

Preparing for a Job Interview

The Employer's Perspective

The Employer is most interested in knowing if you meet two criteria:

1. Do you have the **ABILITY** to do the job?
2. Are you a good **FIT** with the team/company?

Research the Hiring Organization

- Read and re-read the job description, highlighting all the essential skills and abilities.
- Study the company website: read Missions and Values, About Us, etc.
- Search for articles or press releases related to the company.
- Gather information from anyone who has worked at the company, been a customer at the company or knows anything about their reputation.
- Research company using online resources such as Vault Reports (www.vault.com), Glassdoor (glassdoor.com) and O*Net (onetcenter.org).
- Observe: park outside the business and observe the clients and staff that come in and out. Visit the lobby (if appropriate) and observe the culture and their approach to customer service.

Types of Interview Questions

1. **Direct:** Often answered with a "Yes" or a "No" response.
Example: Can you perform the essential job functions?
2. **Open-Ended:** Generally the response to these questions is NOT "Yes" or "No".
Example: What motivates you?
3. **Behavioral/Situational:** The best indicator of how you will perform on the job is how you performed in the past. The employer is asking you to share a specific example from your past, not a general statement about how you typically handle such situations.
Example: Give us an example of a time when you made a mistake. How did you respond and what was the result?
4. **Problem Solving:** The employer is trying to gauge your ability to identify issues, obstacles, and opportunities and then develop and implement solutions.
Example: For a Receptionist Applicant: There are three telephone lines that you have placed on hold. You are talking with the person on the other line. There are two sales people at your desk to see the manager. How would you handle this situation?

The STAR-O Approach

Prior to the interview, prepare 5-10 specific examples. Draw from your volunteer, school and work experiences. Develop examples that show your skills, qualities, and characteristics that are relevant to the job posting.

When preparing your responses for the interview, organize your examples using the **STAR-O** approach to create a story.

1. **Set the Stage:** Briefly mention the experience that you are referencing.
2. **Task/Situation:** Describe the situation that you were in or the task you needed to accomplish. Provide enough detail for the interviewer to understand.
3. **Action:** Describe the action you took. Keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did, not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
4. **Result:** What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?
5. **O** – Take your answer full circle: Relate the experience to the position you are interviewing for.

Sample Interview Questions

1. Please tell us a little about yourself?
 - Limit your answer to 2-3 minutes.
 - Your answer should be 100% relevant to the position.
 - DO NOT include personal, private and family information.
2. Name two of your weaknesses.
3. What accomplishments are you most proud of in your career?
4. Tell me about a time when you handled a difficult situation with a co-worker.
5. What would your past supervisor say about you?
6. How have you handled a situation in the past that required taking care of an irate customer?
7. What type of supervisor do you prefer?
8. Why should we hire you?

Dressing for the Interview

1. Dress one step above what you observe employees are wearing.
2. Pay attention to personal hygiene: hair, nails, makeup.
3. Jewelry: less is more.
4. Don't wear a fragrance.

During the Interview

- What to bring: copies of your resume, references, Drivers License, notebook and pen, portfolio and your own list of questions.
- Arrive early; allow an extra ten to fifteen minutes to find a parking space and allow yourself time to relax.
- 50% of your communication is nonverbal. Have good posture. Make eye contact with the interviewer while listening and answering questions. Shake hands firmly, and limit your use of hand gestures.
- Be prepared to ask questions. This will show interest and knowledge of the company.
- Within 24 hours of the interview, send a thank you note/email to each person who interviewed you.

Sample Questions to Ask the Interviewer

1. What are the current challenges or goals for the company?
2. What would a typical day (or week) look like?
3. What are your immediate objectives and priorities for this position?
4. How is performance measured and how is successful performance rewarded?

For more interview preparation, register for LCWC's Interviewing workshop

