

## **An expert shows how to respond better in job interviews**

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**THE STAR-LEDGER** Richard White, director of career services, Rutgers University Doug Green feels prepared.

His resume has been proofread. His slacks have been neatly pressed. He even has conducted mock interviews with himself, so he can handle anything an interviewer tosses at him.

"Unless they really hit me with a curveball question, I think I'm ready," says Green, 33, of Orange. "It's been a while since I had to prove myself, but it feels good."

Still, a less-than-perfect response to a question can sink a candidate to the bottom of the pile. "You have to really sell yourself," said Joe Passaro, a sales rep for MetLife who was representing his company at a job fair Green attended in Somerset this week.

With New Jersey's unemployment rate at 8.3 percent and expected to keep rising, job applicants face lots of competition. They have only a few minutes to make themselves stand out. It's important to avoid words that can leave interviewers with a negative impression, says Richard White, director of career services at Rutgers University.

"You want to illustrate your statements with specific examples, so if you're talking about a skill, illustrate it with a real-life, on-the-job example," White said.

The Star-Ledger put several job seekers to the test with typical interview questions. The applicants gave their answers -- and then White revised the answers to give the applicants an idea of how to ace that interview.

**Nick Gileta, 59, of Morristown, self-employed business analyst**

SLNick Gileta

**Q:** You graduated from Rutgers in 1989. Why did you choose Rutgers?

**A:** I attended New York University for my associate's degree in engineering science, and I didn't enter that field because the field had died out temporarily. I wanted to do some kind of work in business management, planning. It was convenient. It had a curriculum that closely matched what I was looking for, and the tuition was reasonable.

**Revised answer:** After completing my associate's degree in engineering science at NYU, I sought a highly regarded business school and business-management program. Rutgers fit the bill on both counts. My management courses and business major at Rutgers prepared me well for my future business career.

**Q:** What are your strengths?

**A:** I'm very analytic. Also, I'm very helpful. Not only do I try to help myself here, I try to help others achieve their goals. So if I run across something, I keep in mind that they're in a search, also, so I refer some of that information to them.

**Revised answer:** I have strong analytical, project-management and communication skills -- both oral and written. I recently completed a project for my supervisor in which I demonstrated all of these skills. I was asked to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the five largest paper products companies. I had two weeks for the assignment.

I analyzed the companies, prepared a written report and presented my recommendations to my supervisor and some other senior executives two days prior to the deadline.

**Doug Green, 33, of Orange, took a buyout from management in Toyota**

SLDoug Green

**Q:** What is one of your weaknesses?

**A:** I don't like nitpicking, constant nagging. When the overall project has to be done and there's nitpicking here and there, that can be annoying. They don't see the bigger picture. They want to focus on things that are not relevant or that can wait until later. They want to bring that up and make it a problem. That can be frustrating.

**Revised answer:** One area I am determined to improve is streamlining meetings. I have found that meetings tend to run longer than they need to -- whether I am attending or running them. I always make it a point to come to a meeting with an agenda, whether it's a meeting with 15 people or one-on-one; whether it's 10 agenda items or two. Then I keep my eye on the agenda and the clock. Most meetings should conclude within the hour.

**Henry Rebmann, 25, of Brick, left a job in sales**

SLHenry Rebmann

**Q:** Why did you leave your last job?

**A:** It was sales. I just didn't feel comfortable approaching the people I had to approach constantly. It's a lot of rejection.

**Revised answer:** I learned a great deal in my last position about sales and selling techniques, especially cold calling. I realized that I prefer face-to-face sales and the opportunity to build a personal relationship. I believe my communication and organizational skills are well-suited to this position.

**Melissa Appleby, 21, about to graduate from Monmouth University**

SLMelissa Appleby

**Q:** Where do you see yourself in five years?

**A:** I see myself here with the company, working, being as successful as possible.

**Revised answer:** My goal is to grow with ABC Company and contribute to its growth. I am a very loyal person and believe in committing myself to a company for the long term. I seek increasing responsibility and challenge and believe ABC will provide what I am seeking.

**Terry Andrews, 48, of Bordentown, was laid off from Merrill Lynch this year**

SLTerry Andrews

**Q:** What is your greatest strength?

**A:** My greatest strength is I am a talker. I love people. All types of people. I can talk to anybody on any level.

**Revised answer:** I have strong communication skills -- both oral and written. I am cordial and persuasive, I have a wide range of interests, and I am adept at building personal and professional relationships. I also have strong presentation skills. I write memos and reports quickly, effectively and succinctly.

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