



CANDIDATE INTERVIEW PREPARATION

This is a standard prep we do with ALL candidates. You may find much of it rather elementary, a no brainer, **but we find that most candidates typically take something from this process**, and it's never a bad thing to have a review before going into an interview.

Review the information that follows. This information is designed to put you in the best position possible to maximize your interview experience.

General Interview Preparation

- Who:** Know with whom you will be speaking/meeting and their position/role in the company. Does the position report directly to them?
- When:** Be sure you know when the interview is taking place and be ready 15 minutes ahead of time.
- Where:** If a **Telephone Interview**, the call should take place on a Land-line rather than a Cell phone in order to eliminate the possibility of the cell connection or battery from interfering with the flow of the discussion.
If a **Face-to-Face Interview**, know the exact location, how long it will take you to get there, and who it is that you will ask for upon arrival. You should plan to be at the location **15 minutes ahead of time** in order to fill out any paperwork that might be required in advance.
- The Job:** Know as much about the position as possible.
Have you reviewed a job description?
Where does the position fit within the division/company?
Do you know what impact this position can have on the company? Its profitability? Overall company performance?
- The Company:** Do your research up front. You should be able to answer the following questions before your interview:
Public or Private?
Number of years in business?
Sales volume and growth rate? (if a private company, this may not be easily obtainable)
What products to they develop, manufacture, sell, and to what industries/markets?
- Prepare your Questions in advance:** Prepare at least 10 to 15 questions in advance of an interview. Write them down. These questions should center around:
- The company & its history – how long in business, growth rate, etc.
 - The industries and the marketplace in which the company is involved.
 - Where the company stands among its competitors and its future.
 - Where does this particular career opportunity fit and its impact on the company's growth and bottom line.

The reason we suggest this many questions is that, during the normal course of any interview, a lot of the questions you have will be answered. But typically, at the end of the interview, the interviewer will often ask, "*What questions do you have for me?*" You want to be sure that you have a couple that you can pose easily without having to search your brain for them. You don't want to state, as so many do, that "*Well, you've really answered all the questions I had.*"

Telephone Interviewing Preparation

Have your **resume** in front of you.

Have a glass of **water** readily accessible.

Speak loudly, enthusiastically and use **Professional language**.

Smile when speaking...it naturally increases the volume of your voice.

Remember, First Impressions Count!

Cell Phones should be **Off** or on **Silent mode** unless being used for interview.

Face-to-Face Interviewing Preparation

Resumes: Bring at least **2 extra resumes** with you beyond the number of individuals with whom you are interviewing. You never know who may be added to the agenda at the last minute.

References: Bring a typed document with at least 3 references listed:

Include 2 managers and 1 peer if possible.

Have their **names, titles, relationship to you, company, phone number(s)**.

Have this reference sheet available, but **do not offer it unless asked**.

Appearance: Conservative, clean appearance.

For Men: Jacket and tie recommended.

Limited use of cologne.

For Women: Conservative Business suit or blazer with skirt or slacks.

Skirt should not be too short.

Make-up should be conservative.

Sensible dress shoes.

Limited use of perfume/cologne.

Hair should be well groomed.

Should you eat before you leave to go to the interview, **check your teeth and breath**. Have breath mints available. **Do not chew gum during the interview**.

Use a **firm handshake**.

Maintain consistent **eye contact**.

Cell Phones: Should be **turned off** or at least put on **Silent mode**. You should refrain from answering any calls or sending/receiving text messages until you have left the interview.

Conducting the Interview

Typical Interview Questions: In any interview process, there are a few standard questions you can bet on being asked at some point along the way. You will want to be prepared for these questions and should rehearse concise, but to the point answers for each. They are:

1. **Why do you want to work for us?** This is an opportunity for you to show that you have done your homework on the company.

2. **Why should we hire you?** This is an opportunity to sell yourself. Take advantage of the situation. There is no one else there to do it for you.

3. **What are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?** Choose three strengths and describe them briefly. Choose three weaknesses and answer the question using the phrase...*"My greatest areas of improvement are..."*

NOTE: These are expected, but often difficult questions to answer. We suggest you Practice your answers ahead of time. We often explain to people that: no one is perfect. Everyone has some area where they can stand to improve.

Understanding this is the first step toward being able to make improvement. Often, weaknesses can be looked upon as strengths as well (i.e. *"I'm a Workaholic which sometimes affects my home life. I totally immerse myself in my job, but, I do try to keep a good balance."*) Also, if you have in the past identified a weakness, have done something to effect positive change, and you can point to examples of improvement, this can make a very positive statement.

4. **What are the things that you are most proud of in your personal and/or professional life?** Here the interviewer is attempting to make you more three dimensional. Pick two or three areas to talk about.

5. **Why are you looking?** You want this to be clear, crisp and concise, without Bashing your current/former employer. People who come across too negatively can give the impression of chronic complainers who could experience the same difficulties in almost any job they take. Again, Practice your answer to this question until you're comfortable that it is clear, believable, and presented in as positive a manner as possible.

We will typically ask these same questions of a candidate. If we identify potential landmines in any of the answers, we will point them out in an effort to ensure you enter the interview process as well prepared as possible.

Pro-actively listen. Do not interrupt the interviewer when they are answering or asking a question. Make sure to allow the interviewer to fully answer a question before proceeding to your next question.

Examples: Interviewers will often ask for you to describe how you handled, or would handle, a particular situation in your current or past position. When asked, they are looking for **Real Examples**. Often, candidates with lots of experience will have a tendency to gloss over questions about what they have done, how they did it, and how they might handle a similar situation in a new position. Don't assume the interviewer knows what you have done, how you did it, and what impact it had. Your ability to provide concrete examples of what you have done, or how you would handle a given situation in the future, can be critical in convincing your interviewer of your fit for the position.

Compensation: There are typically two questions asked by a potential employer concerning the money issue during an interview.

The first question is: **What are you currently earning?**

We think the best response is to simply state your **current base salary**. If you participate in a **bonus/commission/incentive programs**, state this and mention what your **Total Target Compensation** is. And leave it at that. If the interviewer wants more details, explain in straight-forward, basic terms.

The second question is: **What do you want to make?**

This is the “Watch-Out” question. Answering this question wrong can derail the process immediately at that point. If it is too early on in the interview process to begin negotiating salary, this can end up badly. **For non-sales positions**, here is a response that 9 times out of 10 will disarm the question:

“At this point, I am exploring the opportunity with your company. Based on your reputation in your industry, I am sure that should an offer come my way, your company’s offer will be fair based on my background and experience.

For a sales person, hiring managers are typically looking for someone who is motivated by money and will not be satisfied to stay at the level of compensation at which you would start. Making a statement to the effect that: “I am looking to make as much as I can. If the territory has the potential for a good sales person to earn six-figures or more, my goal is to meet and exceed that potential,” is generally a safe way to go. Being too specific on salary expectations too early in the process could impact your ability to get to the next step.

Benefits: We would not get into questions about benefits, vacation time, etc. at this point. It would be Premature. When we get to the point of considering an offer, we will be sure you have answers to all of your questions in order to ensure you are able to make an informed decision.

Remember that this is a **fact-finding mission for both** you and the company. Make sure the tone of the conversation is both conversational and professional...never combative or interrogative. Have fun and enjoy the experience.

When the interviewer does turn it over to you for questions, you should have the 10 to 15 questions about the company, position, etc. ready for asking. However, in any interview, **there are a couple of key questions that a candidate should have answered before ending the interview** and making a decision to pursue the opportunity further. These questions should be asked in a natural but professional manner. They are:

What are the characteristics or traits of the person who you will hire for this position? You want to make sure that you understand the company’s culture and that you fit in with that culture and it fits with you as a potential employee.

How does the company measure success for the position? You want to know what their expectations are and whether you are able to meet and exceed those expectations.

Your Goal: Your goal in this discussion is to get to the next step in the selection process. You want to **put yourself in a position of being able to make a decision** as to whether this is the opportunity you are looking for. You can always turn down any offer that does not appear to meet your needs. But, you need to be able to get to that point in order to be able to make that decision.

FOR SALES PEOPLE, REMEMBER: You are a Sales Person – Don't forget to ask for the order!!!!

FINALLY, you should never leave the interview without asking the all-important **Follow-up question**: *"What is the next step for me in your process?"*

Call us to debrief no later than 1 hour after the interview. Once we hear from you, we will call the company to get their feedback. We will pass that along to you as soon as possible.

ONE FINAL, IMPORTANT POINT: Be sure to **Always send a Thank You** email or note to everyone with whom you interviewed—whether the interviews were over the telephone or in person. The note should very simply thank them for their time, and should express interest in moving to the next step in the process.