

# 'So, Tell Me About Yourself': Use This 4-Step Formula to Answer This Dreaded Question

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"So, tell me about yourself." No five words elicit more angst in people than this statement. Yet it is among the most asked questions at job interviews. Talking about yourself is scary, but it's an essential occupational skill. Follow these four simple steps to introduce yourself and communicate who you are and the distinctive value you bring to the table.

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## Step 1: Build a rapport

Often when confronted with, "so, tell me about yourself," you're engaged in a conversation with people who scarcely know you. So, don't start talking about the scope of the job. Instead, aim to establish a genuine connection and build a rapport with those asking. Share a bit about your background and situational identity. Your situational identity is where you are in your life right now, a particular circumstance that shapes how you show up in the world or a community that you identify with that helps to shape your individuality.

As background, some people choose to talk about their family, where they went to school and where they are from. Yet, you can talk about a cause or community you belong to or a personal story about a moment in your life that helped to define you. For example, a client of mine was asked to talk

about himself in a recent interview. He spoke about his time in the military, taking responsibility for his younger siblings after his mom passed and what this taught him about leadership. Sharing aspects of your background and identity provides a deeper understanding of who you are. It can also reveal commonalities between you and your prospects that can help you connect and build trust with them. This is also a good way to demonstrate your interpersonal skills. 55% of employers say they find it very difficult to find qualified candidates with strong interpersonal skills.

People with good interpersonal skills can “build healthy relationships with their colleagues and work better as a team,” says communication scholars Brian Spitzberg and William Cupach. People with these skills are thus in high demand. Indeed, many employers say interpersonal and communication skills are very important to gaining leadership positions in their organizations.

## **Step 2: Communicate who you are – not just what you do**

When people meet you, they do not meet your credentials, experience or expertise. Instead, they come into contact with your personality and social skills (also known as “soft skills,” “human skills” or “power skills”). When asked about yourself, foreground your personal attributes and core values. These are your human skills that communicate who you are as a person, not just what you can do. For example, you can declare that you’re a very compassionate person, explain why you say you are compassionate and provide an example from your professional experience where being compassionate was beneficial in that situation.

Employers value human skills highly because they know job-specific skills can be taught. They therefore look for skills such as leadership, empathy, communication, adaptability and

self-awareness. These can signal whether you can interact effectively and harmoniously with other people. People who are empathetic are seen as better co-workers and leaders because they tend to create the right climate and set the right tone for employees and colleagues to thrive.

In the same vein, your values provide important insights into your character and major clues about what you stand for and what people can expect when they work with you. Companies want to hire hardworking professionals with integrity and good ethics. Sharing your own ethos helps to demonstrate that you can fit into a company culture, contribute effectively to its mission and work harmoniously with the team. To communicate your core values, you might say something like, "I believe in integrity. I, therefore, approach things with honesty. I'm fair in my judgment and mindful of how my actions affect someone else." Then you can offer a specific example of how you lean into your values to help to navigate challenging ethical situations.

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## **Step 3: Communicate your competencies and pain points they solve**

Reveal your capabilities, including areas of specialty, technical knowledge and expertise. In addition, show how your competencies help to solve pain points in your niche and the results you've achieved. For example, you could say, "I'm excellent at marketing. I created a digital marketing campaign for X company and they were able to increase sales by 50%." This is important because it allows those listening to recognize that you have a strong personal brand that gets results. Communicating the problems your competencies solve

also helps you to land roles where your talents are valued, engage in work that sparks your interest and assignments where you can offer the most value.

## **Step 4: Differentiate yourself**

State your point of differentiation. What do you bring to the table that others do not? How do you stand out from the competition? How does this “x factor” add value? In today’s fiercely competitive job market, it is crucial to separate yourself from the pack. What makes you different could be a creative approach you take to solve a challenging problem, a fresh perspective or a more efficient way of doing a task. You can also stand out by leaning into human skills, such as your ability to build positive relationships or simply being reliable. For example, a client once told me that she gives the same energy and commitment to her clients at 10 pm as she does at 8 am. I was thoroughly impressed.

Overall, whenever you hear “tell me about yourself,” remember that it’s about making a solid and memorable first impression. It’s a chance to show that you can communicate clearly, connect with other humans and demonstrate your unique value. Don’t miss the opportunity to display the full power of your personal brand. You’ll be more confident telling your own story, you’ll build trust and give others a chance to get to know you better.

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