

Preparing for Your Interview

Confidence can be an attractive quality in a candidate, but being overconfident can derail your interviews. It's easy to focus solely on your brand, networking, and your resume/CV, since those are the things that will land you the initial interview, but you also need to prepare in advance for the interviews themselves. Executives often fall into one of two categories – introverts and extroverts – both tend to make very different mistakes when they are not prepared for an interview.

An extroverted executive tends to be an excellent, charismatic speaker. Yet, no matter how good they are at striking up a conversation and relating to their interviewers, they're not going to perform well without deep knowledge of the company's needs and astute, relevant ideas. If this profile most closely resembles your interview style, you will need to focus your interview preparation on researching the company thoroughly and preparing responses that contain real examples that relate to company needs and industry trends.

Unlike extroverted executives, introverted executives are much more focused on gathering knowledge about the company and industry. The types of interviews and questions introverts often struggle with are those less-related to their job, such as company culture, as well as less-formal group interviews. Introverts can better prepare for an interview by practicing with a friend or in front of a camera to become better at connecting with their interviewers. Also, preparing a few ice-breakers or current event-related topics is an easy way to show that he or she has a friendly, open demeanor.

No matter which side of the spectrum you fall on, or even if you're more towards the middle, preparation and significant practice will be necessary before each and every interview.

Let's Try That Again: Practice, Practice, Practice

Now that you've committed to practicing before your interviews, you'll need to set aside some time to do so. The most effective method for practicing for an interview is to record or videotape your responses and self-edit. This will help you see and hear what the interviewer will, and decide how your responses and mannerisms can be improved.

When analyzing your recordings, you should ask yourself:

- Are my answers too vague?
- Am I explaining my accomplishments or simply my job duties?
- Am I answering the question?
- Is my answer too long? (Most answers should be about 1-2 minutes.)
- Does my voice communicate enthusiasm and interest?

Gather Information

After scheduling your interview, it's important to start gathering information as soon as possible about the company and the search consultants and hiring executives who will be conducting the interview. Start by asking for the names of everyone who will be interviewing you and researching them on LinkedIn and Google. While conducting this research, you should look for any commonalities between you and your interviewers, such as same employers, same university, and other interests. These will help you emphasize your cultural fit. As you gather information, be sure to take notes so that you'll remember it later.

Taking an in-depth look at the company will also help you come up with well-informed questions. It will also contribute to your interview answers, making them much more effective and relevant to your potential employer. A plethora of resources are available online for researching specific companies and industries. For the most effective research, go beyond scanning the company's website and annual report (though these absolutely should be looked at and remembered). Also take a look at recent articles, industry reports, online reviews, and anything else you can find online.

In addition, find out as much as you can from people in your network who are connected to the company, including vendors, employees, social media connections, etc. The more you invest in researching the company and weaving that knowledge into your interview responses, the better your performance will be during the interview.

Look the Part

Your job interview starts when you walk into the building. Once you're inside, your interviewer or others at the company will see and hear you – start projecting your best self when you walk in the door. Your outfit alone will not likely make or break your interview (unless you're dressed extremely informal), but it will play a big part in how you're perceived.

While some organizations dress casually in their offices, you should always dress "business formal" for an interview. This means a suit and tie for men and a suit or business dress for women. It's fine to show some personality in your outfit through modest jewelry, but for the most part, an interview is not the place to wear your "statement" pieces, bright colors, or ornate patterns.

Arrive 15 Minutes Early

Showing up to your interview on time is absolutely essential as it shows that you care about the interviewer's time and are reliable. Be aware of any potential travel issues by giving your journey to the interview location a practice run. This will help you know how early you need to leave. If you are unavoidably delayed, let your interviewers know as soon as possible. On the other hand, you don't want to arrive too early because that can send a message of desperation or an inability to manage your schedule. If you arrive more than 15 minutes before the interview, wait in your car or at a local coffee shop before entering the building.

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