



The Interview Series: (3) The Underlying Questions

By Martin E. Murphy, CPCU, Senior Vice President, The Jacobson Group

The basic purpose of job interviews is fairly simple. The goal of those interviewing you is to uncover the answers to three simple questions: can you do the job, will you do the job, and do you fit? Don't expect the interviewer to come out and directly ask you these questions, because they won't. However, being aware of these underlying questions will allow you to better tailor your responses to make connections for the interviewer, and ultimately, secure the position.

- **Can you do the job?** The interviewer is evaluating your technical competencies to see if they are a fit for the position: your skills, knowledge, experience, accomplishments and learning potential. The answer to this question is typically very cut and dry; you either can do the job or you can't. Most of the qualifying data should be highlighted on your resume. Expect to be asked to expound upon certain positions or tasks listed on your resume to help the interviewer assess how well your abilities mesh with the position you are discussing. Before you go to the interview, review the position's ad. On a piece of paper, make two columns. Write each of the position's requirements in the first column, and in the second column, highlight your qualifications as they match up with each requirement. If possible, ask the company for a copy of the full position description and use that to complete the exercise. This exercise will ensure that the qualities/skills you need to highlight are fresh in your mind, and you will successfully prove that *you can do the job*.
- **Will you do the job?** The answer to this question is not as obvious as the previous one. The interviewer is assessing your interest, desire to do the job, work ethic, energy level, and outside influences. Questions the interviewer may ask include what is your management style, what are your career ambitions, what intrigued you most about this position, what are your weaknesses, and what is your work style? Some of these questions have text-book answers. Everyone is a self-motivated team-player. Use specific examples from your past experiences to elaborate and demonstrate that not only "can" you do the work, but everything points to the fact that you will jump into the new position with vigor and enthusiasm. By offering concrete illustrations, peppered with energy and electricity, the interviewer will feel more comfortable making the decision that *you will do the job*.
- **Do you fit in?** This is an extremely subjective question, but one of the most critical. The interviewer is rating your likeability, chemistry, communication, values, dress, and style. Organizations want to bring in individuals that compliment and add to their existing team and culture – not distract from them. There are many small actions you can take to help demonstrate that *you do fit in*. Always dress professionally and conservatively. Build rapport and show interest in others' thoughts through positive body language, such as maintaining eye contact, nodding your head in agreement, leaning forward rather than away in your chair, and exchanging a firm handshake. Avoid arguing or disagreeing with the interviewer and always be positive. However, be true to yourself; never alter your own values, interests, or personality to fit in with the interviewer. If you do, you are only fooling yourself; in the end, you won't be happy if you have to be someone else to fit in with their team.