

Congratulations! You have a job interview, which means you have the skills to do the job. Now it is a question of fit and presentation. The secret to effective interviewing is in-depth preparation and a sound presentation. Be sure to answer the questions with the job in mind, tailoring your answers to the employer's needs.

### Preparation

- Preparation begins with knowing yourself.
  - Define your functional skills, personal attributes, work values, and future goals.
  - If you don't know the product (you) well, selling its assets is difficult.
- Gather information about the prospective employer.
  - Company research is a reflection of your interest and enthusiasm, intelligence and commitment.
  - This information helps you determine whether or not a particular company will meet your needs.
  - Use their website, LinkedIn and Google for company news.
- Additional Interview preparation suggestions
  - Attend an Interview Workshop
  - Make a one-on-one appointment to discuss interviewing
  - Utilize **InterviewStream**
  - Schedule an in-person mock interview

### Types of Interviews

- *Screening Interview*: Its purpose is to screen out inappropriate candidates
- *Telephone Interview*: It is an opportunity to win an in-person interview
  - Be in a quiet place where you can focus and that has good cellular phone service
  - Use correct grammar, speak in complete sentences, avoid long pauses and always sound enthusiastic
- *Non-directive Interview*: The interviewer gives you the freedom to sell yourself in any way you deem appropriate with broad and general questions that allow you to elaborate on your qualifications.
- *Directive Interview*: With a particular agenda in mind, the interviewer drives the interview in order to learn specific information – Follow the interviewer's lead, but sell your skills
- *Behavior-based Interview*: Characterized by the emphasis on success stories – examples of what you've done that support your claims – When a question begins with "Describe a time when..." or "Give me an example ...," you should recognize it as a behavior-based question

### Interview Tips

- Arrive early and prepared
- Deliver a firm handshake (smile and maintain eye contact)
- Have resume and supporting materials ready
- Use concrete, positive examples to reflect your best skills and attributes
- Listen
- Show enthusiasm
- Speak clearly and slowly
- Keep hand gestures and body movement to a minimum, but enough to be expressive and engaging
- Follow the interviewer's lead, but make sure you highlight all the information you feel is important
- Ask questions
- Wrap up when it's clear the interview is ending (ascertain needed follow-up action)
- Thank the interviewer for the interview
- Collect business cards from each interviewer

### The "Tell Me About Yourself" Question

A common opener, this broad question can throw many interviewees. Develop a summary of your background in relationship to the job. Include your desire to work for the organization, as well as your qualifications for the position. Lindsey Day, owner of Magnetic Career Consulting, wrote an article to help interviewees prepare for the question and common mistakes that arise. The full article is available by clicking this [link](#). Below is an example from the article to help structure your answer to this question:

**Position:** HR Benefits Manager at Kids First Foundation

**Past:** My interest in Human Resources started about five years ago when I was working at Kids and Family Youth Corporation. I partnered with our HR team on recruitment and designing some custom training programs.

**Present:** I'm currently working as a health insurance underwriter, and I recently finished my master's degree in human resources, which I've been completing part-time.

**Future:** I ultimately see myself becoming a leader in HR.

**Big Three:** I'm excited to speak with you about this position because I think it's a good fit for my skills and interests. I am a certified SPHR and have lots of experience negotiating, which would be very helpful when working with providers. In addition, I've worked for a health insurance company, so I have a solid understanding of policy underwriting and cost-saving strategies.

**Relate to the Employer:** Kids First is an amazing company! I've had friends work here, and they raved about the company's commitment to the community. I'm excited to be here and to learn more about the role.

### The "Weakness" Question

Interviewers often ask about strengths and weaknesses. While strengths are easier to express, weaknesses present more of a challenge. An effective way to answer this question is to think of a weakness you have overcome and share the process with the interviewer. "I used to be very shy and afraid to speak to groups of people. I decided that I needed to overcome my fear to pursue a career in XXXX. So if there was a choice between a paper and a presentation in class, I always chose the presentation." In addition to having an example of something that you have overcome, also have an example of something you are working on just in case the interviewer asks.

### Additional Questions You May Be Asked

- Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
- What is the last book you read?
- Describe your most rewarding college experience.
- What have you learned from participation in extracurricular activities?
- Tell me what you know about our company.
- Why did you decide to apply for this job?
- What is important to you in a job?
- Give me an example of a difficult decision you have made.
- What are your long-range career goals; what are you doing to achieve them?
- Explain a work situation where you were under a lot of pressure and how you handled it.
- What do you anticipate might be your greatest problem with this job?
- What are your greatest strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- How will you be successful in...?
- What is your most memorable accomplishment?
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- How are you qualified for this job?
- Why should we hire you?

### Questions to Ask Employers

- What are the challenging aspects of the position?
- How would you describe the atmosphere here?
- What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
- To whom would I report? What is his/her supervisory style?
- Can you describe typical first year assignments on the job?
- How and when will my performance be evaluated on this job?

### The Salary Question

- Postpone salary discussions until you are offered (or an offer seems likely for) a particular position.
- Research so you know your worth and the value of the job in the marketplace and geographic location.
- Rehearse selling your skills at the right price. When it comes time to discussing salary, you can't be sure that the company's first offer is the best offer unless you ask. Ask some questions on benefits, vacation, stock options, etc. before zeroing in on salary. This will give you a better perspective on your entire package. Then, explain your knowledge of market value and reiterate your skills and contributions that add value to the employer. You might then ask, "Is there any flexibility in the salary portion of the offer?"

#### *Tips:*

- Use real life issues, rather than tactics that come across as simply "I want more."
- If you free-lance or do temporary contracts, you should be able to articulate your rate.
- Look for a "win-win" situation. Remember that the offer negotiation may be one of the first steps in developing a relationship with a new employer.
- Be realistic. Most entry-level jobs do not have much room for negotiation.
- Know your needs. What do you realistically need in order to live comfortably?
- Relax and remember that you are having a conversation, not a battle.

### Follow-up

By the end of the interview, you should know what happens next. For example, know what the organization's timetable is for hiring, or if you are expected to send further material, such as references, to the employer. If the interviewer doesn't communicate this information, ask directly. Close the interview by expressing interest in the job. Get a business card. Send a *thank you note* within 48 hours to everyone you interviewed with to strengthen the good impression you made in the interview. Take the opportunity to highlight your interest and qualifications, and expand briefly on any interesting topic that was discussed during the interview.

### References

References should not be included on your resume. A separate document should be created which includes contact information identical to your resume and the word "References" clearly displayed. The name, title, organization, address, phone number, and e-mail of each reference should be written on your reference sheet. Do not send references unless you are asked. When gathering references, make sure you ask your potential references if they are comfortable providing you with a positive reference. Make sure you keep in touch with references, keep them up-to-date on your career path, experiences and goals.