

## Network to Work Meeting

March 2023

### RESOURCE DOCUMENT – *PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW*

## Prepare in Advance

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

- **Learn all you can about the employer, the position, the people you will interview with** and the industry. Showing you have done your homework will impress your interviewers.
  - Search the internet.
  - Review the employer's website and social media accounts in depth.
  - Do a Google search for news stories about the company.
- **Prepare questions you want to ask** during interviews. It's important that you decide if the position is the right fit for you! (See more below.)
- **Review your resume and cover letter** to remind yourself what you have already told the employer.
- **Re-read and analyze the job description**, focusing on the essential qualifications and responsibilities.
- **Practice your answers to common interview questions** – especially the tough ones! (More on this below.) Think about how to tie your answers to the position's qualifications and responsibilities.
- **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?*
- **Pick out your outfit ahead of time.** You want to look professional and polished. Make sure it is clean and free of holes and wrinkles. Ask in advance about the appropriate attire for the interview and be sure to dress accordingly – or even a slight step above!

If you will be interviewing on Zoom or another online platform, chose something that will 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).

## On the Day of the Interview

- **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 clean 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". The definition of “on time” varies. If your interview is in person, plan to arrive ten minutes early. If your interview is on Zoom, wait until two or three minutes before the interview time to log in as there may be another job seeker being interviewed before you in that same Zoom “room”.
- **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.

## The Interview - Pointers

**Here are some crucial pointers for having a successful interview:**

- **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?

## The Interview – Questions to Expect

### Here are some common interview questions and ways to address them:

- **Tell me about yourself.** This is a serious question. Use it as an opportunity to emphasize the most important things you want the interviewer to know about you. Don't recite your resume or talk about your hobbies, family or personal life. Rather, give a concise, enthusiastic summary of your skills, talents and experience and how that makes you a great fit for the job. Talk about your proudest achievements as well as your goals.
- **How do you see yourself fitting in to the company culture?** Being able to fit into an organization's culture is a big part of the hiring process as employers look for workers who will collaborate and work together as a team. So, before you show up for a job interview, figure out the corporate culture and consider how you might adapt to it.
- **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.
- **What is your greatest strength?** When you answer this question, it is important to discuss your attributes that qualify you for that specific job. A great approach is to answer this with a story that demonstrates how you have used this strength, ideally in the workplace.
- **How do you handle stress and pressure?** How have you dealt with difficult workplace situations or when things haven't gone as desired? The employer is looking to see how you might handle workplace stress. Come prepared to share an example.

### Other common interview questions include:

- Describe your work style.
- How would your co-workers describe your personality?
- What motivates you?
- What parts of this job might be the most challenging for you?
- Tell me something you would have done differently at work.
- What type of work environment do you prefer?

- Describe a difficult work situation or project and how you overcame it.
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What has been your most rewarding work experience or accomplishment?
- Give some examples of your teamwork

## Think Before you Speak

When answering an interview question, a well thought-out answer is always better than a rushed one. Of course, you don't want to sit there in silence for 5 minutes as you come up with an answer, but it *is* acceptable to take several seconds to think before you speak.

Avoid the "ums" and "uhs" and buy yourself time by repeating the interviewer's question back to them, or using a phrase like ***"That's an interesting question!"*** or ***"I was actually just thinking about that when I read an article on a similar topic, and..."***

If you're really stumped, you can say, ***"What a great question. I've actually never been asked this before; let me just take a second to think about this."***

The thought of not being able to answer an interview question is a scary one for many job applicants. It happens more often than you might think. Sometimes, you simply don't know the answer. In other cases, you may know, but your brain freezes.

Being prepared for not being able to respond can help alleviate some of the anxiety, and help you make the most out of a difficult situation.

**Here's advice on what to do if you don't know or aren't sure how to respond to a question.**

- **Don't Panic**

Your mind set going into any interview is a critical ingredient for success. Many candidates assume that they must have a near perfect interview in order to land the job. In reality, it helps to recognize that other interviewees will also have difficulty answering all the questions to the complete satisfaction of the recruiter. Often a solid but imperfect interview will be sufficient to move you on in the screening process. This realization can help stop you from panicking if you can't answer a question well.

- **Stay Calm**

Your reaction can be more important than the ability to deliver the answer. Maintaining a calm, confident posture when confronted with a tough question will help convince the recruiter that your inability to answer a question is an unusual occurrence for you.

If you fall apart and get upset, the interviewer may lose confidence in you. Consider saying something like *"That's a very interesting question, can I take some time to consider it and get back to you later?"* or *"Great question, I can answer it in part but would like to consider it further and get back to you."*

- **Buy Some Time**

You can often buy some time to formulate an answer by rephrasing the question or asking for clarification. For example, you might say "Are you looking for an example of how I motivated an under-performing colleague in a team situation?" By the time the interviewer answers something may have come to mind.

- **Answer When You Follow Up**

Perhaps the most significant thing you could do if you have been totally stumped by a key question is to research a strong answer after the interview. You can then include that answer as part of your [follow-up communication](#).

Very few jobs require workers to have all the answers on the spot. Demonstrating that you will be persistent, hard working, and resourceful when you initially lack information can be impressive to employers.

***For more questions and answers, see***

*"Your 2023 Guide to the Most Common Interview Questions and Answers", by The Muse Editors,*  
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/interview-questions-and-answers>

*"Top 10 Job Interview Questions and Best Answers", by Alison Doyle, The Balance Money,*  
<https://www.thebalancemoney.com/top-interview-questions-and-best-answers-2061225>

## The Interview – Questions to Ask

**Here are some good questions to ask:**

*Questions about your role:*

Be careful not to ask questions already answered in the job description. It's important to 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?*

#### Questions about the company culture

- *What is your work culture like?*
- *How would you describe the work environment here?*

#### Questions about the company's reputation

- *Why do most employees leave the company?*
- *How would employees describe the company and its leaders?*

#### 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?*

#### Questions regarding opportunities for growth

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

#### Questions at the interview's conclusion

- *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?*

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Sources:

"The 45 Questions you Should Ask in Every Job Interview", from *Glassdoor.com*, by Heather Huhman, January 25, 2018  
<https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/the-45-questions-you-should-ask-in-every-job-interview/>

"Do your Homework before the Big Interview", from *Monster.com*, by John Rossheim, Monster Senior Contributing Writer,  
<https://www.monster.com/career-advice/article/do-your-homework-before-interview>

"10 Interview Skills that will Help You Get Hired", from *The Balance*, by Alison Doyle, updated March 19, 2018  
<https://www.thebalancecareers.com/job-interview-skills-to-get-hired-4138625>