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ASK THE EXPERTS

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INTERVIEWING

I am a technical executive who is confident in my interviewing skills. However, I find that some of my interviewers are not trained in interviewing techniques, so the conversation becomes awkward. How can I gain more control about the key points I want to make during my interview?

While most interviewers are prepared with relevant questions and talking points when meeting with candidates, this isn't always the case. The interviewer may be someone who doesn't have a lot of experience interviewing others, or who feels uncomfortable asking probing questions. Your goal as the candidate is to keep the conversation focused on your skills and experience, and how you are the best fit for the team.

You can take charge of the conversation by asking the interviewer if they would like to discuss a challenge they are facing within their department and ways that you would address it. Or you can ask if they would be interested in talking about a specific qualification or requirement of the job and how your talents or past experience will address that need. Another way to keep the interview on track is to ask the interviewer targeted questions about the position and company that show your interest in the role and enable you to share your expertise.

Ask questions like, "Please describe a typical work day for this position. When I worked at XYZ Group, I tackled a lot of responsibilities simultaneously, and I'm wondering if it would be the same here." Or, "What are your top priorities for my first 3 months on the job? I read in a recent business article that you are negotiating a merger with ABC company, and I'm curious to know if my responsibilities will reflect that." These questions not only help you learn more about the position, but also show the hiring manager how you can provide the knowledge and skills they are looking for. It's easy to forget that interviewing is a two-way street, and you can help steer – or redirect – the conversation in a direction that will be beneficial to you.

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