

In Person Interview Prep

Basic Tenets

- People have to buy you before they will hire you. They hire prepared, confident people who demonstrate a positive attitude. It is our experience that 50% of the hiring decision is based on the chemistry you develop with the hiring authority.
- People are more sold by your conviction, confidence, and passion than by your persuasion.
- Clients like confident, assertive and enthusiastic people.
- Clients hire candidates who possess, and can demonstrate, the highest degree of ethics, honesty, and integrity.
- Clients typically hire candidates who are great listeners and ask good strategic questions.
- Clients hire candidates who have an over-the-top work ethic, but still maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- The decision to hire is made in the first 3-5 minutes of the interview, with the remaining time spent justifying that decision. You only have one chance to make a great 1st impression!

Logistics

- Know Interviewer Name/Title/Phone Number/E-mail Address.
- Have information on interviewer's background/bio that will assist you in developing chemistry. Linked – In is a great resource for this.
- Additional information on the company to review and bring to the interview in a folder:
 - Annual report. This can typically be found on the investor portion of a company's website.
 - Recent articles from trade magazines and newspapers.
 - Information off internet/web page.
 - Brochures on products and services.
 - Be prepared to tell the interviewer 3-4 reasons why their company is attractive.
 - General position description from your executive search consultant.
- Directions to the company. This can be found via www.googlemaps.com or a GPS device.
- Approximate length of the interview.

Appearance

- Conservative navy blue or gray suit fresh from the cleaners (dress one level above the position you are seeking)
- White, long-sleeved, starched shirt or blouse.
- Semi-traditional tie, preferably with some red in it.
- Recent haircut, trimmed nails, clean shaven or closely trimmed beard or goatee.
- New or recently polished shoes.
- No heavy perfume or cologne.
- No dangling jewelry.
- Natural looking makeup.
- No gum chewing or smoking.
- Posture – straight or lean slightly forward towards the interviewer.
- Leave the cell phone in the car!

Arrival

- Arrive 10 minutes early.
- Take extra copies of your resume with you and a typed list of references (1-2 ex-bosses, 1-2 co-workers, 1 subordinate if you are a manager) —do not include phone numbers for references, your Recruiter will perform the reference checks for the Client.
- Bring a professional portfolio with a legal pad and 2 quality pens to take notes.

- Bring the interviewer's phone number in case you are running late.
- Bring along your recruiter's phone number so you can call us immediately after the interview to debrief the meeting.
- If asked, willingly complete an application. Complete the application in full and leave no blanks. Do not write "see resume" as a response to any question. List references if requested.
- Greet administrative staff with the utmost respect. Be friendly and say hello to everyone you come in contact with.
- Greet interviewer with a smile, firm handshake, and great eye contact.

Interview

- Start the interview by asking, "Before we get started, although my executive recruiter gave me a general description of the job, would you be willing to share the profile of the ideal candidate you are looking for? I want to make sure I stay on target during our interview." You want to find out exactly the needs of the hiring authority and show how your background and accomplishments fit their needs.
- Out of courtesy, you should ask, "May I take notes?" (You make the hiring authority feel what they have to say is important to you and it makes it easier for you to write a custom thank you letter.)
- Shock them with knowledge of their company.
- Pay a sincere compliment about their company, products, recent news releases, or about the interviewer...especially if you have some similarity in your backgrounds.
- Don't interrupt the interviewer no matter how long they talk. People like to talk, so if you listen and let them talk, they will like you!

Answering Questions

You should give complete but brief and relaxed answers to questions. This takes practice. Continue to sell yourself in a positive way.

General Overview

- Describe jobs in terms of duties and give clear, concise indicators of good performance such as raises, sales quota attainment, profit increases, and promotions. Prepare to share information on the following questions:
 - How did your performance improve efficiency?
 - How did that translate into a cost savings for your company?
 - Did your accomplishment help your boss achieve his/her goals?
- Give short stories involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them and the results of your efforts. Use them conversationally to demonstrate past job performance.
 - 1-2-3 Mini Story Technique
 - State the problem (challenge)
 - State the solution (how you handled it)
 - State the results or outcome
- Never use the word "no" in an interview. Always answer questions in a positive manner.
- When asked about strengths and weaknesses:
 - Give 3 strengths and examples of each. Only give 1 weakness and mention it in a manner the interviewer may view as a positive from his point of view. EXAMPLES:
 - I love to win and dislike losing. But if I do, I learn from my experience and get stronger.
 - I identified my lack of Excel spreadsheet knowledge, so I signed up for a software seminar.
 - I always give 110% and get disappointed to see others in the organization that don't.
- Be prepared to answer tough questions you hope the employer doesn't ask!

- Prepare answers to the questions in advance...be concise and confident.
- Never interrupt the interviewer no matter how much they talk.
- The percentage of the time you spend talking during the interview should be 50% or less.
- Ask questions. Failure to ask questions is interpreted as lack of interest or even worse, lack of intelligence. Questions get the interviewer to talk and an opportunity for you to learn more about the company. Make sure you have at least five to ten strategic questions prepared for each person you meet with.

Types of Questions

The infamous "Tell me about yourself" Question

- Purpose: Asked to explore your background to see if your experience matches job description.
- Answer these questions in terms of the specific accomplishments that are related or transferable to the job you are interviewing for (identify points of interest the hiring authority needs to hear, not your greatest starring moments unless they are relevant)
- Discuss your background and resume just like an exciting short story.
- Prepare a five-minute discussion of your qualifications, in this order:
 - Education
 - Discuss your work experiences
 - Describe your performance (in raises, promotions, awards, sales quota achievement, increase in profits, Etc.). Most employers believe that past performance is the best indicator of future job success.

Personality Questions

- Purpose: Asked to determine whether you are a cultural fit.
- Always answer in terms of your qualifications supported by past or present experiences.
- EXAMPLES: What do you do in your spare time? or What books do you read?
- These are very important questions and subsequent answers. Use wisdom and intelligence when answering these questions. For example, when asked what you do in your spare time, a poor response that would likely immediately disqualify you from the job would be: that you drink beer and watch reality TV in your spare time. A better response would be coaching youth sports, leading Sunday school, or volunteering at a local homeless shelter. For question number two, have three good, intelligent books prepared to use as examples. If you haven't read in a while, buy 2-3 books, and start reading, so you can answer "I'm currently reading" and state the books. Typically one book for fun (i.e. a Tom Clancy book, or Tolkien's Lord of the Rings), one book for business (see <http://100bestbiz.com/more-on-the-100-best/> for examples), one for self-improvement (i.e. the Seven Habits of Highly Effective People – Covey) and/or one of a more philosophical nature (i.e. a book by CS Lewis, or Francis Schaeffer)

Motive Questions

- Purpose: Asked to determine whether you would enjoy the job.
- Answer motive questions enthusiastically and with passion.
- Tell the employer you'd like their job if available!
- EXAMPLES: Describe your ideal job. or What appeals to you about our job? or Why do you want to work for us? or What motivates you to do your best work?

Job Satisfaction Questions

- Purpose: Asked to determine your attitude towards your job and your motivation factors.
- Never speak poorly about a former employer (talk about what you like most).
- Be pleasant, positive, and honest.

- Mention your desire to work for a more progressive company that offers more growth opportunities, recognition, career advancement, and better income opportunity for extraordinary results.
- EXAMPLES: What did you like most/least about your previous job? or What was your relationship with your boss? or What did he do best? or How could he have managed you better?

Money Questions

- Purpose: Normally a buying signal so handle with care!
- Avoid talking about their compensation plan in the first interview.
- On an application, if asked salary requirement, put negotiable.
- If asked, "What you are currently making?" answer truthfully in terms of salary and W-2 but mention if this career move is right for both of us, you're confident a fair offer will be made and accepted.
- If asked, "What type of salary you have in mind?" DO NOT NAME A FIGURE – ASK THEM FOR THEIR RANGE
- Answer: Although salary is important, at this point in the interview process state that you are more interested in learning about the career opportunity.

Questions to Ask the Interviewer

General

Enables you to determine the kind of person the employer wants to hire in terms of education, experience, future performance, and personality.

- What criteria are you using to make a final decision?
- In your words, what is your company's value proposition?
- What distinguishes you from the competition?
- Why would someone join your company vs. your biggest competitor? (name the competitor)
- Where is the company going in the next 3-5 years?
- How will your company compete against your competitor?
- Your biggest competitor is XYZ Company. (Name one or two); what other competitors are up and coming? What is their strategy?
- You stated company results over the last 6 months have been X, what do you attribute that to? What is the future outlook?
- What percentage of your sales are products/software/hardware vs. services/support/consulting/training?
- What are the new markets your company plans to be in?
- Describe your R&D budget? What new technology do you plan on developing in the near future?
- I noticed your President/CEO's (name) vision/statement was X, can you expound on that? How does this flesh itself out in the organization?

Past Performance Questions

Enables you to help sell your candidacy

- EXAMPLES: How many people have held this job in the last 5 years? or Where are these people now? or How many people sold at or above quota last year? or How long has this position been open? or Tell me about Presidents/Pacesetter Clubs.

Interest Questions

- Ask job relevant questions: Focus on the job, the company, products, services, and people.
- Ask open-ended questions requiring an explanation. Questions which can be answered with a yes or no are conversation stoppers.

- EXAMPLES: Why did you join the company? or Imagine today is my first day, what are your expectations for me over the next 90 days? or What is your next career step? or What's a typical day like? or What are the most difficult aspects of the position? or What would my peers say they enjoy most about the job?

Job Satisfaction Questions

- Ask questions that relate to the responsibilities, importance and authority of the position as well as those investigating the rewards for a job well done and the long-range career opportunities.
- Do not ask questions that pertain to salary, fringes, vacation, retirement, hours of position, training, etc.
- EXAMPLES: What motivated you to join the company? or Where can the position lead for a top performer? or Tell me about the culture in your company. or What about your reward system for superior performance?

Closing the Interview

Asking for the job often provides the employer the reassurance needed to make an offer.

- Address the hiring authority's concerns. They all have one, and then take the time to overcome their concern.
 - EXAMPLE: Do you have any reservations (or hesitation) about my ability to do a great job? If there are reservations, ask "How critical is that area on a scale of 1-10?" "Is there anything in my background that would prevent me from going to the next step?"
- Thank them for taking the time to meet with you.
- Tell them you are confident you can do the job and give a quick summary of skills and experience that matches their needs.
- Tell them you are sincerely excited and interested in joining their company. Ask, what is the next step in the interview process? When will the decision be made? Who will make the decision? Do you feel I am a fit for the position?

Debrief

- Call your recruiter immediately following the interview. Only after we get your feedback about the interview and company do we contact the employer for theirs. Please be prepared to answer the following questions from us. Help us help you!
 - How was the chemistry? Did you tie in your background?
 - What qualifications did the hiring authority say he was looking for?
 - What concerns did the hiring authority express? How did you handle them?
 - Did money come up? How did you handle it?
 - Did you close for the next step?
 - Based on the information you gathered from me and the interview, do you want this job?

We will then immediately call the hiring authority and follow up with you regarding their thoughts and the next step. Make sure you write a custom thank you letter (*e-mail preferred, see examples provided*).

****Important Points For 2nd Interview****

- Don't assume you have the job and never be overly confident.
- Don't expect that the 1st interviewer has told the 2nd interviewer everything about your background. You must re-sell yourself and repeat your story with as much enthusiasm and passion as you did in your first interview.
- Take the interview to a higher level. In the first interview you introduced yourself and spoke about your background. In the 2nd interview, talk about how you can solve the company's problems, how you can help grow the business – come with solutions.
- Develop a Business Plan on how you would positively impact the performance of the company in your first 90 days (*see 30-60-90 example provided*).

- At the 2nd interview stage, you are meeting with people at higher levels within the company. Therefore, you must raise the bar as to the caliber of questions you ask each interviewer. Some topics would include the company's performance, including financials, direction of the company, key products and services, R&D, etc.
- Develop a Proof Source Portfolio with letters from customers and clients, ranking reports, awards, achievements, reference letters, completed projects, collateral, extracurricular activities, etc. Bring it with you, but only use if you can; position it properly during the interview.

We wish you the best! You are now prepared 5 times better than most candidates for a typical interview so Go get the job!