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You have created your own business (one or several) and are now looking for a job.

This document

- Reviews the important points that you may encounter;
- Offers suggestions/recommendations for each of these points to avoid penalties as you search for a job.

1 POSSIBLE CONCERNS FROM EMPLOYERS

If you were involved in the creation or launch of a business and your interviewer knows, the following topics will be addressed, or will be on the mind of the employer:

- *"Does this business still exist?;*
- *"Does this candidate come to our company to take a break, to run for cover, to gain experience, to set aside money to return eventually to his own business...";*
- *"Does he still have shares in the capital in this company...if it still exists?";*
- *"Has the candidate sold his start-up and is only coming to our company to work since he doesn't have money problems anymore?";*
- *"If this business still exists and this candidate has shares in it, will he spend the majority of his time with us managing his business remotely".*

2 BEFORE THE JOB INTERVIEW: ADOPT A LOW PROFILE

2.1 Be discreet about your past actions

It is generally not in your best interest to mention the fact that you have started a company and that you have been (or are) the main shareholder.

This information is not useful. It is not in your best interest to flaunt your ego and create suspicions from your interviewer.

2.2 Carefully address the question of the name of the company that you have created.

If this company had or had:

- **Your name:** Indicate it with your initials as many times as possible.
- **Another name:** you are safe.

2.3 Mention with care your former titles and responsibilities

One of the major challenges that you will encounter rests in the fact that the company that is hiring has discovered your company name and has associated it with your name. This happened after Internet searches after you submitted your CV. This is why it is important not to submit your CV before your interview.

In your written documents (paper or on the Internet), be careful with your language:

- Avoid using words such as: "proprietor," "entrepreneur," or "creator;"
- If you have to mention your responsibilities/titles/functions on your CV, simply note:
 - "CEO" ;
 - or "Manager of the company XYZ";
 - or "Director General" ;
 - or "Manager of".



3 DURING THE JOB INTERVIEW: TALK ABOUT YOUR STRATEGY

3.1 Anticipate the reservations and reactions from potential employers

3.1.1 Take into account facts and data

Bear in mind the fact that the majority of employers like entrepreneurs because they find them to be dynamic and entrepreneurial. They are people that they (perhaps) want to be like.

Moreover, an entrepreneur:

- Stimulates the interest of potential employers who ask questions like:
 - *"What have they done?"*
 - *"Have their initiatives been met with success?"*
 - *"Do they have the competencies of a remarkable entrepreneur?"*
- is often difficult to manage and has high expectations because he has had a lot of freedom for a while:
 - *"Will be very difficult to manage/satisfy".*
- Makes the employers fearful that one day they will return to their own company or recreate it and will leave:
 - *"She/he will only stay with us for 2 years!"*
- can create suspicion if the company that they have created still exists and has shares:
 - *"He/or she might spend the majority of his work time with us remotely managing his own business..."*

3.1.2 Talk about your winning negotiation strategy;

This is why it is somewhat risky to tell your interviewer that;

- You were the only one who had the idea of creating it vous étiez le seul à avoir eu cette idée de création;
- And/or you were the only one who created your company et/ou vous étiez seul lors de la création de votre entreprise;
- And/or you were the major shareholder in your company.

Don't lie...but don't put yourself into a "suicidal" situation either. Say the minimum but be completely truthful

avoid leaving a negative impression use this information:

- Say, for example:
 - *"With 2 or 3 friends, we started a company which..."*;
 - *"I took the initiative..."* ;
 - *"I have share capital in a company..."*;
 - *"We have created a business structure which..."*.



- then, add:
 - *"I quit the company after attaining my objective, which was to start the business and break even. I succeeded in balancing accounts in N years, or 10 months before the expected date."*
- Finally, complete this information using one of the following forms:
 - *"We have decided to stop activity for strategic reasons";*
 - *"We have decided to close the business because we lost one of our main clients. We didn't lose anything." ;*
 - *"My only objective was to start a company until it broke even. I reached it. Since the beginning, my objective has never been to manage a start up. Now, I am aiming for new goals, and I have other professional ambitions".*

3.2 Decide to be: Proactive or Reactive

During the interview, you can opt for two strategies to address the topic of creating your company:

- take the initiative: be proactive
- or, on the contrary, wait for your interviewer to ask you questions: be reactive.

3.2.1 Proactive

In this case, take the initiative to let your interviewer know.

We only make reference to the strategies. The other questions that are asked are ethical and left up to you for use.

During the first 15 minutes of the interview, tell the interviewer that you created a company.

For example, you can say (in the right situation):

"With two or three people, we created a company over which we had total responsibility. This project was supposed to take 3 years, but I was able to finish it in 2 years. My objective was to create this business and then look for a job. This is the reason that I am having this interview with you. For your information, there is no conflict of interest between my activity in your company and the fact that I have shares in this company."

Then, look at what happens.



3.2.2 Reactive

In this case, don't say anything and let your interviewer bring up the topic. In negotiation terms, this is called "managing information retention."

This strategy consists in:

- only communicating with your interviewer what he or she has the right to know;
- and to do this at the most suitable moment.

If your interviewer brings it up, respond in a way that is similar to the one listed above.

However, the danger of this strategy rests in the fact that your interviewer does not appreciate the fact that you waited to give this information. He could disapprove of your way of proceeding (your withholding of key information or concealment of the truth, but he wouldn't show it.) In this case, you might not get hired for no apparent reason and not understand why.

3.3 Carefully approach two important topics

3.3.1 Choose the best way to manage the name of the company that you have created

Two situations are possible, whether your company bears your name or not.

- *The company does not bear your name*

It is best for you not to mention that you were the creator.

If the company didn't have your last name, you don't have to mention that it is yours (unless if this runs contrary to your morals and becomes for strategic reasons a conflict of interests). In this case, share this information with your interviewer. But avoid doing so during the first 10 minutes of your interview. This would be suicidal.

- *The company bears your name*

In this case, you can only tell the truth.

You have created a company and you have X% of share capital. Say this with simplicity and without wasting any time. This is an elegant way to share it.

3.3.2 Prepare your case depending on if your company no longer exists or if it is still active

3.3.2.1.1 Your company no longer exists

In this case, your strategy is simple.

If your business closed, say why and present the facts in a positive way in 20 seconds:

- You have closed (or had to close) for strategic and/or financial reasons. You avoided heavy losses;
- Or you have sold it and it merged with a group and it no longer exists

Don't hesitate to summarize what you have learned and the competences that you have acquired from which your interviewer will benefit



3.3.2.1.2 *Your company is still active*

Two situations are possible depending on whether or not you have share capital.

- You no longer have share capital the problem is fixed. Simply tell your interviewer. Then, ask a question to change the subject.
- You still have share capital
- In the unlikely event that your interviewer asks if you had or hold shares in this company:
- Answer very calmly and only with "Yes" ...don't say anything more...but don't give the percentage. He does not have to know.
- Then, ask a question to change the subject
- Make a convincing argument. First, show your interviewer how much you will be helpful to him. Next, tell him in less than one minute that you have shares in a company which...then describe its activity.

If this activity is close to or similar to that of your potential employer, specify that you have thought about it and there is no conflict of interest between the two companies.

Be direct, firm, and precise.

Then, ask a question to change the subject

To avoid the unconscious fears of a business creator who still has shares:

- Avoid sharing too much information (for example, the percentage of share capital that you have 95%!);
- Make sure to mention the names of your associates.
- Emphasize the fact that:
 - In this case, you are now a simple strategic consultant.(This means that you only do consulting for a company one or two times per month);
 - You are a silent partner and you have no responsibility in this company.

3.3.3 *Limit as much as possible the role and responsibility you had when the business has been created..*

If this is the case, specify that you were helped by two or three people in the beginning.

For example, say: *"Two or three friends asked me to participate in one of their projects to create and launch a company. I accepted the challenge. I saw it as a rare and unique opportunity. This project was supposed to take 2 to 5 years. I succeeded in attaining my objective and launched it in less than 2 years. Before accomplishing my task, I left the company, and today, I am applying for a position in your company."*



4 SHARE YOUR PAST GOALS AND SHARE YOUR FUTURE OBJECTIVE

1. Finally, to convince your interviewer, it is important that you describe your professional objectives from 5 years ago, today, and the future
2. Don't take longer than one minute to do this.
3. Show that when you created the company in which you were invested, your main objective was to try something new and take on responsibilities for it.
4. Emphasize that you want to still want to pursue it...but rather in an established structure.
5. Then change the subject by talking about projects that you are going to undertake for your future interviewer.