Answering Difficult Interview Questions

Preparing for an interview is essential, but there's no way to have the answers to every question that may come your way. When you're caught off guard, it can be a true test of your aptitude and professionalism. The interviewer wants to see how you react, what you say and how you say it.

In order to come out on top, you must think on your feet. Here are five steps for staying cool and collected while delivering an answer that will make a positive impression:

**Step 1: Relax**

Even though you're in panic mode on the inside, on the outside it's important to look relaxed and confident. Resist the urge to immediately stumble through an answer. Take a deep breath and let go of any muscles you may be clenching due to stress. Look the interviewer in the eye and move to the next step.

**Step 2: Clarify**

Repeat the question and get clarification from the interviewer. Many questions are broad, so asking for more detail demonstrates your attentiveness and focus. It's also a great stall tactic while you internally brainstorm points you can make. Remember, a moment of silence while you collect your thoughts is not necessarily a bad thing.

**Step 3: One point**

If you're not 100 percent confident in your answer, stick to making one or two strong points in your response. Keep the conversation concise but not so brief that the interviewer feels you're avoiding a response.

**Step 4: Body language**

Sometimes it's not what you say, but how you say it. Your body language exudes confidence and that confidence can make even a ho-hum answer seem like a winner to an interviewer.

**Step 5:**

**Follow up**

After the interview is over you may have a light-bulb moment and think of the perfect answer to that curve-ball question. Write a thank-you email to the interviewer and briefly state you have had more time to consider their question and have some additional thoughts to share. Keep those thoughts brief and make your main point. When crafted appropriately, a follow-up to a difficult question can give the hiring manager more insight into your potential.