

Network to Work Meeting – May 2022

RESOURCE DOCUMENT – PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW

Are you Zoom-ready?

1. Get familiar with the technology

There's nothing worse than having technical difficulties during an important call. That's why it is important to get familiar with Zoom before your interview.

What does this mean for you? Here are some things to keep in mind:

- If you don't have a zoom account, you may want to set one up. Use your full name in the profile. If you choose to upload a photo of yourself for the profile, make sure it is a professional looking headshot. Both will appear when you join the call for your interview and you want to lead with a good impression.
- Download the Zoom app ahead of time.
- Check that you have the correct meeting link (and access code) that was sent from the interviewer.
- Test your equipment: ensure that your webcam and microphone are working.
- Check your Wi-Fi/internet signal strength. You want to make sure that it is an appropriate level so you won't have any interruptions.

2. Set up a distraction-free area

It's important to find a room or area of your home that's best for your Zoom interview. You want to pick a spot that's quiet and distraction-free. You want the interviewer to be able to focus on your answers and what you're saying, and distractions in the room will hurt their ability to do this. You may need to do some adjusting to make sure the space is visually free of distractions too.

What does this mean for you? Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Pick up items on the floor.
- Remove clutter from the shelves or walls that are behind you (a painting or picture on the wall is fine, but 10 colorful posters isn't ideal).
- Shut the windows in the room to eliminate unnecessary noise like lawnmowers, cars, etc.

- Make sure you have all your interview materials (like your resume, references, portfolio, note paper and pen) within reach.
- Choose a comfortable chair. You don't want to be readjusting or squirming because the seat is too hard or too soft that you sink into it.
- Turn off any notifications on your computer and put your phone on silent/do not disturb mode.
- Don't use a virtual background: no matter how hard you try; a virtual background is going to look fake. And if the background is obviously fake, that's going to be a distraction. They won't be able to focus on you during the interview. Also, virtual backgrounds inevitably feel like a little bit of an evasion and a closure, rather than an invitation to engage with you and your world.

3. Provide good lighting

Most webcams don't pick up great images without quite a bit of light. Remember, you want the interviewer to focus on you and if they can't see your face it'll make it hard for them to get a good read on you.

What does that mean for you? Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Natural lighting typically yields great results, so if you can do the video interview near a window, that's ideal.
- If you can't be near a window, then use a lamp. Choose a lamp that has strong, soft light.
- You may need to move somewhere else in the room so that whatever light you are using is in front of you. You don't want windows or lamps behind you because it can backlight you making you look like a silhouette.

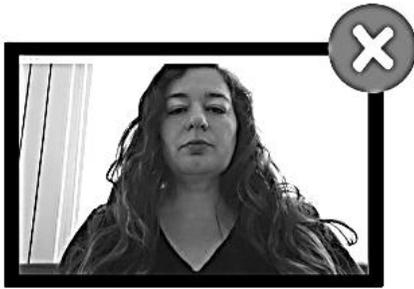
4. Check the camera set up

Make sure your camera is positioned in a way that allows you to make eye contact with the interviewer. Think about a close-up in movies. You'll notice that the eyes are at about the two-thirds level of the screen. That's because it feels good to the viewer to see the human face fill up the screen and to have the eyes at about the two-thirds level of the entire shot. You want the camera to be roughly at your eye line, maybe a tiny bit higher. That way you're actually able to make eye contact. You don't want to be looking down at the screen because it can make the person viewing it feel like they are being looked down on.



What does this mean for you? Here's some things to keep in mind:

- Make sure your camera is positioned so that you're *not* in the bottom corner and definitely don't cut off your face (or even the top of your head). You should be positioned nice and square in the middle of the screen.
- Prop your laptop/screen on a box or some books so that it raises it enough to be eye level.



ANGLE FAIL
DON'T LOOK DOWN



EYE CONTACT FAIL
NO RBF



SMILE!
SO MUCH BETTER

- Don't look at your image on the screen – look at the camera. Looking at the camera creates the sense of looking at the interviewer. If that feels funny to you, put a smiley-face Post-it note or a small photo of someone you love right near the camera. Then you can make eye contact with that (instead of a green light).

5. Dress to impress

Although you won't be in person, traditional interview attire still applies. You want to look professional and polished, just as you would for an in-person interview. Even if the interviewer can't see the lower half of your body, it's a good idea to wear appropriate pants. You'll conduct yourself more professionally if dressed that way. And you'll avoid accidentally showing off your pajama bottoms if you need to stand up for some reason.

What does this mean for you? Here are some things to keep in mind:

- Pick it out ahead of time
- Make sure it's wrinkle-free and looks clean
- whatever you choose should show well on camera - avoid stripes, extremely bright colors, similar colors as your background, and loud jewelry (the clicking/clanking of your jewelry will be picked up by your microphone and can be a distraction)

6. Be on time

Employers may use the same "meeting room" or link for multiple job seekers. So you may be entering a "room" that is being used to talk to another job seeker before you. Normally the rule of thumb is to be 10 minutes early for in-person interviews, but that is not the case for virtual meetings. Instead, you should log in to the meeting about 2 or 3 minutes ahead of time. That will give you enough time to troubleshoot any technical issues if needed.

Are you Ready to be Interviewed?

1. The Initial Phone Conversation

It is very common for an employer to want to have a preliminary conversation with you on the telephone. Don't be fooled, however. It could be simply to confirm you are still interested and to schedule the in-person or Zoom interview, but it could also end up being a more in-depth interview to screen you for your qualifications.

What does this mean for you? Here are some questions to ask during this first conversation so you can be best prepared for the actual interview:

- What did you find of interest in my application?
- Who will I be speaking with? (Get their name, title, address, phone and email)
- How much time will be needed?
- Will there be tests or on-the-job trials?
- Where and when will the interview take place?
- What's the appropriate attire?
- What is the interviewing and screening process?
- What would you recommend I do for preparation?

2. Advance Preparation for the In-Person or Zoom interview

You only get one chance to make a good impression, so it is crucial to prepare. Here are some best practices to follow:

- Learn everything you can about the employer, the position, the people you will interview with and the industry - including their major competitors.
 - How? Use the internet to search on these topics. Go to the employer's website and review every page. Look at its social media accounts. Do a Google search for news and other information about the company. You will likely pick up some information you can talk about in the interview - and hiring managers are impressed when you have obviously made an effort to learn about them.
- Prepare questions you want to ask during interviews. (*More on this below.*) Focus on positives such as "Will I be able to use the wide range of my abilities in this position?" or "I see from your website that you encourage internal advancement - would there be opportunities for me to grow with you?"
- Review your resume and cover letter to remind yourself what you have already told the employer.

3. On the Big Day

- **Rest** - Get plenty of rest and eat well before the interview.
- **Light exercise** beforehand may help boost your mood and ease anxiety.
- **Dress for Success** - Be well-groomed and well dressed. Make sure your clothes are cleaned and not wrinkled. Dress "one click" above what the employer tells you is appropriate attire. If you look sharp, you'll feel more confident - and it's a difference that will impress interviewers.
- **Be Prompt** – Arrive or log in early! Never be late or "just in time".
- **Organize your notes** on the following:
 - The results of your internet research
 - The important points you want to make about yourself
 - The questions you want to ask
 - Your answers to the questions you will likely be asked.
- **Remember these crucial pointers:**
 - **Connect with the interviewer**, don't just jump right in. Find a topic or small talk to get at ease with the interviewer and vice versa. Ask them something about their background - it can be very flattering. **Think about your opening greeting**, for example, *"Good Morning! I'm grateful for this opportunity to learn about working at XYZ company."*
 - **Know Who You Spoke With** - Don't leave the interview without the name, title, and contact information of every interviewer, even people you meet briefly. When possible, ask for a business card.
 - **What's Next** - At the end of the interviews, ask "what's next?". What is the process, what else might I expect, how long will it take?
- **Prepare a closing statement.** You want to end the interview in a positive way. Write down what you could say to show your appreciation for the meeting, your interest in the position, and your desire to move on in the process. For example:
 - *Thank you for a great interview! I learned a lot about this wonderful job opportunity and remain extremely interested in the position. Please let me know what can I expect next?*

4. The Tough Questions

Don't be caught unprepared to answer unsettling age-related questions. Here are some common questions and how to approach them:

- **Do you think you're overqualified?** Explain why you want this job and will not jump to a more challenging or better paying job. Focus on your capabilities, knowledge and skills that you are anxious to use in the position.
- **How old are you?** The Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) does not explicitly prohibit an employer from asking an applicant's age or date of birth. However, such inquiries may deter older

workers from applying for employment or may indicate possible intent to discriminate based on age. If the information is needed for a lawful purpose, it can be obtained after the employee is hired.

A good response to this question would be to focus on your motivation, energy, stamina and capabilities. For example, *"I am old enough to have a very responsible and professional attitude about work, and young enough to get the job done every day, with motivation, skill and energy."*

Another option is to say, *"I don't think age is important, so let me explain how my experience makes me a great candidate."*

- **Why do you want to work?** - A popular question. Tell the recruiter precisely what your motivations are to secure this job and state the number of years you plan to work (ideally at least five to seven or longer).
- **What pay are you looking for?** - Some employers assume that older applicants want a higher salary than younger candidates, or that older workers might be more expensive for the company's health care plan. Your answer should assure the interviewer that you understand what the salary range for the job might be (*this could be found in the job posting, or something you learn through research*) and redirect the conversation back toward the skills you can bring.

Answer with something like this. "I am certain you have a pay structure that focuses on equity; if you were to make a reasonable offer, I will be inclined to respect the proposed salary."

If they repeat the question, tell them your lowest acceptable salary - consider yourself stuck. The alternative is to say "I believe it is premature to talk about pay level". In any event, it helps to research in advance the going salary for the position you are seeking.

- **Are you in good health?** - This is an illegal question. If you have a visible chronic illness or disability, let them draw their own conclusion. As mentioned above, focus on your motivation, stamina and energy.

5. Other Common Questions:

- **Tell me about yourself** – Don't treat this question as the usual small talk you might make with someone you've just met. The interviewer is likely to take everything you say very seriously. Be prepared for this common interview question.
 - Use this question as your opportunity to set the tone of the interview and to emphasize the points you most want the interviewer to know about you. Don't recite your resume or discuss your hobbies, but rather provide a concise, enthusiastic response that summarizes your big-picture fit for the job. Here is the time to share information about your proudest achievements and goals.
 - Steer clear of personal details about your life or family — especially things that might reveal your age, such as stories about grandkids or references to when you graduated from school. Instead, focus on your work experience and why it's relevant to the job.
- **You have so much experience. Are you sure you'll be comfortable in this position?** This question speaks to an employer's concern that you are overqualified. That label that has hindered many older adults when they apply for jobs, and that might be what the interviewer is thinking in asking you this question. Answer this question by offering a clear and concise explanation about why this new role would be a great opportunity for you right now.

Another approach is to own up to the fact that in this stage of your career you are not looking to be CEO, but nonetheless are very willing to get into the weeds and learn some new skills while bringing years of experience to a team. The key is to convince the employer that you are genuinely excited about the job and not settling.

- **How do you see yourself fitting in to the company culture?** Today, being able to fit into an organization's culture is a prominent part of the hiring process as employers look for workers who will collaborate and work together as a team. Unfortunately, if the corporate culture doesn't value experience, older workers have less to offer.

If most of the company's workers are young and single, few have kids and like to end the day schmoozing around the free beer taps, and if management threw a 65-year-old man into the mix, would they feel like they are hanging out with Dad?

So, before you show up for a job interview, figure out the corporate culture and consider how you might adapt to it. How do the executives and managers dress? One of the worst feelings is being interviewed by someone younger than your kids.

- **What are your strongest skills?** Here the interviewer may be testing you on whether you're up to speed with today's rapidly changing technology. In your answer, stress the computer skills you have and – if this is true - how extensively you've been using technology skills at your past jobs or training.
- **How have you kept your skills fresh?** Use this question as an opportunity to showcase your skills and sell yourself. Talk about specific things you have done to upgrade your skills. Here is a great place to talk about your A4TD training and what you have been doing during the pandemic. This might include taking online courses, obtaining certifications, subscribing to e-newsletters, attending networking events, or volunteering.
- **What are your Interests outside your career?** This question could be intended to assess how active or energetic you are, so try to speak to both intellectual activities and physical ones. A good answer might be something like, "I enjoy intellectual activities such as reading or watching TV, but above all, I take long walks on a regular basis, and I often bicycle on weekends." Physical activities prove vitality and high energy.

Questions to Ask in a Job Interview

Interviewers will be focused on finding out if you're a right fit for the position, but it's also important to decide if the company is a right fit for you. Have a list of questions ready to help you through your next interview:

Questions about your role:

Be careful not to ask questions already answered in the job description. It's important go beyond those general duties to understand everything the job entails.

- *Can you offer specific details about the position's day-to-day responsibilities?*
- *What would my first week at work look like?*
- *What do you hope I will accomplish in this position?*

Proceed with caution: If rather than going into detail about the primary responsibilities listed in the job description, the employer rambles off many more duties — they may be asking you to take on more than you initially thought.

Questions for getting to know the interviewer

Most likely, the interviewer is the first contact you'll have at this company — they could even be your future boss. Asking questions can help you understand their attitude, company values, and where the company's future is heading.

- *What do you enjoy most about working here?*
- *What goals does the company have for itself and its employees over the next five years?*

Proceed with caution: Be wary of leaders who have trouble opening up or don't seem passionate about their company and team.

Questions about management's style

What type of management style do you need to reach the height of your potential? Now's the best time to see if the company's leaders align with your expectations.

- *How do leaders encourage employees to ask questions?*
- *How do leaders set employees up for success?*
- *How does employee feedback get incorporated into day-to-day operations?*
- *How does management deliver negative feedback to employees?*

Proceed with caution: Employers who can't list how they encourage employees and set them up for success may not deliver the support you're looking for in a company.

Questions about the company culture

From benefits and perks to the ways employees interact with each other, not meshing with a company's culture can put a roadblock on your path to success.

- *What is your work culture like?*
- *How would you describe the work environment here?*
- *What benefits and perks does the company offer?*
- *How frequently do employees make themselves available outside of normal working hours?*

Proceed with caution: Listen closely to how the interviewer describes the company's benefits and environment to be sure it's the right culture for your personality and working style.

Questions about the company's reputation

After doing some research, you should already know a few things about the company's reputation. Now it's time to dig a little deeper to make sure this is a place where you'll thrive.

- *What's your mission statement?*
- *Why do most employees leave the company?*
- *How would employees describe the company and its leaders?*
- *What are the company's biggest problems? How are they overcoming them?*
- *What do you want the company to be known for among employees — past, present, and future?*

Proceed with caution: Quality leaders will be the first to admit that their company isn't perfect. Interviewers who claim they would change nothing might be failing to grow and make positive changes.

Questions about performance measurements

Knowing a company's expectations and how they measure goals before accepting a job offer helps you decide if their style matches with what motivates you.

- *How are employees recognized for their hard work?*
- *How involved are employees in the structuring of their own goals and tasks?*
- *How often do you evaluate employee performance?*

Proceed with caution: Wanting constant updates and control over employee tasks are warning signs of a micromanager.

Questions about future co-workers

The employees at this organization could be your next team. Make sure you're positive this is a group you want to be a part of.

- *Can you tell me about the team I'll be working with?*
- *How competitive are your employees?*
- *How do you develop teamwork skills among employees?*

Proceed with caution: A competitive environment can be fun and motivating, but a lack of teamwork in the office could point to a cutthroat company.

Questions regarding opportunities for growth

What is your ultimate career goal? Set yourself up for success by finding out how far this new position could take you on your career path.

- *What type of educational/training opportunities does the company offer?*
- *What advancement opportunities are available?*
- *How do leaders promote employee growth and success?*

Proceed with caution: If an interviewer is unable to share how you can advance within the company, chances are you might not be able to grow at the rate you want.

Questions at the interview's conclusion

Don't leave the interview with any questions unanswered — for you or the interviewer. This is your final opportunity to make sure you're both on the same page before you walk out the door.

- *What's the next step of this process, and when can I expect to hear from you?*
- *Is there any other information I can provide you with?*
- *Would you like to see (more) examples of my work?*

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