



# Interview Preparation Toolkit

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## Interview Preparation

- 1— Know why you're interested in the job/company.
- 2— Assess your strengths and weaknesses. Be prepared to sell yourself!
- 3— Assess your major accomplishments.
- 4— Be prepared to discuss your job responsibilities.
- 5— Evaluate your skills and experience as they relate to the position requirements.
- 6— Prepare your questions about the position.
- 7— Research the company – know what you are walking into. Know why you want to work there.
- 8— Make sure you are ready to make a professional presentation – both in appearance and in verbiage.
- 9— Your resume should accurately reflect your education and work experience. It should be organized and logically laid out with no typos or other errors. Have it professionally critiqued.
- 10— Compose a thank-you letter that you can send immediately after your interviews. Thank the interviewer for the opportunity and ask for the job.

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## During the Interview

- 1— Make sure you understand the questions (ask a second time if you are unsure).
- 2— Respond concisely – don't ramble – when people are nervous, they tend to chit-chat.
- 3— Avoid "yes" or "no" answers.
- 4— Don't bring up salary or benefits unless the interviewer brings them up. Know what an appropriate salary range should be.
- 5— If you want the job, let them know!
- 6— As you answer questions, avoid use of negative terms and avoid the temptation to be negative about past employers.
- 7— Answer questions with specific examples – avoid generalities.
- 8— Evaluate the position for which you are interviewing. Be sure you are a good fit for the level of job. If you convey interest in a higher level position, the company will likely be concerned you will not be content with the position.

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## Why Candidates are Rejected

- 1— Lack of proper career planning, purposes and goals are ill defined and need direction. Candidate has no idea why they pursued this field.
- 2— Inability to express thoughts clearly and concisely – rambles.
- 3— Inability to discuss specific achievements or experiences.
- 4— Not prepared for the interview – no research on the position or the company.
- 5— Unable to explain interest in the position/company.
- 6— Little interest and enthusiasm – indifferent – bland personality.
- 7— Overbearing, overaggressive, conceited, cocky, aloof or assuming.
- 8— Interested only in a higher level position or more money.
- 9— Asks few or poor questions about the job – little depth and meaning to questions. Does not talk...
- 10— Makes excuses, evasiveness, hedges on unfavorable factors in record.
- 11— No confidence and poise, fails to look interviewer in the eyes, immature, weak handshake.
- 12— Poor personal appearance, sloppy dress, lacks sophistication. Needs haircut or hair is not clean. Too much jewelry or perfume/cologne.

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## Sample Questions to Ask During the Interview

- 1— Can you describe the company culture?
- 2— How does this company define and measure success?
- 3— What are some of the primary objectives you would like accomplished by this role?
- 4— What is the most important thing I can accomplish in the first 60 days?
- 5— What is the onboarding process?
- 6— How long have you been with the company? What is your background? Why do you enjoy working here?
- 7— Where would the company like to be in five years?
- 8— How will you judge my success? What will have happened six months from now that will demonstrate that I have met your expectations?
- 9— Do you have any concerns about my being successful in this position or whether I fit?
- 10— What is the next step in the hiring process?



## 5 Common Behavioral Interview Mistakes

Gone are the days where you can schmooze your way through interviews. If you have not interviewed (either side of the desk) in the last 5 years, then you may not be familiar with what has become the standard interview process for most companies.

Good candidates often perform poorly when navigating this process which requires you to briefly outline a specific example to support your answer on a specific topic.

**Here are the top 5 mistakes that we see every day.**

- 1— Too vague or general with the answer. Failure to give a specific example.
- 2— “Ramble” too long on answers not allowing interviewer to get through their questions.
- 3— Not fully listening to the question and giving an answer not directly relating to the question.
- 4— Unable to think of an answer – (seemingly not prepared for the interview.)
- 5— Answer given casts a negative light on performance.



## 5 Common Behavioral Interview Mistakes

*Preparation is the key to successfully navigating this process. You can expect that the questions will relate to the key attributes required for the job. They likely will ask about challenges, competencies and successes. Prior to an interview be sure to have an inventory of your accomplishments, challenges and successes that relate to the position. Listen carefully to the questions and use active listening to make sure you understand before answering if there is any doubt. Your answers should be complete and concise, not more than 2-3 minutes maximum per answer. You can always ask the interviewer if your answer covered the question adequately. Here is the basic pattern in which to answer behavioral questions.*

### **Question**

Tell me a time when you .....

### **Answer Pattern** – S-T-A-R (3 or 4 minutes)

**Situation/Task** – What was the situation or problem/challenge? – (one or two sentence description)

**Action** –What did you do? (one or two sentence description)

**Result** – What happened? How did it turn out? (one or two sentence description)

*Check out our list of general behavioral interview questions to help you further prepare!*



## Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Describe what you would say if asked to talk about yourself in a group of 15 people.

If someone told you that you had made an error, describe how you would react and what you would say in your defense (could site an industry specific scenario).

Describe a time someone asked you for assistance with a matter that was outside the parameters of your job description, what did you do?

Describe a time when you performed a task outside your perceived responsibilities. What was the task? Why did you perceive it to be outside your responsibilities? What was the outcome?

Describe a time you were angry about an unfair decision. How did you react?

In an environment where deadlines and priorities change frequently and rapidly, how do you handle it (or cope)? Give an example.

How do you know when you are stressed? What do you do to de-stress? Give an example.

Tell me about a time when you were a part of a great team. What was your part in making the team effective?





## Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. How did you handle the situation?

Think of a time when you were absent from work. How did your co-workers respond?

Can you tell me about a time during your previous employment when you suggested a better way to perform a process?

Tell me about a personal or career goal that you have accomplished and why that was important to you.

Give an example of a time when you were trying to meet a deadline, you were interrupted, and did not make the deadline. How did you respond?

What strengths did you rely on in your last position to make you successful in your work?

What do you do when you know you are right and your boss disagrees with you? Give me an example of when this has happened in your career.

Tell me about a situation you wish that you had handled differently based on the outcome. What was the situation? What would you change (or will you change) when faced with a similar situation?



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## PANEL INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Much like a phone interview, panel interviews are becoming popular because of the need to be time effective. Interviewing procedures are being modified so that all those involved in the hiring decision can meet, question, and later discuss each candidate.

Of all interviews, a panel interview can be the most stressful because you find yourself trying to sway several decision makers rather than one or two. Unlike that old bit of advice — try to relate to the interviewer — it can be difficult, if impossible, in a panel interview.

### **Bring a Cheat Sheet**

Much as you'd prepare for any interview, you should bring a list of highlights that you'd like to mention during the interview. Your interviewing "cheat sheet" should focus on key assets you'll bring to the position. Remember, you're not writing an essay but an outline of all the key elements that need mentioning.

### **Take Names and Use Them**

Individuals like to hear his or her name during a conversation. It's important to know who is interviewing you, so ask their names and write them down within your notes — in order of where each is seated. Don't be afraid to use their names or ask questions throughout the process.

Another great technique to utilize within a panel interview, or within any other group setting, is to cross reference the latest question with a previous one. For example if you answered a question by Jane Doe, and you can incorporate that answer into another question asked by Frank Doe, you'll start navigating the outcome of the interview. An answer might be:

"I understand why you are asking specific questions about my acquisition skills, Frank. As Jane mentioned a few minutes ago, acquisitions are a vital aspect to businesses your size and without someone with specific experience in this area, it can cost your company money. To answer your question, and expand upon what Jane asked earlier, I ..."

This answer is now bridging the concerns of two individuals on the panel, rather than one.



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## PANEL INTERVIEW PREPARATION

### **Take Notes**

During the process, members of the panel will mention points that you need to remember. Just as you jotted down the name of each panel member, you can also make small notations of each person's concerns or specific questions. For example, the department manager may have focused his or her questions on specific administrative portions of the job. Adding important yet little tidbits into your thank-you letter will help set you apart from other candidates and reflect your attentiveness. The key, however, is to mark down items that are relevant to each interviewer. Although they are a team and have one common goal, each has different concerns.

### **Make Eye Contact**

It's difficult to give enough eye contact to each individual without making your head and neck look like a lawn sprinkler. Try your best to look individuals in the eye and focus on speaking to each person equally, focusing heavily towards the one that asked the question.

Unfortunately, a panel interview can be stressful for jobseekers because they feel outnumbered. It's important to remember that you are an asset to their business, and they obviously feel you're a viable candidate, or they wouldn't have scheduled the interview. Stay positive, remain calm, and answer each question thoroughly and concisely.