

Why Were You Fired?

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"I had a great boss, but he left. From the very beginning it was clear my new boss and I were going to be at odds -- we just had different types of personalities. She kept changing the rules. One day, she would want it this way, and the next day she'd want it another way. I don't usually have problems with bosses, but this woman was really overbearing in her management approach."

That's how Karen explains being fired from a previous job at an interview. This is not the best way to present the situation. Karen could be classified as a whiner. Badmouthing former employers during the interview is a bad idea. No one wants to hear about someone else's shortcomings, particularly someone they don't even know.

If you have ever been fired, you probably dread being asked about it in a job interview. Not only have you been fired, you now have to talk about it again and again. How you deal with questions about your firing will depend a lot on how you have resolved the issue with yourself.

Alice explains it this way: "I was fired after a major reorganization. The merging of different cultures had caused a major change in the way things were done. There were some differences of opinion between my boss and me. In the end, I was let go. I take responsibility for my part in the way things turned out. I learned a lot from the experience, and in retrospect, I would have handled it differently. But that is behind me now, and I am ready to move on with a new perspective."

This answer demonstrates strength and self-confidence. Alice takes responsibility and deals with the question honestly.

Script Your Thoughts

Whether you were fired under unfair circumstances or for something you did that you regret, write down your thoughts on how you would explain the instance. Read your script aloud or use a tape recorder and practice until you like what you hear. Better yet, answer the question for someone else in a mock interview. Have him observe your interview technique -- your body language, eye contact and comfort-level while discussing your experience. Feedback from someone else will help you improve your presentation.

Check with Your References

It is important to find out what your former employer will say, or not say, about you if called for a reference. What you say should be in sync with what your former employer will say. If you left the employer under agreeable terms, check with your former employer to find out what you can expect.

Don't Lie

Probably the worst way to handle the firing is by lying. One lie usually leads to another, and before you know it you are in over your head. You always take a chance when you lie on an application. The application usually requires your signature, stating that the information is true and any false statements could be grounds for termination.

People get fired everyday. They move on and get new jobs, and you will too. No matter what the circumstances, put it behind you. Deal with your feelings about the firing, and prepare to talk about the experience in interviews. Being prepared will make you feel more confident and less emotional about the situation.

The purpose of this article is to both provide information and facilitate general dialogue about various employment-related topics. No legal advice is being given and no attorney-client relationship created. Please see the disclaimer for further limitations and conditions.