

Ace Your Interview

Lack of company culture fit is one of the most common reasons new hires end up leaving. To assess a candidate's fit, companies often conduct multiple interviews during which the candidate has to meet with various employees. This section will cover some ways you can ace your interview and be sure to move on to the next stage of the hiring process.

Keep Calm and Turn off All Electronic Devices

Turn your phone off and put it away before you walk into the company building. This will guarantee that you are not distracted. Pay attention and make eye contact throughout the interview. Sit up straight, with your arms and legs unfolded. When asked a question, take a few seconds to think before answering so that you can give a thoughtful response. Most importantly: Have fun! Share your ideas and insights into the industry and ask questions that will help you learn more about how the company works and where they fit into the industry.

Break the Ice

Go ahead and make the first move when you're meeting an interviewer by extending your hand for an introductory handshake. If the interviewer doesn't already do so after you are both settled in, try to break the ice by talking about something you noticed you both have in common during your research. If you didn't find any commonalities with this person, mention something related to the weather. This shows that you are an open, confident person (even if you are not), and makes the interviewer feel comfortable with you.

Speak in Sound Bites

Our attention spans have gotten shorter, so to perform well during your next interview, you'll need to answer questions in one to two-minute sound bite stories. Try to respond using interesting, relatable stories that answer the question succinctly, precisely, and include examples that reinforce your brand message. An excellent way to approach this is by using the CAR method (Challenge with context, Actions, and Results). This approach allows you to show how you've handled challenges that relate to the questions asked by the interviewer by briefly explaining the situation and context, what you did to solve it, and how everything turned out, including any achievements you made.

Also, keep in mind that failed projects are not always a negative if you excelled and learned from them. During an interview, be prepared to offer examples of your weaknesses and failures and explain how you moved past the situation, what you learned, and anything you gained from the experience.

As you answer each interview question with these sound bite stories, find ways to make them as relevant as possible to the position and company you're interviewing for based on the research you've conducted beforehand. It's human nature to remember stories better than lists or numbers; so besides being more engaging, this method will ensure that the interviewer remembers your responses better.

You may even decide to prepare 10-12 stories as you prepare for the interview so you can answer as many questions as possible using this engaging method.

Format Correctly

One of the initial decisions you'll make when writing your resume/CV is how to format the document and how to order your skills and experience on the page. The majority of executives used to find chronological resumes/CVs, which list their key achievements and experiences in order, to be the most effective. This is often not the case in today's job search market. This kind of resume/CV can make it more difficult for the reader to figure out the value you can bring to their organization.

There are three resume/CV layouts: Reverse chronological, functional, and hybrid. Most executive job seekers will realize the most success by using a hybrid layout because it incorporates the best elements of both the reverse chronological and functional layouts. Like the reverse chronological resume/CV, it demonstrates your employment background – job titles, companies, dates, key areas of duties, and achievements – things that all recruiters, hiring managers, and HR executives want to identify. And, like the functional, the hybrid begins with a solid presentation of your most notable skills, qualifications, talents, and career highlights in some form of a career summary section.

Tell Your Complete Story

Even though your executive resume/CV should not be a full detailing of your professional career since college, doesn't mean you should leave gaps. As an executive, you may incur gaps on your resume/CV from going back to school to get a master's degree; taking time out to travel or volunteer; deal with a personal or family health issue; raise your children; or numerous other reasons. That's OK, but you must be able to explain this on your resume/CV and during interviews. Think about this from the recruiter's or hiring manager's perspective. When he or she notices gaps in your resume/CV, the recruiter will become curious about what you've been doing, which will distract from the information on your resume/CV related to why you're a great candidate.

Depending on the circumstance, explaining your situation on your resume/CV can be as simple as adding a new "Volunteer Work" section or adding a point to your "Education" section. If the reason was due to a personal-related leave, include two lines that say what you were doing ("Sabbatical," "Family Leave," etc.) and the dates this occurred. If you were searching for a job, make sure you have other activities that you can include to account for this time period, such as "Contract Assignment," "Board Leadership," "Coursework in...", "Pro Bono Assignment," etc. Be sure your resume/CV tells the full story, instead of making the reader assume the worst.

Internationalize

If you're interested in finding opportunities abroad, internationalizing your resume/CV is essential. Not doing so can impact your ability to be considered by executive recruiters and hiring managers. It could also improve your domestic candidacy due to the more globalized marketplace we all live in today. If you are pursuing multinational companies or in-country companies that work broadly across borders, the US/multinational style resume/CV will be perfect for all your requirements. Only if you are targeting smaller companies in your home country will you need a CV in the style that is traditional in your country.

If you're seeking an opportunity in a specific foreign country or region, it would benefit your search to get someone from the region, such as a resume/CV writer, to help you write your resume/CV. In many European and Asian countries, it is standard practice to include a photo along with your date of birth, marital status, number of children, and other personal information at the top of the resume/CV.

Sell Brand You

During the interview, your interviewers are trying to figure out how you're different from the other qualified candidates they're speaking to. Therefore, you must differentiate yourself from other similar executives. You can do this by creating five unique selling points and weaving them (with real-life supporting examples) throughout your interview answers. What do you want your interviewers to remember about you?

Analyze Culture Fit

The interviewers are not the only ones who should be assessing culture fit – you should be too. Before the interview, prepare a list of three to five questions that will give you additional insights. As you speak with various hiring executives and search consultants about the company and the role, look out for any red flags and pay attention to your instincts. If you feel like this may not be the right career move for you after the interview, don't move forward with the interview process.

End the Interview on a High Note

If you've paid attention during the interview and have done research beforehand on the company, you should be able to pull together a final one to two minute statement that explains why you think you'd be the best person for the position. After your final statement, reiterate your interest in the position, remind the interviewer of your unique selling points, and talk about the next steps in the hiring process. Never leave an interview without being clear on what the next steps are and if there are any action items you need to take next or further information you need to send.

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