



Transformations 123

By Amy Sindicic LIFE COACH

What Private Sector Interviews REALLY Ask For



[Transformations123.com](https://www.Transformations123.com)

Meet Your Coach

I'm Amy Sindicic founder of Transformations123.com—where we pair powerful mindset shifts with practical career strategies to help federal employees thrive in private industry.

“Amy took my 7-page federal résumé and turned it into a two-page powerhouse. Within 2 weeks, I had 3 interviews lined up after six months of total silence.”

With over 15 years of experience in career coaching, resume writing, and interview prep, I've helped hundreds of professionals to land higher-paying jobs faster, often with no private sector experience. I've also taught Business English and job strategy on four continents, and I specialize in helping people shift their mindsets and present their value clearly to stand out and attract their dream roles.



Frustrated that your federal experience isn't opening doors in the private sector?

You're not alone. Many skilled professionals from government face the same struggle — applications that go unanswered, interviews that miss the mark, and uncertainty about what hiring managers truly expect.

This guide is designed to change that.

Inside, you'll learn how to:

- ☑ Reframe your federal achievements in ways that speak to private employers
- ☑ Handle the questions that really matter in interviews — even the unspoken ones
- ☑ Demonstrate that you're the adaptable, results-focused hire companies are looking for

It's time to stop second-guessing your worth and start showing exactly why you're the right choice.

25 Ways Government and Private Sector Interviews Differ — And How to Prepare

Format: Panel vs. One-on-One

Government: Often structured panels with multiple interviewers asking scripted questions.

Private: More conversational, typically one-on-one or two-on-one.

✓ Practice both. Build rapport — private interviews often hinge on whether they can see themselves working with you day to day.

If small talk makes you nervous, prep 2–3 friendly openers (like a comment on their office or industry trends). It breaks the ice.

Structure: Standardized vs. Fluid

Government: Questions and scoring are rigid to ensure fairness.

Private: Questions adapt based on the conversation.

✓ Expect curveballs. They aren't trying to trip you up — they want to see your thought process. Trust your expertise.

It's fine to pause for a second to think. A short pause can show thoughtfulness, not hesitation.

Scoring: Point-Based vs. Impression-Based

Government: Often scored against strict criteria.

Private: Decisions rely heavily on overall impression, chemistry, and compelling stories.

✓ Connect on a human level. Your stories and energy often matter as much as your credentials.

Practice telling a short success story with a smile makes you instantly more relatable.

Language: Formal vs. Relational

Government: Technical language and formal structure.

Private: Conversational tone welcomed; soft skills count.

✓ Translate technical achievements into clear, relatable language. It helps them quickly see your value.

Avoid acronyms unless you explain them. Many private managers won't know your agency's shorthand.

Behavioral Questions: STAR vs. Natural Storytelling

Government: Typically expects strict STAR (Situation–Task–Action–Result) format.

Private: Values STAR but expects it to sound natural, not rehearsed.

✓ Share your stories with warmth and personality. Let them hear your enthusiasm and authentic voice.

End your stories by linking back to the company's needs. It ties your experience directly to their world.

Values: Compliance vs. Initiative

Government: Focus on process and accountability.

Private: Values innovation, ownership, and practical results.

✓ Highlight where you improved processes, solved problems creatively, or drove change.

If your role was compliance-heavy, show how you still made things smoother, faster, or easier for others.

Questions: Predictable vs. Exploratory

Government: Often pre-set and sometimes publicly posted.

Private: Can ask almost anything related to performance or culture fit.

✓ Welcome unexpected questions. They're your chance to showcase adaptability.

Use clarifying phrases like, "That's a great question. May I take a moment to think?" It buys time and shows composure.

Hiring Speed: Slow vs. Fast

Government: Weeks or even months.

Private: Sometimes just days.

✓ Check emails frequently and be ready to move quickly. Fast hiring is a good sign of genuine interest.

Have your references prepped and your negotiation range in mind so you're never caught off guard.

Metrics: Process vs. Profit

Government: Success tied to policy and compliance.

Private: Measures impact in ROI, KPIs, and cost savings.

✓ Reframe your achievements in terms of time saved, money optimized, or process efficiencies.

Numbers pop. Even estimates like "reduced time by roughly 25%" grab attention.

Decision Makers: HR vs. Hiring Team

Government: Often centered around HR or civil service scoring.

What Private Sector Interview Really Ask For

Private: Driven by hiring managers and team fit.

✓ Show how you'd work well with their team. Collaboration and cultural fit weigh heavily.

Mention something you enjoy about teamwork — it signals you'll be easy to integrate.

Follow-Up: Formal vs. Strategic

Government: Thank-yous typically don't influence outcomes.

Private: A well-crafted thank-you email can reinforce your fit.

✓ Always send a thank-you note within 24 hours. It's a simple way to stand out.

Reference a specific topic you discussed — it shows genuine engagement.

Attire: Conservative vs. Culture-Dependent

Government: Typically formal, traditional dress.

Private: Varies by industry and company.

✓ Research ahead. When unsure, slightly overdress — it's safer to look a bit too polished than too casual.

Check their team photos on LinkedIn for clues to dress code.

Duration: Fixed vs. Open

Government: Often tightly timed, 30–60 minutes.

Private: Varies widely, can stretch into multiple informal chats.

✓ Stay consistent and engaged across rounds. It signals genuine interest and stamina.

Bring a few fresh examples to keep later rounds lively.

Tone: Reserved vs. Engaging

Government: Often serious, with minimal small talk.

Private: Builds personal rapport from the start.

✓ Smile, be personable. A positive presence makes a lasting impression.

Mirror their energy. If they're relaxed and joking, lean in a little — it builds connection.

Notes: Poker-Faced vs. Responsive

Government: Interviewers may take notes silently.

Private: Expect nods, questions, or even laughter.

✓ Don't be thrown off by silence. Trust that you're still being heard and evaluated fairly.

Nod back or maintain calm eye contact — it keeps things warm, even with quiet panels.

Risk Appetite: Low vs. Growth-Driven

Government: Hires for reliability and past proof.

Private: Looks for people who take smart risks.

✓ Share examples of where you stepped up, learned fast, or improved a process. It shows courage and initiative.

Frame risks as strategic – highlight what you learned or how it positioned your team to grow.

Competencies: Policy vs. Profitability

Government: About governance, fairness, and equity.

Private: About growth, market share, and efficiency.

✓ Frame your contributions in ways that show bottom-line impact.

Connect your work to the bigger picture. Even compliance often protects budgets and reputation.

Interview Rounds: Few vs. Many

Government: Usually one or two rounds.

Private: Often three to five, including casual “coffee chats.”

✓ Keep your enthusiasm high throughout. Each round is a fresh chance to impress.

Treat informal chats just as seriously – they’re often key culture-fit tests.

Job Security: Tenure vs. Performance

Government: Once hired, generally secure.

Private: Stability depends on performance and fit.

✓ Show that you’re adaptable and eager to add value – that’s what builds private-sector security.

Share a time you embraced a change. It shows you won’t be rattled by evolving goals.

Negotiation: Fixed vs. Flexible

Government: Pay scales are rigid.

Private: Salary, bonuses, and flexibility are all on the table.

✓ Know your market value and be ready to discuss it with confidence.

Frame negotiations as collaborative: “I’m excited by this role – here’s what would make it a perfect fit for both of us.”

Resume Language: Technical vs. Persuasive

Government: Dense, technical detail for eligibility.

Private: Crisp, persuasive, marketing-focused.

✓ Use strong action verbs and clear impact statements. Make it easy to see your contributions.

Read your resume out loud. If it's boring, rewrite until it pops.

Emphasis: Longevity vs. Adaptability

Government: Rewards long tenure.

Private: Loves diverse experience and quick learners.

✓ Highlight your range, flexibility, and ability to thrive in new situations.

Link your varied experience to agility. It's a powerful private sector trait.

Culture Fit: Implied vs. Vital

Government: Often uniform expectations.

Private: Culture fit is a major factor.

✓ Ask smart questions about their mission and values. Show genuine alignment.

Even sharing why you were drawn to them helps. It signals you care about more than just a paycheck.

Job Scope: Defined vs. Evolving

Government: Duties rarely change.

Private: Roles often grow and shift.

✓ Emphasize your willingness to wear multiple hats and learn as the business grows.

Phrase it as curiosity and excitement, not just willingness.

Prep Style: Policy vs. Problem-Solving

Government: Mostly about eligibility criteria and technical fit.

Private: About solving their pain points.

✓ Research the company deeply and position yourself as the person who solves their biggest challenges.

Look up their recent news or financials. It's an impressive edge in your questions.

Fast Wins: Instantly Shift from Government to Private Sector Interview Style

- ☑ Use impact-focused language
- ☑ Show enthusiasm and energy
- ☑ Tell concise, memorable stories
- ☑ Ask smart, forward-looking questions
- ☑ Follow up with a tailored thank-you

Remember: Even small shifts can position you as the confident, adaptable hire they're looking for.

What's Next?

Let's Make This Real.



One client came to me after 6 months of total silence—no calls, no interviews. Within 2 weeks of rewriting her resume with me, she had 3 interviews lined up. You can do it alone through trial and error, but why wait months longer?

If you're serious about making your next career move—or want help translating your 7-page government résumé into something that shines in the private sector.

I've got your back.

Let's hop on a free 30-minute intro call and get clear on what's possible:

👉 <https://amysindicic.simplybook.me/>

Together, we'll turn that career change into a bold, successful next chapter.

You've got this.

Ready to Transform Your Career?

7 → 1

Resume
Pages

Shrink your
government
CV into a
private-sector
friendly
document

1:1

Personalized
Support

Get individual
guidance through
your entire career
transition journey

30 min

Free Intro Chat

Schedule your
Complimentary
Consultation to Discuss
Your Goals

Let's make your career change less
intimidating. You've got this!

<https://amysindicic.simplybook.me>

