

INTERVIEW PREPARATION PACKAGE

A Successful Interview is... Where Preparation Meets Opportunity

This Interview Preparation Package is an in-depth guide to doing all the correct things in your interview. Included are ideas for preparation and follow-up, sample questions and suggestions, video interview etiquette, pitfalls and much more. This is everything you will need for a successful interview.

A black and white photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a light-colored top, sitting at a desk and smiling. She is looking towards the right of the frame. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a window with curtains.

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Be Prepared to Do Well

Many highly qualified candidates fail to obtain positions simply because they interview poorly. Your performance in the interview will be affected most by two factors:

- **Enthusiasm**
- **Preparation**

Keep in mind that while an employer may have a specific personnel requirement to satisfy, an interview can be a forum for discovering even greater opportunities. This may lead to expanding the position – and the compensation – for the right kind of candidate.

No matter how well qualified you are, the success of the interview depends on how prepared you are and your ability to demonstrate sincere interest in the employer's needs. You will need to ask and answer questions intelligently, while exhibiting your ability to make a real contribution to the employer and their objectives.

Things to Consider

Take advantage of a few surprising facts:

- Well-prepared candidates often receive offers that better qualified competitors do not!
- Few candidates bother to research a company prior to the interview.
- Only one in ten candidates sells his or her abilities and accomplishments effectively.
- Successful candidates always ask questions about the position and the employer.
- Companies want people who ask for the job, and one way to move toward the top of the list is to ask for the offer.

Make the Interview Work for You

Establish a relationship with the interviewer that permits a relaxed dialog and open exchange of information. Be friendly and show interest in what the interviewer is saying. Look for opportunities to demonstrate your interest in the opportunity, the interviewer and the employer. Withhold questions about those issues (such as compensation) that can better be resolved once an offer is imminent. Maintain your self-esteem but do not dominate the conversation. Strike a comfortable balance between listening and asking or answering questions.

Consider the impression you are trying to create, and discuss with your Toft Group Consultant any questions you may have concerning appropriate attire for the interview.

Anticipate “tough” questions the employer may ask and review them with your Toft Group Consultant.

Prepare key questions of your own that demonstrate your understanding of the company and its industry. Review these with your Toft Group Consultant.

Be ready to discuss how you have performed in the past, particularly in solving problems similar to those likely to be encountered in the job.

Do not try to negotiate a compensation and benefits package until you know the employer is prepared to offer you the job, and never in the first interview! When the time is right, let your Toft Group Consultant take the lead. If asked directly about your compensation requirements while in an interview, mention your current actual compensation, including any bonuses, salary deferrals, etc.

Indicate to the employer that you would expect a fair and reasonable increase commensurate with the new position and its contribution to the company.

Before leaving any interview, express your sincere interest in pursuing this opportunity.

Following Up

Following Up After the Interview

Immediately after the interview several actions are critical:

- Call your Toft Group Consultant to “debrief” after your meeting.
- Write a thank-you letter to each key person you met. Indicate your appreciation for the opportunity to discuss their organization and its needs. Be sure to re-emphasize any pertinent experiences and accomplishments you discussed that may uniquely qualify you for the opportunity.
- If you initially decide that the opportunity fails to meet your needs, do not burn your bridges. You may be misreading the situation. This warrants further discussion with your Toft Group Consultant.

Remember that the Toft Group Consultant has a very close relationship with the employer and can often resolve seemingly insurmountable issues.

Phone interview Do's and Don'ts

DO'S

Be Ready for the Call

- Respond to voicemail messages within 24-hours.
- Keep your resume, notepad and pen near your phone.
- Find a quiet spot and eliminate any distractions such as the TV, radio, children etc.
- Prepare a cheat sheet outlining your accomplishments and past experiences.
- Get comfortable. Sit in your favorite chair. If you prefer to stand, go for it. They'll never know.
- Keep a glass of drinking water nearby, just in case.
- If you are completely caught off guard when an unscheduled call comes in, politely ask the employer if you can call back within 10 minutes...and don't keep them waiting!

Exude Enthusiasm and Professionalism

- Make sure you sound excited, try smiling, even though they can't see you, it helps you sound friendlier.
- Block call-waiting on your phone ahead of time. If that's not possible, ignore it when it beeps.
- Don't be surprised if you're put on speaker phone and have more than one person asking you questions.
- Speak succinctly about your background and experiences, keeping responses to one minute or less.
- Always have a general set of questions prepared to ask the interviewer(s).

DON'TS

Refrain from these:

- Don't eat, chew gum or smoke.
- Don't use unprofessional answering machine messages.
- Don't answer call waiting during your conversation.
- Don't hang up the phone without asking questions (about the company, position, etc...).
- Don't use too many filler words (um, uh, hmm).
- Don't have distracting noises around.

How to Excel in a Video Interview

In today's global workplace more and more employers are opting for the Skype, Live Messenger or another video interview format. Let's face it – it cuts down on travel expenses, saves on fuel and provides the employer with a much quicker and easier way to find the perfect person for the position without the time consuming face-to-face interview process. For the interviewee, being interviewed in front of a camera and microphone can be daunting. But, fear not! The video interview can be used to your advantage. Here are some video call etiquette tips on how to prepare and ultimately excel in a video interview.

An interview is an interview

Whether you are being interviewed on video, over the phone or in person, all the general rules of a job interview apply. Just because you are not meeting the interviewer in the flesh doesn't mean any less preparation is involved.

Fix yourself up!

The key to a successful video interview is making sure you look presentable. You might feel silly sitting at home wearing a suit and talking to a computer, but it will make all the difference. During the interview it is highly likely that the interviewer will only be able to see your head and shoulders on the camera. With this in mind, don't neglect your bottom half. You never know, you may be required to get something from the other side of the room – so save yourself the embarrassment of revealing your gym clothes to your prospective new boss.

Choose your colors wisely

Certain colors like many shades of blue - royal, navy, sky blue - look great on video while others like reds and hot colors like magenta can be too bright. Patterns like small dots or stripes can be less attractive than solids so think about a color to wear that is easy on the eye and a pattern that won't be distracting to your viewer.

Clean up your room

Your surroundings can be just as important as your personal presentation. Whether the interview is being conducted from your own home or a busy office environment, the interviewer does not want to see you sitting in front of a pile of paperwork or with clutter behind you. Clean up the room as you don't want anything in the background to distract the interviewer from what you have to say.

How to Excel in a Video Interview (cont'd)

Keep the noise down

Finding a quiet place to do the interview is vital as the microphone picks up more background noise than you might think. Dogs barking, children crying, mobile phones or music are not welcome distractions when an interviewer is trying to determine whether you will be suitable for a job. Nor does it look good if you have people walking in and out of the room –if need be, make a 'do not disturb' sign and stick it on the door.

Get the technology right

Five minutes before the video interview is not a good time to realize that your Internet is down, Skype isn't working, or your puppy has chewed through the microphone cord. Not only does this reflect badly on your organizational skills, it will cost the interviewer precious time as they will most likely have to reschedule. Getting the technology right is crucial as it can either make you look like a reliable computer whiz, or somebody who can't quite get the hang of it. Allow plenty of time before the interview to test all equipment. If possible, try to Skype a friend beforehand and get them to give you some feedback. Can you see/hear them? Can they see/hear you? Is the picture clear? Is the lighting OK? Is there much background noise?.

Practice makes perfect

Try recording yourself before the interview to make sure everything is working and practice answering some imaginary questions. While you might feel silly, it will help build up your confidence for the real thing. Also, keep in mind that the employer is able to take a photo and/or record the entire interview on their computer (although they should request your permission prior to doing so), so everything needs to run smoothly.

Lights, camera, action!

The golden rule with a video interview is to treat it like any other face-to-face meeting. There is a real person on the other end of the call, so treat them like one. Smiling is a big one -this makes you look positive, confident and enthusiastic about the job you are applying for. Try to make eye contact: look straight into the camera when you are talking, as this will make the interviewer feel as if you are speaking directly to them, despite being hundreds of miles away. Don't shout, but do speak loudly and clearly. Sometimes with video calls there may be a delay with the picture so a clear speaking voice is extremely important.

Here are the top five common interviewing blunders that can cost you the job:

1

Arriving unprepared

Before arriving at the company's offices, be sure you're well-versed in as many of the firm's products or services as possible. Try to make sure you can discuss knowledgeably how your skills and background will mesh with those of the company. Don't be afraid to bring materials that you may wish to show right at hand.

2

Wearing the wrong clothes

Experts say that no matter what the corporate culture, you should still dress professionally for that first interview. Simple, conservative business attire for both men and women are still the standard. No heavy fragrances, loud clothes or flashy jewelry.

3

Acting desperate for the job

If you've been asked in for an interview, then the company believes you have something to offer because of your skills and experience. Don't derail that by acting too eager or nervous. Instead, appear confident, relaxed and in control.

4

Talking too much during the interview

Some candidates are so eager to impress the interviewer that they scarcely allow questions to be asked. You wouldn't be in the interviewer's office if you hadn't already demonstrated your appeal. Impress the interviewer with your listening skills, and then thoughtfully lay out why you'll be an asset to the company. Avoiding these common mistakes could win you the job.

5

Acting “on the fence” about the opportunity

You may be considering multiple opportunities, in addition to the one you are interviewing for, and you may have concerns about relocation that you are struggling with. If you seem “on the fence,” it will likely be interpreted by your interviewers as a lack of interest in the company or the opportunity. Make every effort to explore the opportunity fully while at the interview. You can always decide post interview that they opportunity is not a good fit for you, but your goal is to keep the door open if indeed you are sincerely interested.

Questions

20 Tough Interview Questions

Are you prepared with the **ANSWERS**? Most of us **THINK** we are!

01

“Tell me about yourself.”

Just talk for two minutes. Be logical. (Start anywhere, e.g. high school, college, or first position. Looking for communication skills, linear thinking. Also try to score a point or two - describe a major personal attribute).

02

“Why are you leaving your current position?”

This is a very critical question. Don't "bad mouth" a previous employer. Don't sound "too opportunistic." The best scenario is honesty when there are major problems, or a buy-out, or layoff. You may also consider stating that “after long personal consideration, your chance to make a contribution is very low due to company changes.”

03

“What do you consider your most significant accomplishment?”

This can get you the job. Prepare extensively. Score points. Tell a 2-minute story, with details and discuss personal involvement. Make the accomplishments worth achieving. Discuss hard work, long hours, pressure, and important company issues at stake.

04

“Why do you believe you are qualified for this position?”

Pick two or three main factors about the job and about you that are most relevant. Discuss for two minutes, with specific details. Select a technical skill, a specific management skill (organizing, staffing, planning), and a personal success attribute to mention.

05

“Have you ever accomplished something you didn't think you could?”

The interviewer is trying to determine your goal orientation, work ethic, personal commitment, and integrity. Provide a good example where you overcame numerous difficulties to succeed. Prove you're not a quitter, and that “you'll get going when the going gets tough.”

Questions

20 Tough Interview Questions

06

“What do you like or dislike most about your current position?”

The interviewer is trying to determine compatibility with the open position. If you have an interest in this position, be careful. Stating your dislike of overtime or getting into details, or that you dislike "management" can cost you the position. There's nothing wrong with liking challenges, pressure situations, opportunities to grow, or disliking bureaucracy and frustrating situations.

07

“How do you handle pressure? Do you like or dislike these situations?”

High achievers tend to perform well in high-pressure situations. Conversely, the question would imply the position is pressure packed and out of control. There is nothing wrong with this as long as you know what you're going into. If you do perform well under stress, provide a good example with details, giving an overview of the stress situation. Let the interviewer "feel" the stress by your description of it.

08

“The sign of a good employee is the ability to take initiative. Can you describe situations like this about yourself?”

A proactive, results-oriented person doesn't have to be told what to do. This is one of the major attributes. To convince the interviewer you possess this trait you must give a series of short examples, describing your self-motivation. Try to describe at least one example in depth. The extra effort, strong work ethic and creative side of you must be demonstrated.

09

“What's the worst or most embarrassing aspect of your business career? How would you have done things differently now with 20/20 hindsight?”

This is a general question to learn how introspective you are, and, if you can learn from your mistakes. If you can, it indicates an open, more flexible personality. Don't be afraid to talk about your failures, particularly if you've learned from them. This is a critical aspect of high potential individuals.

Questions

20 Tough Interview Questions

10

"How have you grown or changed over the past few years?"

This requires thought. Mature technical skills or increased self-confidence are important aspects of human development. To discuss this effectively is indicative of a well-balanced, intelligent individual. Overcoming personal obstacles or recognizing manageable weaknesses can brand you as an approachable and able employee.

11

"What do you consider your most significant strengths?"

Be prepared. Know your four or five strengths. Be able to discuss each with a specific example. Select those attributes that are most compatible with the job opening. Most people say "management" or "good interpersonal skills," in answer to this. Don't unless you can describe the specific characteristics of management (planning, organizing, results, staffing, etc.) or how your relationship skills have proven critical to your success.

12

"What do you consider your most significant weaknesses?"

Don't reveal deep character flaws. Rather, discuss tolerable faults which you are working toward improving. Show by specific example how this has changed over time. Better still; show how a weakness can be turned into a strength. For example, how concentration on details results in higher quality work even though it requires much overtime.

13

"Deadlines, frustrations, difficult people, and many rules can make a job difficult. How do you handle these types of situations?"

Most companies, unfortunately, face these types of problems daily. If you can't deal with petty frustrations you'll be seen as a problem. You certainly can state your displeasure at the petty side of these issues; but how you overcome them is more important. Diplomacy, perseverance, and common sense often prevail even in difficult circumstances. This is part of corporate America, and you must be able to deal with it on a regular basis.

Questions

20 Tough Interview Questions

14

"One of our biggest problems is ? What is your experience with this? How would you deal with it?"

Think on your feet. Ask questions to get details. Break it into sub-parts. Highly likely you have some experience with the sub-sections. Answer these, and summarize the total. State how you would go about solving the problem, if you can't answer directly. Be specific. Show your organizational and analytical skills.

15

"How do you compare your technical skills to your management skills?"

Many people tend to minimize their technical skills, either because they don't have any or they don't like getting into the details. Most successful managers possess good technical skills and get into enough detail to make sure they understand the information being presented by their group. Try for a good balance here if you want to be seriously considered for the position.

16

"How has your technical ability been important in accomplishing results?"

Clearly the interviewer believes he needs a strong level of technical competence. Most strong managers have good technical backgrounds, even if they have gone away from detail. Describe specific examples of your technical wherewithal; but don't be afraid to say you're not current. Also, you could give an example of how you resolved a technical issue by "accelerated research."

17

"How would you handle a situation with tight deadlines, low employee morale, and inadequate resources?"

If you pull this off effectively, it indicates you have strong management skills. You need to be creative. An example would be great. Relate your toughest management task, even if it doesn't meet all the criteria since most situations don't. Organizational skills, interpersonal skills, and handling pressure are key elements of effective management. Good managers should be able to address each issue, even if they were not concurrent. Deftly handling the question is pretty indicative of your skills.

Questions

20 Tough Interview Questions

18

"Are you satisfied with your career to date? What would you change if you could?"

Be honest. Interviewer wants to know if he can keep you happy. It's important to know if you're willing to make some sacrifice to get your career on the right track. Degree of motivation is an instant selection criterion.

19

"What are your career goals? Where do you see yourself five years from now? Ten years?"

Most importantly, be realistic! Blue-sky stuff brands you as immature. One or two management jumps in three to five years is a reasonable goal. If your track record indicates you're on line for senior management in ten years, it's okay to mention. However, if you've had a rocky road, better to be introspective.

20

"Why should we hire you for this position? What kind of contribution would you make?"

This is a good chance to summarize. By now, you know their key issues. Restate them and show how you would address them. Relate to specific attributes and specific accomplishments. Qualify responses with the need to gather information. Don't be cocky or too overconfident. Demonstrate a thoughtful, organized, cohesive summary of what immediate contributions and longer-term contributions you are confident in fulfilling.