



How to Prepare for an Interview

The key to a successful interview is to be prepared. Whenever possible, start your preparation at least two days before your interview. Being proactive will help ensure you are ready for anything an interviewer can throw at you, and will boost your confidence the day of the interview. Following are some of our favorite interview preparation techniques.

Review Your Full Work History

Review your entire resume and ensure you are able to speak to every line item. It's easy to forget details about jobs you held years ago, but anything on your resume is fair game for the interviewer.

Do Your Research

Prior to any interview, do your research on the company. Never go to an interview without visiting the company website and familiarizing yourself with their products or services, philosophies and values, and any other information pertinent to the role you're interviewing for. It is also a good idea to search for articles on what projects or initiatives the company is currently involved in, as these may come up in the interview.

If you've been given the names of everyone you will be speaking with for your interview(s), take some time to look up their profiles on LinkedIn. Get a basic understanding of how long they've been with the company, projects or teams they've worked on, what their career trajectory has been, etc. LinkedIn profiles often include a wealth of information!

Put Yourself in the Interviewer's Shoes

Think about what questions the interviewer might ask you, and practice your answers. It may help to write these questions and your answers down to create a guide for continued reference. You can also ask a friend to conduct a mock interview to practice speaking your answers.

Prepare for Behavior-Based Questions

Recall at least three examples of work-related situations where you exceeded expectations in your role or made a significant positive impact on the business. It may be that you created a program which increased sales, developed a new process that saved money, beat a tight deadline, went out of your way for a customer, prevented a problem by being proactive, or successfully dealt with a difficult customer or coworker.

Write out all the details of these situations, including the basis of the issue, your role, and the outcome, so you have concrete examples at the ready when an interviewer asks a behavior-based question. The ability to demonstrate your success in a variety of situations will help ensure the employer that you are someone who will also bring success to their organization.

Remember to be very detailed in your description of the examples. Instead of saying “I managed a salesperson who was not making their numbers, so I worked with them on it;” try “I managed a Key Account salesperson named Jim in our Cincinnati location who called on one of our biggest accounts, Kroger. He was missing a lot of opportunities to increase our share of business in the account.” Then go on to explain how you turned the situation around and what the final results were. Details will make your examples more vivid, believable, and memorable.

Articulate Your Personal Qualities and Strengths

Interviewers often ask similar questions in many different ways: Why should we hire you? What sets you apart? Why are you the best person for this role? What can you bring to the table?

Think about your examples of success and consider what personal qualities of yours enabled you to be successful. Was your success the result of the fact that you are highly creative, resourceful, strategic, energetic, analytical, executional, proactive, or competitive? By connecting your personal qualities to your previous successes, you will be able to easily answer these abstract questions AND back up your answers with concrete examples. When an interviewer asks why they should hire you, you can say “You should hire me because I am resourceful and creative. For instance, let me tell you about the time...”

Anyone can list a string of adjectives to describe themselves, regardless of actual qualifications. You will stand out by providing examples that make it clear you are the “real deal.”

Prepare Questions

Every interviewer will close by asking if you have any questions for them, and you should be prepared with at least a few to convey your interest in learning more about the role.

Standard questions may include what the first priority will be for the person hired into the role, what a typical day will look like in the role, which individuals or teams this role will interact with most, or how the company will measure success in the role. You can also ask more detailed questions stemming from what you learned during your research on the company.