

Interview Preparation

Interview Preparation



Ask Yourself These Questions

Your Qualifications

- What qualifications do you have that relate to the position?
- What skills or abilities have you developed recently?
- What are some examples from a previous job where you've shown initiative?
- What have been your greatest accomplishments?
- What is important to you in a job?
- What motivates you in your work?
- What qualities do you find important in a manager or a coworker?

Your Career Goals

- What would you like to be doing five years from now?
- How will you judge yourself to be a success? How will you achieve success?
- What type of job is of interest to you?
- How will this job fit in your career plans?
- What do you expect from this job?
- When can you start?

Your Work Experience

- What have you learned from your past jobs?
- What are/were your major responsibilities?
- What specific skills used in previous jobs relate to this position?
- How does your previous experience relate to this position?
- What did you like most/least about your last job?

Your Education

- How has your education prepared you for this position?
- What were your favorite classes/activities at school?
- Why did you choose your major?
- Do you plan to continue your education?

Behavior Based Interviewing

Many organizations, but not all, use behavior based interviewing believing past performance is the best predictor of future performance. You may be asked to describe a situation or task you encountered, what action you took, and what was the outcome of that action. A number of interviewers use what is called the STAR approach to interviewing.

S = Situation

T = Task

A = Action

R = Results

Even when the interviewer or interviewing team has not been taught this interviewing format they may use it in some modified version.

Review the job specification and supplemental job description for the position you are applying for and begin planning and practicing what "stories" you will share. You may be asked to share a negative work situation you encountered. Be prepared to say how you made the best of a bad situation and learned something in the process.

Remember: Interviews are a two-way process so you should ask questions to learn more about the job and the organization. Below are questions for you to ask:

- Will you describe for me what a typical day or week might look like in this job?
- What qualities do the people possess that have already been successful in this job?
- What kind of orientation and training are available to new employees?
- What are some of the more challenging issues I would face in this job?
- What role does this job have in achieving the organization's goals and objectives?
- What are the upward and lateral career paths identified for this position?

Interview Preparation

Interview Preparation



How To Prepare For An Interview

Interviews are opportunities to learn and to share information. Performance-Based interviews are not difficult, but unless you are prepared, they can prove to be quite unsettling. In helping you get ready, here are a few tips to follow.

- Learn about the organization and its mission, vision, and organizational structure. A good place to start is the web site. As you read about the mission and strategic plan, think about how you could contribute to the agency. Also, learn about the administration or office where you will be working. Make a note of any questions that you may want to ask during the interview. Don't neglect to learn about the agency's clients.
- Analyze the job and the type of position for which you are applying. Learn as much as you can about the position. Obtain a copy of the actual position description. Contact other professionals currently working the field within the organization or another agency. Conduct Internet and newspaper searches to aid in your research. Read current periodicals and trade journals to learn about current trends in the field. Be able to articulate why you are interested in the field and your long-term goals.
- Review the duties listed in the vacancy announcement and review your work history and how it relates to the position for which you are applying. Analyze the match between your skills and the job. Specific qualifications for the position should be outlined in the vacancy announcement. Determine which of your skills best suits the requirements of the position. Identify examples from past experiences that demonstrate those skills. Be able to "tell a story" of how you used those skills. Use examples from past work experiences, internships, classes, activities, team involvement and community services.
- Try to provide recent examples, as the interviewer

General Interviewing Tips

- Practice your interviewing skills well before you are called for an interview. Try watching yourself in a mirror and/or; use a tape recorder. An excellent way to develop your interviewing skills is to conduct a "mock interview" with a family member, friend, and/or co-worker.
- Look professional. Professional appearance is an important part of the interviewing process. Conservative attire creates a positive first impression.
- Think positive. Feeling positive projects confidence and enthusiasm.

Sample Interview Questions That May Be Asked Of You

- Describe a situation in which you had to use your communication skills in presenting complex information. How did you determine whether your message was received?
- Share with me an example of an important personal goal that you set, and explain how you accomplished it.
- Lead me through a decision-making process on a major project you've completed. Have you ever had many different tasks given to you at the same time? How did you manage these?
- Give me an example of a time you had to make a difficult decision.

Now that you have an idea of what kinds of questions to expect, the next step is how to answer them. To give a complete answer to a behavior-based question, you must, first, reflect on specific situations that you faced while working [include any volunteering or internships], then, describe the specific action you took, and, finally, the outcome as a result of your actions. The interviewer will be looking for concrete examples not generalities. A helpful hint would be to remember the initials {PAR" for "Problem, Action, and

may want to ask you about specific details. It's much easier to provide details for a recent experience.

- Be prepared to give an example of a time when you experienced a contrary outcome. Explain a situation that did not turn out as you planned. Highlight what you learned from the situation and things you might have done differently.
- Identify a few [2-3] of your best qualities and decide how you will convey these during the interview. Be sure to have examples [tell a story] that demonstrate these attributes. Prepare two or three thoughtful job-related questions for the interviewer.

Other Tips For Successful Interviewing

Always listen carefully to the question, ask for clarification if necessary and make sure you answer the question completely. Remember that it is impossible to control all aspects of an interview. If you encounter a question you are unprepared for, do your best and then move on. Don't try to dominate the interview. Let the interviewer guide the questions. View each interview as an opportunity to learn and refine your interview skills. Do not expect to receive a job offer during the interview. A decision will not be made until all candidates have been interviewed and a second interview with a higher level official may be necessary. You may be given the opportunity to ask the interviewer a few questions, and should use this as an opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge of and interest in the organization and position. You may have the opportunity to make closing remarks in your interview. Touch on qualifications that you did not have a chance to discuss, and inquire about the next stage in the process. Restate your enthusiasm for the organization and the position, and thank the interviewer for his or her time.

Results" such as "PAR for the Course." When giving a response provide the interviewer [s] with the specific **Problem** you encountered, the **Action** you took to resolve the problem, and the **Results** of your action. When answering interview questions, try to be brief and succinct. Try not to ramble.

Nonverbal Communication Skills

Messages are conveyed during the interview not only by what you say but by how you say it. Positive nonverbal communication will reinforce your verbal message.

- Greet the interviewer with a firm handshake and introduce yourself.
- Always be positive; avoid negative words and phrases as much as possible.
- Maintain good eye contact at all times.
- Smile! A pleasant and relaxed smile will keep both you and the interviewer at ease.
- Be enthusiastic about the position, the organization, your skills, and how you can contribute to the organization's success.
- A good interviewer will make a serious attempt to build a positive rapport with you, usually through small talk about weather, current events, sports, etc. at the beginning of the interview. Be certain that you participate in the conversation; don't just smile and nod.
- Try to minimize irritating habits such as tapping your pen, twirling your hair, looking away from the interviewer, moving your legs, or drumming your fingers and use of filler words such as "ummm," "like," "y'know".