



Developing a 30-Second Summary for interviews

Developing a “30-second Summary” as a basis for responding to “Tell me a little about yourself.”, provides a starting point for more in-depth interview conversation and helps you focus, giving you more confidence as you answer the question “Why should we hire you?”

OUTLINE

Cover the essential facts/background information, beginning w/:

5-10-second

Education Background: “I’m majoring in (or I’m graduating in May with a degree in) _____,” perhaps including an area of concentration or your minor. If there is an interesting story about how you selected this major, briefly include that.

5-10-second

Description of Interest: “I am especially interested in _____ opportunity in your company/organization because of my _____ experience.”, which can include mention of related internship, summer job, a class research project, etc.

5-10-second

Strengths, Accomplishments—related to your job target.

5-10-second

Summary or Goal Statement: Why you think you would be a good fit for a certain position in this organization, etc.—a good place to show you have done some research on the organization.

- This can easily expand to one minute or more if you elaborate with details about why you chose to attend Illinois State and/or your major, what skills you have and how you developed them, etc. There is NOT a 30-second time limit in responding to this request for background information!! It’s about displaying some focus in response to a rather open-ended inquiry, so that the interviewer(s) can get a sense of your motivations, purposefulness, and how clearly you can express yourself on a topic that ought to be quite familiar—YOU.

SAMPLE I

I am studying “my major”, with a minor (or concentration) in _____. These areas have prepared me for (a particular entry-level job) in a company/ organization such as yours. I was really drawn to this field because: of a “particular experience”; the inspiration of _____; I have always been very good at _____.

I believe my strong GPA shows I’m willing to work hard and that I was successfully able to juggle working up to 20 hours per week on campus, while taking a full course load. (Further discussion about your organizational skills, good work habits, and/or being very goal-oriented would be OK too.)

Because of my interest and experience in this field (note special academic project or even a summer internship already completed), I think I will be a very good fit for (this type of job) in your organization.

SAMPLE 2

If your major doesn't necessarily match your job target: While my major in _____ is not directly related, I do believe I have the talent to be successful in your management training program. I do have two specific experiences that convince me a management training program in sales (or _____) is my best career target.

My part-time (or summer) jobs at _____ and _____, as noted on my resume, both have given me a great foundation in customer service, sales, and people management. At (1st job), I started as _____, and then was promoted to _____, often serving as the trainer of new staff. At (2nd job) I had more experience in direct sales, and found I was consistently able to meet and surpass my monthly sales goals.

I have taken electives in (this) and (that) which have provided a good background in (marketing, communications, etc.). In fact, an elective in Mass Communication last year convinced me to pursue this career path, instead of something more related to my actual major.

Based upon your Web site's description of what is required of entry-level sales candidates, I am confident I can contribute to the future growth of the company.

[An Education major seeking a job in a social service agency could make a similar case, based on a change in goals, related experiences, etc.]

Whatever highlights/strengths you select, try to use your own words. The objective is to get your message across naturally, without sounding over-rehearsed.

In summary, a successful 30-second Summary will focus on what you have to offer the organization(s) you are trying to impress. It is not about what they can do for you, in terms of a paycheck, a great professional opportunity, the prospect of getting your graduate degree paid for by the company, or other great benefits. Those things are the outcome of, or the rewards for, what candidates have in the way of talents, training, motivation and experience—plus being able to articulate a connection between what you have to offer and what you have to gain. Thus, promoting oneself in an appropriate way in interviews, as well as at job fairs, is another skill needed to successfully make the transition from college to career!