



## INTERVIEW PREPARATION

**"The core message about interviewing is that you have to do a good job of selling yourself. Through your appearance, demeanor, and the way you answer questions, you have to convince the interviewer that you possess the skills and personal attributes necessary to be successful in the job."**

-MAX MESSMER



### THE JOB INTERVIEW

A job interview is a presentation, a performance, and an audition. If you are granted an interview, it means you have successfully grabbed the attention of an employer who has decided to meet with you in person, face-to-face. The employer has some idea that you might be qualified for the job, otherwise he would not be committing valuable time to seeing you.

To be successful in a job interview means putting your "best self" forward. Preparing for an interview involves sharpening your communication skills, anticipating certain questions, projecting confidence, maintaining a positive attitude, displaying enthusiasm, emphasizing your best attributes, expressing your personality, and creating a good first impression. It is important to stress your skills, abilities, and strengths. You must clearly and confidently communicate your accomplishments and achievements.

The goal of an interview is to get a job offer. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether you are the right fit for the job. Your interview, then, will be as much about your personality and attitude as it will be about your qualifications and credentials.

### EMPLOYER'S NEEDS

Approach your interview from the employer's perspective. It is important that you focus only on relevant traits and attributes. You should tailor your presentation so as to emphasize your specific qualifications as they relate to the requirements of the job in question. Target all of your comments and remarks to the employer's concerns. Put yourself in the employer's shoes.

Keep focused on what you can do for the employer rather than what the employer can do for you. Keep in mind the specific needs, interests, values, and biases of the employer. Address the issues that you know the employer cares about. Match your qualifications to their needs. Make your comments employer-centered rather than self-centered. Speak the employer's language. Be sure all your statements answer the underlying most important question: "What can you do for our organization?"



### PREPARATION

Do your homework. Prepare in advance for your job interview by doing some in-depth research. Gather useful information about the employer. Be informed and knowledgeable about the company and the job.

Plan ahead. Organize and outline your main ideas in advance. Determine your key qualifications. Spell out specific details of your background and credentials and commit to memory the major points of your presentation.

Rehearse your presentation beforehand by conducting a mock interview. Practice formulating and expressing your responses to potential questions.

**"A job interview is a business meeting between a job candidate and one or more interviewers. The purpose is to determine whether a match exists between what the company requires and what the candidate offers."**

-JOHN LA FEVRE

## **PRESENTATION**

Dress appropriately. Arrive on time. Maintain good eye contact. Observe proper protocol and good etiquette. Use proper grammar. Offer a solid handshake. Be alert. Listen carefully.

Bring along a portfolio containing a collection of impressive examples of your work, letters of reference, and awards. Bring extra copies of your resume.



## **PERFORMANCE**

Relate a few relevant stories, testimonials, or anecdotal examples as a way of providing supportive evidence of your skills and abilities. Telling stories also allows you the opportunity to communicate positive feelings and emotions, a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and dedication.

Ask appropriate questions. Prepare a few good solid questions in advance. Don't ask about salary and benefits. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation. Express an interest in wanting to learn more about the company.

## **WRAP UP**

At the end of the interview, make a closing statement. In that statement, you can express gratitude for the interview and summarize your main points. Indicate how your qualifications match the needs of the company. State confidently your assertion that you can make a worthwhile contribution to the company. And then, finally, ask for the job.

Always send a follow-up letter immediately after the interview as a way of thanking the employer and reiterating your interest in the job.



**"I've met individuals who have saved lives, built nations, or unlocked the mysteries of the universe... and the most easily observable thread which connected these persons was their ability to present well in a job interview."**

-WINSTON CHURCHILL

## **PLAN AHEAD**

It is vital to your presentation that you prepare in advance. Being prepared for a job interview will help you to feel more comfortable with the process and more confident in yourself. It is important that you project a sense of confidence that arises from good solid advanced planning and thorough preparation.

## **RESEARCH**

Prepare for your job interview by conducting in-depth research. Gather useful background information and data about the company you intend to interview with. Learn as much as you can about the employer. Be informed about the job. You must present yourself as knowledgeable of their business, their market, their customers, their competition, their product, and their line of work.

Do your homework. Where can this valuable information be obtained? The public library, chamber of commerce, business publications, industrial guides, company literature, annual reports, employee handbooks, magazine articles, and on the company's website.

**"Everything you do in a job campaign will be wasted if you don't convert interviews into job offers. Be informed about potential employers. Control your interviews. And tailor your communications and the image you project to what each firm is seeking."**

-ROBERT JAMESON GERBERG

## MAIN IDEAS

Know who you are and what you have to offer. Know the qualifications for the job. Know your sales pitch by heart. Plan your promotional spiel in advance.

Determine your key qualifications. Identify your unique strengths, abilities, and skills. Write them down. Learn them. Organize and outline your main ideas in advance. Commit to memory the major points of your presentation.

Compose a list your traits accordingly:

- Your knowledge, education, training,
- Your experience, activities, relevant employment
- Your relevant or transferable skills
- Your personality traits or soft skills
- Your goals and motivations



## SHOW & TELL

It is recommend that candidates carry a leather portfolio to the interview. In it you can store extra copies of your resume, your reference list (or reference letters), and perhaps a copy of your college transcript. Also, the portfolio should contain blank paper to jot down any notes.

If appropriate for your particular field, also prepare a presentation portfolio containing a collection of impressive examples of your work, your resume, letters of reference, and awards. A presentation portfolio is a tangible collection of artifacts and samples that will help your interview come alive. You should refer to it (using it like a prop) during the interview, flipping to specific pages and pointing out specific examples.

## ATTITUDE

Beyond being the most qualified candidate, you are seeking to be the “best fit” for the job. Throughout the job interview, the successful candidate will seek to project an acceptable image to the interviewer. It is critical to exhibit a positive attitude and a pleasant personality. Since the interview process tends to be a highly subjective and personal process, all preparation in this regard involves five simple attitudinal principles... Be respectful... Be relevant... Be confident... Be positive... Be genuine.

**“It is not the person who is the most qualified that gets the job. The person who gets the job is the one who interviews best”**

-EDWARD SULLIVAN



## STORYTIME

Recall a few relevant stories you can tell during the interview and compile a list of these stories beforehand. These well-chosen stories or anecdotal examples should reflect your past experience, set you in a positive light, and provide supportive evidence of your skills and abilities.

Many interviews will ask content-based or scenario-based questions so as to solicit stories from you. They may say, “Tell about a time when...” or “Give me an example of...”

Also, telling a story allows you the opportunity to communicate positive emotions and feelings, a sense of enthusiasm, pride, and dedication about your work. Telling stories makes you more memorable to the interviewer.

## PREPARATION

Preparing for a job interview involves anticipating the questions employers are likely to ask. It also involves rehearsing what you will say by practicing the manner in which you formulate and express your responses. A big part of your success in the interview will be based on how well you answered the questions. Consider the following list of possible interview questions and think about how you might answer them.

## FOR STARTERS

Tell me about yourself?  
How would you describe yourself?  
Why should I hire you?  
What makes you the best candidate?

## SAMPLE QUESTIONS

Why did you decide to seek employment with our company?  
What do you know about our company?  
What do you think it takes to be successful with our company?  
What do you see yourself doing in five years?  
What are your long-range career plans?  
Why did you choose this occupation?  
How would you describe your work style?  
What do you consider to be your major strengths?  
Name one of your greatest accomplishments?  
How have your past experiences prepared you for future success?

## MORE SAMPLE QUESTIONS

What was the most important thing you learned in school?  
What have you learned from your participation in extra-curricular activities?  
In what ways do you think you can make a worthwhile contribution to our company?  
How have other people described you?  
What are you looking for in the ideal job?  
What really motivates you to perform?  
How do you determine or evaluate success?

## CONTENT QUESTIONS

Many interviews conduct “behavioral” interviews. Be prepared to answer content questions related to your field of expertise and provide specific examples and stories. You may be asked about your philosophy or theoretical methodology. You may be asked your opinion of critical issues in your field. You may be given a scenario and asked what you would do in a particular situation. You may be presented with a problem and asked to solve it.

Tell me about a time when you...  
Give me an example of...  
What would you do if...

## BE CAREFUL

Be cautious in answering questions that call for discussion of potentially negative subjects. Prepare in advance your best response to such inquiries.

What do you consider to be your major weaknesses or areas for improvement?  
Why did you leave your last employer?  
How do you handle yourself in a conflict?  
How do you deal with criticism?  
What was your greatest failure, and what did you learn from it?  
How well do you work under pressure?  
What have you learned from your mistakes?  
Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight? How did you handle it?  
Tell me about the worst supervisor you ever worked for.  
How would you handle a disgruntled customer?  
Have you ever been fired from a job?  
Have you ever been arrested?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

When it's your turn to ask questions in the interview, you should be prepared with a few good solid ones. Your questions should indicate your interest in the company and the job. Ask job-related questions or questions related to your functions and performance. Ask questions that reflect your professional attitude and motivation.

Don't ask self-centered or self-serving questions. Don't ask about salary or benefits. Don't ask questions that might tend to challenge or embarrass the interviewer. Your interviewer is not your sparring partner.

What will my responsibilities be?  
What will I be doing in a typical work day?  
Where does this position fit in the overall organization?  
What role will I play in helping the company achieve its goals?  
How do you see me complementing the existing organization?  
What are the most important qualifications for this position?

What will my priorities be?  
What are the first projects to be addressed?  
What are the major problems to be tackled?  
What kind of leadership responsibilities will I have?  
What kind of feedback will I receive from my supervisor?  
How will my performance be evaluated?  
What kind of training will I receive?  
What professional development programs are available?  
What are the prospects for advancement?

To whom will I be reporting?  
What are the company's mission and goals?  
What is unique about the way your company operates?  
Who are the company's major competitors?  
Who are your major customers?

What plans for expansion does the company anticipate?  
What new endeavors is the company actively pursuing?  
What current trends affect company growth and progress?

