BIT five: The people who will interview me are experts at job interviewing

Truth: Hiring managers are usually not formally trained, and many have very little experience

BIT six: The best thing I could do is be myself

Truth: What does "be yourself" mean, anyway? Yes, be yourself—but be your best prepared self.

BIT seven: I don't know what questions I will be asked beforehand, so there's really no way to prepare.

Truth: Smart candidates have a really good idea of the question types they will be asked.

BIT eight: I'm not even sure if I want this job, so it's not worth my time to prepare for the interview.

Truth: Worry about that after you have a job offer.

Embrace the Suck

That is the difference between a great interviewee and everyone else. The great ones lean into the pain of their incompetence. They don't let doubt or insecurity or anything else derail them from doing what it takes to gain mastery. Whatever part of interview preparation sucks the most for you, if you discipline yourself and embrace the suck you can become excellent at it. And that excellence and enjoyment will give you the secret weapon of confidence in your interview.

Commit to Ten Hours

Nailing the interview is the accomplishment that makes all other career accomplishments possible. Is it possible to master interviewing in only ten hours? Absolutely. Here's how you should structure your time:

Research: three hours.

You need strong foundational knowledge of the company and position prior to going into the interview

Formulation: three hours.

In the formulation phase, you sit down with the job descrip-

It's practice that allows you to flow freely and allows you to improvise comfortably when needed.

tion, apply notes from your research, and craft your responses. You start by developing seven to ten power examples: specific instances in your life that demonstrate you are perfect for the job.

Practice: four hours.

This is the part of preparation where most people give up—practicing your responses out loud for four hours. It's practice that allows responses to flow freely and allows you to improvise comfortably when needed

Get Inside Information. Gaining an Easy Advantage.

Job interviewing is not like stock trading. When preparing for a job interview, getting information from those familiar with the company is not illegal. It's not even unethical. In fact, if done the right way, it's encouraged! It's a common part of job interview preparation that can not only help you prepare but also impress those at your target company.

You should spend most of your two hours of preparation talking to people instead of reading about the company online.

Never cold-call unless you absolutely have to. Use your network and your creativity to get a warm introduction.

When conducting an informational interview, make it REAL.

- Research: read about the company and the person as you formulate your questions.
- Express sincere appreciation by thanking your new friend and mentor.
- Ask relevant questions that you are genuinely interested in, that pertain to the job description, and that your contact is uniquely qualified to answer.
- Listen actively; make the conversation enjoyable and productive by validating responses and reading the room.

Never leave the conversation without asking, "Is there anyone else you can think of whom I should speak with?"

Craft Power Examples. Positioning Yourself for the Job.

Positioning should play a critical role in your next job interview. As part of your preparation, you must practice positioning yourself by carefully studying the job description, developing your power examples, and planning how you overcome gaps in your skills and experiences.

You start the positioning process by studying the job description and identifying the skills and experiences required for the job, paying special attention to the first three to five skills or experiences listed.

Next, you create at least three power examples for each skill you identify. Power examples are instances where you demonstrated those skills.

Strong power examples:

- are relevant to the job description; and
- are tangible and specific.

In cases where your experience isn't a direct match with the required skills, bridge your skills by taking seemingly unrelated experiences and making them applicable to the job description.

Practice With Humans. Accelerating Your Performance.

The best way to master job interviewing is to do it. The discomfort and frustration wrought by practicing job interviews is exactly what you need to rapidly improve. It's often not enough to have a "good" interview. To secure the offer, you have to have a better interview than everyone else.

Practice is the secret weapon to being better than your competition because your competition doesn't want to practice.

Your four hours of practice should include:

- A read-through where you take your written response structure and verbalize it to see how it sounds.

- An “off-book” phase where you memorize your written responses.
- A dress rehearsal where you simulate the real interview by
 1. Getting an interviewer who will take it seriously;
 2. Not breaking character;
 3. Holding feedback until the end;
 4. Getting honest, candid feedback;
 5. Doing two mock interviews (but no less than one)
 6. Allowing your interviewer to develop questions.

Start with Momentum. Owing the First Question.

Starting the interview off strong means reframing “Tell me about yourself” to “Tell me about why you are the perfect fit for this job?” Your opportunity to start telling them why you are the best candidate for the job comes right at the beginning of the interview. Why wait? Your response to the first question is your chance to spoon-feed them exactly what they are looking for. If you do this well, you will create what all candidates wish for in a job interview: momentum. Interview momentum is an invisible but powerful force.

Answer the first question by persuading without being pushy; express gratitude, use facts instead of claims, respect a person’s right to disagree, radiate positivity.

Your opening statement should convey that you have three things:

- Skills: the experiences you walk them through should be easy to understand and related to the job description.
- Results: highlight a positive result you achieved in each experience—business results, promotions, and an increase in responsibility all can pass as results at this stage.
- Interest: give unique reasons for why you are so interested in this company and role.

Tell Compelling Stories. Mastering Behavioral Questions.

Behavioral questions ask you to tell stories because stories are better than data, principles, or platitudes. Our brains

are wired for stories. When we hear a good story, we learn something new, but more important, we feel emotion. A story that inspires emotion solidifies the information in our minds and makes it memorable.

Show, don’t tell, by creating specific stories demonstrating your skills to do the job.

Create five to seven power stories based on the skills the employer wants. Don’t try to create a unique story for every possible behavioral question.

When telling stories, use the SPAR model:

- Situation: make it brief and related to the story.
- Problem: create tension, so the interviewer wants to keep listening.
- Action: explain what you uniquely did to solve the problem by using the “rule of three.”
- Result: tie it in a bow.

Use Simple Frameworks. Nailing Scenario Questions.

Scenario interview questions, also known as hypothetical, situational, or case questions, are open-ended questions that require you to formulate answers in real time, based on a real-world scenario.

Some examples are:

- How would you approach your first ninety days on this job?
- What areas of opportunity do you see for our business?
- How would you go about making an upset customer happy?
- How would you compete against our business if you were our competitor?
- Which of our competitors is doing the best job in the market and why?
- If you were offered this position, how would you go about building relationships with key players in this office?
- What would your approach be for building our social media presence?
- Tell me what you think about this piece of advertising. How would you make it better?

As you explore paths, not only will your opinion materialize, but you will also have developed sound logic for it.

- What would you do if you were given an assignment with an unreasonable timeline?

They are among the hardest interview questions to answer because:

- There are no right or wrong answers.
- They are open-ended and ambiguous.
- The interviewer has an information advantage.
- They require you to think in the moment.

The way to answer them is with the Home Base model.

- Establish a home base: develop a core principle or idea that you will use as the foundation for your response. Your home base needs to be broad enough to have multiple paths going out from it.
- Explore paths: generate and discuss options that tie directly back to your home base. A path is a specific idea or action you can take that ties directly back to your home base. Exploring paths should be the longest part of your answer. You shouldn't just mention the path, you should discuss it, its pros and cons and implications. This is where you demonstrate your critical thinking skills.
- Pick a path or summarize your answer: wrap it up by offering your best choice with your reasoning. Taking the time to establish a home base and explore paths has a remarkable way of giving you a great final answer to a question that you didn't have at the outset. As you explore paths, not only will your opinion materialize, but you will also have developed sound logic for it.

Know Thyself. Answering Questions about You.

“You” questions are those that ask you to talk about yourself and how you think.

Companies ask “you” questions to gauge your self-awareness and cultural fit for the company. You don't need to develop new stories to answer these questions; you merely need to reframe the power stories you already have.

Put your stories into the SEE model:

- Statement: give a simple, concise answer to their question.
- Explanation: explain what you mean by giving more context.
- Example: provide an example that proves your point.

Avoid Land Mines. Handling Illegal, Negative, or Just Plain Wacky Questions.

In the job interview frontier, you may get asked the following types of questions:

- Trap questions, which are seemingly genuine questions that have the potential to take you to an overly negative place. Answer them by staying positive and discussing how you overcame a difficult situation.
- On-the-spot creativity questions, which require you to offer ideas in real time. Answer them by staying calm and playing along. Don't worry about having a perfect answer.
- Illegal questions, which force you to make a difficult decision to answer the question or call out the interviewers. Answer them by asking the purpose behind the question, asking how the question applies to the job description, telling them the question is illegal, or just answering the question. It depends on the context of the question.
- Wacky questions, which are strange enough to make you want to laugh out loud. Answer them by having fun and being confident. Recognize that there is no one “right answer” and that strange questions allow for strange answers.

Strike Last, Strike Hard. Asking Questions, Closing, and Following Up.

The end of the interview is your opportunity to finish strong.

If they ask you if you have any questions, avoid

- questions you ask only to look smart,
- questions that clearly put you and your career first,
- questions that require the interviewer to speculate,
- negative questions,
- questions that require long, complicated answers, and
- questions for which the interviewer likely doesn't know the answer.

Instead, ask engaging questions that

- genuinely interest you,
- are related to the job, and
- the interviewer is uniquely qualified to answer.

Never close the interview without resolving potential concerns. Resolve them by using “I understand” and “however.” Make your final pitch by telling them you love them. End with a committed timeline for when you can follow up.

Know Your Worth. Negotiating Your Best Offer.

When it comes to salary negotiations, focus outward instead of inward. Fairness, competence, and need don't matter. Points of difference, high switching costs, and market dynamics do matter.

The ten laws of compensations negotiations are:

1. The best time to negotiate your compensation is when you have an offer in writing.
2. Any agreements, promises, or statements not in writing should not be taken seriously.
3. It's best to be paid what you are worth, not a lot more or a lot less.
4. Compensation is about salary and so much more.
5. Companies are much more willing to negotiate if they believe you will accept the offer.
6. Don't underestimate the power of likability.
7. You likely won't burn bridges by negotiating hard.
8. Knowledge is power.

9. A rushed deal is usually a bad deal for one party or the other.

10. Your current salary can be a good negotiating point, or it can be a liability.

The four steps in salary negotiations are:

1. Identify what you want and what you can live with.
2. Prepare your justification.
3. Rehearse your response.
4. Deliver your response through a live conversation.

Learn, Build, and Contribute in Your New Job

You now have a new challenge: thriving in your new position. Thriving means starting your new role with momentum. It means enjoying what you are doing and the people with whom you are doing it, feeling that you are doing great, meaningful work. Most important, it means feeling that your future is bright at your new company. There are some important things you must do to start your new job off strong.

Manage Your Manager

Your relationship with your boss is the most important relationship you have at your new job. It's more important than your relationship with peers, direct reports, and people in other departments.

If your relationship with your boss is weak, your job will be draining, stressful, and downright miserable enough to make you consider leaving. But if it is strong, you will be on the path to winning at your company, resulting in more responsibility, more advancement, and more money in your pocket.

Build a Relationship With Everyone You Will Work With

Being new at the company gives you a perfect excuse to set up thirty-minute meetings with those you will be working with, including peers, superiors, potential mentors, and people in other departments. This is your free chance to establish personal connections. You don't want your first interaction with someone from another department to be when you need something from them.

Listen More Than You Speak

Too many new employees think that the way to succeed in a new position is to shake things up, to establish themselves by making a lot of changes. As a result, they make critical errors because they fail to properly assess the culture and background at the organization. And worse, they come off as arrogant, which is way worse than if you had just shut up in the first place.

Nail Your First Assignments

Listening and learning doesn't mean you can't find ways to contribute meaningfully. Whatever your first assignments are, no matter how trivial, do them with excellence.

Make Your Own Good Luck

“What role does luck play in career success?” Luck plays a significant role, but its power diminishes over time. Things tend to work out for those who keep trying.

Job interview success is not about luck or natural-born talent but about preparation, mindset, and confidence. The foundation of becoming an excellent candidate is first believing that you are one. This confidence doesn't come from merely telling yourself you're good enough—it's built through deliberate and disciplined preparation.

By clearing away negative thoughts, embracing the uncomfortable aspects of preparation, and committing to dedicated practice, you can approach interviews with the knowledge and poise necessary to stand out. This process isn't just about landing one job; it's about developing the lifelong skill of positioning yourself effectively in any career situation.

As you adopt these principles, you'll not only excel in interviews but also cultivate the resilience and expertise that will open doors to continued success throughout your professional journey. Ultimately, you're not just preparing for a job—you're shaping your future by building the confidence to navigate every career challenge ahead.



Sam Owens is the founder of Sam's Career Talk where he provides career coaching services and helps people land their dream jobs and thrive in them. He is also a chief marketing officer who has worked for three multi-billion-dollar companies in the consumer-packaged goods (CPG) industry, and now runs marketing for Freezing Point, the makers of Frazil.

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