

What I SHOULD HAVE SAID WAS.....

(A sure-fire Method for Improving your Interview Skills)

(Please read through this entire guide as soon as you receive it).

The very best training for your NEXT Oral Exam or your NEXT hiring interview is what you can learn from your MOST RECENT oral exam or hiring interview. Instead of spending time kicking yourself or playing the “I SHOULD have said.....” game, use the experience to prepare for the next one. Instead of aimlessly replaying the interview in your mind over and over and over and over again, critique your performance while it’s still fresh (and breathtakingly, heartpoundingly scary) in your mind. You probably won’t get the exact same questions on your next interview, but they’ll be looking for the same basic qualities, skills, knowledge and abilities. And if you’ve worked through this exercise, you’ll know WHAT they’re looking for and WHY....and maybe more importantly, HOW you can better answer their questions.

This exercise is for your personal use only. Questions asked by Hiring and QAP panels are NOT to be shared; ESPECIALLY since that can give your competition an unfair advantage over YOU. As soon as you’re in a safe, quiet place (NOT driving down the freeway), start by writing down as many of the questions that you can remember. DON’T wait too long or you’ll forget the questions (ah, blessed amnesia) or you may word them incorrectly.

Write the questions below, as accurately as you can...word for word. (Put an Asterisk by any question that the interviewer(s) asked you to expand on, or clarify you answer, AND mark any question where you drew a real blank. THOSE questions you need to research in depth). On the following pages, fill in each analysis grid with one of the questions, and follow the instructions.

Question 1. _____

Question 2. _____

Question 3. _____

Question 4. _____

Question 5. _____

Question 6. _____

Question 7. _____

Question 8. _____

Analyzing the questions, looking for What Was Really Being Asked, is like training your ear for all future interviews. The more you can practice this, the more easily you'll 'automatically' hear what's really being said. This can help you in your daily interactions with customers, peers, superiors, and even your family. But during interviews is when it can significantly affect the final score and your future promotions.

The tools for question analysis would be the Test Announcement and/or Opportunity Bulletin, the official Job Specs from SPB, a Position Duty Statement, this guide, input from trusted supervisors, individuals who hold the job you're going for, a mentor (if you're lucky enough to have one), and your own common sense.

Compare the questions asked to the skills needed and the duties and the required knowledge. Find the area the question probably covers, and you'll have a much better idea what they were asking and what you should have answered. For example, the interviewer can't just ASK if you have good communication skills; they HAVE to ask a question that gives you the chance to SHOW that you have good communication skills. A big part of communication skills is 'active listening'; UNDERSTANDING what's being asked. Start with your first question (PROBABLY, "Tell us about yourself" or "How have you prepared for this job?").

Question #1 _____

What I said (↓ Write it in this box ↓)	What I COULD HAVE said ↓	↓ What were they REALLY* asking?
_____	_____	1. Specific Scope topics** or Skills**: _____
_____	_____	2. WHAT were they trying to see if you COULD DO or HAVE DONE? _____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

* What were they REALLY going for with this question? What specific experience or knowledge would a 'good answer' **show** the interviewer(s)?
 ** On the Test Announcement the "Scope" lists all skill, knowledge, experience & ability areas to be covered on the Oral Exam; Four (+-) Specific, job-relevant skills are listed on the Opportunity Bulletin (e.g. for MVFR they are Verbal communication, Interpersonal skills, Learning ability, Mathematical and cashing; For Manager I, Communication (written and verbal), Interpersonal skills, Supervisory and training, Planning and organizing). You'll have to analyze the questions carefully, to try & figure out what they were REALLY asking you.

Question #2 _____

What I said	What I COULD HAVE said	What were they REALLY* asking?
_____	_____	1. Specific Scope topics** or Skills**: _____
_____	_____	2. WHAT were they trying to see if you COULD DO or HAVE DONE?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Question #3 _____

What I said	What I COULD HAVE said	What were they REALLY* asking?
_____	_____	1. Specific Scope topics** or Skills**: _____
_____	_____	2. WHAT were they trying to see if you COULD DO or HAVE DONE?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Question #4

What I said	What I COULD HAVE said	What were they REALLY* asking?
_____	_____	1. Specific Scope topics** or Skills**: _____
_____	_____	2. WHAT were they trying to see if you COULD DO or HAVE DONE?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Question #5

What I said	What I COULD HAVE said	What were they REALLY* asking?
_____	_____	1. Specific Scope topics** or Skills**: _____
_____	_____	2. WHAT were they trying to see if you COULD DO or HAVE DONE?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Question # _____

What I said	What I COULD HAVE said	What were they REALLY* asking?
_____	_____	1. Specific Scope topics** or Skills**: _____
_____	_____	2. WHAT were they trying to see if you COULD DO or HAVE DONE?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Question # _____

What I said	What I COULD HAVE said	What were they REALLY* asking?
_____	_____	1. Specific Scope topics** or Skills**: _____
_____	_____	2. WHAT were they trying to see if you COULD DO or HAVE DONE?
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

(Print as many of these generic pages as necessary so all of your questions are written down for analysis).

AND THE NEXT STEP IS.....

What if your personal analysis of *WHAT THEY'RE REALLY ASKING* is way off? If you missed the point of a question DURING the interview, it's possible that you'll do the same during this analysis exercise. It's **possible** that this is the root of a problem that's been holding you back through numerous Oral Exams or Hiring Interviews. So; AFTER THE TEST/HIRING PROCESS IS COMPLETE, find someone who can help you analyze a question or three, to see if you're on the right track. This can be someone IN the type of position you competed for, or a trusted Supervisor/Manager, or a mentor, etc. Ask them how THEY would answer a few of your questions. Ask them how YOU SHOULD have answered during your interview. Ask them what skills/knowledge/abilities the question seemed to be looking for.

FOR EXAMPLE:

One recent MVFR applying for a Manager I position was asked, "what skills do you bring to the position of Manager I?"

They answered something like,

"I'm trained in **Registration and Drivers License, Personnel and Control.**"

But the SKILLS that candidates for Manager I must have (AND "PROVE" during the interview) are:

Communication (written and verbal), Interpersonal skills, Supervisory and training, Planning and Organizing.

The applicant answered the wrong question, or answered the question wrong. And if they carried that same reasoning into this analysis exercise, they wouldn't answer the question any better *the next time*. So...a pair of fresh eyes might be able to help you see what was really being asked AND then help you figure out how you really should have answered, considering your own personal level of abilities, knowledge, experience and skills.

AND THEN?

AFTER you've really thought about the questions, and analyzed what was really being asked, sit down and redo the interview. Have someone you trust help you in this 'mock oral'. Have them ask the questions *as they were asked* at the interview, but answer the questions that were REALLY BEING ASKED. Answer with the information in the 'What I COULD have said column.' (DON'T memorize that column, but use the concepts & ideas you've written there to craft your *relatively spontaneous responses*).

AND FINALLY?

Keep a copy of this entire exercise in your personal Asset file (That's the folder you ARE keeping, that has a note in it about every special project or incident, every award, every commendation, every odd/complex situation, every 'good example' of skill use, etc.). When your next interview is on the horizon, review the entire Asset File, especially THIS document. For that next interview, be ready to HEAR what they're really asking and be ready to answer with what you SHOULD SAY.

Best of luck from the Usual Gang of Interested Managers and Supervisors.