Job Interviewing: 
How to handle illegal questions asked by potential employers

Hiring decisions are not based solely on your competence. Equally important is how well you will fit into the organization. Therefore, the employer often asks questions concerning your personality and personal goals. Some questions asked may include:

- What are your major strengths? your weaknesses?
- How much initiative do you take?
- What types of people do you prefer working with?
- What role does your family play in your career?
- What do you do in your spare time? Any hobbies?

These questions help the employer determine if you'll be an effective member of their organization. However, it is important to evaluate the questions asked during an interview. You must determine whether the questions asked are to best evaluate your effectiveness or whether they are to discriminate against you.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes discrimination on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origins illegal in personnel decisions. Women are still more likely to face illegal questions than men. Some employers still ask questions regarding birth control, child care, or how their husbands feel about them traveling. The following types of questions are considered illegal:

- Are you married, divorced, separated, or single?
- How old are you?
- Do you go to church regularly?
- Do you have many debts?
- Do you own or rent your own home?
- What social or political organizations do you belong to?
- What does your spouse think about your career?
- Are you living with anyone?
- Do you plan on having (more) children? If so how will this affect your work situation?
- How much do you weigh?
- How tall are you?

You should consider how you'll handle these questions before the interview. It must be your decision— one that you feel comfortable with. If you encounter these questions, your choice may depend on which is more important to you:

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defending a principle or giving yourself the greatest chance to land the job.

You may decide the job is not as important as the principle. Or you may decide, even though you really want this job, you could never work in an organization that employed such “clods” and tell them so.

On the other hand, you may decide to answer the question, offensive though it may be, because you really want the job. If you get the job, you vow you will work from within the organization to change such interview practices.

If you do decide to take this route, there are a few suggestions such as turn what appears to be a negative into a positive. If, for example, you are female and the interviewer asks you how many children you still have living at home and you say, “I have five; two boys and three girls,” you can expect this answer will be viewed as a negative. Working mothers with five children at home may be viewed as neither good mothers or dependable employees. Therefore, you should immediately follow your initial response with a tactful elaboration that will turn this potential negative into a positive. You might say:

I have five—two boys and three girls. They are wonderful children who, along with my understanding husband, take great care of each other. I do want you to know that I keep my personal life separate from my professional life. But more important, I think being a mother and working full-time has really given me a greater sense of responsibility, forced me to use my time well, and helped me better organize my work and life. I would hope that the fact that I’m both mother and I’m working—not a working mother—would be something your company would be supportive of, especially given my past performance and the qualifications I would bring to this job.

Here you were able to take both an illegal question and a potential negative and turn them into a positive, perhaps the most tactful and effective way of dealing with the situation. However, it is important to remember that these type of questions are illegal and by no means do you have to answer them. It is your choice.

Source: Interview for Success, Caryl Rae Krannich & Ronald L. Krannich, Ph.Ds, Impact Publications, 1993

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**Quote of the month . . .**

"Women are genetically better about keeping lots of plates spinning, (and) paying attention to follow-through. Men are better at -- well, men are better at arbitrary aggressiveness." *Mary Matalin,* former political director for the George Bush campaign, TV talk show host and author.
Media Broadcaster continued

At small local radio or television stations, newscasters may write and deliver their own reports. At a large station, they may be part of a news team, gathering and reporting stories from the wire services in the field. They may be aided by producers and writers in preparing material for the program.

Because they are visible figures in the community, broadcasters frequently participate in local activities—everything from serving as master of ceremonies at a community dinner to participating in a special charity function or school activity. Because broadcasting is a seven-day-a-week, twenty-four-hours-a-day business, night, weekend, and holiday work is common, as are last-minute calls for special assignments.

College graduates and others hired by television stations usually start out as production assistants, researchers, or reporters and are given a chance to move up if they show an aptitude for the business. After gaining experience at a small station, an ambitious and talented person may move to a better-paying job with more exposure in a larger city. Advancement may be easier for those who specialize in a particular field, like sports or consumerism, and gain a reputation for their expertise.

Earnings and Opportunities
Over 58,000 people hold such positions, and this number is expected to increase to 70,000 by the mid-1990s. Since television is a glamour profession, competition for jobs is stiff. Salaries range from $15,000 to $75,000 and more.

Training and Qualifications
Poise, and appealing personality, good judgment, and the ability to react quickly in emergencies are important, as is the ability to ad-lib on the air. A well-controlled voice and good speaking manner will enhance chances of success. For newscasters and reporters, knowledge of current events, research techniques, and writing are important background skills.

A liberal-arts education provides a good background, and many universities offer specific courses in broadcasting. A number of private broadcasting schools offer training as well.

For Further Details


Job Bank Openings...

Transit Operations Supervisor. The Housatonic Area Regional Transit District (HART) is a 50+ bus public transit, demand response and contract para transportation operator located in northern Fairfield County, Connecticut.

HART is looking for a creative and energetic individual to work with a dynamic transit team. The Operations Supervisor, under the guide of the Director of Operations, will be responsible for a host of operational duties including daily staffing needs and ensuring coverage, as well as providing assistance to the traveling public. This individual will supervise a staff of 50 and should be responsible with personnel record-keeping.

Individual shall have a bachelor's degree in business or public administration, transit or management and a minimum of four years work experience in public transportation. This individual shall also possess excellent line supervision skills and administrative skills. Must be able to work rotating shifts. Current salary range is $27,000 - $32,000.

Send resume and salary requirements to Suzanne A. Passarelli, Housatonic Area Regional Transit, 107 Newtown Road, Danbury, CT 06810

HELP WANTED

The WTS Job Bank committee needs more members! Our committee is professional and relaxed. We need help with the Job Bank Update, conducting research, writing articles and selling advertising. If you'd like to gain experience in any of these areas call Laura D. or Mary at 525-8267 and let us know how you'd like to contribute.
Job Openings . . .

Maritime Program Manager. The Connecticut Department of Transportation is accepting applications for a Maritime Program Manager. $54,000 to start. Applicants with a minimum of nine (9) years professional experience, or a Bachelor's degree and five (5) years of professional experience in the managerial or operational activities of a maritime terminal or at-sea cargo function, will be provided with civil service examination package for this position. The successful candidate will manage Connecticut’s maritime development programs, will serve as the Department’s agent to the Connecticut Coastline Port Authority and will manage the staff and activities of the Division of Ports. For consideration, resumes are to be received no later than September 30, 1994. Mail to: Director, Leasing Operations, Connecticut Dept. of Transportation, Bureau of Aviation and Ports, P.O. Box 317546, Newington, CT 06131-7546.

Administrative Assistant. Exciting, challenging position for bright, reliable, hardworking person. Experience in Macintosh, PageMaker and database programs. Excellent written and oral communications. Hours 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Send resume to The Rideshare Company, 108 Charter Oak Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106. No calls. Affirmative Action - EOE. ■

F.Y.I. continued

in the Job Bank, give us a call ask for Laura Dowlaby or Mary Dyer at 525-8267. We'd be happy to mail or fax a copy of the current openings. Our service is confidential and prompt.

✓ Recently, we have gotten a number of job openings that have very narrow windows of response opportunity. For instance, a job that opens on August 14 and closes August 24. Contact either Laura Dowlaby or Mary Dyer at 525-8267 if you'd like to be notified when such jobs come into the bank.

✓ Are you interested in finding a job in a certain geographic or professional area? Let us know and we'll research it for you.

F.Y.I. Local Job Bank Information . . .

✓ We only give a partial listing of job opening in the Job Bank Update. If you'd like access to what's available...

Is there a job opening at your place of business? FAX a copy of the position description to the WTS Job Bank -- (203) 522-8445/attention Laura or Mary!

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WTS Connecticut Valley Chapter
P.O. Box 290164,
Wethersfield, CT 06109

JOB BANK UPDATE

Brooke Haberman
Employer Services Coordinator
Rideshare
389 Whitney Ave.
New Haven, CT 06511

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