



CAREER CORNER

Where do you see yourself in five years?

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This once-dreaded interview question is fast becoming obsolete. Where will I be in five years? You might as well ask me what kind of summerhouse I want on the moon!

That being said, it's premature to dismiss the question entirely. Some interviewers may still ask you to peer into your crystal ball, if for no other reason than someone once asked them to do the same. Others are genuinely curious to see if you've given your career path any thought beyond your immediate need to pay the rent. No matter the reason, your best bet is to deliver a statement that addresses the question without boxing you in.

To give you some perspective on how to answer this question, I asked my peers on LinkedIn for their feedback and synthesized the responses into a five-step plan to tackle the five-year question:

1. Park your fear.

If this question causes you to sweat, take a deep breath and remember that a "hiring decision will not be made on your answer," says Ronald Bastyr, a veteran recruiter and practice leader of HR recruitment at Hong Kong-based executive search firm MRI China Group. What counts is your readiness to answer it.

2. Prepare your answer.

Consider the company's long-term goals and where you might fit in. Steve Iacampo, staffing manager at Wallingford, Conn.-based electrical connections manufacturer Amphenol Corp., encourages you to "do your homework." Before the interview, you should "understand what a career path looks like in your field and form your answer accordingly."

3. Personalize your story.

To keep things friendly, consider sharing a personal goal like training for a marathon or learning to speak a foreign language. "Companies want to hire individuals that know where they are going in life and have some type of plan in place to advance their professional and personal goals," says Samuel Barnes, director of talent acquisition at Fremont, Calif.-based technical talent acquisition firm ZanderMax Technologies.

4. Practice your delivery.

As with any tricky interview question that has the potential to stop you in your tracks, I encourage clients to write out the answer on an index card and practice saying it out loud. The point is not to memorize the answer verbatim, but rather to help you quickly recall keywords and become more comfortable and confi-

dent with your delivery. Bastyr concurs, saying the manner in which you answer is "more important to the impressions the interviewer is collecting."

5. Promote yourself.

The most important thing for the hiring manager to know is that "you want to help the company grow and be successful," says Lynn Hazan, president of Chicago-based executive recruitment firm Lynn Hazan & Associates Inc. And the only way to be sure is to say so! You have to be your own best cheerleader. Toby Nathan, principal at Chicago-based staffing firm RecruitStar, encourages candidates to "reinforce all good things about yourself."

To see all the LinkedIn answers, visit <http://linkd.in/in5years>. Happy landings!

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