



## Interviewing Strategies

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Preparing for an interview is the same as preparing a sales presentation. It takes research, review and rehearsal. Here are some strategies that should increase your odds of landing the job you want.

Do Your Homework on the Company. The company already has your resume. It is equally important for you to have the company's resume. Try to schedule your interview one or two days ahead of time. This should give you ample time to do some research.

Visit the company's website. Find out what you like and impresses you about the company. It is important to do this because the employer is going to want to know why you want to work there.

Prepare a typed list of three or four professional references to present during the interview, along with a hard copy of your resume.

Know ahead of time where the employer is located, and with whom you will be meeting.

Show up at least 15 minutes early. The employer may want you to fill out an employment application. This is standard procedure with most companies.

Prepare and rehearse your answers to typical questions the employer might ask during the interview.

### **Typical Interview Questions**

Here is a sampling of typical interview questions. It is important to write down, memorize and rehearse your answers. The more prepared and comfortable you are with your answers, the better listener you will be, and the more you can concentrate on what the employer is communicating or asking you. Remember, the primary thing every employer wants to find out is who you are and what you can do for them.

#### **Tell me about yourself.**

This is an open-ended question often asked to "break the ice" in the interview. The important thing to remember is to keep the answer job-related. Talk about your professional background and personal attributes that have made you a valuable employee in the past.

#### **What are your strengths?**

Strengths are not too difficult to think of: You are a problem solver, you have good communication skills, strong work ethic, organized, detail oriented, etc.

#### **What are your Weaknesses?**

Weaknesses can be trickier because you don't want to reveal a weakness that the employer might see as a problem for the company.

Describe weaknesses that can be seen as positive or benign: "I tend to be too giving of my time," "I'm too honest," "I am a perfectionist," "I'm a workaholic." But.....Make sure what you say is sincere and comes from honesty.

#### **What is the worst mistake you have ever made?**



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Remember, don't say anything that might be construed as controversial.

### **Where do you want to be in five years?**

Be careful how you answer this one. What you tell the employer here can make or break the interview. The employer is usually looking for a long-term commitment from a new employee. Indicate that you hope to keep developing new skills and knowledge in the next few years that will contribute positively to the company. If moving into management or becoming a project leader is an important career goal, say so. This is really the only answer that will make the interviewer feel comfortable about the prospect of hiring you.

### **How do you believe others would describe you?**

Think of positive attributes or strengths you have that your friends, former supervisors, employees or family members might say about you. Another way an employer might ask this question is, "How would you fit in with our organization?"

### **Describe your ideal job.**

This is another question to watch for. It falls under the same "comfort level" question as "where do you want to be in five years?" Make sure you don't describe a different job from the one you are being interviewed for.

### **How do you think a past employer would describe you?**

Remember your strengths.

### **Why do you want to work here?**

This is where your homework on the company will pay off. Explain what you are impressed with and like about the company.

### **Why should we hire you?**

Again, Remember your strengths.

### **What are your salary expectations?**

Never make money an issue, especially during the first interview.

A good answer is, "I am very interested in this opportunity, and I'm sure a mutual agreement on salary can be reached."

Interview questions fall into several categories:

- Knowledge of the Position and Company.
- Organizing, Planning and Leadership.
- Problem Solving and Decision Making.
- Communication and People Skills
- Knowledge and Technical Skills.
- Maturity, Judgment and poise.

### **Questions to Ask the Interviewer**

During the first few minutes of the interview, before the employer begins to ask questions of you, you should ask, "What qualifications are you looking for in someone to fill this position?" An answer to this question will



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give you a great deal of insight into what issues are really important to the interviewer. (Note: if you are interviewed by 10 different people, you will get 10 different answers to this question!) With this information, you will be better able to address the interviewer's needs, concerns and requirements for the position. Other appropriate questions are:

Do you offer any type of training or orientation programs?

What are the primary responsibilities of the position?

What are the company's plans in terms of growth?

What types of projects would I be involved in?

Would you tell me about the department I will be working in?

Do I need to meet with anyone else before a decision is made?

What questions or concerns (if any) do you have about my ability do this job?

### **Key point:**

It is critical to show genuine enthusiasm about the company and the position. Nothing can turn an employer off more than arrogance, apathy, or a know-it-all attitude. Close the interview with positive statements:

- Complement the interviewer on his or her thoroughness, enthusiasm, success or other attributes that have been impressive to you.
- Make a positive comment about the company based on what you have read or learned.
- Make a positive statement about your ability to handle the position and reaffirm your interest in it.