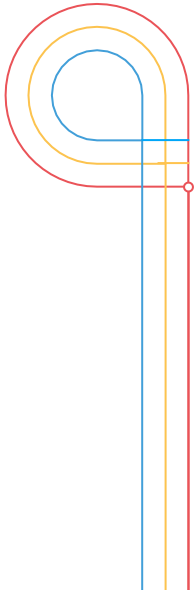# Introductions

Lauren Pizer
VP, Learning Experience

Brooke Haag
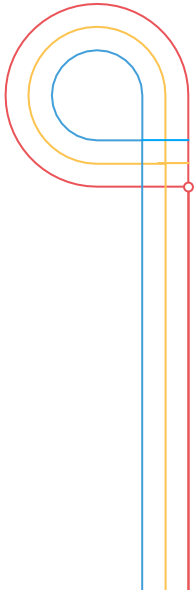**Learning Experience Design**

Today's goal:

Equip you with a framework to effectively and confidently answer a common interview question: *Tell me about yourself*

Today's goal:

- Tell me your story.
- Can you walk me through your resume?
- How did you go from where you started your career to today?
- Why are you interested in (company, industry or role)?

What is this question *really* about, and why is it so frequently asked?

- **It's provides an overview**: it's a quick snapshot of your resume, and identifies places for hiring managers to dig in during the interview
- **It forces you to sell yourself, quickly**: you have 1-2 minutes to sell yourself and put your career in the best light possible
- **It offers a glimpse into your personality**: interviews are short and this question is a quick way for interviewers to assess:
  - Motivation
  - Enthusiasm
  - Preparation → how much do you care about this job?

"The people I'm most excited to place in jobs are the people that are most excited to talk to me."

Amanda, former recruiter

The good news about this question:

- **<u>YOU</u>** get to craft your story the way you want it and create a first impression that people will remember
- Your personality gets to come through
- People connect with stories
- There's a formula for this, which you can prepare in advance to take the pressure off

Agenda

1. Review Good vs. Less Good "Tell me about yourself" responses
2. Framework for: Tell me about yourself?
3. Q&A

Example Story

Meet Jake!

Hiring Manager at ____ Company:
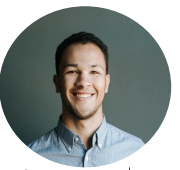"So, tell me about yourself?"

Jake:
I graduated from college a few years ago and wasn't totally sure what I wanted to do. I got a sales job at a technology company and started learning the industry. Eventually my team was reduced and I was laid off. I took off time to help my parents whose health was declining, and started working part-time retail jobs while I was looking for something else. A friend of mine recently changed careers and became a data analyst and she recommended I explore the industry. I looked into it, was really interested, and ended up enrolling in a certificate. I just finished and am interested in data analysis work now. Your company looks great and I'd love to be a part of the team.
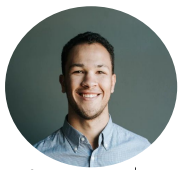
Example Story - 2nd try

After I graduated from college, I started my career as a sales development representative at a technology company. I taught myself about all the products I was selling, learned Salesforce, and developed deep relationships with large clients. I was in the top 10% of representatives the year I started, and created new systems for managing clients for my team. When my department was reduced due to company layoffs, I took some time off to take care of my parents who were in poor health. I'd always been interested in data analysis, so I taught myself some basic skills. But I quickly realized I wanted a more structured program, so enrolled in the Tableau Data Analytics program at (University Name). I performed exploratory data analysis using spreadsheets, SQL and Tableau, and practiced packing insights for various business stakeholders. I got hands on practice with various data analysis tools during the program. I'm now searching for my next opportunity and am very interested in [company name]. The work you are all doing to make healthcare more available is a mission very close to my heart. As the primary caretaker for my parents, I see how important this is.

What makes this a better version of Jake's story?

After I graduated from college, I started my career as a sales development representative at a technology company. I taught myself about all the products I was selling, learned Salesforce, and developed deep relationships with large clients. I was in the top 10% of representatives the year I started, and created new systems for managing clients for my team. When my department was reduced due to company layoffs, I took some time off to take care of my parents who were in poor health. I'd always been interested in data analysis, so I taught myself some basic skills. But I quickly realized I wanted a more structured program, so enrolled in the Tableau Data Analytics program at (University Name). I performed exploratory data analysis using spreadsheets, SQL and Tableau, and practiced packing insights for various business stakeholders. I got hands on practice with various data analysis tools during the program. I'm now searching for my next opportunity and am very interested in [company name]. The work you are all doing to make healthcare more available is a mission very close to my heart. As the primary caretaker for my parents, I see how important this is.

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I'm now searching for my next opportunity in data analysis and am very interested in [company name]. The work you are all doing to make healthcare more available is a mission very close to my heart. As the primary caretaker for my parents, I see how important this is.

Specific in terms of past skills, role

After I graduated from college, I started my career as a sales development representative at a technology company. I taught myself about all the products I was selling, learned Salesforce, and developed deep relationships with large clients. I was in the top 10% of representatives the year I started, and created new systems for managing clients for my team.

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Demonstrates accomplishments and "brags" a bit!

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Mentions time off but frames it appropriately and doesn't over-emphasize

After I graduated from college, I started my career as a sales development representative at a technology company. I taught myself about all the products I was selling, learned Salesforce, and developed deep relationships with large clients. I was in the top 10% of representatives the year I started, and created new systems for managing clients for my team.

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I'm now searching for my next opportunity in data analysis and am very interested in [company name]. The work you are all doing to make healthcare more available is a mission very close to my heart. As the primary caretaker for my parents, I see how important this is.

Clearly names certificate program & gets specific about what was learned

After I graduated from college, I started my career as a sales development representative at a technology company. I taught myself about all the products I was selling, learned Salesforce, and developed deep relationships with large clients. I was in the top 10% of representatives the year I started, and created new systems for managing clients for my team.

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I'm now searching for my next opportunity in data analysis and am very interested in [company name]. The work you are all doing to make healthcare more available is a mission very close to my heart. As the primary caretaker for my parents, I see how important this is.

Makes a connection between Jake's skills, interests and the company he is talking to

After I graduated from college, I started my career as a sales development representative at a technology company. I taught myself about all the products I was selling, learned Salesforce, and developed deep relationships with large clients. I was in the top 10% of representatives the year I started, and created new systems for managing clients for my team.

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Present

I'm now searching for my next opportunity in data analysis and am very interested in [company name]. The work you are all doing to make healthcare more available is a mission very close to my heart. As the primary caretaker for my parents, I see how important this is.

Future

Tells a confident story about their PAST PRESENT and FUTURE

Recap: What makes a great answer to the question, Tell me about yourself?

- Tells a confident story about your career journey (past → present → future)
- Shows off your skills, specific accomplishments and motivation
- Confidently acknowledges career changes and disruptions in career
- Doesn't mention ALL past work experiences, especially those that aren't relevant or very short-term
- Describes how your interest in the field developed with intention (vs. randomly or haphazardly) even if it didn't feel like it was intentional at the time
- Makes who you're talking to feel special and unique!

Agenda

1. Review Good vs. Less Good "Tell me about yourself" responses
2. Framework for: Tell me about yourself?
3. Q&A

How to craft your answer to: "Tell me about yourself?"

Use the Framework: Past → Present → Future

STEP 1: Start by talking about your PAST experiences and accomplishments

STEP 2: Then, talk about what you're currently doing (certificate, part-time work etc) in the PRESENT

STEP 3: Close by describing what you want for your FUTURE and why you want to work at that particular company

Let's take a look at another example, and then go through a template for each part.

(PAST) I've been working in the event planning industry for the past 10 years. I absolutely loved the thrill of organizing 10,000 person events, working with diverse clients, and managing budgets. By the end of my tenure in planning, I was managing a team of 30 people across 6 regions. As Covid began to slow down and eventually halt the event business, I decided to explore some of my other passions. I had always been intrigued by digital marketing, and even had some experience with it while event planning. I often supported the marketing team that promoted the various events I led, so had awareness of various marketing strategies and tools in the industry.

Meet Stephon

(PAST) I've been working in the event planning industry for the past 10 years. I absolutely loved the thrill of organizing 10,000 person events, working with diverse clients, and managing budgets. By the end of my tenure in planning, I was managing a team of 30 people across 6 regions. As Covid began to slow down and eventually halt the event business, I decided to explore some of my other passions. I had always been intrigued by digital marketing, and even had some experience with it while event planning. I often supported the marketing team that promoted the various events I led, so had awareness of various marketing strategies and tools in the industry. **(PRESENT)** I recently decided to fully transition my career into the digital marketing space, and enrolled in the Facebook Digital Marketing Certificate program at [University Name]. In this program, I am creating marketing plans, social media strategies, and various pieces of content marketing and social media ads.

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(PRESENT) I recently decided to fully transition my career into the digital marketing space, and enrolled in the Facebook Digital Marketing Certificate program at [University Name]. In this program, I am creating marketing plans, social media strategies, and various pieces of content marketing and social media ads.

(FUTURE) I'm most interested in [Company Name], because I'm looking for a role where I can combine my digital marketing skills with my event planning experience. The [role] ~~at [Company Name]~~ will allow me to use my marketing skills to support small businesses in marketing their events to a larger audience, which is very exciting and motivating to me given my background.

Meet Stephon

Step 1: Start by talking about your PAST

TEMPLATE:

Over the past # years, I've been working as a […]. In this role: *(pick and choose)*
- I developed skills in […].
- I accomplished […].
- I got really interested and inspired by […].
- I learned […] about myself
- I taught myself […]
- I realized there was so much more I wanted to learn about […]

Step 1: Start by talking about your PAST

Julia

EXAMPLE:

After high school, I went right into working for my family's business. I scaled the family painting business from one to five cities over the past two years. I learned how to manage people and budgets. The business was doing well but I wanted to equip myself with new technical skills that could help me learn even more about scaling businesses and making data-driven decisions for the company.

Step 1: Start by talking about your PAST

What to Include:
- Past jobs
- What you accomplished
- Skills you've gained
- Gaps or time off in your career
- Your career interests

What NOT to Include:
- A play by play of every role held
- Short term work or jobs that didn't build skills
- Specifics on why you were laid off or out of work

TEMPLATE:

Over the past # years, I've been working as a […]. In this role: *(pick and choose)*
- I developed skills in […].
- I accomplished […].
- I got really interested and inspired by […].
- I learned […] about myself
- I taught myself […]
- I realized there was so much more I wanted to learn about […]

Practice Activity: What to do if you get stuck describing your PAST?

Meet Janine

Step 1: Write down every job you've held since high school, including education (include any time off)

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Example:

Worked as a bartender → Enrolled in college, took courses in project management → Didn't finish → Became a receptionist → Got laid off → Starting contract work in medical billing → Unhappy; searching for new career → interested in project management certificate

Step 2: Underline the professional experiences that gave you skills that relate to what you want to do now OR taught you transferable skills

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Example:

Worked as a bartender → Enrolled in college, <u>took courses in project management</u> → Didn't finish → <u>Became a receptionist</u> → Got laid off → Starting <u>contract work in medical billing</u> → Unhappy; searching for new career → interested in project management certificates

Step 3: Reframe each experience you <u>underlined</u> and package it into the PAST template

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Example:

College courses in Project Management → That was my first exposure to project management. I remember I loved it because it was so orderly and just made sense to me

Receptionist → I actually practiced a lot of project management and other transferable skills like communication and teamwork in this role

Medical billing → I hated this job but I had to build project management skills here too, alongside a lot of attention to detail (another transferable skill)

Step 3: Reframe each experience you underlined and package it into the PAST template

I was first introduced to project management in college where I took a few courses and absolutely loved it. My first role was as a receptionist at a law firm where I put my project management skills into practice. I implemented a new scheduling system for the office, organized all company events and interacted with over 20 clients a day. I then transitioned into a role in healthcare where I used my project management skills to ensure all insurance claims were correctly billed for a large, top 5 insurance provider. I managed and organized over 100 claims a day. While my past experiences have been diverse, I've had the opportunity to use project management skills across a variety of industries.

A note about gaps in your resume or work experience:

- **We all have something in our past we wish was different:**
  - Unemployment
  - Changing jobs frequently
  - Getting fired or laid off
- **There are other things from our past that were courageous and make us who we are today, but may have taken us out of the job force:**
  - Medical or mental health illnesses
  - Taking care of a sick family member
  - Having or taking care of children
  - Traveling the world

Ask yourself a few questions when deciding to include or disclude these moments in your story:

Ask yourself a few questions when deciding to include or disclude these moments in your story:

1. Is this something I feel comfortable sharing with others?
2. Is this a meaningful part of my career story - Did I learn something or experience something during this time that is relevant to my next job?
3. If I DON'T include it, will there be big questions from the interviewer?

How to craft your answer to: "Tell me about yourself?"

Use the Framework: Past → Present → Future

✅ **STEP 1**: Start by talking about your PAST experiences and accomplishments

STEP 2: Then, talk about what you're currently doing (certificate, part-time work etc) in the PRESENT

STEP 3: Close by describing what you want for your FUTURE and why you want to work at that particular company

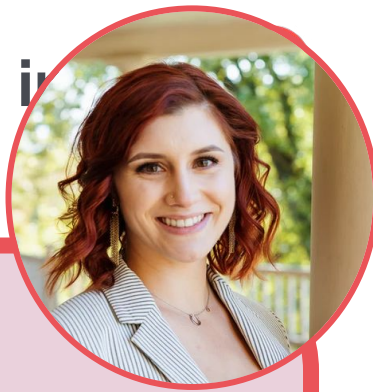# Step 2: Talk about what you're doing and learning in the PRESENT

TEMPLATE:

I just completed / am enrolled in the [cert name] program, which taught me skills such as [...].

In this program, I worked / am working on projects such as [...] and [...]. I'm also still working part time / full-time at [...] doing [..]

Step 2: Talk about what you're doing and learning in the PRESENT

TEMPLATE:

I recently enrolled in the Tableau Data Analysis Certificate program, which taught me analysis tools such as spreadsheets, SQL and Tableau. In this program, I am conducting exploratory data analyses on various datasets and visualized insights for various audiences. On the side, I'm also still working with my family's business to apply what I'm learning in data analysis.

Step 2: Talk about what you're doing and learning in the PRESENT

What to Include:

- Education you're enrolled in (if applicable)
- Specifics of what you're learning and doing (brag!)
- Current, relevant job(s), freelance etc

What NOT to Include:

- Jobs you're doing that may not be relevant to your ultimate career goal

TEMPLATE:

I just completed / am enrolled in the [cert name] program, which taught me skills such as [...].

In this program, I worked / am working on projects such as [...] and [...]. I'm also still working part time / full-time at [...] doing [..]

Step 3: Close with where you want to go in the FUTURE and why

TEMPLATE:

I am looking for a career where I can combine my interest in [..] with my [... skills].

I want to bring this skillset to [Company name] because I'm inspired by the Company's commitment to [mission/vision] because [...]

OR

I am inspired and passionate about [...] because [...]. [Company name] is aligned with this passion and allows me to use my skills in a way that's aligned with my purpose.

Step 3: Close with where you want to go in the FUTURE and why

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What to Include:
- The connection between your new skills and the company you're talking to
- Your passion / interest in the company you're talking to

What <u>NOT</u> to Include:
- Vague, impersonal information about why this company is aligned with your career goals

TEMPLATE:

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OR

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PAST

After high school, I went right into working for my family's business. I scaled the family painting business from one to five cities over the past two years. I learned how to manage people and budgets. The business was doing well but I wanted to equip myself with new technical skills that could help me learn even more about scaling businesses and making data-driven decisions for the company.

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FUTURE

I am looking for a career where I can combine my experience in scaling early stage companies with my skills in data analysis. The [role] at [Company name] is an ideal environment for me to apply my entrepreneurial spirit to solving complex data challenges in a fast paced, startup environment.

Now that you know how to craft your story, HOW do you deliver it?

Tips for delivering your story:

1. **PRACTICE** your story! Write it down, read it out loud, record yourself and share it with others. It should take you ~1-2 minutes to deliver
2. **WRITE DOWN** your story. Have a paper copy of your story that you can reference and read (if needed) during phone/video interviews
3. **TAILOR** your story for each person you talk to. Remember to customize the FUTURE portion to align it with each company you speak with
4. **BE CONFIDENT**. Many people downplay their story because they don't think others will find it interesting or impressive. Speaking with confidence (even if you don't always feel it) is critical

Workshop Recap

- Successfully answering the question "Tell me about yourself" requires preparation. You will need to write out a story you feel proud of that incorporates your past → present → and future

- Look at your past experiences and pull out the ones that are related to where you want to go in your career OR taught you transferable skills. Use those experiences to describe your PAST

- When describing your PRESENT, boast about what you're currently doing and all that you're accomplishing

- Tailor the FUTURE to the company you are talking to and make the case for why you want to work at their company

- Be confident and proud of your past, present and future. If you aren't then who else is going to be?