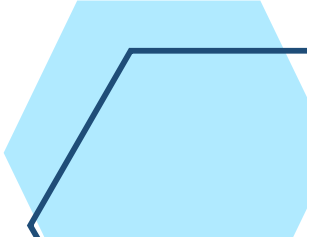




INTERVIEW TIPS



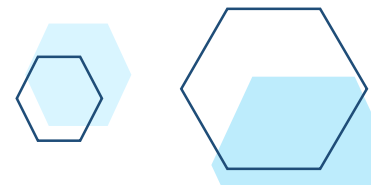
PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

Research and Prepare

We recommend preparing for a high energy, thought provoking, positive and intelligent conversation that gives the interviewer a good sense of your background and experience as well as your enthusiasm for the role.

First, find out as much as you possibly can about the company prior to the interview. Your interviewer will likely see your effort as a sign of commitment. You can get a lot of information from company websites, on the internet (articles), newspapers, and if publicly traded, their quarterly and annual financial statements and annual reports. This information can help shape both your questions and answers.

- Preparation will ensure you are less surprised by the interviewer's questions, enabling you to focus more on how you respond, than what to say.
- Know your resume, inside and out - be able to tell stories (not facts) of your background, in general or on any bullet as needed.
- Have examples of work you've led that demonstrate your competencies. Read over your past reviews to help you prepare.
 - NOTE: they will likely ask you questions about any prior position, you **MUST** be able to answer them in detail.
- Have 5-7 questions (mix of high, mid, detailed level) that would help you learn about the company, the group, the role, etc. Thread your questions into the conversation and if there are any unanswered at the end of the meeting, ask them if timing allows.
- **Bring** at least 3 copies of your Resume



Dress the Part

Dress for the position you are interviewing for, not the position you have now, it will help the interviewer visualize you in the role.

- It is **CRITICAL** to project the most professional image to potential employers. Interviewers are not only assessing your competency for the job but they're also assessing your ability to represent the company to their clients, etc.
- If in doubt, wear a subdued color suit (navy, gray, etc..), along with a white or a non-trendy blue button down dress shirt, conservative tie and shined shoes.
- Avoid avant-garde clothing, or overdone make-up or accessories. Your choice of clothing, grooming habits and general presentation speaks volumes about you.
- 'Wear your 'best shirt, best suit, best tie, etc. The process can usually be a few rounds so make sure you have enough inventory to mix it up.
- Look good, feel good. Remember, you never get a second chance to make a first impression in an interview!
- Recently, several firms have adopted a "**business casual**" dress policy. Do not assume that this means that you may attend the interview in business casual attire. Companies have differing views on appropriate dress for interviewees, so if desired check with your recruiter whether business casual attire would be acceptable to your interviewer before the interview. Even if the client deems that business casual is acceptable, bear in mind that many of your "competitors" in the interview process may still elect to dress in business attire.

Arrive to the interview 10 minutes early (Not 20 minutes early or 2 minutes early) and NEVER late!

Punctuality is a reflection on your candidacy, don't take any chances here, sit at a coffee shop for an hour if need be.

- You may have difficulty locating the address or you might need to fill out a job application, or both, arriving early can help with this.
- If you find yourself running behind, text or call your Recruiter, or the person you are meeting if possible to let him or her know how late you will be and why.

ACING THE INTERVIEW

What is an Interview?

Now, it's time to break it down to the basics.

A successful interview is a conversation between two people. That's it! A positive, thoughtful and memorable conversation.

An unsuccessful interview usually feels like a game of 21 questions, or worse off, an uncomfortable meeting with long silences. Who's fault is it when 21 questions or long silences occur on the interview? It's yours! Most people try to blame the interviewer, but if you walk into an interview with a basic understanding of the position, and have done enough research on the company, you should be able to sustain at least ½ an hour of your own questions with the interviewer answering them. (Not that you want it to go that way!) Remember, they want to hear you speak, make sure you do so in a confident, clear manner.

Be friendly. Personality is extremely important! Who isn't attracted to friendly people?

In an interview process, most candidates have very similar hard skills. During the interview it is time for a company to gauge who they WANT to work with, and they will select a friendlier person. Again, they want to hire people they would enjoy working with every day, so be enthusiastic about the opportunity, show personality, be confident and genuine – find a way to connect with them right from the start.

- Establish eye contact. It makes them gain a sense that you are GENIUNE and open.
- Give a strong handshake and smile as you introduce yourself, and be prepared with an opening line.
- Get into a sincere conversation and find a way to connect with them right from the start. Again, the first 5 minutes are the most important 5 minutes.

Don't be casual about your interest in the position. Let them feel that you are engaged, prepared, curious, professional, enthusiastic and confident, but don't overly praise them or the company. That can feel overwhelming or even awkward to them.

Steer Away from Negativity, Always!

Don't be negative about anything, always present your past experiences positively. Steer away from negative words. Don't 'badmouth' your prior employers or supervisors. Keep the "sour grapes" to yourself to avoid coming across as bitter or difficult to work with. No matter how tempting or sincere this can be, it NEVER comes across well. There is a way to get that [point across in a neutral or even better, a positive way.

Interviewing with Multiple People

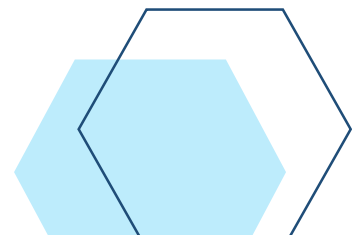
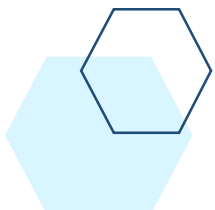
The interview can be with one, two or more people. Most are one-on-one conversations that follow each other. Each person that you meet within is an interview in and of itself. Treat each as such. You can ask similar or even the same questions and gain different perspectives or choose to ask the most relevant question to an interviewer based on their position.

You are Competing, this is your Chance to Sell Yourself

Companies do not meet with just one person and make their hiring decision. That's why they call it an interview process. Whether the company meets 3 people or 30, you are competing against other people and want to put yourself in a position to win. It doesn't mean you know you want the position, but it's better to be in the driver's seat.

Think of it like a 10 person race. You may run a great race, but someone else may run the race a little better than you. If you are on the top of your game, and you end up in second place, at least you know that you gave your best effort and will be better for on the next Interview. Anything less should be unacceptable to you and is also a disservice to your career.

- The most important thing for you to realize and truly own is that you are there to **SELL YOURSELF** - your background, skills interests and personality. It is not the other way around, and any minute you are not doing this, someone else will be.



ANSWERING THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Usually, the structure of an interview (if structured at all) goes like this:

The interviewer walks in, introduces him/herself (as do you), sits down, looks at your resume, and starts asking questions...that's about as far as you can go with regards to the predictability of the interview.

Let's talk about the questions that you may encounter early on in the interview. These are geared towards getting new information on you that they can't get from your resume or asking you to elaborate on your resume. As for how to handle questions you may receive, see below for some thought starters.

Common Interview Questions:

***These are ideas to help, you'll naturally want to come up with answers that are personal to you.*

CLARIFYING AND VALIDATING QUESTIONS: AGAIN, KNOW YOUR RESUME!

Print out a copy, take a slow read through it two days before, and then again a day before. Practice asking yourself to elaborate on each bullet of your resume as if the person across the table had no idea what it is that you have done.

- Including: school, grades, past employment and responsibilities, current position, system skills, certifications, etc.

“SO, TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.”

The interviewer is really saying *"I want to hear you talk."* Use this opportunity to give a high-level summary of your qualifications, career history, major responsibilities and abilities that are most relevant to the position. They are assessing your ability to communicate well, so let them drill deeper on a specific question of course.

- This is not an invitation to relate childhood memories in great detail or that you spend every weekend at the golf course, speaking for approximately 2-3 minutes max.

“WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT US”?

They want to know that you understand what they do. They of course want you to be genuinely interested in them. Be able to give them a summary, and perhaps any current news on them might help as well.

“ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR CAREER?”

The interviewer is really trying to gauge your self-esteem, confidence, career aspirations and whether you are a happy, positive person. Ensure you are genuine, you might want to explain to the interviewer how that position would be a positive step in your career.

“WHAT DO YOU LIKE/DISLIKE ABOUT YOUR CURRENT/MOST RECENT ROLE?”

The interviewer wants to know whether the job in question involves tasks you don't like. Answer this wisely of course. A safe approach is to play up a characteristic of your present company that's different from the company you're talking to.

“WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS?”

- There are no excuses for being unprepared for this question. The interviewer wants a straightforward answer as to what you are good at so they can start to understand ways that you can add value.
- Concentrate on discussing 2-3 of your strengths relevant to the position you are discussing.
- Think about the performance reviews your Managers have shared with you – quick learner, tech savvy, or that you were seen as the go-to person there. ‘My Managers have shared with me that that I am _____. ‘
- Avoid clichés such as *“I'm a good people person.”* Be specific and provide relevant examples. Be prepared with stories and use them strategically and intermittently throughout the conversation.

“WHAT IS A WEAKNESS OF YOURS?”

A favorite of interviewers, this one is really about your level of self-awareness. Don't say you don't have any weaknesses.

- Choose wisely of course. Describe a professional development area and the steps you have taken to action it successfully.

“WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER?”

Your response to this should be straightforward. You might want to let them know that you have learned a lot, have done very well but come back to the opportunity this role presents.

Never give negative reasons for leaving. Also, it's rarely appropriate to cite compensation as your primary motivation.

“WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR MOST NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS?”

The interviewer is trying to find out if you are an achiever. Describe a fairly recent, work-related achievement. Identify the skills it demanded and its benefit to the company.

- For example: *"My greatest achievement was to design and implement a new sales ledger computer system, bring it in ahead of time and improve our debtors position significantly, thereby, saving the company \$100,000 a month."*
- S.O.A.R is a helpful way to frame your examples. It stands for **S**ituation, **O**bstacles, **A**ction, **R**esult. Share your example in this sequence if it helps.

“WHAT INTERESTED YOU IN THIS ROLE?”

Come up with a specific answer for this, being too vague can come across as being unprepared. A common pitfall, prepare for this one!

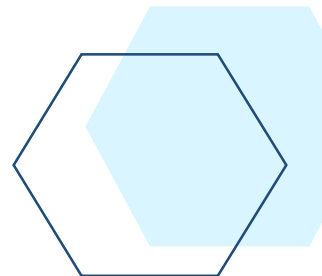
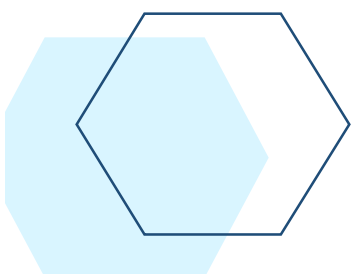
“WHAT TYPE OF WORK ENVIRONMENT DO YOU ENJOY / THRIVE IN?”

- Come up with what is important to you and what attracted you to the position. Connect your answer to how you can add value and fit into the company environment, the role, group and functional area you are interviewing for.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS – “WHAT DO YOU DO FOR FUN? HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?” ETC...

Traveling, eating out, etc. Whatever you choose to say, be able to back it up. The more interesting your answer is, the better, as long as it is relatable to the interviewer, so don't be too risky here.

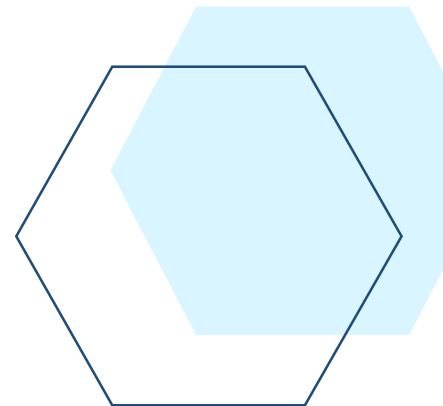
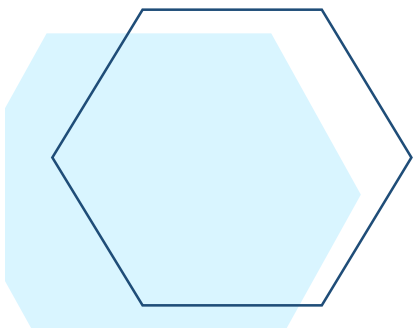
***These are only ideas to help, you'll naturally want to come up with answers that are personal to you.*



Additional Interview Questions You Might Want to Prepare For:

- Where would you like to be in your career in five years?
- How would your colleagues describe you? Your subordinates?
- Why should I offer this position to you?
- How do you feel about working long hours/weekends?
- What can you bring to this organization?
- Which part of this role is least attractive to you?
- Do you prefer to work alone or in a group? Why?
- What are you looking for in a company?
- Have you received any work-related awards for outstanding performance?
- Have you taken any skills-related courses recently?

There are thousands of “other possible questions” that may be asked on the interview. When asked a question you did not specifically prepare for, make sure your answer is professional, and that it allows the interviewer to gain further confidence in you for the open position.



QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER:

The interview is about selling yourself. That means asking intelligent, well thought out, relevant and practical questions that allow you to build a connection to the people and the role.

Again, ALWAYS thread your questions into the conversation so that it becomes a natural, free-flowing conversation to the interviewer and it's always best to come up with questions on your own.

1. **What is the organizational structure of the Accounting Department?**
2. **Describe what exceeding expectations looks like at year end for the person in this role?**
3. **Do you think that the monthly close is running as effectively as it can?**
4. **What are the key monthly deliverables and deadlines within the group? Which ones would I be responsible for?**
5. **Who would I be regularly interacting with the company across other divisions or externally?**

Finally, answers by the interviewer should spark comments from your own experiences allowing a conversation to form. Don't simply ask your question, get an answer, and then just jump into your next question. You will not look sincere nor will you appear to be listening to your interviewer's answer. This is the part of the interview that's totally up to you to execute. Get the fear out of your head, so you can be you!

It is **NOT** impressive to go into an interview and ask the following questions:

1. "What is a typical day like?" (Yaaaaaaaawn!) So in other words, you'd like for me to do all of the talking, this is a question set aside for lighter level roles only.
2. Questions focused on growth or career advancement. You can have a conversation around career advancement but be careful not to sound too interested in future roles. Your interviewer may worry about your interest in leaving the position (internally or externally) six months after you're in it.
3. Questions regarding hours, compensation, corporate benefits, and quite honestly, any other question that asks, "so what do I get out of this whole deal?" It conveys that you are there for all the wrong reasons...we will get answers to those questions in other ways and they will get answered over time.

HOW TO END THE INTERVIEW

Always end the interview on a very positive note! Be gracious and thank the interviewer for his/her time. Confident people say this in a genuine way.

- “It was great to meet you and to learn more about the position, thank you very much for your time. I hope to hear from you soon, have a great day!”

To summarize, you have what it takes, be confident in that. Be able to discuss your experience, be prepared and genuinely enthused, connect right from the start, tell stories, and ask good questions so you have a business conversation with another professional. Remember, your resume indicates that you have functional skills to do the work, the interviewer wants to gain the confidence that you would be an asset to the team and the firm, both in the work you would do, but just as importantly, that you are a high performing professional that the team would enjoy working with each day.

