

INTERVIEW PREPARATION

I. FIRST IMPRESSION

This will distinguish you from the competition. You never get a second chance to make a first impression. The first few minutes will have the greatest impact on the interview. Enthusiasm is one of the leading reasons why people are hired!

- A. Strong Vocal Inflections to show enthusiasm.
- B. Strong Body Language to show interest - firm handshake, maintain strong eye contact, sit up straight, square off your shoulders to the person you are talking to, and most important – SMILE!
- C. Professional Appearance - dress and groom for success (Even if the office is casual). A leading reason for not getting the job is often appearance. Shine shoes, (no open toe for females) etc.

II. LISTEN WELL, BUT REMEMBER TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE INTERVIEW

Be proactive, rather than reactive (simply waiting for the next interview question).

- A. Market yourself to the interviewer by providing specific attributes that they are looking for.
- B. Uncover more details of the company, job and opportunity through inquiry, and more importantly, what skills are important to the interviewer. Examples of applicant questions that could be asked towards the beginning of the interview:
 - “I am familiar with the position and job duties as explained by Robert Half, but can you expand on the areas of responsibilities?”
 - “What skills do you feel are important to be successful in this position?”
- C. Be prepared to answer the question with a Brief 30second response:
 - What do you know about the company?
 - Tell me about yourself?

III. KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS/WEAKNESSES

Go to the interview with knowledge of your skills from which you can pull at any point during the interview and speak confidently about yourself.

- A. Be prepared to discuss 2 technical strengths [example: analytical skills, knowledge of the flow of transaction within the G/L cycle, computer skills, etc.] and 2 non-technical strengths [example: team work, attention to detail, communication skills, organizational skills, etc.]. BE PREPARED to support each strength with at least 1 work related example (or school related examples for a new grad). Then, practice the presentation of your strengths and related examples similar to how you would prepare for a speech. Develop 2 weaknesses or “areas of improvement”. Show how you have attempted to overcome and improvement over time.

IV. KNOW YOUR RESUME

Review your resume and be able to answer all questions relating to what, why and when. Don't have it in front of you - You should be the expert on you.

- A. What did you do at each position you have held?
- B. Why did you choose your school? Your major? Why did you take this job? Why did you leave this job? Why are you currently looking to leave your current employer? Be positive about prior experiences (don't talk about negatives). Reasons for change should be positive and for professional reasons. Stay away from compensation, commute, don't like boss, etc. as reasons for change.
- C. When did you work for each company and when did you attend school (GPA). Memorize the months and years of employment and education.

V. STANDARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO BE EXPECTED

Prepare for the standard interview questions such as “Why are you looking?” “What are you looking to do more long-term, say 3 to 5 years?” Respond to these questions with clear, positive, concise, well thought out answers with business/professional motivating factors. Your responses to short term goals/movement should align with the position you are applying for and the company you are interviewing with. Long-term movement needs to be consistent with opportunities for movement within the company that you are interviewing with.

VI. MONEY

- A. Leave discussion of money to second interview. First Interview should be “SELL” mode. On application & discussion, be open to salary based on responsibilities and that “you are more interested in the opportunity and would consider a reasonable offer”. A salary too high will immediately eliminate you from consideration and too low will cut into your potential. Try to turn it back to them – eg what is the range for the ideal candidate?
- B. If asked current compensation, be honest but include all applicable overtime, bonus, rewards, and other key fringe benefits.

VII. YOUR QUESTIONS

Remember you are there to interview them as well, and it is your responsibility to gather information needed to evaluate the opportunity. Prepare questions related to: Position, Department, Company, Opportunity, Company direction/plan, interviewer’s background.

VIII. INTERVIEW CLOSE

Going back to being very proactive, you need to close the interview strong, consider these areas in closing:

- A. Remember to SMILE!
- B. Express your interested and **Why!** If you are interested in the position, tell them! This is also a good time to summarize why you believe this is the right employment opportunity for you. Match your skills to what the interviewer is looking for.
- C. Express “thanks”, “appreciation for their time”, and let them know that you look forward to speaking with them again.
- D. A timely thank-you letter or email is also a great touch – Be sure to ask for their business card.

CLOSING RECOMENDATIONS

- Be on time! Arrive 10 to 15 minutes early to the interview.
- Do some brief homework on the company (Sales, products & services, locations, News)
- Focus on questions being asked. Avoid Yes/No answers, but do not “tangent” your responses. Keep your responses brief, but concise.
- Relax – Think of it as a conversation not an interrogation. The interviewer is a person just like you and me. Remain positive and show self-confidence during the interview.
- Do not have your resume in front of you during the interview. You should be the expert on your resume. Don’t volunteer your resume, but always be sure to have a clean copy.
- Call me following the interview with feedback. What did you like, what didn’t you like?
- Have a great interview and have fun with it.
- Lastly make sure to get a business card and send a brief thank-you email.