

making it happen for you!

Laura Serway

**GENERAL MANAGER, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP SERVICES
GALAXY COMMUNICATIONS**

When it comes to interviewing job candidates, Laura Serway believes there's a method to her madness. She calls that method STAR—an acronym for Situation, Task, Action, Result—and the system works for her.

During the interview, perhaps a job candidate mentions having been a volunteer for a community organization. Serway will ask why the person decided to volunteer. What was the situation that led the person to that community organization? What were the responsibilities or tasks associated with the volunteer position? What actions did the person take to fulfill those responsibilities? Last, she'll ask the person to describe the results of those actions.

"When a person talks about the results of what he or she did in the past, I believe that predicts what the person is going to do in the future," Serway says.

While the individual chats, Serway pays attention to eye contact, posture, and body language. She also measures the person's judgment, openness, sensitivity, and ability to get along with others. "I can read through all that and determine how this person is going to work in my organization, based on what the person has done in certain positions," Serway says.

Serway can size up someone in the first five minutes, especially a person going

for a sales position. She peppers the person with questions such as

"Why are you in sales?"

"What do you like about sales?"

"What don't you like about sales?"

"How do you deal with objections?"

"What's the best thing that's happened to you in sales? Why?"

"What's the worst thing that's happened to you in sales? Why?"

Asking the "why" questions, Serway believes, leads to the effectiveness of the STAR method.

Serway assesses how long a person has been in a given job, why the person left a prior position, and how the person obtained a particular job. She looks at the individual's educational background, the person's work experiences, and the individual's community involvement.

"If the person isn't involved in other things besides work or the person isn't passionate about what he or she does, that person is not going to work out for me," Serway says. "I need people who are very grounded and who really want to dig deeper into what they do versus just a nine-to-five person."

(Continued)

Other turnoffs for Serway are candidates who arrive late for the interview and those who forget to turn off their cell phones. "All of a sudden, the cell phone rings, showing that the person didn't think ahead. I'm looking for someone who's proactive, not someone who's reactive," Serway says. She also bristles when the job candidates show arrogance or when they stipulate what they will or won't do (e.g., "I can't work weekends").

When Serway turns the tables and gives the candidate an opportunity to ask questions of her, that person had better be prepared.

"Prepare a list of questions that are industry specific for the job you're prepared

to do," Serway advises. "Talk to people who do that same job. Talk to people who have been interviewed by the same company or the same person you're going to interview with. Come prepared with a pen, a notebook, and your list of questions. You have to be a sales person sitting in that interview chair. You want to sell yourself, certainly, but more importantly, you want to get the interviewer excited about selling the job to you."

When Serway gets excited about selling the job to a candidate, it's a safe bet that the person in the interview seat is a "star" in Serway's book. ●