



So, you have sent resumes, made countless phone calls and now you have an interview. What now? The interview is the time to talk with your perspective employer, to let them know you not only have the skills (they got that from your resume), but would be a valued asset to their team. How do you do that? Prepare, prepare, prepare.

Imagine two people sitting in the lobby waiting to interview for the same job. One of the applicants spent several hours researching the company and industry. The other has not done any research at all. Who stands the best chance of getting the job? These two candidates may have similar skills and experience, but the one that took the time to research the company stands a better chance of getting the job.

THE BASICS:

- Research the company and industry. Check out the client's website, blogs, social media sites, etc.
- Dress your best. Black or navy dress or suit (with a tie); minimal jewelry; no perfumes or scented lotions; hair should be clean and trim; Men: facial hair should be clean shaven or neatly trimmed.
- Announce yourself 5 to 10 minutes early; be nice to the receptionist (the interviewer will ask everyone you encountered about you); make a strong opening (good eye contact; smile; handshake; posture).
- Project a high level of enthusiasm and energy.
- Bring copies of your resume. Letters of reference, transcripts, etc.
- Ask Open Ended questions, ones that elicit discussion and that cannot be answered with a yes or no. This will demonstrate their interest in and comprehension of what has been discussed thus far.
- Be prepared to defend your resume, to answer questions in a "net" fashion.
- Do not bring up money or benefits. If salary comes up, state that the opportunity is the most important factor in their decision criteria. If the interviewer pins you down, give a salary range.
- Make a strong close (Thank you for your time. "I am very interested; I am looking forward to the next step", etc.).

OTHER POINTS:

- Most clients make decisions that are based on chemistry (50%) and technical skills (50%).
- Never complain about your current or past employers.
- Keep a nice dialogue going; do not talk too much.
- If you don't understand a question, ask.
- Sell the client on the requisite skills that you possess; what you bring to the table.
- Maintain a positive attitude at all times.
- Always give it your best effort. A lot of clients have multiple openings and you may be considered for another area if you impress them.
- Ask when a decision will be made and follow up.
- Thank everyone you interview with and get a business card (if possible).
- Send a thank you card or e-mail (check grammar and spelling carefully).

Common Interview Questions and How to Handle Them

Tell me about yourself.

This question is to put you at ease at the beginning of an interview. Mention your experience as it is related to the job and your attributes i.e. show stability, get along with others, etc.

What are your strengths and weaknesses?

This is to find reasons to hire you. For your strengths, mention work skills, training and experience specific to the job you are interviewing for. When it comes to your weakness, focus your response on an area that doesn't have a major impact on your ability to do the job. This should be an area that you are on your way to improving.

Tell me about the three major responsibilities you had at your last job.

This is to validate your resume. Back it up with specific information.

Which supervisor have you found easiest to work with and which have been the most difficult?

This is to judge your adaptability. When it comes to dealing with a negative aspect in an interview, be honest and focus on how you dealt with / overcame dealing with the difficult issues.

What did you like best and least about your previous job?

This is to check your administrative and management skills. Mention things related to the job you are interviewing. Interviewers want to hear that you like areas related to the job in question. When it comes to what you liked least, turn the question around into a positive.

Give me an example of a time you did more than what was required in your job.

This question seeks initiative. Give specific examples of how you went beyond your job description to help others.

Give me an example of a time you found it necessary to make an exception to the rules in order to get something done.

This question checks your integrity. Be honest and give an example that got results not failure.

Tell me about a time you had to gain the cooperation of a group over which you had little or no authority. What did you do? How effective were you?

This question is to judge your leadership. Think carefully and give a specific example with details on your method and results.

Describe a time that you had conflict with a co-worker, and how did you handle it.

Checks your ability to work as a team. Keep it work related and give an example that worked out / got results not failure.

Why did you / do you want to leave your current job?

This question is geared to find out if you are leaving for negative reasons. Never bad mouth your current / past employer. Focus on growth, pay, experience, location, etc. If you were fired from a past job, be honest, but stay positive.

Interview Questions: What You Don't Have To Answer

A half dozen federal laws protect job applicants from questions that might be used to discriminate against them. Basically, the employer must prove (if challenged) that an interview question is directly related to the duties of the job for which you are applying.

Listed below are items which are illegal to ask during an interview. Your job resume and employer application form also need not contain this information. You may, however, voluntarily provide any of the information below.

Are you married?

With whom do you live?

If married, are you expecting to have children soon?

What does your spouse do?

Were your parents born in this country?

How old are you? (But, may ask if you are legally old enough to work)

Have you ever filed for bankruptcy?

Where do you bank?

Have you ever been arrested? (But, you may be asked to provide information on criminal convictions)

How much do you weigh? (But, may be asked about height and weight if they are necessary for the performance of a job)

How many children do you have?

If you have children, what kinds of day care arrangements have you made?

What memberships do you hold in social, religious, and community groups?

What is your military service status?

If a veteran, what kind of discharge did you receive?

Are you physically handicapped?

(Note: that these questions delve into your personal life and are not legitimate occupational qualifications.)