

Interview Preparation

Essentials for a successful interview

Interviewing is often a process of elimination, not a process of selection. Employers want to hire people that they like, who like them, and who show an interest not just in the role but the company and its mission. Take the time to prepare appropriately—DON'T JUST WING IT!

PREPARE ANSWERS TO EACH OF THESE QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO ANSWER ABOUT YOURSELF:

The key to situational interviews is to provide a story as an example with a clear beginning, middle, and an end. Emphasize what you accomplished as a result- what you learned, saved, or achieved.

- Tell me about yourself.
- What are you looking for in your next position?
- Why does this job interest you?
- Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?
- What led you to leave your current job?
- What is your anticipated salary?
- Why should we select you for this position?
- What do you see as your strengths and how would you utilize them in this position?
- What would you consider a weakness or area that would offer you growth?
- What changes would you have made, if you could, in any previous job?
- What did you like best and least in your most recent job?
- Tell me about an assignment or goal from your last job which you failed and why.
- What did you like best and least in any supervisor?
- Tell me about an occasion in your career where you exceeded your employer's expectations.
- Describe how you organize and prioritize.
- What is your approach to customer satisfaction?
- Tell me about a situation where you had to make an important decision with limited facts.
- What was the toughest work-related decision you have ever made and how did you arrive at it?
- When have you had to support an idea or project that you were not in favor of?
- How have you previously improved an existing process or work area?
- Describe the most challenging ethical decision you have made in the workplace.
- Describe when you anticipated potential problems in a previous job and developed preventative measures.
- What are some of your significant accomplishments in your career?
- How would your previous supervisors/peers describe you?
- What do you have to offer us that someone else doesn't?
- What if you get a counter offer?
- Do you think you are overqualified for this job?
- Where did you tell your employer you are today?

MAKE YOURSELF RELEVANT DURING THE INTERVIEW

REAL

Be yourself, but reveal only what's applicable to the role.

EXPERIENCE

Go through primary and secondary responsibilities of the job.

LISTEN

Let the interviewer lead the conversation and answer carefully what is asked.

ENTHUSIASM

You may not have the exact experience, but you are willing and want to learn.

VERSED

Research the company and the team that you will interview with to be prepared.

APPROPRIATE

Prepare examples of how your traits and previous experience are relatable to the position.

NEGOTIABLE

Emphasize your ability to start early, drive farther, be flexible, etc.

THANKFUL

Ask for the interviewer's business card and always send a thank you note within 24 hrs.



DRESS CODE: Always dress better than suggested.

DIRECTIONS: Don't forget to account for traffic, ask about parking beforehand, and know who to contact if you're running late.

BE PREPARED: Take two copies of your resume with you, turn off your phone, and take notes.

ASK GREAT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMPANY

It is your responsibility to research the company, their mission, and their team prior to your interview. Learn about them by visiting their website, LinkedIn, etc.

- How many people are in the group as a total?
- How does this office/department interact with the others?
- What is the company's long-range forecast/plan?
- How has the company changed in the past few years or how will it change?
- How does this job relate to the overall structure and goals of the corporation/group/department?

ASK GREAT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE JOB

Let the company lead the interview, but be prepared with questions that are specific to the role you are interviewing for and the person you are meeting with.

- What special projects are being worked on that I would be involved with?
- Who would I be reporting to? What is his/her background? What sort of management style do they practice?
- How would I spend a typical day?
- How can I improve upon the performance of the last person?
- What type of budgetary/operational responsibility will this person have?
- What challenges has this role faced in the past that you'd like to avoid in the future?
- Where do I have the opportunity to make the most significant contribution?
- What are the one or two biggest challenges I will face in the first 90 days?
- How can I make an immediate impact on the bottom line of the department/company?

IF YOU WANT THE JOB, TELL THEM SO!

Reiterate your interest in the role by asking genuine questions about where you stand. Companies want to hire those who are excited about the role and want to contribute to the overall success of the company.

- How can I show you I am the best person for the job?
- How can I make an immediate impact on the bottom line of the department/company, etc.?
- How do I compare to other candidates you have seen so far?
- Where do I stand from your perspective?
- What, if anything, about my background or experience, would prevent me from moving forward in the process?



For your in-person interview, strive to be 10 minutes early. Arriving too early can cause scheduling problems for the interviewer. Receptionists are instructed to inform people of their guests' arrival no matter what time it is, even if it is your intention to sit quietly in the lobby. Wait in the car or in a coffee shop around the corner until 10 minutes before your scheduled appointment.

DO NOT ASK ABOUT: SALARY, BENEFITS, OR UPWARD MOBILITY

You want to focus your limited, valuable interviewing time on why you are good for the job not what's in it for you.

SALARY: Salary is not always as negotiable as some may think. When presented by a search firm, your recruiter will work with you on this.

BENEFITS & FLEXIBILITY: Everyone has different needs. HR should provide the answers to your questions when an offer is extended.

UPWARD MOBILITY: If you are a good and loyal employee, you will move up! Promotions are earned on the job, not negotiated during an interview.



REFERENCES

Don't provide references unless asked, and only provide references that have given you permission to use them. If an application asks for the contact information of a previous supervisor, it is likely that they will be contacted.

When you work with a recruiter, the recruiter will complete the reference checks for the client. If the client asks for references, let them know that you have provided a list to your recruiter and that they will provide completed references, not just a list.

Interviewing is a matching process. Try to respond to questions with answers that relate specifically to the skills necessary for the job you are interviewing for and the person you are interviewing with. Tell them the things they're interested in hearing about.

Ask and answer appropriately. By asking a lot of questions, you'll know what they're looking for and you'll be able to pick and choose things about your background that apply. If you can answer their questions appropriately, you will keep their interest and build rapport easily. Ask big-picture questions about the company, based on your research, to HR and specifics about the role requirements to the direct supervisor.

Always send a thank you note. Even if you're no longer interested or don't think that the interview went well. A quick e-mail reiterating your interest in the role and thanking them for their time is also a great way to include anything you may have forgotten to say or would like to elaborate on. Make sure your note is specific to the topics discussed during the interview and that it's spell-checked and grammar-checked.



QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD KNOW HOW TO ANSWER

- **Tell me about yourself.**

Start at a logical point and move forward or backward from there, focusing on milestones. 3 or 4 factual sentences is plenty.

- **What are you looking for in your next position?**

2 or 3 things that the new job includes that you are looking for.

- **Where do you see yourself in 3-5 years?**

Nothing too specific, but obviously a career leading down the same path with more responsibility. DON'T mention that you want their job, your own business, go back to school, etc.

- **Why does this job interest you?**

2 or 3 concrete work-related reasons why the role interests you which are not about benefits or location.

- **What led you to leave your current job?**

Nothing negative about your job. Only focus on positive reasons that the new job will have and why it's a better opportunity.

- **When would you be able to start?**

Always say within 2 weeks of an accepted offer. Don't be concerned about any upcoming vacations or time off, details can always be worked out later.

- **Would you be prepared to move?**

If the job is out of town, don't get into personal issues of selling a house etc. At this point, just say yes.

- **What is your anticipated salary?**

Always be factual and specific. "My last salary was X plus my last bonus was X. I'm open to your best offer."

- **Why should we select you for this position?**

2 or 3 concrete things about you that apply to the company and the job.

- **What do you see as your strengths and how would you utilize them in this position?**

Choose measurable and soft skills such as computer skills, ability to work in a team/independently, etc. 1 or 2 each.

- **What would you consider an area that would offer you growth, or is a weakness?**

Mention something you are genuinely working to improve on that is career-related and your enthusiasm about becoming better.

- **What changes would you have made, if you could, in any previous job?**

Choose areas with only positive outcomes, or situations that you grew and learned from. Nothing negative.

- **What did you like best and least in your most recent job?**

Pick attributes that you liked best that the new job will also include. Don't mention duties/responsibilities that you did not enjoy as it could be a reason not to hire you.

- **Tell me about an assignment or goal from your last job which you failed to achieve and why.**

Be truthful, and include what you learned in the process. How would you do things differently in the future?

- **What did you like best and least in any supervisor?**

Don't attack personal character. Talk more about the positives than negatives and what they taught you. Never use names.

- **Tell me about an occasion in your career where you exceeded your employer's expectations.**

Include quantifiable benefits to the company.

- **Describe how you organize and prioritize.**

Tell the story logically for your role.

- **What is your approach to customer satisfaction?**

Answer the question – don't give a summary of why customer satisfaction is crucial

- **Tell me about a situation where you had to make an important decision with limited facts.**

Make sure the story has a point: made/saved/achieved.

- **What was the toughest work-related decision you have ever made and how did you arrive at it?**

Be specific and measurable.

- **Describe the most challenging ethical decision you have made in the workplace.**

Be truthful and include what you learned in the process. How would you do things differently?

- **Describe when you anticipated potential problems in a previous job and developed preventative measures.**

Make sure the story has a point: made/saved/achieved.

- **What are some of your significant accomplishments in your career?**

Include quantifiable and measurable benefits to the company.

- **When have you had to support an idea or project that you were not in favor of?**

This should not be a "told you so story."

- **How have previously improved on an existing process or work area?**

Make sure the story has a point: made/saved/achieved.

- **How would your previous supervisors/peers describe you?**

Measurable skills, as well as personality traits, apply here.

- **What do you have to offer us that someone else doesn't?**

2 or 3 concrete things about you that apply to the company and the job.

- **Do you think you are overqualified for this job?**

"No, I think I'm well-qualified." Add details why.

- **Where did you tell your employer you are today?**

Always tell the interviewer you took personal leave time, no matter what you told your current employer about where you went.