



Interview Prep Document

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PERSONAL INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Thanks to your winning resume, and the way AccruePartners has presented your abilities to a prospective employer, you've been asked to interview with a company. **Are you prepared?** You may think you are, but one of the best ways to separate yourself from your competition for a position is to be prepared for anything that may come your way during the interview process. The following information is designed to help you understand exactly what you need to do to maximize your chances of receiving an offer.

First, let's consider what an interview is all about. By the time you are invited to meet with a prospective employer, the interviewer has already reviewed your resume in detail with AccruePartners and they are intimately knowledgeable about the hard facts of your employment history and skills. Therefore, the interview itself is a subtle, more subjective, part of your job search process. **First impressions are extremely important.** During each interview, each person you meet will be forming an opinion of you. They will be gauging your compatibility with the needs of the organization and they will be assessing their ability to work with you in the role they may hire you for. Every interview needs to be viewed as your only opportunity to make a good impression, even in cases when an organization requires multiples interviews prior to making an offer.

Be sincere and polite, and let your enthusiasm for the organization show. Let your knowledge of their company and the industry show through as well. Your resume likely gives examples of your skills as a team player. In the interview, you need to convince them that you fit within their team. In order to make the best impression possible you need to be prepared, anticipate questions, and know how to handle any situation that may arise unexpectedly.

RESEARCHING THE COMPANY (The 5 W's)

Understanding the Who, What, When, Where and Why of a company is critical in preparing for an interview. This information can easily be found through researching: the company website, social media sites such as; LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, Dun & Bradstreet, newspaper articles and/or trade publications.

Prior to the interview you should be able to speak intelligently about:

- » The company history
- » Recent mergers or acquisitions
- » Company locations
- » Competitors
- » Trends in the industry
- » Recent press releases
- » The leadership team
- » People you know who currently work for or have worked for the company

ETIQUETTE & PRESENTING YOURSELF

- » Allow enough time to ensure heavy traffic or an accident will not cause you to be late. It is recommended that you arrive at least 10 minutes prior to the interview but no more than 15 minutes early. Sitting in your car in the parking lot because you've arrived early is better than risking arriving late.
- » Bring extra copies of your resume, a conservative portfolio and a pen. If you are applying for a creative position please bring copies of your portfolio.
- » Be sure you know how to pronounce the interviewers first and last names correctly. Address the interviewer only the name with which they introduce themselves.
- » Be polite to everyone, especially the receptionist. Everyone within the organization is important, and everyone within the organization is going to form a first impression of you.
- » Do not use your cell phone in anyway prior to the interview, make sure it is turned off prior to walking into the receptionist area.
- » Be personable and professional; a smile helps relax everyone!
- » Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake.
- » Use professional verbiage. Casual language such as "cool" or "awesome" is considered unprofessional.
- » Do not chew gum, eat candy, smoke, or swear.
- » Do not interrupt the interviewer, even if you think you know what they are going to ask. Similarly, do not go off on a tangent and answer a question that was not asked.
- » 93% of communication is nonverbal. Sit up straight and smile, Do not slouch, cross your legs or cross your arms. Think about the tone and inflection of your voice as you respond to questions.
- » NEVER bad-mouth previous employers.

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW ETIQUETTE

- » Test your technology – check your internet connectivity and confirm that your camera/mic are working. If there is an echo, you may need to make an environment change.
- » Set the scene and minimize distractions – find a room with optimal lighting and an appropriate background. Platforms such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom allow you to "blur" your background so that you are the main focus.
- » Sit down prepared – just because you are on your computer during an interview doesn't mean you should be researching the company while on the call. Just like an in person interview you should do your homework before the meeting
- » Practice, don't memorize – be as genuine as you would be in a formal, in-person interview

PROPER ATTIRE

First impressions are extremely important. Your appearance (and smell) can be equally as important as what you say.

Do not wear perfume, cologne or heavy make-up. Some interviewers find it offensive, and worse yet, some are allergic. A well-groomed, freshly bathed appearance is all that is necessary.

FOR WOMEN: A suit or conservative dress is appropriate attire. Minimal amounts of jewelry. Stylish low heels are appropriate. Form-fitting or low-cut blouse or dresses should NOT be worn.

FOR MEN: A conservative business suit, long-sleeved shirt and tie are the best choice of attire. Wear matching socks and polished shoes. Do not wear jewelry other than a wedding ring and a watch.

IF YOU ARE FEELING UNSURE ABOUT THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE ATTIRE YOU PLAN TO WEAR, CALL ACCRUEPARTNERS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO BE PREPARED TO ANSWER

Practice, Practice, Practice! Give thought to the questions you might be asked and prepared to [Make an Impact](#) in your responses for each one. Behavior-based interviewing is becoming more common. This is based on the idea that the best predictor of a candidate's future performance is his/her past performance. These types of questions target your specific work experience and require a more detailed response. Expect to be asked many standard interview questions, as well as behavior-based interview questions.

STANDARD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- » Tell me about yourself?
- » Describe a difficult problem you have had to deal with and how you overcame it?
- » What do you know about our company/industry?
- » What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
- » Why would you want to work here?
- » Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- » Why are you leaving your current position?

BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- » Can you describe a time when your work was criticized?
- » Have you ever been on a team where someone was not pulling their own weight?
- » Give me an example of a situation at work where you felt you went above and beyond? This is a great time to show how your [Work with Passion and Purpose!](#)
- » What is your greatest failure and what did you learn from it?
- » Tell me how you handle giving someone difficult feedback?

THE STARCH METHOD

The STARCH method is used to help you formulate strategic answers for behavior-based interview questions.

S/T – Situation/Task

- » Clearly describe the situation or task (paint the picture).

A – Action

- » What “action(s)” did you take to overcome or accomplish?

R – Result

- » What are the “results/outcome?” Describe results that have a relatively positive outcome.

CH – Change

- » What “change(s)” would you make if you had to do it all over again? How can you [Be Better Than Yesterday?](#)

POLISH YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Your social media profile is like the cover to your book: It should be clean, vaguely explain what your work and life are about and give a hint at your personality – nothing else. It is important to ensure your online profiles, not just LinkedIn, aren't going to contain something that may lower your chances of landing that new job. How to clean up and enhance your online profiles:

- » Set your accounts to private
- » Create a solid, purely professional LinkedIn profile if you don't already have one
- » Follow publications in your industry
- » Follow influencers in your industry and share their content
- » Connect with your extended network
- » Get a professional photo
- » Be careful what you post and delete old posts or tweets
- » Join a professional group
- » Google yourself

QUESTIONING THE INTERVIEWER

Most interviewers will ask at the end of an interview if you have any questions. How you respond will play into their evaluation of you, so be prepared to ask insightful, well thought-out questions. Make sure you asked at least a few questions so you don't appear passive and uninterested in the position.

- » Make a list of any questions you have regarding the company. Don't ask questions you are able to find out the answer to from an online search or from asking AccruePartners.
- » Do not ask about compensation and benefits. You should have some idea of the salary and benefits from your conversations with AccruePartners. If not, you will be given that information at the appropriate time in the process. These types of questions make you seem more interested in what they can do for you and less enthusiastic about the position.

SOME QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER ASKING

- » Describe the competitive environment in which the organization operates.
- » What are the top 3 attributes that would make someone successful in this role?
- » What obstacles does the organization anticipate in meeting its goals?
- » How have the organization's goals changed over the past 3 years?
- » What is the culture like?
- » Why do you like working at this company?
- » What can I do to best prepare myself for a job at your company?
- » What challenges do you see me having in this position?
- » What obstacles have commonly been met in reaching corporate goals?
- » What resources are available from the company and what must be found elsewhere to reach position objectives?

THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION

The last question you must always ask every interviewer is, ***"What challenges do you see me having in this position?"***

Listen very carefully to how the interviewer responds. If they respond with a resounding "no," you have done a good job covering all the issues that are important to them. However, if they respond with something like, "You appear to have all the qualifications we're looking for, but..." Listen for that "but." Whatever comes afterwards is an area you need to re-address with them. Try to go over your experiences in that area one more time in an effort to re-strengthen their view of your experience.

FOLLOWING UP AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Follow up immediately with a brief, sincere thank you email to each person you interviewed with. This is a great opportunity to extend your first impression and [Invest in Relationships](#). Do not text your thank you.

ACCRUEPARTNERS INTERVIEW PREP VIDEOS

Click on the below options to hear from our Subject Matter Experts!

- » [What Are Your Strengths?](#)
- » [The STARCH Method](#)
- » [Tell Me About Your Weaknesses](#)
- » [Questions for The Interviewer](#)
- » [Tell Me About Yourself](#)

These next two pages are some excellent articles written by experts we encourage you to read prior to going on any interview.

HOW TO SELL YOURSELF IN A JOB INTERVIEW

BY DANIEL BORTZ
MONSTER CONTRIBUTOR

Unless you're actually in sales, the very concept of selling yourself during a job interview can be daunting. You don't want to sound arrogant or corny, or worse, desperate. But learning how to self-promote in a convincing manner is what the job interview is all about.

The good news is you can learn how to confidently talk about yourself – specifically your skills, knowledge, and career achievements – with a little effort. These tips can help you close the sales on a job offer.

LOOK THE PART

Many hiring managers will form their first impression of you based on what you're wearing. Granted, the right interview attire depends on the company you're auditioning for and the culture of the organization, says Portland, Oregon-based career and job search coach Vicki Lind. "You want to dress up one notch above what the employees are wearing," she recommends. In addition, you need to physically project confidence. "Your body language has to reinforce what you're selling," says Atlanta-based career coach Gia Ganesh.

In other words, your nonverbal cues – mainly your eye contact, hand motions, posture, and tone of voice – are critical when selling yourself to a hiring manager.

TAILOR YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

Ganesh says you should have a 30 to 60 second self-introduction prepared in advance, but this elevator pitch has to be customized to the job you're interviewing for.

"You can't create a single elevator pitch that will work for every audience," says Stamford, Connecticut-based executive coach Anne Marie Segal. "You have to be speaking to the pain points of the company." After all, your goal is to present yourself as the solution to their problems.

Look closely at the job posting to assess the company's needs and the job responsibilities, and then tweak your pitch accordingly. Do your research and find what matters most to the company – go to their website and social media pages and read their mission statement, recent press releases, and any initiatives they're undertaking – and then tailor your pitch.

ALWAYS QUANTIFY YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

"Metrics sell," says Cole, which is why it's important to use hard numbers when describing your accomplishments. So, instead of saying, "I led a successful project," say, "The project I led reduced costs by 35%, shaved four days off from start to finish, and landed us seven huge new clients in the first 10 days," Cole recommends.

Also avoid using empty clichés, like saying that you're a "team player" or "hard worker." Instead, back up your claims with relevant stories that show how you've applied your skills in the past.

VIRTUAL INTERVIEWING: 5 USEFUL TIPS TO HELP YOU ACE YOUR VIRTUAL INTERVIEW

BY HEIDI LYNNE KURTER
FORBES

As businesses begin to re-open and start hiring again, many are erring on the side of caution and choosing to keep their interviews virtual. For many job seekers, virtual interviewing is a new concept and something they've never done before. Despite being held online, virtual interviews should be treated as if they were conducted in the office.

The biggest mistake many candidates make when interviewing remotely, is not paying attention to the details such as their outfit, their background or being prepared. Consequently, this hurts their chances of moving forward.

Here are five useful tips to help you ace your virtual interview and impress your future employer.

TEST EQUIPMENT BEFOREHAND

An oversight many candidates make is waiting a few minutes before the interview to test their equipment and attempt to learn the platform. It's then they realize they need to download a program or encounter technical issues in the process. As a result, they jeopardize their first meeting and impression due to being late to the interview.

As soon as the interview is confirmed, take the time to double-check the interview platform, internet connection and anything else that could possibly create problems. Make sure the microphone and headphones work when connected as well as the video. If there is a lag with your internet, try rebooting your router, reaching out to the provider for assistance or finding a new location that has a stronger internet connection.

RESEARCH THE CULTURE, IDENTIFY GAPS AND READ THE REVIEWS

The secret to gaining a competitive advantage over other candidates is doing your homework on the company and seeing how you can sell your skills and fill the gaps. You can do this by watching some of their videos, reading reviews from current employees on Glassdoor, reading the website and checking out their social media. Likewise, spend a few minutes looking up the interviewer on LinkedIn. The information you learn might help you find common ground. For example, if they've both worked at the same company in the past, this is a great conversation point that will help create a connection.

By taking the time to research the company outside of their About Me page, it shows you're genuinely interested in the position and how you'll fit into the culture. Kenny Trinh, CEO of [Netbooknews](#), said "those who don't take virtual and phone interviews seriously are the ones who have issues." He added, "show that you are committed and take the initiative to understand everything that you can about the company."

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH COMMON QUESTIONS

The worst thing you can do is go into an interview blindly without any preparation for the questions they could potentially ask. Most companies rely heavily on two types of interview questions: situational and behavioral. Behavioral interview questions focus on past experiences while situational questions present hypothetical situations that ask candidates how they would handle it.

Visiting the company page on Glassdoor could prove to be helpful as candidates typically share interview questions they've been asked. You can use this as a reference point as well as researching commonly asked behavioral and situational interview questions. Even if all of the questions aren't asked, you'll have some experiences to refer back to instead of being caught off guard.

Some examples of behavioral and situational questions are:

- Describe a time in which you had many competing priorities. How did you prioritize and complete them?
- Tell me about a time you had to collaborate with a colleague who was difficult to work with?
- What would you do if you were working on a project that was almost at completion but the goals or priorities changed?
- How would you handle it if you were unsatisfied with your job?

In addition to being prepared for common interview questions, have your resume and other documents ready that you can refer back to when needed. Furthermore, if you have any verifiable data or hard numbers to back up what you've done in previous roles, make sure to incorporate them into your answers.

PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS

While testing your equipment, do your due diligence in knowing how much of your background appears on camera. It's contradicting to have on your resume that you're organized and detail oriented when there is an unmade bed or clothes scattered in the background. Take the time to make sure the background is clean, tidy and presentable. Make sure to remove anything that could be offensive to the interviewer, distracting or isn't considered workplace appropriate such as wall hangings or decor.

Additionally, take the time to make sure there is ample lighting in the room where you're doing your interview. Michele Mavi, career strategist and founder of MonumentalMe, said "take control of your lighting and if you can, place a lamp on each side of the monitor so that your lighting is balanced and your face is well lit." She went on "you don't want to start off the interview well lit and then all of a sudden have the sun disappear."

Even if it is a virtual interview, make sure to dress your best. When in doubt, opt for business professional. To put yourself in the right frame of mind, wear the full outfit instead of just from the shirt up. There's a psychological feeling when you wear the entire outfit, shoes included, instead of only one piece of it.

BE AUTHENTIC AND ENGAGE WITH THE INTERVIEWER

It's normal to be nervous, overwhelmed and want to win over the interviewer. When you're prepared, you're able to better demonstrate why you're the best person for the role. James Dyble, managing director and head PR practitioner of Outsourcer, explained "know your selling points and reiterate these points throughout the interview."

Use this time to show your personality. Lead with a smile and don't be afraid to laugh and engage with the interviewer. Although there is physical distance between you and the interview, you should still treat a virtual interview as if you were in the office. Lastly, don't talk over the interviewer. Let them finish their sentence or question. If there's a lag in technology where you both spoke at the same time, apologize and let them lead. If you don't understand the question they asked, let them finish and ask clarifying questions. Remember to be respectful and kind. To ace a virtual interview means making a positive impression.

AccruePartners is made up of a team of subject matter experts that have extensive experience in their dedicated practice areas. We take pride in giving unique opportunities to valuable talent by taking the time to understand the needs of both the client and candidate.

Contact us today if you're interested in learning more!

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