

CHAPTER 4

The Job Interview Game

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*The hardest battle you are ever going to
have to fight is the battle to just be you.*

—Leo Buscaglia

Now that we have classified a typical staff, we can look at how and why the games begin. It should be no surprise when I say that it all starts with the job interview. But you may be surprised to learn how much of a role the job interview has in how your work life plays out, should you get hired.

As we uncover the job interview game, you will need to keep your knowledge about ideal candidates and A-Players in the back of your mind. This will play a key role in helping you understand what hiring managers are looking for in job seekers.

Once hired, the job interview is seen as little more than the means that got you in the door of a new company. Very few people give that

interview much thought once it passes and they are now in a new job. What's to think about? You needed a job and you found one. Problem solved? Not really.

While you may have been the one chosen for the job, it really is important to reflect on *why* you were chosen, as it will help you in the next chapter when we talk about all the games that go on in the workplace. Many issues you may be experiencing in your job today, which could be long past the job interview process, may stem from your initial interviews. So pay close attention and keep those thoughts in the back of your mind. In addition, I invite you to dredge up your memories of past job interviews and consider what you said in them as you continue to read this chapter.

Don't Say 'That'. Instead, Say 'This'.

Shortly after leaving Corporate America, I started providing one-on-one job search and career coaching services. As part of that role, I took clients through mock job interviews to help them prepare for their actual job interviews. These mock job interview experiences were so profound that they ended up playing a significant role in why I wrote this book.

It started out with clients giving me honest answers to my interview questions. That is supposed to be a good thing, right? But the more interviews I did, the more I realized it wasn't a good thing at all if they actually wanted to get hired. And that truth created a big predicament for me.

Here's how it worked: I asked a question and the client gave me an honest answer. But more often than not, I had to stop the interview and tell him or her that the answer given isn't what hiring managers want to hear. I said something like, "umm, yea...that's an honest answer but... don't say that. That answer will likely raise concern if you say it and here is why you need to say something more like *this*. Let's see if we can find a better answer." We then dig through all sorts of other past experiences looking for a better answer I think will pass the job interview game. But

when it comes to situational questions (when candidates have to describe how they handled a previous work scenario), I found that many people do not have the right experience, aptitude, or soft skills to provide a better answer than what they initially gave. Because of that, they don't have an honest *and* correct answer to use that will work.

With almost 15 years experience of hiring (and not hiring) thousands of people, I know exactly what it takes to get hired because I know exactly what hiring managers want to hear. It was difficult being in situations where the person I was trying to help didn't have an answer that worked. And this happened quite often. This was my big dilemma.

I didn't want to be the typical career coach who just told people to say the right things even though I knew their answers weren't going to work. But I didn't want them to use what doesn't work either! It certainly would be easier for me to tell them to say something that wasn't true but I believe that sets people up to fail. And in reality, it's not ethical either. For example, I once asked a client, who was applying for a higher-level managerial position, how long it took him to terminate his most difficult employee after he was fairly certain this was the action he needed to take. He told me it took him 18 months. He then said, "I know, but I felt bad for the guy because I knew it would cause him significant hardship." This is *not* the answer employers want to hear! But it's his true and honest answer.

When I drilled into his answer further (pretending I was his prospective employer) I asked him what kind of problems arose in those 18 months as a result of him keeping the wrong person in the job for so long. He listed off several but it concerned me most when he said the work wasn't being done correctly and customers were complaining. Will an employer bring in a new manager who admits keeping a poor performing employee for 18 months *knowing* he was upsetting his customers for that long? Of course not! Worse than that, the employee worked in a different location from where my client worked. My

client admitted he didn't put forth the effort to closely supervise this employee by visiting his location more often – even though he *knew* he was making mistakes and upsetting customers. If I had come across this answer, in a real job interview, the interview would have ended shortly after I heard it.

He's not the first one to do something along those lines with a problem employee and based upon his answers to other questions, I don't necessarily think he would be a terrible manager because of it. He seemed to have learned the lesson that came with it and so on a *personal* level, I felt I could somewhat give him the benefit of the doubt. But I definitely couldn't and wouldn't do that as a representative of an employer who has been charged with making a hiring decision. In fact, it wouldn't even cross my mind. The answer may have worked if he explained that the situation happened much earlier in his career (many, many years ago) and if he talked about the lessons he learned along with what his new approach has been since that time. Unfortunately, he said it had occurred within the past year.

I originally asked this client how long it took him to terminate his most difficult employee and he said it took 18 months. That's his honest answer. But it doesn't work, for the reasons I outlined, so he has to lie to land the job, correct?

This is an example of the conditioning we receive that contributes to the cause of the games in the corporate work culture. We have to lie because we learn that our way of handling situations is inappropriate or unacceptable. This makes us feel ashamed of ourselves and the more we discover about ourselves that doesn't fit the mold of the ideal candidate, the more we try to hide our true selves.

In Chapter One, I raised the issue of career advice and the role that typical advice plays in the games. We are practically taught to lie when we prepare for job interviews. I am shocked at the large amount of books and articles you can find out there that literally *give* you answers to job interview questions.

Providing job seekers with actual answers to job interview questions confuses me because answers need to be specific to each person and each job. Some advice is a bit more vague, however, and advises readers to find answers that fit within certain criteria. It's ideal if job seekers can do this but it's been my experience that most people can't make every answer fit within the criteria. So, what do job seekers do if they are reading such advice and realize they have no such answer to fit within the criteria? They make one up.

For example, consider this job interview question: "Give me an example of a time when you suggested a new idea, to your supervisor, and he or she didn't agree it should be implemented. How did you handle that?"

A career expert might suggest you clearly state the idea you had and talk about how you tried to sell it to your manager by detailing all the good points and proving there was a good return on investment. He or she may further advise you to make 'sure' you mention that while your idea wasn't implemented, the reason had nothing to do with you *personally*. The expert may also add, "make sure you also mention that you understand everything can't go your way and that's perfectly okay with you." Now, how can the author/speaker of such advice state, "make *sure* you mention..."? What if the ending to that phrase isn't true about your situation? The reason is simple. It's because mentioning those little tidbits makes the answer 'correct'.

Let's look at this question more closely. First of all, what if you never proposed a new idea? Many people haven't. I have heard many job seekers admit that in an interview! But immediately after reading such advice, average people will recognize that if they haven't done this, they better make something up. Nowhere does it say it's acceptable to answer, "oh, I have never done that but I'll gladly do it in the future if it's important to the job!"

The question is trying to discern if you are proactive and innovative. If the question is being asked, in the first place, then it's safe to assume

the company is looking for an individual with such qualities. If you want to get hired, you will need to provide *examples* of how you are proactive and innovative therefore you can't say you have never proposed a new idea—even if you haven't. The simple fact that the advice only tells you *how* to put your answer together makes people without an answer feel pretty small as it assumes everyone has done this. Why haven't you?

Secondly, it is advised you explain the reason your supervisor didn't implement your idea without making it about *you*. Perhaps a better reason is, "it just wasn't cost efficient to implement at the time because the company was experiencing financial difficulties". The hiring manager wants to hear that your idea was utterly fantastic but for *other* reasons it was tossed out. If you cite your supervisor showed you how ridiculous your idea was then hiring managers may believe you come up with ridiculous ideas. But supervisors *do* tell employees that their ideas can't possibly work leading them to believe their ideas are bad ones. What if you only suggested your ideas a handful of times and your supervisor just didn't like them? Many people have that story. You obviously can't say that, right? You may get to use your real story but you must *change* your supervisor's reason for tossing it aside.

Lastly, what if you did propose an idea but you weren't fully okay with it being tossed aside and you have no examples where you were *truly* okay with it? I know of many employees who are less than happy when their ideas get shot down. The truth is, most people want their ideas to be accepted and it doesn't feel good when they're not. Many people *pretend* to be okay with it, but are they truly okay?

This is how we are forced to lie. To answer some questions, we may have to make up an *entire* scenario in order to provide the correct answer. In others, we may be able to relate a true scenario but must change how we handled it or change how other people reacted to us. If we don't, we greatly increase our chances of not being hired.

Average unemployed clients spend many months *not* getting hired before they seek out a career expert for help. From there, if they hire a

knowledgeable coach, they typically learn exactly what to do and say to get a job. If they have honest answers that are also *correct*, that's a bonus. Otherwise, they learn how to craft their answers so they can provide the correct ones.

Many job seekers don't even seek out the assistance of a career coach. There is a lot of generalized information that can be found on websites, blogs, or in books. Anyone can seek out and find *some* information about what to say and do in a job interview.

When people follow this type of cookie cutter advice, and billions do, they may get hired by managers who subsequently put expectations on them that go beyond what they are capable of providing. They are expected to *be* the person they said they were in the job interview. This is why it's important to remember everything you said during your interview. How big was the gap between who you said you were and who you really are?

The means in which traditional career advice is provided is just the beginning of the games. It's the first time we become painfully aware that we have to say and do the *right* things in order to be hired. We realize we actually *can't* be honest about who we are and how we perform at work.

Sadly, this is only half the problem. Truthfully, career experts don't really have a *choice* but to provide advice in this manner. This is the other half of the problem.

I think it's wrong to advise job seekers to say and do the 'right' things, regardless of the truth, but at the same time, I honestly can't blame anyone who does it. You *do* have to know the right things to say and do to get a job so why shouldn't a career expert just tell you what those things are? I started out with those exact intentions and have followed this type of advice in the past.

This dilemma weighed heavily on me and it brought light to the real problem. No one seems to want to come out and directly say this but the truth is, the job interview process is completely flawed and

ineffective because most people cannot be truly honest about whom they really are in the interview if they would like to actually receive a job offer. Because of that, candidates do not go in to an interview as themselves. They go in as the person they learned they should be and say and do the things they know they should say and do. The truth randomly shows up in bits and pieces while being smoothed over by the 'correct' answers.

Let's face the reality of a job interview. If asked if you are willing to put in a lot of overtime at work, can you say you're a person who strives to balance work and family time therefore you restrict your work hours to only between 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM? Of course you can't! Employers do not want clock-watchers. They want people who will put in a lot of extra hours whenever necessary.

If asked if you're a person who is willing to help out in other areas of the company, what do you say if you prefer to stick with only your job responsibilities because otherwise you tend to feel overwhelmed? Try mentioning that in your interview and see how far you get! Employers want people who consistently go above and beyond their job responsibilities.

If your biggest weakness is that you procrastinate way too much or you are so disorganized that it takes you at least five minutes to locate any given item on your desk, you can't admit to either when asked, "what is your biggest weakness?" and expect to get a job offer!

In a job interview, millions of people in the world claim their biggest weakness is they push themselves too hard or are perfectionists. This is what many career experts said were good answers to that question. Another popular answer is explaining they have some difficulties balancing work and family responsibilities because they enjoy working long hours and it causes some problems at home. Because these canned answers are so overused nowadays, employers have come to expect them and do not consider them to be honest. Today, you can actually get tossed out of the job candidate pool for using such answers.

This shouldn't alarm you, however, because career experts already have found different, but acceptable, answers to provide to their clients. They may suggest you say your biggest weakness is in a skill you won't need for that particular job. For example, if you know you will never have to use Microsoft Project on the job, perhaps you should say your biggest weakness is you aren't all that proficient in that software. Is that really your *biggest* weakness? No!

Well, that technique can work with some hiring managers but not all. I was one who didn't let answers like that slide by unnoticed. When I was interviewing candidates, I would probe further and ask them to identify their biggest weakness in their *character*. Many were unprepared for this and failed miserably by being honest. I remember a candidate telling me he had difficulties controlling his anger, at times, and he even showed me an example of how he might react when he is upset. He then proceeded to stand up and, while leaning in toward me, he lightly pounded his fist into the table.

Yes, it's safe to assume I never saw that candidate again after the interview. That's what he got for being honest but I have worked with many people just like him. The only difference was, the ones I worked with never mentioned that weakness in the job interview therefore they got job offers. See how this works?

Many other candidates were very prepared for that follow-up question. They used the newer answers career experts have thrown out to the general public. An example may be, "I tend to become overly concerned when customers are not happy, especially if it's my fault. I feel bad when they complain and sometimes take it personally". Great answer! Employers like when you feel guilty or bad when customers are not happy because that means you care and will do a great job in making sure their customers are the happiest people on earth.

Many career experts also point out you should *always* mention how you have avidly worked on this 'weakness' and talk about how much you have improved in that area. Better yet, turn that weakness into one of your

strengths! Here is a good example. "I no longer feel hurt when customers get upset because I worked hard on reminding myself it's not my fault and it's my job to fix their problems. My passion to make customers happy is stronger now that I have taken myself out of the equation. It's very important to me that I do the right thing by the customer and I will do everything in my power to assure that my customers walk away feeling extremely satisfied". Wow! That's impressive...if it's true.

These situation and behavior based interview questions are the biggest areas in which candidates have to lie. I was once in a mock interview with a client who was seeking a customer support role. I said, "tell me about a time you went way above and beyond your normal job responsibilities to satisfy a customer who was upset." My client thinks for a moment and then calls a time out so she can explain her answer to me, "hmmm. I always call my customers back when I say I will and follow the situation through until it reaches a resolution. I am very polite and accommodating but I can't think of a time I did anything much different from that. There are standard procedures in place on how to handle customers. Should I just say that?"

A red flag shoots up in my head.

I then respond, "Well, unfortunately I don't think it's a good idea to actually say that". I then explained that when it comes to customers, employers want to hear amazing stories of how you went above and beyond what you were required to do to make sure a disgruntled customer walked away happy. After all, this is the reason they asked that question in the first place. Perhaps there are standard procedures in place but employees can go an extra mile to 'wow' a customer despite that. Candidates who have amazing customer service stories are the ones employers want to put in front of their own customers.

We then spent about 15 minutes or so searching into her past for an example of something that fits the bill. Unfortunately, we couldn't find anything that gave her an honest, but also *correct*, answer. I asked, "did you ever see if you could offer something to a customer for free

or maybe with a big discount? Did you ever reach out to a customer more often than necessary to make sure the customer felt confident the problem was being resolved? Did you ever try to help a customer with something related even though it was not necessarily your responsibility? Did you ever reach out to your co-workers, in other departments, to see if they can somehow speed up a process? Did you ever send out extra products? Extend a service?” I was really reaching for something—anything. Eventually, we skipped that question and I told the client to think more about it later as I felt there may be something perhaps she can't remember at the moment.

Several days later, my client sent me an email saying she had remembered a good customer service story from her past. She then related a situation from a retail job she had, over ten years ago, while still in college. She said a customer desperately wanted to find a product that was currently out of stock. She called around to about six different stores before she found one who had it. She then requested it be shipped to her store and the customer was very happy.

I wasn't thrilled with this new answer because calling around to other stores to find a product for a customer is expected. In addition, she had almost ten years of professional customer service experience and still no examples of how she provided stellar customer service in any of the jobs she had *since* she was in college. Using an example from a retail job, where she worked part time while in college, was less than ideal. She claims to love doing customer service work but she is just one of those people who does her job without much thought about how she can creatively improve her level of service. Employers like to call this quality 'thinking outside the box' and it's typically not a good idea to present yourself as a person who only thinks 'inside the box'—unless the job is a worker bee job.

I told my client that perhaps she could use that story (if she truly has no other), as it'd be better to use that than nothing at all. I told her it might help if she left out where the job was (if possible) and also forget

to mention she worked there over ten years ago. I also explained that her story wasn't that strong. Without *telling* her to lie, I gave her examples of strong customer service stories. I then suggested she keep her brain open as she might remember other good stories from her more recent past.

If you were that client and I told you your story wasn't really strong, but you had no others, what would you do?

I didn't want to tell her to make something up but honestly, how easy is it to do that? I intentionally gave her examples of what companies want to hear as a way of giving her ideas of what she needs to say. I couldn't come right out and *tell* her to make something up because I didn't feel right telling her to lie. So, I did the next best thing and just told her what her story needed to sound like and left it at that.

I don't want to lie either. There was a small part of me that wanted to tell her to make something up because that's *truly* what she needed to do to provide an acceptable answer to that question. This client did land a job within about one month of our coaching sessions. My gut feeling says she probably used my examples to create a different story to answer that very common question. That's what most people would do because otherwise, it becomes very difficult to *get* hired.

What other choice is there? The goal is to get a job, not some optional hobby. Why do we need a job? Well, we need a place to live, a car to drive, clothes to wear, and food to eat—for our family and for ourselves. People *need* to work.

Because most of us work to pay the bills, we simply can't afford to interview for years on end, without success, sticking to the principle, "I will be honest about myself." How long can people live without money coming in?

Confidence Killer

The job interview process, in and of itself, really hammers on our self-esteem. Going in to the interview, we already know we aren't good enough whether we consciously think that thought or not. Simply

knowing we can't speak truthfully about ourselves, and may even have to make stuff up, is enough evidence to make us feel inadequate. We know we have to go in to the interview and describe ourselves, and our past behavior, differently from the truth because the truth isn't good enough. But you lived that truth. The truth is who you have been and now you must hide it or change it in various ways just to meet the standards of getting a regular job? Isn't it the same as knowing *you* aren't good enough to work there as you are?

Since people don't tend to walk around saying, "I made up all these stories in my job interview and I think it went really well!" we feel we are all alone with this. We know we have to tell the truth about our factual data (name, dates of education, skills, degrees earned, past jobs we held, etc.) but we go on to fabricate or embellish some or much of everything else about us that makes us human. And the clincher is, we have to try very hard to show high levels of self-confidence at the *same time*.

How can we feel confident when explaining our work style and personality differently from what it truly is? How do we feel confident relating stories showing how we handled past work situations when the stories are embellished or not even true? We can't and we don't. The truth is, if we were confident all along, we'd likely have a lot more of the 'correct' answers. We don't have them in the first place partly because of our *lack* of confidence.

Once in the interview, we may describe ourselves as more upbeat and positive than we actually are in real life. We might describe ourselves more as an extrovert or an introvert depending on which personality type typically works best for the job at hand. We might beef up our work ethic and say we work 60 hours per week, on average, when we know it'd be a rare week to even hit 45 hours. We might talk about how much we enjoy inspiring others when we know we really don't like to socialize with others at work at all.

A hiring manager might ask, "how do you handle stress?" You might have a quick flashback to a few of the most recent meltdowns you had

when you were feeling completely overwhelmed. But the words coming out of your mouth say, "I work out several days a week and that helps a lot. If work becomes overwhelming, sometimes stepping outside and taking a few deep breaths is all I need to put me back on the right track. I am a pretty laid back person." You flash a smile, hoping it sounds real, and pray you are appearing strong and confident. You know you can't tell the truth here so you don't.

We understand what type of behavior is frowned upon in the workplace so we make sure we mention we never complain about company policies nor do we gossip with co-workers—even though we've done a whole lot of that in the past. We simply have to say the right things to assure we provide the correct answers. Hopefully, we know what they all are so we can spout them off effortlessly and without getting caught off guard. It's tough to come up with the correct answer, on the spot, without having previously heard what the correct answer should be.

It literally makes my head spin when clients ask me, "how should I answer this question?" Job interview questions aren't actually *difficult*—they just are asking you to provide information about yourself or something you have done in the past. Shouldn't "just tell the truth" be the appropriate response to that question? Why doesn't that response apply to job interviews?

You may not spend many conscious hours dwelling on these exact concepts, but I can't stress enough the impact this has on you whether you are aware of it or not. Without a doubt, and in some way, it makes you feel bad about who you are. When we learned what we *should* say, we noticed the difference between that and who we actually are. How many people can feel good knowing how they worked and lived, thus far, won't allow them to join the billions of others who actively contribute in the workforce? We know that we will stand alone on the sidelines of life, without a penny to our name, unless we hide our true nature and past actions. How does one feel proud of that?

If we didn't notice a gap between the correct answers and our truth and we didn't recognize the profound consequences of neglecting to 'manually' close that gap, we would feel our truth is good enough and we'd just speak it in a job interview. But we don't because we *know* our truth isn't good enough.

Whether it was a job interview or something I knew I had to say or do at work, I never actively thought, *I am just going to lie*. But upon realizing I had to say or do something different from my truth, I recall many, many times thinking: *I am not good enough for this. I guess I'll just say what I am supposed to say. Why am I such a loser? I'll never be successful because I don't know how to be like everyone else*. This quickly became my secret to hide from everyone—in both my professional and my personal life. I probably had that thought, or similar ones, in the back of my mind at all times.

This whole convoluted job interview process really comes down to just one simple task—we must try to make hiring managers *believe* what we say so they will like us and hire us. In the end, the interviewee who does the best job at portraying the brand of the ideal candidate is the one who gets hired.

You know what the brand of the ideal candidate looks like as it was covered in the last chapter. The ideal candidate has a very well developed and high-level brand. Technically, it doesn't matter whether you *truly* represent that brand, you just need to create and provide mountains of evidence that 'proves' you are a person with that brand. To win the game, you have to be the one who does it better than any other person interviewing for the same job.

Game over.

So you see, it's just a *game*! You aren't the only one who does this. The majority of people play the same game in some way and at some level. We all want to say we have high levels of all the soft skills that make up the ideal brand but let's get real about *who* we really are. Most people don't have all of them perfected at a high level. Most of us have

all those skills at some level, but not at a consistent high level across the board. Most of us are even weak in some areas.

When it's all said and done, it comes down to a choice. If you don't have all these skills and qualities, at a high level, you either have to work at developing them or 'fake it to make it' like the majority of job seekers.

While it *is* a choice, it certainly doesn't present itself as a choice. Many people don't know *how* to go about developing those skills and may even decide they just aren't the right person. I was one of those people. I didn't see a choice in front of me. I had no idea how to go about transforming myself into the person I wanted to become or needed to be. For me, I resorted to the only way I thought I could win a job offer and even survive in the workforce—I had to fake it to make it by saying and doing all the things I believed 'normal' people say and do. And I was pretty good at it (most of the time) if I may say so myself. But I'll tell you what, that isn't something I was proud of and if you can relate, you probably aren't either.

You should now have a pretty good snapshot of how the job interview game plays out on your end. But, hang on! There are always at least two teams in these games.

Management's Strategy

If you just recognized some truths about yourself, I hope you aren't feeling sad, mad, or bad about it. You are far from alone and I think if I had known that others, besides me, were also walking around trying to say and do all the right things, I'd have found much comfort in that. Until I started catching on to the games, which didn't happen until later in my career, I thought I was the only one and I felt like a complete outsider. I really hope that by reading this, and seeing how common it is, you now feel much more 'normal' than you may have previously thought because I am telling you now, normal is exactly what you are.

None of us want to lie but most of us feel backed into a corner without other options. Unfortunately, no one wants to admit to this so

most people suffer alone. And while I firmly believe that two wrongs don't make a right, it's only fair that I expose both sides of the job interview process. So, with that said, you should know that you aren't the only one lying in that job interview.

Chances are, the manager interviewing you (your potential future boss), did the same thing in his initial interviews, as you did in yours. He lied to get himself hired into the company. He now has to go back and be that person again because candidates interview employers too. It's a two way street. Managers are likely lying to you in several ways. You may already know some of this or it may blow you away. Regardless, it has to be said.

First of all, managers may not be honest when they describe their management style to you. However, if you don't ask the question, "what is your management style?" he may not have to answer it and go into his perfectly rehearsed description of himself. But, he still has to reference how he operates with his staff and what his expectations are, all throughout the interview. If we had the ability to close our ears, without moving our hands over them, I might suggest you do that. But, we don't so I will just say that it's not really safe to assume that what a manager says in your job interview is completely true, or even true at all, for that matter.

Think about this. Pretend you are a manager and you are in the midst of navigating through some difficult relationships with several members of your staff. Some of your employees may have switched departments because of you or even left the company. Let's even say your boss has had many stern discussions with you about your management style. Now, you are walking into a job interview. How will you describe your management style to the candidate?

I can answer that question for you and for all managers everywhere: "I work hard to motivate and inspire my team. I value open communication and respect their ideas. I expect hard work but I am very fair. I trust my employees to get their work done and encourage

them to bring their ideas and opinions forward. I have an open door policy to all questions and concerns. I value developing my employees and making sure they have a rewarding experience at XYZ Corporation. We work hard but we have lots of fun. I have very strong relationships with all my team members."

This is how most managers, in companies all over the world, will describe themselves. I am telling you, it's like a recording on repeat! I don't know about you, but I find it odd that all managers sound so perfect to work for in job interviews. It makes it difficult to explain all the real life complaints we hear about these same managers from their direct reports.

After being hired into a new job, most of us can pinpoint the moment we discovered our manager was nothing like he described himself in the interview. I am not saying there aren't any good managers out there. There are. But most of them aren't quite as good as they described and some are polar opposite.

That's one way the other team may fudge the truth a bit.

What about the company culture? I'd bet that in all past job interviews, you heard that working at that company is eerily similar to a whirlwind trip to Disney World, right? It goes something like this: "This is the best company to work for—you'd really enjoy working here. Everyone cares so much about each other. The people here are very friendly and willing to help each other out. If you have questions, management has answers and unlike other companies, when managers talk, people *want* to listen. Our management team only speaks the truth and they never keep you in the dark about what is going on in the company. They really walk the talk and that means a lot to everyone, me included. We have a very relaxed culture here. The benefits are very generous, the perks are awesome, and everyone is treated in a respectful manner. We even have a TV and billiards room where you can find all sorts of company provided drinks and snacks. We have a beautiful picnic area outside where you can eat lunch. Oh! Sometimes, in the spring,

the management team brings in Cheesecake Factory and serves lunch to us outside! I just love working here!” says the hiring manager as he unclenches his teeth to flash you a big ole fake smile.

If managers have issues with different aspects of the company, can they tell you what those are in your job interview? What if they don't like the president of the company, a few key higher-level managers, or they think the senior management team is slowly destroying every employee? Do you think they will mention that to you in a job interview? Will they mention it if you even ask direct questions such as, “if you could change something about the company, what would it be?” Can they be trusted to give you a slight hint of the truth if you ask, “can you describe the work culture to me?” Absolutely not!

Managers have jobs to keep and families to feed just like you, and they are going to tell you how wonderful the culture is and how much they love working there – regardless of the truth.

I knew many of the trials and tribulations that my management co-workers were going through at work with various other individuals on the management team. I can't tell you how many times I was in an interview with one or more of them and I sat back and listened to them talk to candidates about how wonderful the company is and how much they loved working there. I listened to them boost up people I knew they didn't like and talk ridiculously high about a company I knew they were desperately trying to leave. And, I am not innocent here. I did it too. Again, what choices do we have?

On the employer side of the equation, choosing to be honest comes with much higher consequences than not getting a job offer. Being perfectly *honest* with candidates, in a job interview, can easily get a manager fired.

Imagine a candidate asks the hiring manager some very popular questions such as, “do you enjoy working here?” or, “what do you like and dislike about the company?” What if you got this answer? “Um, no Ms. Candidate, I really don't enjoy working here. In fact, I hate it. The

work culture is extremely stressful, the senior management team is fairly dishonest and you can't believe a word that comes out of the president's mouth. Most people who work here are so stressed out that you can literally cut the tension with a knife. I haven't received a raise in two years but they expect me to work 55 hours per week. If the truth should be told, I am actually looking for another job and I can't wait to get out of here!”

How do you think that would go over?

Yes, this is what we call 'professional job interviews'. So you see, this isn't any different than your lack of honesty about yourself in the same interview. Nobody in the room is being honest simply because no one is *able* to be honest when seeking a positive outcome

I think it's safe to say, yet again, that the job interview process is relatively worthless across the board, for both teams. When it comes time to make a decision, you better hope you have strong intuitive skills because going with your gut feeling is the best thing you have going for you in this regard. For the most part, *both* sides have to make decisions based upon their gut feelings. I am blessed that I was gifted with very strong intuitive skills. This is what made me a strong recruiter as I could tell when someone was lying with almost no effort at all. Regardless, what I have described is not an effective process. It's truly laughable when you consider all I have outlined so far in this chapter.

To be honest, I struggle to understand why job seekers and employers continue to play this bizarre game of charades. Certainly, I am not the only one who can see how ridiculous this process is, am I? While I believe it's critical for employers and job seekers to meet in person, I also think the entire process is a big waste of time (for the most part) and there is no professional way to say that to make it sound better. I think people can learn much more about each other spending an afternoon on a golf course, than they can in a job interview, but still not near enough.

With that said, it seems kind of silly when we consider how nervous we get before showing up at one of these games, doesn't it? Think of

it in the same way you thought about playing house as a child. Only this time you are playing the job interview game with a few people you don't know very well. You are playing the role of *ideal candidate* and you are meeting with someone playing the role of *ideal manager*. Just be prepared to also meet with some others in the roles of *ideal higher-level manager*, *ideal company representative*, and *ideal co-worker*. You may even get to meet the person playing the role of *ideal company president*. Doesn't this sound much more relaxing? I hope so, because once you get hired, the real tough games begin.

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