



INTERVIEW KUNG FU: 5 TECHNIQUES

While some people are naturally good at interviewing and building rapport with employers, it never hurts to have a few extra tricks up your sleeve to give yourself a competitive advantage!

#1: The Range-Flexibility-Probe (RFP) Technique for Addressing Salary Questions

When to use it? When companies ask for your salary requirements or salary history

The strategy? To satisfy the interviewer's need to know you're not way out of the ballpark, salary-wise, without locking into a specific number that will reduce your negotiating leverage

The process? When asked about salary requirements, first give a wide RANGE (\$10-30K depending on the level of position you're targeting) that you feel is fair for the type of position under discussion, then tell them you're fairly FLEXIBLE within that range depending on the benefits package and final scope of the job, and lastly, PROBE back and ask them if the salary range you've given is in line with their own.

An example? "Well, John, it's always hard to narrow things down to a specific number so early in the conversation, but just to make sure we're on the same page, I'd say that a package in the \$110-130K range is probably what I'd be looking at for an opportunity at this level, based on what I'm seeing out there with other employers. This being the case, money obviously isn't my only consideration and I do have a certain degree of flexibility for the right opportunity—especially if a company offers a fairly decent benefits package. Does it sound like we're pretty much in the same ballpark?"

#2: The Embrace-Then-Counter (ETC) Technique for Overcoming Objections

When to use it? When companies ask you a tough question about a weakness/vulnerability

The strategy? Since it never pays to get defensive in an interview, you'll want to go the opposite route and enthusiastically embrace any objections the interviewer brings up—so you can then "rebut" them

The process? When an interviewer drills you on an area of your background that you're weak in, relative to the job in question, resist the urge to argue with them. Instead, tell them you fully understand where they're coming from and why the issue is a concern. Then, once you've established agreement in their *perception* of this issue, share a few well-conceived arguments (that you'd thought about in advance, ideally) as to why this issue won't be as big a problem as initially feared.

An example? "Mr. Cooper, I'm actually glad you brought that issue up, since I know some of the recent short-term roles on my resume raise a lot of questions and might cause an employer to wonder if I'm a flake or a flight risk of some kind. I'm sure I'd have the same concern, if I were in your shoes, since I know turnover can be awfully expensive. In my defense, however, I'd stress that my work history isn't nearly as sinister as it first looks—since in each case, there was a legitimate reason for moving on and in many cases, I simply got nailed by an unforeseen round of layoffs or took a job knowing it would be a contract role, going in. At this point, however, I can assure you I'm very motivated to break this pattern, myself, and settle down with the right company for a much longer stretch, if at all possible!"

#3: The Fear-Uncertainty-Doubt Technique for Undermining Your Competition

When to use it? When you know you're an underdog for a role or up against stiff competition

The strategy? To get the interviewer to place more weight on *your* key strengths by gently creating a degree of fear/doubt/uncertainty in their mind about the credentials of your competitors



The process? This time-tested sales technique involves making an educated guess about where your competitors likely have you beat, in terms of qualifications, and then vocalizing a perspective where these qualifications could actually be a negative or get in the way of effective performance. For example, you could knock off more “educated” competitors by discussing how “book smarts” are rarely an effective substitute for “street smarts” in terms of getting things done. Or you could combat a lack of industry-specific experience by pointing out that you’ll be a total sponge, if hired, and willing to learn the exact “right way” the employer wants you to do things, versus “veteran” candidates who might bring in bad habits or unwilling to change their ways, given their long tenure with other firms in the field.

An example? “In terms of my lack of direct experience in the wireless services field, Martha, I can understand why you’d be concerned about that and perhaps leaning towards candidates who have a deeper pedigree in this area. At the same time, however, I’d point out that the wireless space is an incredibly fast-changing market—so I’m not actually sure how useful or relevant it would be for a person to have experience that goes back a great many years. You might even get some folks who are a bit burned out or locked into old ways of doing things from 3-5 years ago, whereas with me, I’d be starting from scratch—and excited to combine my long track record of sales excellence with the latest and greatest methods you’d coach me on, relative to how to sell to *your* current target market.”

#4: The Make-It-Personal (MIP) Technique for Building Rapport

When to use it? At a few selective moments throughout the interview

The strategy? Interviewers have a much easier time saying no to an individual they view simply as a “job candidate” and with whom they haven’t really bonded at a psychological level; try to break this dangerous pattern by engaging them personally and getting them to acknowledge you as a human being

The process? During the course of the interview, ask at least three questions that relate to the interviewer’s own background, feelings, wishes, and goals; then, at the close of the interview, look them in the eye, address them by name, and tell them you’d really like to work for them.

An example? “Sally, we’ve talked a lot about the company’s needs and objectives so far, and how this position would bring value to the stockholders, but I’d love to hear more about YOUR role in all this—and how, if I hired, I could help you reach YOUR goals and get where YOU want to go. Perhaps I’m old-school in this regard, but I feel that making my boss look good is a pretty important part of my duty as a team member. So if you could share a little more about what this would look like, I’d appreciate it!”

#5: The Frame-The-Question (FTQ) Technique for Asking Smarter Questions

When to use it? At any point you’re asking questions in the interview, especially at the end

The strategy? Rather than just asking questions verbatim, add more value to your candidacy by teeing up each question with some opening observations/insights that explain WHY you’re asking it

The process? As stated above, try to avoid just rattling off questions directly; instead, before stating each question, share a 10-20 second observation from your experience that will put the question in context, illuminate your thought process, and explain why you’re curious to know the answer

An example? “Thanks, Pierre. Actually, I do have a couple of questions I’d love to bounce off you, if we have time. For starters, you mentioned that this role would involve working directly with the Engineering team on some product development projects. Historically, I know that the engineering and marketing departments don’t typically play nicely together in many organizations, leading to roadblocks and bottlenecks in bringing new products to market. Is this the case in your organization? And would part of my mission, if hired, be to build a stronger bridge between the two departments?”

Closing Note: *As with any new skill set you’re trying to master, it won’t be enough (in most cases) to simply be aware of the above techniques, theoretically; you need to practice them multiple times, by yourself or with a partner/coach, until they flow smoothly enough to be effective!*