

A - Interview Preparation

I. Breaking the Ice

It is always good to have something nice to say to “break the ice”. One suggestion would be to simply say, “I have really been looking forward to interviewing with you.”

II. Getting Started

How to respond to the classic question from the employer of, “Tell me about yourself?” That is a very broad question, so you need to narrow it down by asking, “Well, where would you like me to start?” This will allow you to focus your answer on what the employer really wants to hear. If he/she asks about your academic background, then you know this is an area of initial focus. Proceed to ask what other information you can provide.

When asked the question, “Would you please walk me through your career and the steps you took to get to where you are today?” Your response should be: “Well, do you want the short, paragraph version or the long detailed version?” Based upon this clarification, proceed to provide the information requested.

III. Demonstrate Strong People Skills

During an interview, a potential employer will be watching how well you listen and will take direction by seeing how you respond to their questions. Therefore, never cut them off by stepping on their sentences. Wait until they have finished and have completed their thought process. In fact, if you literally wait two seconds before responding you will come across more professional. In addition, the interviewer will unconsciously feel obligated to let you finish your sentences and thoughts.

IV. Three Types of Presentations Typically Experienced During the Interview

1. The first will be a short synopsis of your career. This should be nothing more than a paragraph in length- short and to the point.
2. The second will be a dialogue about the individual jobs that you had. Be prepared to pinpoint specific qualities about particular jobs. Be prepared to discuss each of your jobs and discuss them at length.
3. The third will be to explore your technical qualifications. This is where the interviewer gets to demonstrate their knowledge by asking you those “tough technical questions”. Be prepared to detail a particular function from any of your previous work-related experiences and be sure that it relates to the position for which you are applying, i.e. bulls-eye your response.

V. Exercises:

To prepare for your short synopsis, take out a piece of paper and write out what you would say during an interview. Do this at least two times, because it will only get better. Rehearse it to yourself, then to a family member until it just flows naturally.

By writing down your answers, it helps you remember them better. During an interview there is no time for thinking, just time for performing.

Next take out another piece of paper and draw a bit “T” across it. On the left side write in the title “New Job Responsibilities”. On the right side, write out “Similarities In Previous Jobs”. As you do this, think of those areas that are similar in nature from your previous positions to those of the new position for which you are interviewing, and then equate each area to a dollar value savings or gain to the company. The goal being able to provide analogies of how you could realize the same results for the company in which you are interviewing.

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VI. Additional Thoughts

1. Remember to use Action Words on your resume and during the interview:

I planned	I created	I originated
I initiated	I developed	I conceived
I implemented	I formulated	I ensured

2. Remember to use leadership words, if applicable:

I organized	I was responsible for	I managed
I directed	I presided over	I built
I led	I coordinated	I guided

3. Use Result Phrases, when appropriate:

It lead to	I achieved	It saved/reduced
It contributed	I provided for	It collected
It demonstrated that	I increased	I evaluated

VII. Be Ready with Important Questions

At the end of the interview when the interviewer asks you, “Do you have any questions?” Be prepared to ask insightful questions. You will be judged by the quality of the questions you ask. Feel free to write these down and take them with you for the interview. There is nothing wrong with referring to them during the interview. However, be sure to memorize at least a couple.

Sample Questions:

1. What are the major short and long-range company objectives facing the company today?
2. What are two, or three characteristics about XYZ Corporation that you feel differentiates itself from the competition? (Here you will find out if they know how to sell the company.)
3. What outside influences or other industries affect your company’s growth?
4. In what area does the company excel?
5. In what area does the company have limitations?
6. What are some of the common denominators that exist in the successful employees of this company? (The answer to this question may aid you in your interview with the next person you are to meet.)
7. What areas does the company need to polish or further develop?
8. What would you add or subtract to the company’s performance, or current incumbent’s performance, to increase production or efficiency? (This is a good question if the company is recruiting a replacement.)
9. Based on what you have seen so far of me, where do you feel I can contribute the most effectively? (Understand that you will be putting them on the spot with this question, so expect a bit of backpedaling.)

VIII. Image and First Impression

The culture of the company may be business casual, however you must always dress professionally. You are trying to “sell” yourself and make a good first impression.

For men, wear at least a sports jacket, dress slacks and a tie. For women, a business suit, dress, or slacks with a jacket is appropriate.

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For the Men

- No loud/big ties.
- Be modest in the use of cologne/after shave. (If you can smell it more than three feet away, you have used too much.)
- Get your shoes polished.
- Make sure clothes are clean and pressed
- Get a haircut, if you need one.
- If wearing an overcoat, ensure it covers the bottom of your suit jacket.

For the Women

- Be modest in the use of perfume and makeup.
- Dress conservatively and professionally (no bare legs).
- Make sure clothes are clean and pressed.
- Get your shoes polished.
- If wearing an overcoat, ensure it covers the bottom of your suit jacket.

General Rules of Thumb

Do not skip breakfast if you have a morning interview. You do not want your stomach growling.

Rehearse your drive, if possible. And allow plenty of time, so you can arrive 10 minutes early.

IX. Follow Up and Close

We highly recommend sending out thank you letters (please reference the attached example) the day of the interview to those you have met during the interview process, especially the hiring manager. This action serves to express your interest and also keeps you in front of the decision maker. If available, attempt to obtain business cards from each member of the interview team, so you will have their name, title, and mailing address.

Three days later, follow up with a phone call thanking the hiring manager for his/her time and reminding them of your continued interest in the position. Don't do any more than this, or else you may run the risk of coming across as a nuisance.

Good luck!

If you take the time to go through this material, perform the exercises, and rehearse- and then rehearse your answers again, you will have the competitive edge that will make you to stand out amongst your peers.