

Preparing for the Interview

Tips and Techniques for Before, During, and After the Interview



Agenda

- How to prepare **before** an interview
- What to do **during** an interview
- How to follow up **after** an interview

Goals for Prepping for the Interview

Leave this workshop knowing:

- ☐ How to research your target company and position
- ☐ Questions to ask in the interview
- ☐ Your 30-second elevator pitch
- ☐ How to answer common interview questions
- ☐ How to use the STAR technique to answer interview questions
- ☐ How to calm your nerves and make a great first impression

Before the Interview

- ❑ Research company and the position
- ❑ Craft questions to ask your interviewer
- ❑ Prepare your 30 second pitch
- ❑ Plan what to wear
- ❑ Plan how to get there (in-person interview) or how to manage the technology (virtual interview)



Research helps you prepare to answer:

- Why do you want to work for our company?
- What are some skills that someone needs to be a good (job title)?
- Why are you a good candidate for this opportunity?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Before: Research (Website & Social Media)

Review company websites:

- What do they do? What product or service do they offer?
- What is their mission? (About Us section)
- How do they describe their services? What sets them apart from similar organizations?
- Who are their customers/clients/competitors?
- Where are they located? Can you see yourself making the commute?



Before: Research

Research the position:

- Have you read the job description at your target company?
- What are qualities and skills that seem to be important for this role?



Crafting questions prepares you to answer:

- Do you have any questions for me?



Before: Craft Questions

When you ask an employer questions, it shows that you are looking for a good fit - an organization where you can make a difference.

Some sample questions:

- What would you say is most satisfying/challenging about this job?
- What are the top priorities for this position?
- What qualities are you looking for in a successful candidate?
- What do you like best about working here?



The Elevator Pitch prepares you to answer:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Tell me about your work history.

Tell Me About Yourself

- Stick to the professional aspects of your life
- Keep your answer brief
- Refrain from “bashing” a previous job or boss
- Your answer can be used to explain career shifts/gaps

Before: Elevator Pitch

Prepare your 30 second elevator pitch that communicates who you are, what you're looking for and how you can benefit a company or organization.

- Highlight your:
 - Career goals
 - Relevant experience
 - Education
- Practice so that you feel comfortable

Build Your Pitch

- I am a **customer service rep**
- I have expertise/interest in: **entertainment and audio/visual equipment**
- I have worked at: **call center**
- I really enjoy: **helping people and solving problems**
- I'm known for: **good communication**
- I'm looking for opportunities in: **sales**

The Pitch

I've been a (customer service rep) at (a call center where I learned the importance of listening and providing options to customers)

While in that role, I enjoyed (the challenge of solving customer problems) but would enjoy more opportunity to use my sales skills.

And I'd like to use my **(knowledge of electronics)** to help customer identify the right products for their home entertainment needs.

Before: The Outfit



Before: The Outfit



Before: The Outfit



Before: The Outfit



Before: The Outfit



Before: The Outfit



Before: The Outfit

Dress professionally – one level up from the dress code of the employer.

When in doubt: better to be overdressed than underdressed.

Business Casual is a safe bet.

- Professional - not too casual, but not a night on the town.
- Avoid clothes that are too revealing.
- Steer clear of super high heels, hats, t-shirts, sneakers, or jeans.
- Clothes should be clean and pulled together.

Before: The Outfit

Helpful resources

- www.pinterest.com/jvs_boston_cs/ - good examples of business casual
- Goodwill Industries
- Savers

Before: Getting There

Know where you are going

- Look up the interview location if you haven't been there before
- Identify the best way to get there: bus, train, car or foot
- Research parking options and prices
- Plan to arrive 30 minutes early
 - For mock interview, check in right when you arrive
 - For real interview, you could hang out nearby (café, park, etc.) until 15 minutes before

Before: Reduce anxiety

- Preparing will help reduce anxiety
 - Practice with other people or record your answers
- Get a good night's rest
- Eat breakfast, have your usual amount of caffeine
- Don't cram research or practice all the way up until the last possible minute.
 - Finish up the day before and instead, spend some time before your interview doing something that puts you in a good and positive mood (e.g. go for a run, listen to music, relax)

During: Making a Strong First Impression

- Interviewers say that they know in the first 90 seconds whether they will hire someone
- Greet everyone. The interview starts when you walk through the door
 - Make a positive impression with everyone you come in contact with, including the receptionist in the waiting area.
- Body language speaks volumes!
 - Good posture – no slouching, no folded arms
 - Keep a pleasant look on your face – smile
 - Project calm confidence, but not bravado
 - Firm handshake
 - Maintain eye contact
 - No fidgeting or crossing arms across your chest

Common Interview Questions

- Why should we hire you?
 - Talk about your passion for the position and company. Remind them of your qualifications for the position.
- What is your greatest strength?
 - This should be relevant to what they are looking for in the position.
- What is your weakness?
 - This should always be positive, talk about something professional you are working to improve.

Common Interview Questions

- Can you explain this gap in your employment history?
 - Be honest, tactful and BRIEF
 - Use the sandwich strategy; emphasize a positive, address the negative, back to positive.
- Do you have any questions for me?
 - Always say yes

Using the S-T-A-R strategy

- Useful for answering questions that ask you to describe how you manage a situation, or to give an example from the past
- Identify at least two accomplishments from your past (ideally from a work environment) to highlight your best work stories
- S-T-A-R
 - Situation – Describe the circumstance (When, Where, Who was involved)
 - Task – What needed to be done
 - Action – What did you do? (this should be the most detailed part)
 - Results – Positive outcomes

Employers Don't Want to Hear

- Accounts of unprofessional behavior
- Things you “might” have done or wish you had done
- Vague descriptions of an event
- What the team did
- “No, I can’t think of a time when that happened.”
- Snide comments about customers
- Signs of defensiveness when you received feedback
- Indications that you can’t work with well others
- Indications that you act without planning/preparing



Finishing Up

- If you are excited about the job - say so! Don't be shy expressing your interest in the job outright
- Ask what the next step is going to be, by when will the decision be made?
- Ask when you can expect to hear from them – and then “If I don't hear from you by_____, may I give you a call?”
- Be prepared to leave references, should they ask.

Finishing up

**Make sure to ask for business cards/email
addresses from all the people you've interviewed
with**

After the Interview

Take a moment to reward yourself – completing an interview is an accomplishment.

- **Write an email within 24 hours thanking your interviewer(s) for their time and consideration (if multiple people, separate email for each)**
 - Reiterate your interest in the position/company
 - Remind the recruiter of your qualifications
 - Refer to a specific part of your conversation to personalize it
 - Provide any additional information they may have asked for