



Interview Preparation Packet

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PLANNING FOR THE INTERVIEW

1. Research the company – gather information from annual reports, web sites, and the recruiter, check out YouTube, and other social media channels, as well as related company marketing materials.
2. Be prepared to tell the interviewer why the company is attractive to you.
3. Evaluate yourself in terms of the position you seek.
4. Formulate responses by asking the question, “Why should they hire me?”
5. Review your resume thoroughly and be prepared to discuss all points. Bring a folder and a pen to the interview to jot down notes. Also, have 12 questions prepared to ask each interviewer (three questions should be the same in order to later compare interviewer responses; the remainder of the questions should be interviewer-specific).
6. Ask for a tour of the facility; ask good “business” questions that apply while touring.
7. Plan to arrive at least five, but no more than fifteen, minutes early.
8. Review your notes and go in with **CONFIDENCE**.

PROPER ATTIRE AND APPEARANCE

- ◆ Employers reject improperly dressed candidates. Many employers have an unwritten dress code and like to hire properly dressed candidates. Forget your own personal preference; dress according to the impression you want to create – dress for your boss' job. Your attire /appearance WON'T get you the job, but it CAN rob you of it.

FEMALE CANDIDATES:

- Hair: Neat & Clean
- Nails: Clean – conservative (or no) nail polish
- No (or light) perfume T scents can be offensive
- Wear a suit or tailored dress – basic colors (navy, black, tan...)
- Tailored blouses
- Shoes – Closed toe, no casual shoes
- Jewelry – limited & subtle
- Make-up – light & subtle
- To ensure correct posture, cross legs at the ankles, not the knees
- Don't wear a watch if you have a nervous habit of looking at it
- Maintain good posture & eye contact

MALE CANDIDATES:

- Fresh hair cut - Neat & Clean
- Facial hair, if any, should be neatly trimmed

- Nails – Clean & Neat
- No (or light) cologne – scents can be offensive
- Wear a suit – navy – right out of the cleaner’s bag – no sports jackets
- Shirt – white – new (washed) or just laundered
- Tie – conservative with contrasting colors
- Shoes – black or cordovan, highly polished
- Socks – black or blue, over the calf
- Jewelry – minimal
- Don’t wear a watch if you have a nervous habit of looking at it
- Maintain good posture & eye contact

INTERVIEW STRATEGY

Your objective is to obtain a job offer by outshining the competition. You've already done it with your work history, now you need to do it with your appearance and interviewing strategy.

I. POINTS TO REMEMBER

- ◆ Shake hands firmly while establishing direct eye contact
- ◆ Be gracious and enthusiastic in your greeting
- ◆ Address interviewer as “Mr.” or “Ms.” until given permission to use first name
- ◆ Offer interviewer a copy of your resumé
- ◆ Always look at the interviewer – maintain eye contact
- ◆ Maintain high energy level
- ◆ Sit Up
- ◆ Back Straight
- ◆ No Drinks – to spill
- ◆ No Smoking
- ◆ Avoid nervous habits – showing anxiety through your legs, feet, and hands
- ◆ LISTEN to questions and think before you respond
- ◆ Never talk while your interviewer is reading
- ◆ Respond formally – “Yes, Ma’am / Sir” – be sure not to say Yeah/Yep
- ◆ Eliminate such phrases as “you know,” “uh,” and other fillers

- ◆ Never be negative about anything especially former employers
- ◆ Never bring up the subject of money
- ◆ Never chew gum
- ◆ Do not take cell or mobile phones into the interview
- ◆ Be prepared for a group interview

NOTE: Be yourself. Poise, confidence and self-respect are of great importance. Conduct yourself with confidence and determination - don't play coy. Sell yourself. This is your first meeting and the position, as well as future promotions, may depend on your presentation. Are you going to sell your prospective employer on the idea of hiring you, or will the interviewer sell you on the idea that this job is not for you? You must present a positive attitude to the prospective employer. You must not appear to be disinterested or appear to be job shopping.

INTERVIEW TIPS

1. In order to have a successful interview, you must find out what people want and then show them how to get it. Uncover the employer's wants, needs, desires, goals, and priorities.
2. Listen well to the interviewer. Be attentive – show him/her that you understand the needs of the company.
3. Establish rapport. Switch the situation from “you against me” to “you and me against the problem.”
4. Be yourself - let your natural strengths come through.
5. Be truthful. If you don't know how to answer a question, say so – ask for clarifications if necessary.
6. Demonstrate integrity – never divulge confidential information about your previous employers.
7. Never be negative about anything - including former bosses, companies, or employees.
8. Never get into an argument with the interviewer.
9. Always show loyalty to former employers even if you have been downsized or fired.
10. Be on your toes at all times and with every person you meet: secretary, company employees you pass in the hallway, etc. If invited to lunch or dinner, remember that's part of the interview as well. Remember – job interview behavior is different from normal work behavior, just as interview dress is different from normal job dress.
11. If you wish, take notes – but ask first.
12. Finally, don't ask the employer about salary until you're offered the position. To get into a salary discussion too early will handicap your negotiating ability. Be sure the employer wants to hire you first, and then you will negotiate from strength.

POSSIBLE AREAS OF DISCUSSION/QUESTIONS

I. **PROOF OF COMPETENCE:**

- ◆ Give indicators of good performance – use mini-stories
- ◆ State problem or challenge
- ◆ Describe how you handled it
- ◆ Emphasize results achieved
- ◆ Review how we presented you

II. **WHY DO YOU WANT TO WORK FOR MY COMPANY?**

- ◆ This should be your easiest and favorite question to answer. In fact, if he/she does not ask it, volunteer the information anyway. Because you have done your research on this company, you know exactly why you want to work there. All you need to do is organize your reasons into several hard-hitting sentences. Using facts, not puffery, tell the interviewer why his/her company is your number-one choice.

III. **WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS?**

- ◆ Be ready to deliver one or two short hero stories that demonstrate some capability that will make you attractive to your new employer. Include situations involving problems or challenges and how you were able to solve or overcome them. Describe the results you achieved. If you are fresh out of school, consider academic experience or something connected with summer employment.

IV. **HOW DO YOU MANAGE YOUR TIME?**

- ◆ Be ready to explain how you manage your time between multiple work projects, community activities, family, etc..... **PRESENT YOURSELF AS A WELL-ROUNDED PERSON!** Your answer gives you dimension – name some hobbies.

V. **WHEN ASKED – AND YOU WILL BE ASKED – “DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?” ANSWER, “ABSOLUTELY!”**

- ◆ A job hunter who tells the interviewer that he/she has no questions is making a classic error that often results in losing the job offer altogether.
- ◆ The questions you must ask will enhance your candidacy. An interviewer will be impressed by serious, probing, carefully thought-out questions. Good questions may indicate that you are ready for a position of much greater responsibility.

HOW TO ANSWER TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Question

_____, I've read through your resume and we had a nice discussion over the phone last week, but why don't you tell me a little bit more about your qualifications.

Answer

Your best answer would be to give a one-minute summary of your strongest qualifications and then, without pausing, immediately continue by saying, "I have a number of accomplishments that I'd like to tell you about. So that I can make my answers relevant to your areas of greatest interest, may I ask a question or two about the position?"

This allows you to ask a couple of questions which draw out his/her greatest need, want, desire, goal, or problem.

No matter which question the interviewer asks you at the beginning of the interview, you should always give a brief answer and get back to this strategy of uncovering his/her greatest need or want.

Two questions to consider would be, "What would your highest expectations be for the person who fills this job?" or, "What would the highest priorities be for the person who fills this position?"

Once the interviewer begins to talk about his/her wants and needs, keep the dialogue going with further probing questions, such as, "That's interesting, why is that the case?" or, "How would you like to see this situation remedied?" or, "What would the person in this position have to achieve to be considered a great success?"

When you have gained the critically essential information of what the interviewer is looking for, you have everything you need to make a masterful presentation – one that matches the interviewer's greatest wants with your most relevant credentials and accomplishments.

You should then proceed to describe anecdotes of how you have achieved success in similar situations. Allow your interviewer to interrupt with more questions.

Do not offer an on-the-spot solution to the interviewer's greatest needs and wants. The purpose of your achievement anecdotes is to demonstrate how you think, how you approach problems, and that you are an achiever who knows how to get results.

2. Question

What are your greatest strengths?

Answer

Prior to the interview, you should have a list mentally prepared of your greatest strengths and a specific example, which illustrates each one. Then once you've uncovered your interviewer's greatest wants and needs, you can choose those achievements from your list that best match up.

3. Question

What are your greatest weaknesses?

Answer

BEWARE – this is an eliminator question – disguise strength as a weakness.

"I sometimes push my people too hard. I like to work with a sense of urgency and everyone is not always on that same wavelength." Or "I can't say "no," even for something falling outside of my job description, if it will benefit the company."

Or you may, instead of confessing a weakness, want to describe what you like most and what you like least, making sure that what you like most matches up with the most important qualification for success in the position. And what you like least is not essential. For example, "I enjoy performing internal audits, working with departments to create corrective action plans (as required), and follow-up activities to ensure that corrective action is effective, but I don't like standing up in front of executive management providing them with audit summary results. I would prefer to review results while sitting down.

Or: "Throughout my career I have worked hard to identify what my weaknesses are and through personal and professional development tried to eliminate them.

4. Question

Why are you leaving (or did you leave) this position?

Answer

Never badmouth your previous company, boss, employees, etc. State honestly what you are hoping to find in a new spot. Make sure you have a reason for leaving each job – more money, opportunity, responsibility, or growth.

5. Question

Why should I hire you?

Answer

This is a killer question because so many candidates are unprepared for it. If you stammer or adlib, you've blown it.

Whether your interviewer asks the question explicitly or not, this is the most important question of the interview because he/she must answer the question favorably in his/her own mind before you will be hired. SO HELP HIM/HER OUT!

Since you already know what his/her greatest needs are, this will give you a big leg up over the other candidates because you will give him/her better reasons for hiring you than for hiring anyone else – reasons that are tied directly to his/her own needs.

Walk through each of the position requirements as you understand them and follow each with a reason why you meet that requirement so well.

Examples:

“As I understand your needs, you are looking for someone to facilitate your ISO 9001 certification. As you've said, you need someone with a strong background in ISO 9001. This is where I have spent my last five years. I believe that I know the right methods, principles, and successful management techniques as well as any person can in our industry.”

"You also need someone who can ensure that corrective action adequately addresses systematic problems, so non-conformances, if any, do not occur on a recurring basis. I believe that my successful implementation and timely closure of corrective action activities is among the best in our industry."

And so on for each requirement...

Every one of these selling couplets is a touchdown that runs up your score. It is your best opportunity to outsell your competition.

6. Question

Where do you see yourself in three years? In ten?

Note: You "need to have" an answer to this one!

Answer

"I am definitely interested in making a long-term commitment to my next position. Judging on what you have told me about the position, it's exactly what I'm looking for and what I'm very well qualified to do. In terms of my future career path, I'm confident that if I do my work with excellence, opportunities will inevitably open up for me."

7. Question

Why do you want to work at our company?

Answer

This question tests whether you've done any homework about the company. If you haven't, you lose. If you have, you win big. This is your chance to hit a homerun. Review annual reports, corporate newsletters, and contacts you know at the company, its suppliers, advertisements, etc....

8. Question

What should you say to your boss if he's crazy about an idea, but you think it stinks?

Answer

“I believe that when evaluating anything, it’s important to emphasize the positive. What do I like about this idea? Then, if I have reservations, I certainly want to point them out, as specifically, objectively, and factually as I can. After all, the most important thing I owe my boss is honesty. If he/she can’t count on me for that, then everything else I may do

or say could be questionable in his/her eyes. But I also want to express my thoughts in a constructive way. So my goal in this case would be to see if my boss and I could make his idea even stronger and more appealing, so that it effectively overcomes any initial reservation others or I may have about it. Of course, if he/she overrules me and says, “No, let’s do it my way,” then I owe him/her my full and enthusiastic support to make it work as best as it can.

9. Question

What would you do if a fellow employee wasn’t pulling his weight...and this was hurting the company?

Answer

“Good human relations would call for me to go directly to the person and explain the situation, to try to enlist his/her help in a constructive, positive solution. If I sensed resistance, I would be as persuasive as I know how to explain the benefits we can all gain by working together and the problems that we, the company, and our customers will experience if we don’t.”

10. Question

The hypothetical problem – How would you handle...

Answer

Don’t fall into the trap of trying to solve this problem on the spot. It will make your decision-making process seem woefully inadequate.

Instead, describe the rational, methodical process you would follow in analyzing this problem: whom you would consult with, generating possible solutions, choosing the best course of action, and monitoring the results.

11. Question

The salary question – How much money do you want?

Answer

Never bring up salary. Let the interviewer do it first. Good salespeople sell their products thoroughly before talking price. So should you. Make the interviewer want you first and your bargaining position will be much stronger. Stress opportunity and growth, not salary, early in the interview process.

12. Question

What was the toughest part of your last job?

Answer

State that there is (was) nothing in your existing (prior) position that you found overly difficult, and let your answer go at that. If pressed to expand upon your answer, you could describe the aspects of the position you enjoyed more than others, making sure that you express maximum enjoyment for the tasks most important to the open position, and you enjoyed least those tasks that are unimportant to the position at hand.

13. Question

Tell me something negative you've heard about our company.

Answer

This is a common fishing expedition to see what the industry is saying about the company. But it is also a trap because, as an outsider, you never want to be the bearer of unflattering news or gossip about the company. It can only hurt your chances and sidetrack the interviewer from becoming sold on you.

Just remember the rule – never be negative – and you'll handle this one just fine.

QUESTIONS TO BRING

INTEREST QUESTIONS are questions related to the job, the company, its products, services and people.

Keep the following guidelines in mind when asking interest questions.

- ★ Keep the perception of being a recruited candidate.
- ★ RELAX; this is a fact-finding mission for both you and the interviewer.
- ★ DO NOT cross-examine the interviewer
- ★ Ask questions requiring an explanation. Questions which can be answered with a “yes” or a “no” are conversation stoppers.
- ★ Ask job relevant questions. Focus on the job, company, products, services, people.

NOTE: DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT SALARY, FRINGE BENEFITS, OR VACATION.

The following are some interest questions you may want to ask.

Questions About the Company:

- ★ Ask the interviewer how he/she got to be where he/she is today, and what he/she likes most about the company.
- ★ What are the biggest challenges facing your company?
- ★ What areas of the company would you like to see strengthened?
- ★ What are the company’s future plans and goals?
- ★ Where do you see the major growth potential for this company during the next 2-5 years?

- ★ What has led to your company's success and how do you expect to maintain that?
- ★ What new technologies do you feel are essential in order to maintain or increase your position in the marketplace?
- ★ "In my research, I read that (state information on industry, trends, company's market share, new products under development, etc.....)." "How do you see that changing in the next two years? (Or briefly relate your skills or past experience on this topic)."
- ★ What is your philosophy and the company's policy on training and development? How are training dollars budgeted?
- ★ Ask about the culture environment of the company.

Questions About the Position/Department:

- ★ How many people have held this position in the past several years? Where are these people now? Were they promoted?
- ★ Ask about long-range career opportunities.
- ★ Ask about what you'd be expected to accomplish first in this position and what the expected time frame is.
- ★ Ask about the priorities and challenges that are seen for the position.
- ★ Ask if there are projects in motion that you will inherit and ask about their history and status.
- ★ Ask about future projects.
- ★ Inquire about performance evaluations and how they are conducted.
- ★ Ask if the department has a Mission Statement or Vision Statement.
- ★ Ask if the interviewer has any questions about your qualifications. This is your chance to clear up any misunderstandings and come to terms with any reservations your interviewer may have.

ASK FOR THE JOB! (The following are some options, modify to use what works best for you)

- ★ “ _____, based on our conversation, I know that I can be an asset to you and the department. Is there anything else you need answered?” **Listen to the answer....if they say nothing, inform the interviewer that you want this opportunity and ask them what the next step is.**
- ★ “This has been an interesting interview. I like what I’ve heard today and I look forward to moving to the next step. Before I leave, do you have any more questions about my background or qualifications or can I supply you with any more information?”

****The farewell should also include a smile, direct eye contact, and a firm handshake. ****

If you maintain Questioning Awareness you will automatically ask the right questions, giving yourself a considerable advantage when interviewing.

Show Determination!

Employers value candidates with drive and commitment. Those who show they are determined and don’t make mistakes in interviews often land jobs over more qualified applicants. You might lack some of the qualifications and still land the job because you impressed the interviewer by your enthusiasm and flawless interviewing style. The opportunity could be yours.

Don’t forget to ask for business cards or contact information so you can follow-up!

FOLLOW-UP

- ❖ Call your recruiter IMMEDIATELY following the interview to summarize the interview
- ❖ Evaluate every job offer – never accept or reject on the spot
- ❖ Write a brief thank you or follow-up letter to the interviewer(s)
 - ❖ You've enjoyed your meeting
 - ❖ You can do the job
 - ❖ You are interested in the job

REMEMBER:

In essence, this is a fact-finding meeting. You are presenting what you can do. The employer is presenting what his/her company can offer you.

REASONS FOR REJECTION

- *Poor Attitude* – Many candidates come across as arrogant. While employers can afford to be self-centered, candidates cannot.
- *Appearance* – Many candidates do not consider their appearance to be as important as they should. First impressions are made in the first three to five minutes. It is only human nature for an employer to form an impression quickly. Do a checklist from your head to your toes.
- *Lack of Research* – It is obvious when candidates haven't learned about the job, company, or industry prior to the interview. Browse the Internet to research the company, and then talk with friends, peers, and other professionals about the opportunity before the interview.
- *Not Having Any Questions* – Asking questions shows your interest in the company. Prepare a list of intelligent questions in advance.
- *Not Readily Knowing Answers to the Interviewer's Questions* – Anticipate and rehearse answers to tough questions about issues raised by your background, such as recent termination or an employment gap. Practicing with your spouse or a friend before the interview will prompt you to frame intelligent responses. You may also want to have your responses videotaped so you can review your answers after you've finished role-playing.
- *Relying Too Much on Resumes* – Employers hire people – not paper.
 - Although a resume can list qualifications, it is the interview dialogue that
 - Will portray you as a committed, responsive team player.
- *Too Much Humility* – Conditioned not to brag, candidates are sometimes reluctant to describe their accomplishments. Explaining how you reached difficult or impressive goals helps employers to understand what you can do for them.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS

The use of drug testing as part of a pre-employment physical examination is becoming more prevalent. Drug testing has become a standard for getting a job.

Some over-the-counter products can produce positive drug-test results. Among them: Alka-Seltzer Plus, Allerest, Bronkaid, Contact, Donnagel, Nyquil, Primatene, Promlamine capsules, Sinutab, Sudafed and Triaminic.

You should be aware that poppy seeds in your food also could produce a positive drug-test result.

When you take your pre-employment physical, you should not take any medication 48 hours prior to the examination. In the event that you take some medication prior to the physical, be sure to list all drugs taken prior to the physical and advise the examiner.

RESIGNATION SAMPLE #1

Dear _____:

This letter serves as formal notification that I am terminating my employment at (COMPANY) as of _____.

My decision is final and not open for discussion.

Sincerely,

RESIGNATION SAMPLE #2

Date

Dear _____,

Please accept this letter as my formal resignation as (Title) for (Company) to become effective as of (Date). I have accepted a position in (Location).

I believe this position will offer me more challenge and opportunity for advancement as well as allow me to broaden my own experience and knowledge.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your time and efforts in my training and advancement during the past (number of years). The support and concern shown by you and the rest of the management team has been deeply appreciated.

I leave (Company) with no animosity or ill will and wish you and your company continued success.

My decision is irrevocable. In conclusion, any and all counter offers extended by you and/or (Company) will be rejected.

Sincerely,

(Name)

10 REASONS FOR NOT ACCEPTING A COUNTEROFFER

- 1) You have now made your employer aware that you are unhappy. From this day on, your loyalty will always be in question. When promotion time comes around, your employer will remember who is loyal and who is not.
- 2) When times get tough, your employer will begin cutbacks with you.
- 3) Accepting a counteroffer is an insult to your intelligence and a blow to your personal pride – you were bought.
- 4) Where is the money for the counteroffer coming from? All companies have wage and salary, which must be followed – is it just your next raise early?
- 5) Your company will immediately start looking for a new person at a cheaper price.
- 6) The same circumstances that now cause you to consider a change will repeat themselves in the future, even if you accept a counteroffer.
- 7) Statistics show that if you accept a counteroffer, the probability of voluntarily leaving in six months or being let go in one year is extremely high.
- 8) Once the word gets out, the relationship that you now enjoy with your coworkers will never be the same. You will lose the personal satisfaction of peer group acceptance.
- 9) What type of company do you work for if you have to threaten to resign before they give you what you are worth?
- 10) If you do consider being bought back, obtain the details of the offer in writing, as well as a one year “no cut” contract from the employer. If they refuse, as two-thirds of counter offering employers do, your decision to leave is made.