

Tell Me About Yourself

Many interviewers, in fact a sad majority, open an interview with some form of the **“Tell me about yourself”** question. It would be an easy question to answer if you answered with a prepared and well thought-out initial marketing statement of yourself and your skills, which are applicable for the open job.

This sounds pretty straightforward, but few candidates are able to answer the question in an intelligent, influencing and powerful way. Candidates must teach themselves to answer this question with a three-part, pre-planned marketing statement. Part one of that three-part marketing statement is always a **one-sentence summary of the candidate’s career history**. For example, a candidate for an IT position might say:

“I am a five-year veteran of LAN/WAN Admin and Systems Engineering with substantial experience using Novell, XP, Cisco and Lotus Notes/Domino.”

The idea is to compress a summary of your career into one pithy sentence that encapsulates the most important aspects of your career, the aspects that you want to leverage in order to make your next career step. Few candidates seem to be able to condense a career into one sentence, but it can and must be done.

Part two of the pre-planned marketing statement will be a **one-, maybe two-sentence summary of a single accomplishment that you are proud of and that will capture the potential employer’s attention (maybe imagination)**. This would immediately follow your initial career summary sentence previously mentioned. The accomplishment should be one that the new employer will be interested in hearing, **one that is easily explained or illustrated and one that clearly highlights a bottom line impact**. When done properly, this will build interviewer intrigue about the accomplishment so that they inquire further, giving you an opportunity to further discuss a significant career success. That IT candidate’s statement of accomplishment could be:

“Recently, as a long-term contract employee at a local regional bank, I learned they were about to install Lotus Notes/Domino and were planning to use outside consultants for the project. I let them know I had done a similar installation at my last assignment, and I outlined how we could get the job done with an in-house staff, and successfully completed the install for \$55-65K less than it would have cost with outside consultants.”

The final piece of the marketing statement is the most fluid. It needs to be a **one-sentence summary of specifically what you want to do next in your career**. The reason that this part is a bit more difficult, is that it needs to specifically address what you want to do next, and how it matches the opportunity you’re interviewing for. For example:

“For the next step in my career, I would like to move away from contract work and find myself as a direct employee of a large firm where I could join a substantial IT team, and be involved with a group that focuses on email and network security applications, while having access to the knowledgebase that would accompany a large, diverse IT group.”

With some simple planning *before* the interview, you will quickly realize the benefit of a targeted third sentence in these pre-planned opening statements, as employers feel you are perfectly suited to do just the job they are interviewing you for.

Should your interviewer open the meeting with that simple question, combine all three statements into one simple, powerful, targeted response. Take advantage of your preparation and lay a strong foundation for the rest of the interview.