



Interview Training

Prior to the interview

Research the industry and the company.

You should have a general understanding of the company and the products they market. It is also important to understand where the company fits in their industry. Are they the market leader or are they a “start-up” that is going to enter the market with a new or better product. During this research period you should be thinking of how your skill set or how your interests fit the responsibilities of the open position. An understanding of what they do also provides you with information that you can use to ask intelligent questions during the actual interview.

Think of at least five good questions that you want to ask during the interview.

Using the research you’ve done, write up several questions you would like to ask the interviewer about the company and the job.

Examples of company/interviewer questions are:

What do you consider the company’s biggest success? What are your biggest challenges? What keeps you up at night? Where does the group I’d be working for fit in the business plan of the company? Ask the interviewer what they like the most about their job and work environment and is there anything they would change. Tell me how you got involved with the company and what is their background.

Examples of the open position questions are:

What are the most important attributes you’re looking for in a candidate for this position? Is this a new position or is someone being replaced? Tell me a little about the team I’d be working with.

Know where the interview will be conducted.

Find out where you will be interviewing. Many companies have several offices and you need to know the location of the one where you will be interviewing. If the location is in a part of town you don’t know make sure you either take the time to travel the route or allow plenty of time the day of the interview.

Is your resume up to date and has it been “modified” to reflect the current position

A resume should be a document that expresses your strengths and minimizes your weaknesses – particularly as it relates to the job you’ll be interviewing for. It is not a detailed autobiography. Your resume should be a guide and a basis for discussion during the interview. Make sure you review your resume prior to the interview so that you can answer any questions the interviewer asks accurately and with confidence. The last thing you want to do is stumble through answers or, even worse, contradict yourself.

Day of the interview and the interview itself

What to bring.

Make sure you bring a sheet of paper with the name of the person conducting the interview, the address/directions, and the phone number of the interviewer, as well as the main office number. Be sure to bring a couple extra copies of your resume. Bring a notepad and something to write with so you can take notes during the interview. Don't forget to bring your questions about the job and the company.

What to wear.

Simple, clean, lean towards conservative.

Be on time.

Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes early and use this time to review your resume and make a check of your appearance in the bathroom before you enter the office.

During the interview.

Practice a good handshake. Treat everyone you meet in the company with respect. Make eye contact, try to smile whenever possible, and show enthusiasm about yourself and the possibility of working for/with the person that is interviewing you.

Try not to talk for more than two or three minutes at a time.

What am I going to be asked?

First of all, don't ever lie in an interview. There is a very good chance it will come back to haunt you.

Glossing over your mistakes is one thing...telling the interviewer a blatant lie is another.

The interviewer is really interested in three things; are you qualified/can you do the job, do they like you, and can they afford your salary requirements. To make the interviewer feel you are qualified for the position you should think about the following questions. What jobs have I enjoyed in the past? What skills have I learned that are transferable to the company I'm interviewing with? What are my biggest achievements/weaknesses. Understand what you believe to be your best characteristics and be able to discuss how they relate to the role you will be filling.

In one form or another you will probably be asked:

Tell me about yourself. (The interviewer is trying to see if your work experience fits the job profile – so you need to answer with the idea of how your past history is the perfect match in three minutes or less).

Give me an example of your achievements. (If they haven't been outlined in your resume, this is a chance to sell yourself. Most people find it hard to do this, but you should be able to briefly summarize what you've been good at in the past and how it will help in future employment.)

Describe a situation where you failed to meet objectives or were faced with conflict. (The interviewer is trying to find out how you react to adversity. If you answer that you can't think of one you will sound either naïve or arrogant. Try to use an example where the result was positive or where you learned a significant lesson. Most people are interested how well you rise above a situation.)

Why do you want to work here? (This question is trying to determine your interest level. Did you research the company? Do you know what they do? Do you know what products they sell? All of this indicates that you spent some time before arriving at the interview and shows you are serious about the job.)

Where do you see yourself in (x) year's time? (This question was designed to determine if you are serious about your career, are you ambitious, and are you able to plan for the future.)

What are some of your weaknesses? (You have weaknesses... we all do, so don't try to pretend that they don't exist. Try to answer by acknowledging you have work areas and show how you are already working towards improvement. Also, it's usually a good idea not to choose a weak area that is a primary requirement of the job profile!)

Why should we hire you for the job? (Prepare an answer for this and know it by heart because if they don't ask this during the interview you need to say it to the interviewer before you leave. Try to shoot for a 30 second speech that highlights your strengths and how they fit into the company needs.)

During the interview process remember the following:

Listen very carefully to the questions you are being asked and don't be afraid to ask the interviewer to be more specific or for clarification.

Ask for time to think if you need it. If you can't think of an answer, ask if you can come back to it later.

Try to act confident, even if you don't feel it.

And, as mentioned above, **try not to talk more than three minutes at a time, make eye contact, and smile.**

Make sure to ask the questions that you have prepared from your research.

After the interviewer has asked about your background they will probably ask if you have any question they can answer about the company. Now is the time to bring out the questions you've prepared and ask them. Make sure you take notes while the interviewer answers.

How to end the interview.

If the interviewer didn't already ask, then this is your chance to answer the question of "Why they should hire you". You want to remind them of why you would be a great fit for the company and why you are interested in the job. **Ask for the job** and ask what the next step in the interview process is.

Thank the interviewer for their time and consideration.

Follow-up

Follow-up is as important as every other step in the interview process. Within a day of the interview you should send a note, or possibly an email, reminding them of who you are and thanking them. Remember to reaffirm your interest in the position and if you have any remaining questions about the company or the position you can include them. If there was something that you felt didn't go well in the interview you can address it in the note. Remember that this is a professional correspondence, not a "text message". Be clear, concise, professional, and check spelling and grammar before you send it. About a week after the interview, try to phone the interviewer and check on the progress of the job search. The goal here is to follow-up, but not annoy or harass.