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Interview Preparation

An interview allows you the opportunity to convince a potential employer that you fit the organization's culture and have the skills, knowledge, and experience for the position. A successful interview is highly dependent upon preparation. Below are steps that you can take in order to maximize the opportunity that lies ahead.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW....

Research the career field and organization

Lack of knowledge of the field and organization are consistently cited as a reason candidates do not advance in interviews. To stand out amongst less-prepared candidates:

- Use resources such as Glassdoor, LinkedIn, Business Insights Essentials, trade/business publications for an overview of the organization and industry.
- Check recent news headlines about the company and read recent press releases for insights.
- Perform a detailed review of the organization's website (including "About Us" page mission statement, products, services, clients, cases studies).
- Reach out to individuals in your network who work for the organization to better understand the culture of the organization.

Compare your skills and qualifications to the job requirements

- Review your resume. Your resume is often a source of interview questions-be able to expand on each item on your resume and connect your experiences to the job/organization.
- Analyze the job description and outline the tasks you will be responsible for along with the knowledge, skills and abilities required to carry out your duties.
- Understand where the position fits within the structure of the organization.

Develop your interviewing skills

- Meet with a Career Coach for a mock interview.
- Most interviews involve a combination of resume-based, behavioral and case questions. Practice telling your story and prepare responses for commonly asked questions.

Prepare

- Know how to get to the interview location and arrive 10 minutes early. Confirm where and when you will meet in advance.
- Dress professionally.
- Bring copies of your resume and your cover letter (along with other pertinent application material).
- Bring a padfolio/professional binder and a pen.



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Prepare Cont.

- Many interviews end with “Do you have any questions?” Have a list of questions to ask the interviewer about the organization/position based on your research.

DURING THE INTERVIEW...

What to do during the interview

- Have an open and positive attitude from the beginning. Greet the employer warmly with a firm handshake while making appropriate eye contact.
- Express confidence through body language – Nonverbal communication is just as important as your interview response. Be aware of eye contact, posture, hand gestures, and facial expressions.
- Treat every interaction with your employer, including interactions in the waiting room, as part of the interview.
- Communicate your excitement in and motivation for the position and organization.
- Listen and be attentive.
- Use interviewers’ names and develop rapport.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand a question.
- Get business cards from your interviewers, or at least make a note of the correct spelling of their names.

What not to do during the interview

- Confuse confidence and professionalism with arrogance and an attempt to dominate the conversation.
- Talk poorly about past employers, supervisors, colleagues, etc.
- Exaggerate or lie.
- Provide general or generic answers instead of specific, targeted responses.
- Behave too casually in an interview with someone you know or someone you have a rapport with.
- Sound overly scripted/present memorized answers.
- Let a poor answer to a previous question distract you.
- Ask about salary and benefits issues before receiving an offer.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW...

- Thank-you notes should be sent within 24 hours to all those with whom you met. Notes should personalize your experience, reiterate your qualifications, and declare an interest in the next stages of the selection process.
- Perform a post-interview analysis - make note of positive experiences, areas for improvement and information you can use to improve interview performance.



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Pre-Interview Worksheet

Complete this worksheet as part of your interview preparation. Researching the employer, understanding the position, and knowing how your skills, interests, values and experiences relate to the organization and opportunity are critical.

EMPLOYER OVERVIEW

A key part of preparing for an interview involves researching the organization (what they do, performance, standing within the industry, mission, culture, etc.). Use the employer's website, recent press releases, case studies, stock trends, Google Alerts, your network, etc. to conduct your research. Identify two facts you can cite about the organization and two questions you can ask during the interview to demonstrate your interest in and knowledge of the organization.

Facts

1.

2.

Questions

1.

2.

Evaluate the employer mission statement and values to determine three characteristics or traits the organization might value in a prospective employee. Also, identify and be able to articulate experiences or situations in which you showcased these qualities.

Personal Attributes

1.

2.

3.

Showcase Statements

1.

2.

3.



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POSITION DESCRIPTION

Review the position description and identify four key roles and responsibilities for this position. Summarize key experiences, knowledge, skills or qualifications that you possess that will help you fulfill that responsibility. Showcase these unique selling points during your interview.

Position Responsibilities

1.

2.

3.

4.

Showcase Statements

1.

2.

3.

4.

During the interview, use the **SAR method** to convey your showcase statements:

Situation: Briefly describe the situation, problem or objective.

Action: Describe the specific actions you took to solve the problem or meet an objective.

Result: Explain the results you accomplished. Use as many quantifiable metrics and specifics as you can (\$, %, +/-) to prove that you had an impact. Note any special recognition received.