

# Interview Guide

Congratulations! You got the interview or the first of several interviews. Depending on the employer's hiring process there may be just one interview or several. Interviews come in different shapes and sizes including: one-on-one, panel or committee, group interview with other candidates, or even hands-on demonstrations or presentations. All of these methods of interviewing can occur in person as well as through phone or video calls. This guide is here to help with preparation and the process of a typical interview and the principles can be applied to any interview setting.

## Before the Interview

### Interview Preparation

- Start by researching the company and your interviewers
  - Things you should consider researching are (but not limited to):
    - What industries is the company in? What new product, service, or event was just released? What has the news been saying about the company? What has the department you are trying to work for been doing recently?
    - What are the position titles of the interviewers? How long have they been at the company? What do they list as their primary roles on LinkedIn? How might the role you are applying for interact with the interviewers role?
- Reread the job description and make sure your answers to the interviews questions show that you can do the job.
- Practice your answers to common interview questions (see below for examples of common questions)
- Identify examples from your work experience and consider the STAR Method for composing your answers:
  - S-Situation: Set the scene. When and where did the situation take place?
  - T-Task: What was the task or challenge?
  - A-Action: What actions did you take to achieve the task or solve the problem?
  - R-Result: What was the end result? IF not completely positive, what did you learn from the experience?
- Practice with a friend – recruit a friend to ask you interview questions and practice saying your answers.
- Show up early (10 minutes or so) before your interview time and give yourself enough time to find parking, walk to the interview, etc.
- Upon arrival at your interview site, turn off your phone and any other communication devices.

### What to bring to the interview:

- Bring multiple copies of your resume and cover letter. As a rule of thumb, bring 1-2 more copies than the amount of interviewers.
- Bring a pen and note pad to take notes
- Have a list of references ready. You may not need it in the early stages of the interview process, but it is good to be prepared
- Prepare everything the night before what you will wear (see next step), pen and notepad, and any work examples you need if the interviewer requested them ahead of time.

# Interview Guide

## Dressing for the Interview

- Start by researching the company's dress code and match your attire to the workplace. When in doubt error on the side of wearing something fancier. It is better to be a little over dressed than under dressed.
- Wear clothes that make you comfortable and confident.
- Check for stains, snags, pet hairs and holes. Make sure the clothing is pressed and wrinkle free.

## During the Interview:

- Introduce yourself to each interviewer, if appropriate shake hands.
- Make eye contact with the interviewer(s) while providing answers
- Use the STAR method and tie your answers back to your skills and accomplishments. Be honest and keep your answers in line with the audience you are speaking with.
- Keep your answers concise and focused, the goal is to keep your responses between 2-3 minutes.
- Keep your answers positive, do not speak negatively about past employers or bosses. Construct answers in ways you helped overcome and improved challenges in past work experiences.
- Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question or need some more details to answer the question.
- Seek Feedback. Ask the interviewer if you have provided the level of detail needed to fully answer the question.

## Concluding the Interview

- Questions to ask the interviewer (a few examples)
  - Ask about next steps in the hiring process
  - Ask insightful questions about how your role fits into the bigger picture of the company based on your research (ex. Mission, vision, upcoming projects, etc.)
  - Ask what the day-to-day responsibilities look like and what success looks like in the role and/or ask what the responsibilities in the first 30/60/90 days will be.
  - Ask about company culture and professional development opportunities
  - Be sure to be mindful of the interviewer's time, but also try to get all your questions answered.
- Questions not to ask in the interview
  - Unless brought up by the interviewer, do not ask about pay, benefits, and vacation/holiday/sick time during an interview. This can be discussed when a job offer is presented.
- Thank the interviewers for their time and opportunity to interview. If follow-up items were requested during the interview confirm that you will have items to them by a definitive time.

## Common Interview Questions:

- Tell me about yourself.
- Why are you interviewing for this position?
- What qualifications do you have that will make you successful?

# Interview Guide

- Why do you think you are a good fit for our company and how are you going to make a contribution to our company?
- What do you see yourself doing in five years?
- How does this job fit into your overall career plan?
- Give me an example of when you've worked in a team.
- Describe a leadership role you've had.
- How do you manage your time?
- What have you learned from previous jobs?
- What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses?
- Why should I hire you?
- Tell me about a challenge or conflict you've faced at work and how you dealt with it?
- Tell me about a time you made a mistake or failed.
- How do you prioritize work?
- What are you passionate about?

## Common Interview Mistakes:

- Poor Handshake (when handshakes are appropriate): Too limp or too strong of a handshake can give the wrong impression to an interviewer.
- Talking too much: Talking too long gives the impression you can't get to the point. Nervous talkers give the impression the candidate is covering up something.
- Talking negatively about current or past employers/managers: Always try to say something positive.
- Showing up too late or early: Arrive about 10 minutes early.
- Treating the receptionist rudely: Often the receptionist is asked her/his opinion of applicants.
- Not preparing for the interview: Always research the company or organization prior to the interview.
- Not practicing to reduce or eliminate the "umms," "like" and "you knows" from your answers.
- Failure to match communication styles: If the interviewer seems all business, be succinct and businesslike. If the interviewer is personable, you can be more informal.

## After the Interview:

- Send a personalized thank you after the interview to each interviewer. If possible come prepared with note cards and envelopes and write a quick thank you note and provide the letters to the receptionist to give to the interviewers. If not possible, send a personalized email to each interviewer thanking them for their time and what excites you about the opportunity, the goal would be to do this within one day of the interview.
- After the interview review your notes and jot down any other key points about the interview so you can reference them later.
- Send any supporting documents or work product that the interviewers have asked for. Do not send any unsolicited work product or supporting documents.
- If the interviewers requested and explained they would be contacting references, call or email your references to give them a heads up.

# Interview Guide

- Be patient, hiring processes can take some time. However, after a week or so feel free to follow-up with an email to check on the process.
- If you know the hiring process has more than one interview, begin preparing for your next interview and be sure to reference your notes from your interview as you prepare.
- If you don't get the job, thank your interviewers for their time and consideration.