

How to Prepare For An Interview

Overview

In preparation for your upcoming interview, find time to conduct a store visit and pay attention to the category of business you are currently managing today or will be interviewing for. Companies want you to have an opinion on their assortment. Keep your comments mostly positive but also provide constructive feedback for improvement. Please conduct company research, review the website and other resources to educate yourself on the organization.

In addition, look up the individuals you are interviewing with on LinkedIn to gain insight on background and career history.

Please contact me with any question and good luck with your interview.

1) Why Prepare

- A. You may be a pro at selling yourself face-to-face, but how comfortable are you selling yourself over the phone? Interviewing is an infrequently used skill, and we want to give you a professional look at the interview process.
- B. If you're having a telephone interview, the main goal is to get a face-to-face interview – that's it! Telephone interviews are the most difficult.
- C. The reason most companies use telephone pre-screening is because it's cost effective. 75%-80% of candidates are usually eliminated from the interviewing process in the telephone process, so it's important to be prepared.

2) Are You Ready? Research the Job!

- A. Do you understand the position?
- B. Have you researched the company – size, products/services, recent news, history, leadership, values?
- C. Have you visited one of their locations? Web Site?
- D. Position Income Potential? Relocation?
- E. Reason you're looking at opportunity? Interest level? Counteroffers?
- F. Does your family support a move/relocation?
- G. Please see "10 Reasons for Not Accepting a Counteroffer" attached.

3) Logistics

- A. Have the date and time of the interview been set?
- B. Who will you be talking to or meeting with? (Name-Title)
- C. If you're traveling, do you have all of the travel information?
- D. Do you understand how you will be reimbursed for expenses?
- E. Do you have emergency home and work numbers of your search firm recruiter and company contact?
- F. Arrive 15 minutes before the interview.

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4) Preparation Is The Key

A. Interviews start with mental preparation and setting the stage. Settle in before the interview to review your notes. If it's a phone interview, be sure you're set up where there will not be any interruptions.

B. Have your "Tools" ready:

- Copies of Resume
- Pen & Paper
- FAB Worksheet (see #9)
- Company Information
- Calendar
- List of questions you're prepared to ask

5) Basic Interviewing Tips For Face-To-Face Interviews

A. The employer should talk 60% of the time and you should talk 40% of the time.

B. Dress Code – Dress Professional

- a. Men – Dress suit – solid shirt – conservative tie
- b. Women – Dark suit or tailored dress

C. DO maintain good eye contact with the employer.

D. DO follow the interviewer's leads, but try to get the interviewer to describe the position and the duties to you early in the interview so that you can relate your background and skills to the position.

E. DON'T answer questions with a simple "yes" or "no". Explain whenever possible. Tell those things about yourself that relate to the situation. Keep your answers 30 to 60 seconds long.

F. The interviewer may steer the conversation into politics or economics. Since this can be a ticklish situation, it is best to answer the questions politically correctly, trying not to say any more than necessary.

G. DO be prepared to answer typical questions truthfully, frankly, and as "to the point" as possible.

H. DON'T ever make derogatory remarks about your present or former employers or companies.

I. DO NOT have your cell phone on!

J. DO always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door to opportunity.

K. With any confusing, or multi-angled questions, reframe to clarify if you are responding with the type of information they are looking for. If you are even slightly unsure about a specific question, or need time to formulate and process your response, ask for clarification.

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6) Chemistry / Personality

- A. Statistics show that companies don't always hire the most qualified candidate. They hire based on fit in their company culture.
- B. Enthusiasm, passion and excitement are the biggest selling points a candidate can bring to an interview. Here are some tips that can help you:
 - Talk directly to the interviewer, or talk directly in the phone if you are having a phone interview.
 - Sound upbeat – if you had a lousy day – put it out of your mind.
 - Be a conversationalist, but don't interrupt.

7) Let's Start The Interview

- A. Set The Tone. Try to establish some rapport with the interviewer at the beginning of the interview. Nothing personal, but just general conversation to break the ice.
 - “So how has the weather been?”
 - “Have you lived there long?”
 - Ask an open-ended question to let the interviewer answer and start talking about themselves.

8) Tell Me About Yourself

A. Some interviewers like to ask the question “Tell me about yourself,” question to open up. Be careful, this can be a trap question. They want to hear how you communicate, whether you're articulate, or whether you ramble.

B. “Tell me about yourself” means “Tell me about your professional qualifications. What in your background will benefit our company? Pre-plan a 1-2 minute script:

“I graduated from college with a degree in _____ and started my retail career with _____, where I progressed up to _____. From there, I went with _____ as a _____. One of the areas I was responsible for at this company was in _____, where I implemented a _____ and increased the _____ by _____. What I am looking for in my career is to work with a progressive company like _____, in the _____ area where I have an opportunity to bring to the table my years of experience and background in the _____ area.

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9) Review of Your Background (FAB Worksheet)

- A. The interviewer will have your resume and background in front of them and when they ask you to "Tell me what you did when you worked at _____," or "Tell me what you currently do in your current position." This is the most important part of the interview! This is where you are going to sell your qualifications.

- B. This is where your FAB worksheet comes into play. (Do your homework)
 - 1. Take a legal sheet and turn it sideways.
 - 2. At the top of each page write the company you worked for and the position title you held and dates.
 - 3. Divide the paper into 3 columns titled:
 - 4. Column 1 – Facts about the job (Main responsibilities of the job)
 - 5. Column 2 - Accomplishments (Significant results and how you achieved the results.)
 - 6. Column 3 – Benefits (What do you have that will benefit our company? Concrete example of what you can do for the new company?)

- C. What this FAB Worksheet does is:
 - 1. Tells the employer what you can do for the employer
 - 2. Tells how you can benefit the potential employer
 - 3. Details what you have accomplished in present and past jobs
 - 4. Can highlight your unique accomplishments and experiences
 - 5. Most importantly – eliminate reading from your resume. You are telling them the same thing that is on your resume except you are putting it into your own words!

10) Typical Interview Questions

The following are examples of the "typical Human Resource questions". These questions are very important. How are you going to fit into their organization? We have broken these down into three categories.

- 1. Situational Interview Questions – (How do you handle everyday situations?)
- 2. Qualification Questions – (Do you have the skills?)
- 3. Politically Correct Questions/Commitment Questions

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SITUATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Goal Setting: How do you set goals? How do you achieve your goals? Give an example of something that you set out to do and were able to accomplish.

Persuasion: How do you persuade individuals to do things the way you feel they should be done? Give specific reasoning, use facts.

Challenges: How do you handle challenges? Give a specific challenge that you have faced in your work life.

Frustration: Example: Tell me about a time you had a difficult working relationship with a colleague. What was the challenge, how did you address the situation and what did you learn from the experience? OR How do you handle frustrating situations or people at work?

Team Work: Have you ever worked in an environment where teamwork really existed, and why do you think it worked?

Why do you want to work here? OR Example: What interests you most about this position?

What did you like/dislike about your last job? OR Example Describe your favorite supervisor and your least favorite supervisor – and why.

What would you like to be doing 5 years from now? I have always felt that first-hand knowledge and experience open up opportunities that one might have never considered, so while at this point in time I plan to be (a buyer), it is reasonable to expect that other exciting opportunities will crop up in the meantime.

What are your biggest accomplishments? OR Example: Tell me your biggest success story related to [skill].

What is your greatest strength? I believe in planning and proper management of time, and yet I can still work under pressure.

Why should I hire you? OR Example: What can you offer us that someone else can not?

Negative Feedback: How do you handle negative feedback. **Example:** What is a development area, a deficit, or a gap that you've had to overcome or improve in your career? How was that identified, and what did you do to improve?

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QUALIFICATION QUESTIONS

The following are general talent questions that can be used for all disciplines. (Talents that we look for are in parentheses.)

1. How do your managers, peers and subordinates perceive you collectively and separately? (Self Perception and Analysis.)
2. What type of role do you play in a team? What role do you prefer to play? (Leadership and Self Assessment.)
3. Take me through a time when you took a product from inception to fruition. (Detail orientation, Results orientation, Drive and Passion.)
4. Take me through a project where you had to be creative to meet the customer's need. (Creativity and Customer Empathy.)
5. Describe a time you had to work under tight deadlines. (Goal orientation, Get Things Done, Results orientation and Resourcefulness.)
6. How have you overcome a manager's or supervisor's resistance to an idea of yours? (Pushback and Persuasion.)
7. Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond the requirements for a project. (Analytical and Work Ethic.)
8. How do you motivate different personalities within your group? (Leadership and Creativity.)
9. What are the most important characteristics in a job you're looking for and why? (Self-Awareness and Analytical.)
10. Who are our competitors? (Analysis and Creativity.)

POLITICALLY CORRECT / COMMITMENT QUESTIONS

Be careful. You should never say anything negative about anyone or any company.

1. What did you think of your last boss? OR What are your bosses strengths/weaknesses?
2. Which qualifications do you feel make you a better candidate for this job than anyone else?
3. How do you compare with your peers?
4. Why our company?
5. Why do you want to leave your current company?

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11) Ask Questions

At this point of an interview, it is important for a candidate to let the company know you have a high interest level by asking question. Have a list of prepared questions before you interview. This signal a higher level of preparation and initiative. Probing questions you may ask:

QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES TO ASK POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS

1. What is your vision of this job and what are the key responsibilities?
2. Can you share with me the structure of the department or division and how it fits into the total organization?
3. Considering the people in your department or company, tell me what your most valued employees are like, and what are some examples you believe that makes them the most successful?
4. What do you perceive the corporate culture to be and what type of person best fits into the organization?
5. Tell me about your management style and what traits best match with your personality to produce the most productive working environment.
6. What are the three or four problems that your company faces that you are currently trying to solve?
7. In the first year, what are the three key contributions that you would expect from my performance?
8. What makes you enjoy getting up each day and coming to work?
9. After interviewing me, how do you see my background adding value to your company?

12) The Salary Question – “How To Answer If They Ask”

If salary comes up be prepared. This can be a trick question! They know your current salary. If they were to ask “How much would it take for you to come and work for us?” Here is the best way to answer.

“I’m sure you know where my current compensation is. Although I would like an increase, salary is not the issue as much as the opportunity, advancement potential and the job itself. As I stated I feel I have a solid progressive background, and once I learn more about the opportunity I would like to be compensated for my experience and what the job is worth.”

If the interviewer pushes you to expand on this area, you can share your current base salary, bonus structure and total compensation package. If the interviewer also asks for an exact amount regarding what you are looking for in terms of salary, you can also share your desired salary but be careful not to give an amount that is too high, or too low

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13) Closing The Interview “Ask For The Job”

- A. DO ask for the position if you are interested. Ask for the next interview if the situation demands. If the position is offered to you, and you want it, accept it on the spot. If you wish time to think it over, be courteous and tactful in asking for that time. Set a definite date when you can provide an answer.
- B. DON'T be too discouraged if no definite offer is made or specific salary discussed.
- C. If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, do not let your discouragement show.
- D. Express thanks for the interviewer's time and consideration of you.
- E. Ask for the next step in the process.

Close – Ask For The Job!

Even though you don't know if you want to go further, or if the company wants to go further, Ask for the job!

“ _____ I really enjoyed our conversation. I feel I have a good understanding of what you are looking for (summarize your qualification). I feel that my background and qualifications would be a good match and I would like to pursue it further. What is the next step? – Where do we go from here?”

Wait and listen

14) After The Interview – “VERY IMPORTANT”

- A. Last and most important, call your recruiter immediately and communicate what transpired. The recruiter will want to talk with you before the interviewer calls back. If you are interested in the position your recruiter will do their best to help you get it.
- B. Follow Up
- C. Be sure to ask each interviewer for their business card if you meet directly.
 - 1. Name of person who interviewed you
 - 2. Title
 - 3. Phone Number
 - 4. Email
- D. Send a brief follow up and thank you email immediately.