

CAREER

All the career news, books and advice executive-level PAs need

INDUSTRY EXPERT



ALEX JONES

Tell me about a time you failed...

No-one likes failure but it's an inevitable part of working life and an interviewer knows that. While you won't be the one to bring it up, you need to be prepared to answer that dreaded interview question – "tell me about a time you failed..." – in a positive way.

Here, the interviewer is seeking to determine how you approach and deal with failure – do you step back, assess where you went wrong and learn for next time or do you sweep it under the carpet and act like it never happened?

- For a start, don't pick a thinly veiled success story that isn't really a failure as the interviewer will see straight through it. But, at the same time, don't talk about a huge mistake that cost a lot of time and money. How about a time you made an oversight or error in judgement that caused a slight ripple in the ocean? Missing a deadline or failing to meet a monthly KPI, maybe? Just ensure the example doesn't relate to a key requirement of the job you're interviewing for.
- Show you know exactly where you went wrong by pinpointing the obstacles that prevented you from achieving what you wanted to. This shows you know the root cause and so can prevent reoccurrence.
- Don't attribute failure to things beyond your control – you'll seem unaccountable and defensive. And, don't blame others – an employee who looks for the nearest person to blame will always be a threat to morale and productivity.
- Don't be too hard on yourself – there's being humble and self-aware, then there's going overboard and being self-deprecating. Stick to the facts and show you can take these situations on the chin, rather than dwelling on them.
- Show you've learned from the situation by outlining lessons taken from the story – and say how you've since applied them to similar situations to achieve a more positive outcome.

Alex Jones is senior regional director at Hays Office Support

BOOK REVIEW



JANINE GARNER

It's Who You Know

Executive PA Media is delighted to introduce a book review feature to the magazine – the perfect opportunity for our members to feedback to the rest of the readership about the books worth investing in for your professional development

Our first review will feature in the December/January issue, covering *It's Who You Know* by Janine Garner – the title will be reviewed by Executive PA magazine reader Sue Watkins.

Following on from Janine's informative article on page 60 of this issue on building your network, her book further explains how a hand-picked network of just 12 key people can really fast-track your success by providing strength, diversity and opportunities for you. Janine explains who you need to know, how to get to know them and how to make value a two-way street.

Janine promises that by the end of the book (which comes complete with action plans, checklists and an online diagnostic tool), you'll be able to:

- Master the art of real and influential strategic networking
- Identify who you need in your circle, and how to find them
- Nurture and maintain your professional relationships
- Use your network to help make your dreams of success come true
- Future-proof your career and business ventures with a power network that evolves with you and is a non-stop source of opportunity and support.

We'll look forward to reading Sue's thoughts on the title next issue!

READER REVIEWERS

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