

SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWS

Step One: Researching the Company and Interviewer

The first step in preparing for an interview is to research the company and, if possible, the interviewer. Often LinkedIn, Facebook or Google+ can be of assistance here.

Remember that researching the company includes researching more than just the growth trends, products, profitability, etc. It means the culture, the dress code, level of informality, and communication habits too. Use your network (virtual and other) to obtain this kind of information in addition to the other research sources (search engines) you investigate. Obtaining information on the interviewer, however, is more difficult. A possible source may be the person who arranges the interview. If the third party is a search firm or Human Resources representative, you will often get the information you ask for.

Step Two: Matching Your Strengths to the Company and Job Profile

Once you have the relevant company information, you will need to prepare your story to convey what you can do and to demonstrate how you will add value.

The best way to convince the boss that you can solve the problems and do the necessary work is to illustrate how you have solved similar problems and done similar work in the past. Based on your research of the company and interviewer, pick the achievements you want to emphasize and decide on the way you want to present them. To be effective you cannot use vague terms or clichés.

The process of recalling and actually writing down your accomplishments will be very valuable in your job interviews. You will have opportunities to weave your accomplishments into interviews in a graceful, natural way.

That's why it's important to write many more accomplishment statements than you actually use on your resume – to provide a store of well-thought-out, specific illustrations of how you added value - for you to draw from in an interview when you need them.

Of course, for the interview discussion you may need to elaborate on some aspect of the accomplishment statement. Be ready to expand appropriately once the interviewer indicates further interest in a particular action that you took.

Step Three: Preparing Questions to Ask

Take the time to develop relevant and insightful questions for each particular interview. And don't rely on generic questions such as: "What are the company's future plans?"

Until you get the job offer or the decision to pass you on to the next interview, all of your questions should be about the job and about the company.

Step Four: Preparing Answers to Difficult Questions

In addition to asking insightful questions, you'll want to be prepared to answer difficult and unexpected questions.

Although many of your interactions will be quite informal and seemingly unstructured, there will be some interviewers who are quite incisive in their style, asking penetrating and often difficult questions. You cannot anticipate every question. But if you prepare your responses and practice answering the difficult questions, you should be in good shape.

Step Five: Practicing Aloud

Start by writing rough notes of how you would introduce your background, ask your questions, and answer the interviewer's questions. Whenever possible, record your practice interview on your smartphone or recording device.

Remember: rehearsing in your head isn't very helpful, as your thoughts race ahead of the answers you are currently reviewing. When reviewing your practice interview, pay attention to what you said and how you said it. Ask a friend to listen in and ask for feedback.

In any interview, you communicate on at least three levels and skilled interviewers will listen and take into consideration all the information you provide:

- * **Non-verbal Messages:** Body language, inflections, tone of voice
- * **Verbal Messages:** Information conveyed by your words
- * **Meta-Messages:** The message conveyed by your choice of words (and by those you omit), as well as by the sequence of your ideas when giving your answers.