

**Tips  
Include**

**Preparing and practicing for technical, scenario, team and soft skill questions**  
**Interview etiquette • Questions to ask hiring managers • Common interview questions**

## The 3 P's for Interviews: Prepare, Practice & Perform

### Prepare

- **Review your resume.** Refresh yourself on past responsibilities, accomplishments, involvements, etc.
- **Know your history.** Make a list of your past achievements, strengths, weaknesses/areas of improvement, challenges, and learning experiences. Ensure you have explanations for any large gaps in employment, or why you've had any short term positions.
- **Review times you have overcome challenges.** Remind yourself of some struggles you've had with past/current co-workers, Managers, and clients. What was the issue? How was it resolved? What did you learn from it?
- **Know the structure of the interview.** Is it a panel interview or one-on-one? Will you have personality/technical assessments, etc.? Who are you meeting (i.e. HR, hiring Manager, team member, Manager of the Department, someone who would be reporting to you)? How long is the interview expected to be?
- **Research the company and anyone you might be meeting.** Use the company's website, Google searches, LinkedIn, Glassdoor. Do you know anyone who's worked there (filter LinkedIn connections)? What was their experience?
- **Prepare questions for the interview.** Have questions for different people, and make sure you're asking the right questions to the right people.
- **Put thought into how you'll reflect some of the following traits**, which managers look for: coachable, flexible/adaptable, calm under pressure, exercise strategic thinking, creative/innovative, enthusiastic, positive attitude, good work ethic, listen, open to criticism and ideas, good communication skills, proactive, honest, resourceful, good team member, solution-oriented, good leadership skills, and can relate to people
- **Prepare for Behavior Based Interviewing Questions.** Describe a time when you have improved procedures in your company. Tell me about a high stress situation when you needed to keep a positive attitude. What happened? Give me examples of how you turned an unprofitable branch and/or area into a profitable one.

### Practice

- **Review common interview questions and think about your answers.**
- **Think of stories you want to share.** Follow the PAR Format for telling stories: Problem, Action, and Result (present the problem, the actions you took, and the results; limit your story summaries to 1-2 minutes)
- **Review the job description.** Why are you a good fit? What have you done before that relates?
- **Master your 30 second personal elevator speech.** Include key skills, technical competencies, differentiators and interests. Practice your pitch in front of a mirror.
- **Practice asking your questions out loud.** Are they clear, concise, and relevant? Do they show you've done some homework on the role and organization?

### Perform

- **Be positive and try to make others feel comfortable.** Show openness by leaning into a greeting with a firm handshake and smile. Don't make negative comments about current or former employers.
- **Relax.** Think of the interview as a conversation, not an interrogation. And remember, the interviewer might be just as nervous about making a good impression on you.
- **Be aware of non-verbal communication:** Remember that words express only about 30-35% of what people actually communicate! Nonverbal communication (i.e. facial expressions, body movement, actions) convey the rest! Focus on:
  - **Good eye contact:** looking away can indicate that you're shy, you're not interested, or a general dislike for the situation you're in or the person you're meeting with.
  - **Good posture:** the way you sit or stand can convey energy or fatigue, interest or boredom. How do you want to be perceived? Lean forward. Stand upright.
  - **Avoiding negative body language:** frequently touching your mouth, faking a cough to think about the answer to a question, gnawing on your lip, tight or forced smiles, swinging your foot or leg, folding or crossing your arms, slouching, avoiding eye contact, and picking at invisible bits of lint

### Tips for Phone Interviews

- **Stand up, or sit up straight at a table or desk.** Research has shown that individuals project themselves better when standing, and you'll feel more knowledgeable and confident.
- **Make sure you are in a quiet place with clear reception.** Have your resume, interview prep, and something to take notes on in front of you.

## Follow Up – Post Interview Tips

- **If working with a Recruiter, call immediately to provide them a debriefing.** Discuss an overview of the interview, who you met with, what they outlined about the job, your positive feedback as well as any concerns, your timeline and the status of other opportunities you might be considering, and any other details you think they might want to be aware of.
- **Send brief thank you letters to the hiring manager and others you met.** Send in a timely fashion via email or USPS. Show appreciation for their time, summarize your qualifications and interest level, and tactfully hint at your eagerness in hearing a positive outcome. Send to the manager directly, or to your Recruiter, who can forward along on your behalf. *Offer examples of your work, references or letters of recommendation.*
- **Stay in touch with your contacts at the company** between the interview and offer process. Maintain communication to stay in the loop, inquire on the status of the position/other candidates, and to re-express your interest every 1-2 weeks.
- **Stick to the point.** Ensure any follow up communication are concise, to the point, personalized, and expresses your interest.
- **OPTIONAL: Send a LinkedIn invitation to those you met.** Take the extra time to customize the invitation. These small details do not go unnoticed. Every little bit to help you stand out helps!

## Interview Dos and Don'ts

### Do

- Dress for success and show up early.
- Be Present! Be focused on the interview and engaged with who you're meeting with!
- Actively listen, and take notes.
- Express both your qualifications and interest level in the position!
- Find a way to relate and connect with who you're speaking with.
- Offer a reference list, which could include Managers, Leads, Clients, Co-Workers, and Subordinates.
- Answer questions directly.
- Show you're team-oriented and results-driven.
- Express any accomplishments or career progression you've had.
- Ask questions that show you've done your homework, your interest level in the position, and that show how you'd contribute to the team, project, company, etc...
- Interview the Interviewer
- Focus on what you've done, not what others on your team have done.

### Don't

- Dress casual.
- Forget copies of your resume.
- Be late.
- Bring your phone in. If you do, ensure it's on mute. Never answer your phone.
- Talk negatively (about previous teams, companies, bosses, etc).
- Provide zero managerial references.
- Provide references who are outdated or who've had minimal experience working with you.
- Not know the job description.
- Display a focus on money only.
- Lie. Be honest about your knowledge. Show how you'd find the answer.
- Go off on tangents.
- Ask questions that raise red flags.
- Only focus on the achievements of others.
- Get thrown off by odd questions or scenarios; these are becoming more commonplace to see how well you think on your toes!
- Downplay your accomplishments or attribute them to luck.

**Remember... Practice Makes Perfect! Especially when it comes to Preparing for an Interview!**

## Interviewing Best Practices

- **Research the company.** Get details such as: Size of the company (both number of employees and revenue/sales volume), public or privately held, history, competitors, organizational chart, primary roles at the company and in this department, etc... You can capture this information through these sources: Company's Web Site, Company Brochure, Annual Report, Business Library, Periodical Files, Dunn and Bradstreet Report, American Staffing Association web site ([www.staffingtoday.net](http://www.staffingtoday.net)).
- **Asking questions** that express you are thinking ahead about the job and how certain developments may impact the business demonstrates to an employer that you are a "smart" candidate. You are already thinking like you belong in the position and looking ahead at how to address possible challenges. These types of questions can also help the employer see how you fit right in.
- **Concentrate on the employer's needs, not yours.**
- **Explain how the skills you bring will benefit the company.**
- **Be prepared** with answers to the traditional interview questions.
- **Provide specific answers to questions.** Aim for clarity and honesty. Use real examples in your career.
- **Don't downplay your accomplishments or attribute them to luck.**
- **Take responsibility on communicating your strengths.** Don't rely on the interviewer to pull it out of you.
- **Express strong interest.** Before leaving the interview express your strong interest in the position and ask how he/she feels about your qualifications for the position.
- **Think of the interview as a sales presentation to get acquainted with the client.** Trust must be established. Find ways to connect.
- **Make a cheat sheet.** Jot down a few notes about the most critical points you want to make with your interviewer(s). Are there certain skills and experiences you want to emphasize? Do you have certain interests or passions you want your interviewer(s) to know about and understand?
- **Be friendly and respectful to everyone**—receptionists are often vocal about their opinions.
- **Research what you don't know.** Familiarize yourself with concepts, technologies, etc... in the job description that you don't recognize or understand.
- **Focus on what you've done**, not what you've seen others do. Focus on your relevant experience!

## Behavioral Interviewing Technique

Behavioral interviewing is based on using past behavior as a strong prediction of future behavior. Many professional interviewers use the behavior interviewing technique, thus it is important to prepare for this style of questioning and understand why certain questions are being asked and how to answer the behavior-base questions.

In behavioral-style interviewing the interviewer asks specific questions seeking information about candidate's skills, character, and performance based on examples of past behavior. By using these answers, the interviewer can rate the candidate based on past actions, not "gut feelings" or "intuition". The key in behavioral interviewing is to "paint a picture" of the reasons and thinking about the decision or behavior without bringing in unessential details.

### Examples of Behavioral Interviewing Questions

1. Describe a time when you have improved procedures in your company. Be specific.
2. Tell me about a high stress situation when you needed to keep a positive attitude. What happened?
3. Tell me about a time you dealt with a difficult client and the measures you took to create a productive relationship.

## Common Reasons Candidates Miss out on an Offer

There are three main reasons why qualified candidates do not get hired:

1. Lack of enthusiasm and professionalism prior to, during, and following the interview.
2. Poor interview preparation.
3. Presentation by the candidate to the client why he or she left previous jobs.

Remember – despite the different tactics used, all employers are searching for the same answers in interviews. They seek to confirm that an applicant has the required knowledge, skill, attitude, and personality to contribute and fit into the company culture.

## 10 Questions to ask a Manager/Client and Why they are Important

**1. What are the biggest challenges the person in this position will face?**

*This question shows that you don't have blinders on in the excitement about a new job; you recognize that every job has difficult elements and that you're being thoughtful about what it will take to succeed in the position.*

**2. Can you describe a typical day or week in the position?**

*This question shows that you're thinking beyond the interview and that you're visualizing what it will be like to do the work itself. This is different from many candidates, who appear to be focused solely on getting the job offer without thinking about what will come after that.*

**3. What do you think are the most important overall goals for this position? What are the primary objectives in this position for the next six months? What would a successful first year in the position look like?**

*Asking questions like these shows that you're thinking in the same terms that a manager does--about what the position needs to contribute to the team or company to be worthwhile. You'll also sound like someone who isn't seeking to simply do the bare minimum, but rather to truly achieve in the role.*

**4. How will the success of the person in this position be measured?**

*This question is similar to the previous one, but it will also give you more insight into what the manager really values. You may discover that while the job description emphasizes skill A or responsibility B, the manager actually cares most about skill C or responsibility D.*

**5. What customers do you have? What industries do you serve and what clients do you support?**

*Questions like this show you are trying to understand the bigger picture, including the company's reason for existing.*

**6. How would you describe the culture here? What type of people tend to thrive, and what type don't do as well?**

*If the culture is very formal and structured and you're happiest in a more relaxed environment, or if it's an aggressive, competitive environment and you are more low-key and reserved, this job might not be a comfortable fit for you. You'll spend a large portion of your waking life at your job, so it's crucial to make sure you know what you're signing up for.*

**7. How would you describe your management style?**

*Your boss will have an enormous impact on your quality of life at work. While you can't always trust managers to accurately self-assess, you'll at least get some insight into their style by what things they choose to emphasize in response to this question.*

**8. Thinking back to the person who you've seen do this job best, what made their performance so outstanding?**

*Most managers' ears will perk up at this question, because it signals that you care not just about being average or even good, but truly great. This is the question managers wish all their employees would ask.*

**9. Are there any reservations you have about my fit or skills for this position that I could try to address for you?**

*This is a great way to give yourself the chance to tackle any doubts the interviewer might have about you, as well as for you to consider whether those doubts might be reasonable and point to a bad fit.*

**10. What is your time line for getting back to candidates about the next steps?**

*Always wrap up with this question, so that when you go home you know what to expect next. That way, you won't be sitting around wondering when you'll hear something.*

## Common Interview Questions

1. What brings you to the job market?
2. Why did you leave your last position? Or, why are you looking to leave your current position?
3. What attracted you to this position?
4. What do you know about our organization? What interests you about working here?
5. Tell me about yourself.
6. What do you do to ensure you're staying abreast of technology and best practices?
7. What are your interests related to technology?
8. What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
9. Why are you qualified for this job? Or, why should we hire you for this job?
10. What skills would you need to enhance, or what would you need to learn, to be successful in this job?
11. Tell me about a conflict you've had with a team member and how you overcame it? A past boss?
12. How would your boss describe your job performance?
13. Describe your ideal job.
14. What are your hobbies, or other interests outside of work?
15. What did you think of your current/recent company? Boss?
16. Tell me about a challenging customer issue you've had, and how you overcame it?
17. How do you handle stress? Conflict? How well do you work under pressure?
18. Tell me about your communication style. What advice do you have for effective communication?
19. Tell me about a time when you were running behind schedule on a project. Why were you running late? What do you do to get back on track? What did you learn?
20. Tell me about an unsuccessful project you were on. What led to its downfall? What did you learn?
21. What are your long-range and short-range career goals? What would you like to accomplish in your career?
22. How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
23. What do you enjoy most about your career? What do you like least about your career?
24. How would a friend who knows you well, describe you?
25. What motivates you to put forth your greatest effort?
26. Why do you think you would be an asset to our company?
27. What do you consider to be your greatest achievements?
28. What three things are most important to you in your job?
29. What major work problems have you encountered in your career and how did you deal with them?
30. What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
31. What are some of your tactics for time management and organization?