



How to prepare for your interview



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Interview Preparation

Congratulations - you were selected for interview! Now it's time to demonstrate to your potential employer why you are best person for the job. Remember - your cover letter and CV will show a potential employer what you offer on paper, but the interview is what establishes the personal connection and convinces an employer to hire you!

1 - Analyze the Position

Before the interview, read the job description thoroughly to understand what the employer is looking for. Ask yourself the following questions to make sure you have a complete idea of what the job is about:

- What skills, qualifications and competencies are critical for this position?
- Which relevant experiences do I bring and which ones can I highlight in my interview?
- What are the gaps I need to work on and how can I address these in the interview?

2 - Do your homework on the organization

Demonstrate that you have done your research on the organization as this will show a potential employer that you have the enthusiasm and motivation for the position. Read the hiring organization's website, social media profiles, strategic plan or other key publications to get an overview of who is who in the organization and to ensure that you're prepared to share your views when asked. Ask yourself:

What are the organization's key services and priorities?

What is the history of the organization?

How is the the organization structured?

3 - Practice the STAR Method

Once you have analyzed the position, you will be able to better anticipate potential interview questions and prepare your answers accordingly.

The 3 step STAR method (short for Situation/Task-Action-Result) is a simple and powerful interview technique that can be used to formulate your answers and highlight your accomplishments during an interview. The STAR method is particularly useful for answering behavioural or Competency-Based Interviews. Practicing this method can help you to feel confident in your responses during your interview.

A STAR response is typically structured as follows:

Situation/Task

Set the context for the story. Describe the situation you were faced with or the task you were responsible for. Make it concise and informative. This situation can be from a previous job or any other relevant event.

Action

This is an important part of your answer because it is allows you to showcase your strengths and problem-solving skills. Describe the action you took to achieve your results. Even if you are describing a team situation, keep the focus on what YOU did, not the team members.

Result

What happened? What did you accomplish and what did you learn from this? Explain the outcome of your efforts.

For example, at an interview, you might be asked on your conflict resolution and communication skills. You could recount a time when communication between you and your team members broke down (situation). To address this problem, you organized an informal meeting over lunch to discuss the issues people were experiencing (action). This meeting helped to break down initial communication barriers and cleared some misunderstanding which lead to the team resolving their issues (result).

Challenging interview questions - some tips

Every interview has at least one tricky question the can catch you by surprise. The good news is that with a bit of preparation and practice it is possible to deliver answers that showcase your strengths. Consider for example, these two commonly asked interview questions:

“Why do you want to work with us?”

This question can seem quite straightforward, but it can reveal a great deal about a candidate’s motivations. In 2009, Forty-five percent of employers in a CareerBuilder survey said that the biggest mistake candidates made in the interview was appearing disinterested! Think about what truly draws you to the position and how it fits into your broader career objectives. Be sure to research the company and make note of why their work inspires you and aligns with your own career path.

“What is your major weakness?”

Nobody enjoys this question! But did you know that with some practice you can turn this question around so it highlights your strengths? Here are some tips to keep in mind:

As a rule of thumb, avoid saying anything negative or critical about previous employers or yourself. Only highlight weaknesses that are irrelevant to the position

Never say you “don’t have any weaknesses”!

Demonstrate how you are actively trying to overcome a weakness, and when possible, replace it with a strength.