

# *The Sextant*



*Navigating Your World*

X.V.MMXXII

## RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON?

YOU DON'T NEED A JOB,

*YOU NEED A BREAK!*

*PART TWO*

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE

JOB INTERVIEW.

As mentioned in the preceding article, people have an innate need to want to help you.

When people help another person, the brain releases endorphins, which are produced by the central nervous system and pituitary gland. It consists of two parts: endo- and -orphin; these are short forms of the words endogenous and morphine, intended to mean “a morphine-like substance originating from within the body.”

The principle function of endorphins is to inhibit the transmission of pain signals. These chemicals may also produce a feeling of euphoria very similar to that produced by other opioids.

Consequently, when a person provides help to another person, the feeling they receive is not dissimilar to a small



dose of morphine. Some argue that this is one reason that some people become very addicted to volunteer work.

My advice for the interview includes the following components – all of which must exist homogenously and with a deep level of personal conviction, commitment, and sincerity. This isn't a script but rather, it is a philosophical change in you, that if embraced, your script will come from your heart.

- A. Be an open book. I realize that our past is not something that we are particularly proud of. It's an embarrassment. However, everyone has periods in their past that they are not especially eager to discuss, and they understand and respect when someone demonstrates the humility to discuss such an embarrassment openly and honestly. This is especially true if the people you are talking to have children who are in their adolescent years.

If I was feeling relatively comfortable in the interview, I sometimes pushed the envelope a little. You will have to trust your gut as to the appropriateness of making this reference, but I have at times made statements during an interview to the effect; “If you have children, perhaps you can appreciate the fact that sometimes young people don't always make the best choices.” If the person I was talking with had the same propensity for honesty as I was demonstrating, at the very least, this comment generally elicited a rolling of the eyes and slight smile indicating their acknowledgement.

Just lay it out, spill your guts, no hidden agendas and present yourself with all of the cards face up. Give that person the opportunity to fulfill their innate desire to be a savior. It will make them feel so good that they will go



out of their way to further satisfy their craving to compound the endorphin fix. They will go home and tell their spouse how they are helping someone who made a little mistake, they will tell their friends and co-workers. They will justify your mistake for you.

- B. I have emphasized that you need to open up and spill your guts out. This does not mean that you spend an hour discussing your background. On the contrary, you spend a maximum of thirty seconds. This is called my *30-second rule*.

Spilling your guts out and being an open book is not measured by the volume of your rhetoric, but rather it is measured by the depth of your sincerity.

After providing a very brief but forthright and humble admission to the poor choices you made earlier in your life, you immediately slide into the following topics. This is how we dilute our less favorable attributes and highlight our best features.

- i. List all of the positive accomplishments you have made since the time of your behavioral aberration. Right now, as you read this, is a good time to start physically writing down this list.
- ii. List all of your talents and skills that could apply to the particular position, and your skills that represent any value to any employer. You may find that they have other positions to which your skills could apply.
- iii. Show the employer your written goals and your written plan to achieve those goals.



Let's elaborate on each of these topics.

List all of the achievements and accomplishments you have made since the date of your conviction.

Did you graduate from high school or earn your GED? Perhaps you became involved in a rigorous exercise agenda that taught you good self-discipline.

You may have attended and completed various behavioral modification classes for anger management, substance abuse, goal setting, etc. Did you learn a new trade, or receive a diploma or degree in higher education? You may have become self-educated, taken correspondence courses, or simply immersed yourself in reading. List the understandings you have realized from reading.

You may have developed faith in a higher power. It is fine to mention this, however, be careful! Playing the religion card is sometimes perceived as a bunch of malarkey. And, if you are talking to someone who is also a person of faith, you better be sincere and know the material. If you don't, all this will do is create skepticism. If your faith isn't a genuine and integral part of your character, then don't try using faith as an empty selling point. It will backfire.

List everything you have done that demonstrates a contrast between the person you were, and the person you are, since having made the decision to pursue a new life path. The actions, habits, and behaviors you have had since the time of your behavioral aberration is the only thing that defines the new you and provides evidence of positive behavioral change. Talk is cheap. You need to back up the claim that you have changed with evidence of change.

Every person has value. You know in your heart that you can represent a value to an employer. If you're like most people, you may not have taken the time to actually write down what



value you bring to the table. Now is the time to do that. Start writing it down.

If you have learned specific trade skills, this is an easy list to make. Irrespective of formal education, there are talents and skills that you have which are valuable to an employer. If you know how to work on your own vehicles, but have never been formally educated in auto mechanics, then you have an ability to understand and learn how mechanical systems function.

Your life experiences have certainly taught you how to perform various functions. Are you a person of patience, capable and willing to learn new skills? Do you have the self-discipline to perform those tasks that you may not necessarily want or like (*called work*), but must perform in order to reach fulfillments and positive conclusions?

What about your attitude? As an employer, I look for people who have the attitude; “I’m willing to cheerfully do anything that will make your job and life easier.” I look for people who have a positive attitude and are willing to embrace and conquer challenges. Otherwise, all I would be hiring is someone who required a lot of supervision, which just makes my job and life harder.

I want people who do not need to be told what to do but rather, people who do their job, and when they are finished, they go above and beyond and find other things that they can do, which will benefit the company.

If you were hiring someone and paying him or her out of your pocket, what kind of person would you want to invest in? Become that person. Not just as lip service in an interview either.

Remember, all a successful interview does is open a door to an opportunity. What happens after you walk through that



door is entirely up to you. When you land the job, the work begins. It is now time to perform and prove that you are worthy of promotions and raises, or at the very least, continued employment.

Starting today, walk around for a month or so with a pencil and paper in your pocket at all times. Keep paper and pencils next to your bed. Think about yourself, your talents and skills, and the value you bring to an employer. That employer is considering making an investment in you. You need to give an employer the justification for that investment, and you need to generate a solid level of confidence that it will receive a return on that investment.

As I said before, as an employer, I am only interested in hiring and paying people if they will make my life easier. If I have any inkling that a prospective employee will be a complainer, or that they are otherwise coming with a bunch of negative attitudes, I'm not interested because they will just make my life harder – then the interview is over. To quote Robert F. Kennedy; “The future is not a gift. It is an achievement.” Employers want achievers – not just someone who thinks they are entitled.

Develop a written list. Let me emphasize, written list. If you don't write it down, you are not going to remember these great selling attributes when it is most important – during an interview.

From your list, you will develop a presentation. You are going to want to memorize and practice your presentation until it flows easily and naturally, with sincerity and conviction from the gut – much the same as anyone practices a speech or sales presentation.

Your presentation needs to create a certain enthusiasm. If you are excited about your new future, (which you will be



when you genuinely make the decision) then that excitement and your positive outlook will be contagious.

You have good reason to be excited – you have begun a journey that leads to life’s rich rewards. You’re at the foothills, climbing a mountain that has a pot of gold at its peak. The climb will fill you with the feeling of challenge and accomplishment, create confidence, and it will form your character. You’re on stage and under the spotlight during your interview. Make it an Academy Award presentation.

Having read thousands of resumes and conducted hundreds of interviews as an employer, there were only a handful of people who had written goals. Of course, everyone states on their resume, “*Goal Oriented,*” and gives lip service about their goals. However, when questioned, it becomes pretty obvious that the statement on their resume is only a thin and unsubstantiated veneer. During the interview, it becomes painfully apparent that they are just making it up as they are talking.

Like many employers, I frequently ask people about their goals during an interview. After an individual had explained their goals, whether it sounded sincere or was just an obvious bunch of rhetoric to create what they perceived would be the desired impression, I would ask to see their written plan to achieve those goals.

The number of individuals who were able to produce a written goal plan remains miniscule compared to the number of people I have interviewed. Those who did produce a written goal plan were hired on the spot. Why? Because these are forward thinking people and have a plan to actually achieve something moving into the future. These people represent that small percentage of individuals who are controlling their destiny.



If an individual has goals, and a genuine written plan to achieve those goals, that plan will translate into them working hard and achieving my company's goals. These people are genuinely goal oriented. To achieve their goals, they will need to maintain gainful employment, and they will need pay raises and promotions, which I am delighted to hand out – if they are earned.

I don't give out endurance raises. If a person manages to come to work every day, drink their share of the coffee and breathe their share of the air, and do their minimum job requirements, they are already receiving appropriate compensation. If they want more from the company, the raises, promotions, and perks, then it is up to them to demonstrate that they are giving more.

People who have written goals and written plans to achieve those goals are creating a greater value to the organization through their own efforts, motivation, and attitude.

What is a goal? A goal is a dream with a plan to achieve that dream, and an achievement date. In short, a goal is a dream with a date on it.

If money were no object, what do you want? What are your dreams? While you're walking around for a couple of weeks with pencil and paper, start writing down the things that you want.

Perhaps you want to buy a new house – one with a swimming pool and Jacuzzi. You might want a couple of nice cars, nice furniture, a nice wardrobe, and an entertainment system in your new home.

You may want respect and admiration from the people whom you admire and respect. You want other people to recognize your position in life and the accomplishments you have





made. You want a lifestyle that includes financial security, comfort, and convenience.

If you have children, you may want to help them with college expenses. You may want to develop a robust retirement savings account. Perhaps you want to own your own business as I have and enjoy the journey of building, and the rewards that come with conquering challenges. You may want to travel, take vacations, and stay in the best hotels, or sail in a top-of-the-line suite aboard one of the best cruise ships.

Maybe you want to help family and friends or make abundant donations to your church or other charitable organizations. Perhaps you want to go to college and earn a degree, or sail around the world in your new yacht.

Above all, you want freedom. You want the secure feeling that there are no skeletons in your closet and that you're not looking over your shoulder. You want to take comfort in the fact that everything you are achieving cannot be taken away.

These are just a few examples of dreams. Can they be attainable goals? Of course, they can.

Houses with swimming pools and Jacuzzi's are built and bought every day. The cruise ship and hospitality industries only survive because people set a goal to take vacations.

People earn respect and admiration based upon their achievements all the time, because they deliberately set and achieve goals. People attend and graduate from college every quarter. There are thousands of new businesses started every year, and those organizations that have goals and a plan that provides a clear path to profitability achieve great success. People follow savings goals that provide for retirement, and create college funds for their children each and every day.



Remember this! I have been where you are, and I have achieved all of the aforementioned goals, so there is nothing preventing you from doing the same. The path is there. I'm just showing you that the path is real, and that you can follow it the same as I did.

People, at least the vast majority, take freedom for granted. Most people never even consider the possibility of losing their liberty and accumulated assets. That is because they are not engaging in any behavior that could jeopardize their freedom. In many respects, the ex-offender has a great advantage. They have eaten the forbidden fruit. They have the knowledge and experience to know the difference.

Can you dream dreams – do you dream dreams? Of course, you do. Can you realize your dreams? Yes, of course you can. Achieving your dreams only requires that you take the time to formulate a realistic plan, and through that planning process, you will determine a realistic attainment date for reaching your goals.

The goal-setting and planning process is not difficult. It only takes a little focus and time to internalize your dreams, make your plan to achieve your dreams, and determine a reasonable and attainable date that you will achieve your dream.

When you go through these few steps, you have now taken a dream and made it an attainable goal. Then, you simply follow the plan, with the understanding that you will face Dragons, adversities, and challenges. Divide and conquer!

Get a dream, set a goal, create a plan, forget the goal and follow the plan. The goal will happen.

Be careful that your goals do not conflict with each other. If your career goal is to become an over-the-road truck driver, and your personal goal is to raise a family and spend a great



deal of time with your children, then you have set conflicting goals.

During my corporate flying career, I was out-of-town an average of 25 days a month. I thoroughly enjoyed the traveling for many years. However, I was not raising a family, and those pilots I knew who had family obligations also had frequent family and marital problems. All of your goals need to coincide with one another.

After you have organized your goals and made written plans to achieve those goals, break down your plan to monthly and weekly sub-goals. Now, break it down further to daily tasks. This is critical. You must know each day the tasks that you need to complete to stay on track and on schedule.

After you have made your written plan and broken it down to daily tasks, you will have a really powerful and compelling presentation for a prospective employer. As I said before, any person that I ever interviewed who actually produced a written plan to achieve their goals was hired on the spot.

#### TO SUMMARIZE:

1. Keep pencil and paper close at hand for a month – actually for the rest of your life, but we'll start with a month.
2. Think about yourself and list all of the positive accomplishments you have made since the time of your behavioral aberration. If you carry paper and pencil for a month, you will be amazed how large a list you will make.



3. List all of your talents and skills that could apply to the particular position you plan to pursue, and your skills that represent any value to any employer. Emphasize the skills that apply to the position you are pursuing but list them all during an interview. An employer may have other positions available in addition to the one for which you are applying.
4. Develop a list of goals – short term, medium term and long term. Develop a plan to achieve each of those goals. Keep a progress report on each of your goals. Show the employer your written goals and your written plan to achieve those goals.
5. Memorize your lists of accomplishments, skills and talents, and your goals and plans.
6. Practice your presentation.

When the question arises about your behavioral aberration, you might handle it something like this. Keep in mind that your explanation needs to be sincere – not just a bunch of hyped-up rhetoric that sounds good.

Everything you say could bring more probing questions. Probing questions are a good sign that the employer is interested enough to ask further questions.

If your explanation is sincere, the answers to any probing questions will flow naturally. When you are telling the truth, the answer to any question is the truth. It doesn't require much thought or rehearsal.

Yes Mr. Employer, a few years ago I made some poor choices and engaged in some unacceptable behaviors. In retrospect, and in looking at the person I am today, those choices were



clearly not in keeping with my standards of acceptable conduct.

Mr. Employer, I stole some money that did not belong to me. I'm not proud of that and I cannot offer any excuses. I did not steal for need of others or myself. I stole money because of greed, and because I somehow thought that I could take a shortcut to financial freedom and security. It was not victimless, and for that I genuinely feel bad. I paid a dear price with my liberty, but the experience was the genesis of a directional change and a healthy understanding that the choices I make today determine where I will be tomorrow.

The changes that have occurred within me have been the result of very conscious and deliberate choices. I can confidently say that I am not the same person today who stole that money. Based upon who I am today and who I intend to become, the stark contrast of my behavior of yesteryear is so foreign, and it so violates my very essence, it can only be described as a behavioral aberration.

That took about thirty seconds. The 30-Second Rule.

Now, you immediately start to dilute the past with your progress.

Since the time of my indiscretion, I have... (*List all of your positive accomplishments.*) Some examples might include: Earned my GED and completed several college courses. I intend to continue my education on a part time basis until I earn my degree. I developed a couple of trade skills including horticulture, construction and culinary. I am computer literate and have a good working knowledge of Microsoft Word, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint. I've developed excellent organizational disciplines and the ability to identify challenges and work through them to reach positive resolutions. I have let all of my old friendships and association's drift, because I'm just moving in a totally



different and positive direction. I'm participating in several programs through several community organizations that are designed to help me become the best that I can be. I have volunteered with United Way and meet with economically disadvantaged teens once a week. I am applying to volunteer with other organizations as well. I find that volunteering helps a good number of people, and it has also resulted in meeting a whole new group of genuinely wonderful people. These are my new friends.

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to take up too much of your time talking about what I have been doing. Let me offer some information about my skills and experience as it relates to this specific position.

Now just list your professional skills as brief bullet points. If the person interviewing you has questions, they will ask you to elaborate on those skills that they feel are most applicable to the position you are seeking.

Briefly list every skill that you have that supports your ability to perform in the job, to interact well with co-workers, and that demonstrate responsibility. After you have gone through the list, now elaborate in more detail on those skills that are most applicable to the specific job for which you are applying.

Mr. Employer, the last things I would like to share with you are my goals. (Briefly list your goals.) Here in my planner, I have developed my goals and I have my written plans to achieve each of these goals. I would be happy to share them with you in detail.

I'm not sure how many people working here have written goals, but I believe that there is an enormous advantage to you and this company when you hire someone who has genuine goals and a decisive plan to achieve those goals. I can only achieve my goals if I demonstrate a high level of



performance in my job. To achieve my goals, I will need to earn promotions and pay raises. And yes, Mr. Employer, I clearly understand that promotions and pay raises are earned based upon my performance. My goals and the company's goals will become interdependent, which will result in forward progress for both the company and me.

During your positive orations, the employer may bring you back to your conviction issue with additional questions.

If the conviction questions come back up, THAT IS GREAT NEWS! Questions regarding your conviction are a really good sign. The interviewer wants to understand, so embrace it. Answer their questions directly and completely, observing the 30-Second Rule, then right back into more positive facts that dilute it.

It is also important that you know a little about the company that you are interviewing with. Take the time to do a little homework. If you do not have Internet access, almost all libraries have Internet access, and you can probably read about the company on-line. If the company does not have a website, take the time to visit them and get a brochure. If they are a publicly traded company, read their annual report. During the interview, you are going to want to demonstrate that you have enough interest in their company to have done a little research.

Incidentally, as an employer, I cannot imagine hiring someone who does not have and use a planner – essentially a calendar. Planners are inexpensive. You cannot achieve a goal without a plan, and you cannot create and follow a plan without a planner. It is a fundamental tool for success. Aside from that, if people don't write things down, they forget. This really is a critically important point that I need to emphasize. You cannot achieve a goal without a plan.



If you forget to attend meetings, forget an assignment, or forget that you are supposed to call someone, you may not get a second chance. Develop the habit of writing things down and using a planner/calendar. Then people will start to think that you have a steel trap for a memory. You'll never forget anything, and you will demonstrate a high level of responsibility.

If you have genuinely made the decision for a life of legitimacy, then the preceding interview presentation will come from the heart. Your enthusiasm will be contagious, and the person interviewing you will become excited about you and your future as well. You will have appealed to their innate hunger to help another person.

Notice that the explanation of the behavioral aberration is brief but thorough. It is a complete admission that defuses any need to turn the interview into an interrogation. You've opened up and admitted your wayward past.

You then diluted the significance of your conviction with positive information about your skills, and what you have done since the time of your conviction that demonstrates and provides compelling evidence of behavioral change.

Perhaps most importantly, you have definitiveness of purpose as you embrace the future, which is clearly demonstrated by your goals and written plans for their attainment. You have taken what could be a negative element of the interview (your conviction) and turned it into a very positive asset.

You need to remember one side note. Do not bring up money or benefits. On the application where it questions your income requirements, write the word "Open." Do not write the word "Negotiable." Frankly, when I landed that first job, I was not in a position to negotiate – I just needed a break.





Do not ask about money or benefits in an interview – *ever!*

If you have utilized the twenty or thirty minutes allotted for the interview to truly highlight your positive characteristics, trust me, they will raise the money issue. They already know that you're not there to volunteer and that the paycheck thing will be a necessary component of your coming to work.

For now, try to remember the simple concept so eloquently stated by President John F. Kennedy. “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”

If you were hiring someone and paying them out of your pocket, wouldn't you want a person whom you believe is going to make your life easier – a person who demonstrates that their priority is facilitating your agenda as opposed to using you to facilitate theirs?

As an employer, I always became very attentive and receptive during an interview when the person asked questions that pertained to how they could help make my life easier. I became very engaged with those people that emphasized how they could participate in resolving the challenges that my company had and assist with moving my company forward.

I have always noticed that 99% of resumes include a self-serving objective. The objectives generally state how they want to secure a position that will further their career, give them experience and give them education.

Why in the world would that interest me? Such an objective suggests to me that the individual will take what I invest in them and then sell it to my competitor? Employers find self-serving objectives distasteful.



Write an objective that appeals to the needs of an employer as opposed to an objective that tells the employer what you hope to get out of a position with their company.

Tailor your objective to yourself, but try to include such phrases as:

- Produce quantifiable results.
- Maintain accountability to my assigned responsibilities.
- Pioneer fresh, definitive, and innovative agendas that homogenize toward a positive and substantial impact on an organization's ultimate objectives.
- Embrace difficult challenges and implement solutions that engender conclusive resolutions.

If you are seeking the privilege of employment and want someone to invest in you, appeal to the employer's needs – not to your own.

Ask not what your company can do for you, ask what you can do for your company.

As a final note, if you follow my guidance regarding interviewing, you will probably get the job – or a job.

If you're just faking it and using the rhetoric, you might get the job, but you won't keep it, and then when you return to prison, you'll likely be blaming me.

Either make the decision, or don't, but don't do it half way.

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