

# ALL FIRED UP

IF YOU'VE JUST BEEN FIRED *and you're nervous about answering why* IN YOUR NEXT JOB INTERVIEW, DON'T SWEAT IT! *We have the answers*

by ERIN COE

**Y**ou're interviewing for your dream job. Dressed to the nines. Answering questions thoughtfully and eloquently. But then the dreaded question gets asked: 'Why were you let go from your previous job?' If you thought explaining to your friends was hard; imagine how much harder it is to tell a potential new employer. Here's how to do it

## THE BEST POLICY

According to Human Resources Specialist Heloise van Heerden, honesty is always the best policy. 'Lying just doesn't work', she says. 'The truth will come out in a reference check anyway. And if it doesn't, you may well get the job, but what if your employer finds out at a later stage that you lied in your interview?' Do you really want to live with the fear of being found out? No, thank you!

## THE TRUTH DOESN'T HURT

So, if you can't lie, does that mean you should spill every grisly detail? Absolutely not. 'Keep it short,' Heloise says. 'Explain why you were fired, without going into lengthy explanations and justifications for what happened. One to two sentences

should be enough'. Human Resources Manager Evita Plaatjie agrees. 'While you shouldn't stutter around the topic, as it may look like you're trying to hide something, you also don't need to go into too much detail about it.'

## THE FLIP SIDE

And it's not all bad. You'll have gained useful insights about yourself in the process of getting fired. Perhaps you didn't take enough initiative, or you gossiped about your seniors. Maybe you made one giant mistake that just couldn't be overlooked. Whatever the case, if you can acknowledge your part in getting fired, rather than simply blaming your employer, you have an opportunity to turn a blunder into a valuable life lesson. And if you can convey this in your interview you're bound to impress. 'You can explain what you have learnt from the experience and what you're going to do to ensure you don't repeat the behaviour that got you into trouble,' suggests Heloise. Evita has a tip too: 'Once you've given a truthful account of the events that led to you losing your job, tell your interviewer that honesty and transparency are values you believe in – if they are, of course! Being able to admit that you got fired

will ultimately show how strongly you stand by your values.'

## FOUL PLAY

And if you were unfairly dismissed? According to Heloise, talking about this can be tricky as you don't want to bad-mouth your previous employer. 'You can state that you think it was unfair, however, be prepared for the interviewer to ask you why you felt it



## CONFIDENCE BOOSTER

Career coach Penny Holburn has some tips on how to regain confidence after a bad working experience:

### •Talk to someone or try out journaling

You'll feel a lot better about the situation once you've opened up about it.

### •Change your mindset

'Remind yourself of all your strengths and successes in life.

### •Try and make sense of what happened

'Look at any role you may have played in getting fired and see what you can learn from it. See what you can do differently going forward and look at the role of others in the experience.'

was unfair and what you did about it at the time.' Your response could have a huge impact on how your interviewer sees you. For example, if you thought it was unfair, but didn't challenge it through the available avenues, such as the CCMA, the interviewer may wonder if there is more to the story. 'Never play the victim card', warns Heloise. 'If you felt wronged, but did nothing about it, don't be surprised if your interviewer is unsympathetic.'

## THE NO-NOS

Here are some things you absolutely shouldn't do:

### Refuse to answer the question.

'If you respond with "I'd rather not answer", it will definitely reflect negatively and the interviewer will immediately wonder what you are hiding,' explains Heloise.

### Bad-mouth your previous employer.

'As someone in a higher position, your interviewer is more likely to relate to your boss than to you, so bad mouthing your previous employer won't be received very well.' **BL**