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The Interview to Win Guide

Everything you need to knock their socks off!

“Three job offers, all at once. I cannot believe how easy this was! Plus, I’m making more money than I ever have. Thank you!” Mollie K.



Created by Catherine Byers Breet & the ARBEZ team

Having the right skills will get you the interview, but they won’t get you the job offer. You will! We pack over 20 years of experience getting people hired into an easy, step-by-step process. We cover everything from how to prep to how to show up to how to follow up.

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How to prep for any interview

“If at first you DO succeed, try not to look astonished!” – Author unknown

Hooray! You got an interview! Now what?!

Interviewing can be hair-raising for even the most accomplished candidates. Well, it’s time to set your stage for success. Believe it or not, there are a *lot* of things you can do to dramatically increase your odds. No matter where you interview, or for what job, there are some fundamental things you can expect from employers. There are also fundamental things they expect from you. Relax! I’m going to not only help you understand what these are, but I’ll give you the tools you need to knock their socks off and get the job you want.

Know what makes you great!

The first (and most important) thing is to boost your confidence. The best (and fastest) way to do that is to answer this question:

“Tell me about one of your proudest career achievements. You know ... one of those days when you drove home giggling, you were so proud of yourself.”

One of my favorite questions to ask people as an interviewer is this one: “Tell me about your proudest career achievement.” When a candidate has one in mind already, this can be a wonderful way to learn a ton about a candidate ... like where their strengths are, what’s important to them, and how their skills might translate into my world. It is frustrating (for me and the candidate) when they are unable to answer this question, or if they come up with an example that is no relevant at all to my world. What’s fun about this question is this: people light up. I mean, they REALLY light up. I get to see them at their best, and that is very fun. It usually knocks their anxiety down a few levels and lets them settle in to a conversation with me.

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It is also a GREAT way to start your preparation for your next interview. Even if you don't get an opportunity to talk about your proudest career moments in your next interview, you will carry them with you and it will shine through in everything you talk about. So, that is the very first exercise I'd like you to do.

Once you think of one of your proudest days, you'll soon remember that the scary challenge or crisis that you overcome that day. Think about what was going on, then answer these questions:

1. **S** (Situation or problem): What was the business problem or challenge?
2. **T** (Task): What was the task you were asked to do (or that you decide to do)
3. **A** (Action): What action did you take?
4. **R** (Results): What were the results (what was the "win" for the business)?
5. What skills did you use to achieve that result?
6. What made you a stand-out in that situation?
7. How can this story translate to the job you will be interviewing for? Which pieces of this story are relevant to the job at hand?

Now look yourself in the mirror and repeat what you just (re)discovered about yourself. It sounds silly, but looking yourself in the eye while you're talking about one of your biggest achievements is powerful.

Bonus: Not only will this remind you how talented you are, but it will also prepare you for tough interview questions like "Why should I hire you?" and "Tell me about a time when you stood out at work" or "Tell me about a time when you went above and beyond" or "Tell me about one of the biggest challenges you overcame at work."

Proudest career moments

Repeat this exercise for at least 2 more accomplishments. Then turn them into bite-sized stories you can tell in 30 seconds or less using the "STAR" method:

- **Situation**
- **Task**
- **Action**
- **Result**

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Identify the Gaps

What skills or experience (if any) are you missing? Some gaps are real (“They want 5 years of industry experience, but I only have two.”) Some are simply perceived (“She thinks my management experience is light, but I’ve been supervising people for 5 years! I really need to make sure that comes through clearly in my next interview.”) Real or perceived, they all need your attention. Most people are too afraid to really look deeply at what is missing. They’d prefer to cross their fingers, and hope everything turns out okay. That, I’m afraid, it’s a recipe for disaster. There is a better way! Lean into it. Once you identify a potential issue, work through possible solutions (“I’ll take online training, I’ll share examples of some comparable tools I have used in the past, etc.”). Then practice answering questions like “I see you don’t have any experience doing Is that right?”

Get ready for the 5 key questions

There are 5 core things every employer wants to know about you. No matter what question they ask you, I promise you: it points to one of these core questions. If you can wrap your head around that, and prepare accordingly, you’ll be able to deliver what they want ... even when their questions seem confusing. Stay focused on these 5 things, and you’ll be able to answer with confidence and clarity. Here are the 5 things they want to know:

1. Can you DO the JOB?
2. Do you UNDERSTAND the JOB?
3. Are you at the RIGHT PRICE?
4. Will you FIT IN with the team?
5. Do you WANT the job?

The trick to giving employers answers to these questions is to practice answering them *before* the interview! Good answers rarely come to mind in the heat of the moment. Below are some great ways to get ready for every single one of them. If you prep for these questions, you’ll be prepped for almost any interview question that comes your way. Below, you’ll find the 5 key questions and an exercise to do to prep for each one of them.

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.” - Colin Powell

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1. **Can you DO the job?** (Are you really qualified? If so, prove it!)

EXERCISE: Name 5 key skills (experiences) you have that qualify you for this job:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. **Do you UNDERSTAND the job?** (Do you understand what you're getting into?)

EXERCISE: Answer these questions:

- How is the job like past jobs of yours?

- How is it different?

3. **Are you at the RIGHT PRICE?**

EXERCISE: Answer these questions:

- What are your salary expectations? (What do you really want to make?)
- Are your expectations high or low compared to market rates? (If you don't know this right now, that's fine. You can go find out after your interview)
- What is the lowest salary / rate you will take & still be happy in this job?

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4. Will you FIT IN with the team?

Culture clash is one of the top reasons people fail, get fired or quit. Employers know this, so they are just as concerned as you are about finding a good “fit.” If you can’t answer the following questions right now (because you don’t know enough about the company), that’s just fine. Be open and enthusiastic about learning what their company culture is like. Ask the hiring managers some questions to help you understand their culture (see sample questions for you to ask below).

EXERCISE: Answer these questions:

- Have you worked at a company with a similar structure and culture?
- In what kind of environment do you thrive (excel and succeed)?
- What attracts you to the company, work and/or team?

5. Do you WANT the job?

“People don’t buy what you do; they buy why you do it.” – Simon Sinek

Just because you applied for the job does not mean you really want it. Employers know this. A few interviewers will ask you directly about this with questions like “What attracts you to this company and job?” or “Why do you want the job?” All will spend the interview looking for clues that you’re excited about their company and job. It’s up to you to find some enthusiasm and bring that forward in your interview. Here are some questions to help you find your enthusiasm for this job:

- What attracts you to the industry?
- What attracts you to their company (and not another one)?
- What attracts you to their job? (Why do you want THIS job over others you are considering)?

The reality is this: sometimes in life you will be interviewing for a job that does not excite you ... because you need a paycheck. That’s reality, and that’s just fine. However, you need to find something you can get excited about before you go on that interview or your lack of enthusiasm will come through and they will hire someone else.

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For example: Sue needed money, so she took a part-time job at Target as a cashier. In her heart, she did not want to work in retail again, but she couldn't afford to wait for the perfect job. During the interview, they asked her "Why do you want to work at Target?" She said "I've been shopping at Target since the Dayton days. I love the shopping experience. I also love that Target donates 5 percent of its profits back to communities." She did not say "I love working as a cashier," because that was not the truth. Instead, she found something else to get excited about and shared that. It worked.

Get ready for the scary questions (because they're coming!)

"Here's some advice: At a job interview, tell them you're willing to give 110 percent. Unless the job is a statistician."

- Comedian Adam Gropman

Prepare a list of questions you think you'll be asked. Go back to those 5 key questions. Think about variations of those questions that you've been asked before. Then practice answering them! Circle the ones that scare you the most & spend the most time preparing for those. Here are ten of the toughest (and most common) to get you started:

Over and over and over again, I've watched great candidates choke (literally and figuratively) over these interview questions. Most job seekers cross their fingers and hope nobody asks these questions. That is a recipe for disaster. There IS a better way! Practice answering them BEFORE your next interview and watch the offers roll right in. So, here they are:

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Top 10 interview stumpers (toughest interview questions)

1. Tell me about yourself. Phew! They want 30 seconds or less. They MIGHT tolerate 60 seconds, but they really prefer a quick 30-second overview. After that, they'll dive in and ask for more where they want to know more.
2. Why did you leave your last job?
3. Why are you still unemployed?
4. How much \$\$\$ do you want to make?
5. You're overqualified. Aren't you? Convince me why I should hire you anyway.
6. What's your proudest career achievement?
7. What's your biggest mistake (failure)? What happened, how did you handle it, and what did you learn from it?
8. You've never done _____. How will you overcome this gap?
9. Why should I hire you?
10. What questions do you have for me?

10 more common interview questions

1. Tell me about your best & worst bosses.
2. What's one thing you would like to have changed about your former employer?
3. Why are you interested in this job and/or our company?
4. What do you want in your next job?
5. What are your strengths?
6. What are your weaknesses?
7. Your background seems to be more _____ than _____. We really need someone with solid _____ skills. Help us understand (briefly) how what you've done fits this role.
8. If we hired you today, how do you think you might help us?
9. Tell me about a time when a coworker made you really mad.
10. What other opportunities are you pursuing?

If you want, you can freak yourself out by googling “interview questions,” then preparing yourself to answer 50+ interview questions. I like to keep things simple. If you practice answering these questions, you will be able to handle anything else they throw at you.

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Research the people and the company

“If someone asks me during an interview ‘So, what kind of business are you in?’ then the interview is over. Period. If they don’t care enough to figure that out before an interview, I know what kind of an employee they will be.” - Mike C., VP

Research the company. Know what business they are in. Read their website, annual report and review recent press releases. If you know anyone who works there (or who has worked there in the past), call them and ask for them to chat with you about the company and its culture.

Research your audience. Find out as much as you can about the person or people you are meeting. If the meeting is by referral, circle back to the person who referred you and get as much information as you can. If you are going in cold, do an Internet search, go to your network (online networks are especially powerful for this), and see if anyone knows this person or people. You may be amazed at what you can find out. Still coming up dry? No worries! Online research can give you a great deal of information about someone. Start with the company website. If there is a bio there, read that. Then move to LinkedIn. Lastly, do a Google search and see if anything pops up (published articles, association leadership, recent awards, etc.) Jot down notes about something you have in common, or something worth mentioning if the opportunity arises.

Prepare some questions for them

Asking smart questions is a great way to stand out from the herd!

Not only is picking the right job critical to your sanity and health, but **asking smart questions is also a great way to stand out from the herd and be a more attractive candidate.** Seriously! Good questions demonstrate a serious desire for the job, and that you have done your homework on the company.

Create a list of 5-10 questions you would like to ask them during the interview. Don’t write down the obvious. Rather, write some in-depth questions that will do two things. First, help you decide if this really is the right move for you. Second, indicate that you are serious

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about exploring this opportunity. Listen to your gut and concerns about this job, and build questions around that.

Hold off on asking questions like, “What are your hours of operation?” or “When do my benefits start?” Those are questions for much later in the process (unless, of course, you think this job might be graveyard shift, and you need to work days), when you are seriously considering this job. Think of the first interview as a first date. You wouldn’t ask someone if they clean the kitchen every night before bed on a first date, would you? You might want to ask it before you toss a ring her way, but not on a first date. Interviews are a lot like that. The first and second date are about the romance ... figuring out if you want to spend more time together. Don’t blow it by looking like a high-maintenance or greedy employee. There will be plenty of time to ask those questions either right before, or after they extend an offer.

10 great questions to ask in any interview

1. Why is this position open?
2. Tell me a little bit about your most successful employee.
3. What does success look like in the first 90 days?
4. What are the biggest challenges you think I’ll face in the first 90 days?
5. One year from now, what will make you say “Wow! I’m glad I hired you!”
6. Pain: I see that your company (mention an industry or company challenge they’re facing). Can you tell me a little bit about how that is affecting your performance? I’d like to help you turn that around ...
7. What do *you* like about working for this company?
8. Do you see any reason why I may not be a fit for this position?
9. What are the next steps?
10. What can I do to be the one you want to hire?

11 great ways to ask about company culture

Aside from networking with people who work inside the target employer (and people who have left), the next-best thing to do is ask smart questions of every person you talk to during the hiring process. Ask questions that are insightful and professional ... without offending them or coming across like a needy or inflexible employee. Here are some great

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questions to ask (yes, some of them are duplicates of the list above. I offer them here again to demonstrate that they are great questions for uncovering company culture).

Evaluate expectations / job duties

1. What are the most important things for me to do in the first 90 days to be successful?

Listen carefully and take notes. If it feels good, that's great. If the hair stands up on the back of your neck, you need to pay attention to it! As follow-up questions to further clarify job expectations. You want to find out the real scope of the job, the resources available and the importance of the job.

2. What are the biggest challenges you think I'll face in the first 90 days?

This is important. If they are open, they will tell you a lot about the culture and your potential barriers to success. If they are not open, that's room for concern and follow-up questions. Look for clues about the people, processes and infrastructure. This question is a great way to surface political issues.

3. How will my performance be measured?

If they are not clear about this, or are non-committal, that is a concern. Strong managers can tell you their expectations without batting an eyelash. This is especially disturbing if you are considering a sales position. If you hear anything like "We'll work that out once you are on board," run. PLEASE do not ever take a sales job where your commission plan is not in writing. That is a recipe for disaster (and heartache). Even if you are a leader and will be creating something from scratch, you must have some clear idea about how your performance will be measured.

4. One year from now, what would you like to see in me and this role?

This question provides a longer-term view of the job, the expectations and what it will take for you to be successful. It also gives you a view of the leadership, the vision and mission ... all of which may or may not fit in with your values and desires.

Evaluate the culture

5. Describe your ideal candidate for this position.

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This question will tell you much more about what they really want in their next hire – and how they will evaluate you to other candidates. The answer to this is often quite different from the job description you have seen. Not only will it tell you what to expect, it will also help you translate your past experience and skills into a language that matters to them – to help you stand out from the herd.

6. Tell me a little bit about your favorite – or most successful - employee.

If they are open and engaging with this question, it will tell you LOADS about the culture, and what the position really entails ... much better than a job posting. For example, if you hear things like “She is great. She never has to ask for direction. She just jumps in and gets things done,” then you know the job has a high degree of autonomy. That’s great for me – but it might not be great for you. Do you like a manager who is more hands-on and provides a lot of direction? Then this should be a flag for you.

7. Why is this position open? (What happened to the last person in this role?)

The point of this question is to discover if there is some inherent problem with the job, their hiring process, or if it’s the result of a positive change. If it’s a new position, that usually means growth –which is great. However, the rate of growth can mean very different things. Explosive growth indicates a high degree of change, fast pace, and usually a lot less direction and formal processes in place. Does that energize you? Or, are you someone who needs structure, predictability? If so, you need to consider this will likely be a tough culture for you). If it’s open because the last person quit or got fired, ask why. Listen carefully to what they say. It will give you valuable clues about what it takes to be successful and happy in the role.

8. Why do you work for this company? What do you like most about working here?

If the person struggles to answer this, that should be a concern – especially if you’re talking to your next potential boss! An unhappy boss = an unhappy employee. However, you do need to remember that the perfect job for you is NOT the perfect job for everyone else. It means you need to have your radar up, and ask that question of everyone you meet in the process. Work hard to network with others who have worked there in the past, and see what they say about the work environment.

Evaluate their market / competition / climate

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9. **I see that your company (mention an industry or company challenge they're facing). Can you tell me a little bit about how that is affecting your performance - and what you're doing to address it? I'd like to help you turn that around ...**

This question demonstrates that you have done your homework on them, but it will also tell you where their biggest threats are in the market – and how that might affect your role with the company. It will also give you a great platform for showing how you can help them address these challenges (assuming you've faced something similar before).

Evaluate your chance of getting the job

10. **Do you see any reason why I may not be a fit for this position?**

This is another great way to figure out what they really want in their next hire - and for you to see how you stack up against the competition. Listen carefully – and ask clarifying questions. If they raise a concern that you think is not a concern, by all means let them know that!

11. **What are the next steps in your process? How will you make your decision?**

Not only is this a great way to express your interest in the position, it helps you understand what to expect. If they are unclear about next steps, that's a good sign that their hiring process stinks and you might get dragged through a long and painful process. Be nice and responsive to them, but focus your energies elsewhere. You cannot afford to wait around for wishy-washy companies.

"Believe you can and you're halfway there." - Theodore Roosevelt

Save questions about flexibility and hours for later in the game

Asking questions about work hours and flexibility should be saved for later in the process (unless your first interview is with the decision maker. In that case, you can go through those types of questions after you hear the words "I'd love to bring you in" or "When can you start" or something similar.

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The first interview is like a first date: you do not want to start making demands on the relationship before they decide if they want to be with you. So, those questions you have about hours, flexible work schedule, vacation time and how they give raises are all important questions ... once they are in love with you and you seriously want the job. Focus instead on the right JOB fit, and answering all their questions. Once you make it through the first round, things get much more exciting – and it does become appropriate to ask these kinds of questions.

The only exception is this: if you have some real-life constraints (childcare or eldercare issues, a disability, etc.), and cannot take a job unless it meets certain criteria. Even then, you should usually wait until the second interview (or at least until they call you back for a second interview) to start asking these questions.

“I need a job right now! I can’t be picky!”

In the beginning, you might need to take a few jobs that don’t excite you. I took a few like that when I first started out. Soon, however, I was able to pick and choose because I had built up my portfolio, my reputation and my client list. I also had more money in the bank. Don’t get too bummed out taking a boring project in the beginning. The beautiful thing is this: it is temporary! You will soon be on to bigger and better things! Make the most of each assignment. Take your “A game” every day and make a goal of getting a solid reference from every client. Once they see how good you are, they might even ask you to take on a more exciting project at their company, and/or refer you out to friends at other companies.

Jane is a project manager who took a project coordinator contract position at a national health insurance company. She was not excited about being a project coordinator, but she was just starting out and wanted to get to work as soon as possible as a consultant. 2 months in, they saw how good she was and promoted her to a project manager and hired someone else to do the project coordination work.

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You need to “close the deal”

Remember how important it is to share your enthusiasm for the job? Asking a great closing question is an important piece of this puzzle. Plus, at the end of an interview you will undoubtedly want to know if they’re excited about you. The following questions are great for two things: **demonstrating that you want the job** and **uncovering any potential concerns they have** ... so you can address them on the spot. Too often, employers walk away with concerns that are completely unfounded, when a simple question by the candidate could have uncovered it so the candidate could have eliminated it.

5 great ways to “close the deal” (questions to ask at interview end)

Pick one of these questions to ask at the end of the interview. Put it at the bottom of your list of questions so you remember to ask.

1. Based upon our meeting today, how do you see me fitting your needs?
2. How do I compare to other candidates?
3. Do you see any gaps in my experience that concern you?
4. What are the next steps in your process?
5. Where do we go from here?

Remember to say thank you! “Thank you very much for your time today. Based upon what we’ve talked about, I am very interested in learning more.

Warning: Some interviewers will be uncomfortable with a direct question about what they think about you, but that is okay! Very often, it’s company policy not to give feedback. I promise – it’s worth asking! If you are enthusiastic and smile, they will walk away remembering that you are excited about working with them.

Now practice! Do mock interviews.

The best interviewees (and the ones who get multiple job offers) think quickly on their feet and come up with smart, insightful answers. There’s one reason why they perform that well: preparation and practice.

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Let's face it. Interviewing is difficult. It is nerve-wracking, and you cannot know what to expect most of the time until you are in the middle of it. Like anything in life, if you prepare for what might happen, you will be in a much better position to handle what really does happen. For most of us, interviewing is like getting up on stage to perform. It takes practice. So, start practicing! Ask a friend to role play with you. If the idea of doing this makes your stomach roll, then you know you *really* need to do it (because chances are good that without practice, you will do poorly in the interview that really matters).

Best method: Use a video recorded to tape the interview, then watch it back to see what you do well and what you can improve upon. I know it is scary, but it is so incredibly valuable. It's much better to walk through the discomfort in the privacy of your own home than to experience a bad interview over something small that you can fix.

Some things to watch for and practice during your mock interview:

1. If you tend to be stiff and reserved when you get nervous, focus on relaxing and **thinking of this interview as a conversation – not an interview**. Remember that the person interviewing you is human and fallible, too! In fact, **they might be just as nervous as you are!**
2. If you tend to talk too much when you get nervous, practice stopping yourself. When you feel like you're starting to ramble, you are! Just stop. Smile. Breathe. Then ask, "Have I answered your question?"
3. Never get too comfortable in an interview and "let it all hang out." I am STUNNED at the personal things people sometimes share with me in an interview situation. Unfortunately, once you share something it cannot be taken back!
4. Keep the conversation focused on the job at hand. Wow, can it be easy to get off track. Some interviewers are the worst culprits! It's okay to let them run off and talk about things that don't apply, but make sure you don't go running off on a tangent about something that is not relevant to the job at hand.

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5. Let the interviewer drive. This is especially critical in a first interview. Something few people understand (or they forget it in an interview) is that the interviewer is in the driver's seat ... needs to be. The interviewer holds the key to what might be your dream job. He's got to get through his questions to be able to effectively compare you against other candidates. Give him what he needs. You do not want him leaving the interview with questions unanswered.

Don't panic if you do not get all your questions answered

Chances are good you will NOT get all of your questions answered ... and that's okay.* During a interview, you are gathering information and having a conversation. You are not expected to accept or decline an offer on the spot. Even if they ask you to accept on the spot, it is perfectly acceptable to say "I have a few more questions and I'd like to think about it overnight." If you interview with a company who does not give you time to ask your questions, don't worry too much. You will be able to get your questions answered before you accept a job. If not, be wary of that company.

*There are two exceptions to this: if you are in sales or leadership, then you already understand that you need to demonstrate your ability to step up and make sure it's a very balanced conversation.

"A positive attitude may not solve all your problems, but it will annoy enough people to make it worth the effort." – Herm Albright

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How to get past the HR or Recruiter Interview

“29 phone screens (with recruiters). Not ONE SINGLE in-person interview! But then, your program changed everything. I moved ahead on the next three phone screens and got two job offers!” – Vince S.

10 great ways to handle a rookie recruiter

1. Connect! Connect! Connect!
2. Be nice! Likeability is key.
3. Assume that they have great intentions.
4. Listen!
5. Take notes.
6. Let them drive.
7. Ask clarifying questions.
8. Wrap up conversation with A. What you heard and B. Two or three reasons why you think you're a great fit.
9. Follow up! Send clear, concise follow up about why you think you're a good fit for the position. TRANSLATE! Include more info. if needed (but just a little bit)
10. Don't be a jerk.

Typical recruiter initial interview

- Is short.
- Is over the phone.
- Is scripted.
- Is designed to screen you out.

10 ways to identify & overcome their concerns

Repeat the 10 great ways to handle a rookie recruit. It works!

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5 things recruiters need to know about you

1. Can you DO the job? Minimum qualifications!
2. Do you UNDERSTAND the job?
3. Money: Are you at the RIGHT PRICE?
4. Will you fit in? Do I like you? Do I want to work with you? Will the hiring manager like you? Will the team like you!
5. Do you WANT the job (level of interest, availability, etc.)?

6 things they *might* want to know about you (if you meet min. requirements)

1. Will you *really* make a move? What would motivate you to leave your current role? How will you make your final decision?
2. Competition: How interested are you *really*? Who else are you dating right now?
3. Work history: why quit last job, favorite job, worst boss, etc.
4. Behavioral questions: failure, weaknesses, etc.
5. Benefits (money, vacation, health insurance, stock options, etc.)
6. What questions do you have for them?

How to prep for the recruiter interview

1. Know what kind of recruiter you're dealing with
2. Know what makes you great (key skills + experience)
3. Identify the gaps b/w what you've got + what they want
4. Get ready for the 5 core questions
5. Get ready for the scary questions (anticipate the worst)
6. Research the recruiter & the company
7. Prep some questions

6 biggest job hunter blunders

1. Talking too much (they don't have time!)
2. Interrupting often (they don't have time + it makes you unlikable)
3. Being all business (forgetting to connect + be likable)
4. Being really negative about anything (that makes you NOT likable + raises flags)
5. Forgetting that this is a first date (asking about picky things too soon ... like commute, benefits + money)
6. Being a jerk.

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How to nail an interview with a hiring manager

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

The problem AKA The 4 biggest challenges:

1. Not knowing what to expect
2. Not knowing how to prepare
3. Struggling with tough & unexpected questions
4. Getting nervous ... and showing it

The solution

1. Get educated.
2. Get prepared.
3. Practice.

Get prepared! How to prep for a manager interview:

1. Review your notes from previous conversations & interviews. Figure out what they want and what they might be concerned about. Are there any gaps (real or perceived) between your skills & experience and what they want?
2. Get clear: What's their biggest pain? What do they need you to do?
3. Identify the gaps: what are you missing?
4. Get ready for the 5 core questions
5. Get ready for the scary questions
6. Get ready for behavioral questions
7. Research the people & the company
8. Prep new questions for them
9. Review your proudest achievements (STAR stories)

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“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up ... the most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.” – Thomas Edison

Debrief! 12 questions to help you get to the truth

Review your last interview(s). Figure out what they want & what their concerns are. You need to figure out these 4 things:

- What went well?
- What did not go well?
- What are their biggest pain points?
- What are their primary concerns about me?

Here's how: Ask yourself these 12 questions. Be really honest. If there were some hiccups, there are steps you can take to overcome them. However, if you're afraid to look at the tough stuff, it will certainly remain a barrier to your success. Once you've gone through this list of questions, I HIGHLY recommend you review it with a friend who can help you sort through it all, and think about the best next steps.

12 questions to ask yourself after every interview

1. What excites you about the job?
2. What concerns you about the job?
3. Do you have what they are looking for? Make a list! (Identify the gaps)
4. Do you think you are a top contender? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. Was there anything missing in your skills & experience?
6. How does the job match your values & desires? (Scorecard – WS #15)
7. Did the interview go well? If so, why?
8. What did not go well?
9. What could you have done better?
10. What were the tough questions for you? Awkward moments?
11. What are the next steps in their process? When should you hear more?
12. What do you wish you had done better?

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Figure out their biggest pain points

What problem do they need you to solve? What is the #1 thing they need you to accomplish in the first 30-90 days? What is one thing you could focus on to dramatically improve their current situation? Common pain points include:

1. Need more revenue
2. Need more clients
3. Need to cut costs
4. Need to increase productivity

Here are two great examples:

1. Waiters are responsible for taking great care of their customers, and upselling (selling those ice cream sundaes and bottomless margaritas). A waiter could assume that's the biggest focus in an interview. However, what if the owner just had to fire 3 people for showing up late to work? If that's the case, then the candidate should focus on punctuality and dependability.
2. Recruiters are responsible for hiring people – fast! It could be easy to focus exclusively on time to fill (how fast you've gotten people hired in the past) during a job interview, but what if the company has a terrible turnover issue? And what if they spent waaaay too much money on recruiting last year? Then, you better focus on cost per hire and quality of hire / retention during the interview.

Remember to prep for the 5 core questions

1. Can you DO THE JOB? (Skill & experience)
2. Do you UNDERSTAND THE JOB?
3. Are you at the RIGHT PRICE?
4. Will you FIT IN WITH THE TEAM?
5. Do you WANT THE JOB?

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Anticipate & practice answering behavioral questions

- Behavioral questions sound like:
“Tell me about a time ...” and “Give me an example of a time ...”
- They are designed to get you to share A SPECIFIC EXAMPLE from your past that is relevant to their business needs

Practice! Here’s how:

1. Prepare an interview packet
2. Grab a friend to play the role of manager
3. Dress for success
4. Ask your friend to interview you & take notes
5. Debrief
6. Do it again.
7. BONUS: Videotape the interview

Remember what they really want. They want someone who will bring:

1. Less work (can you do the job ... and do it well?)
2. More success (can you make our team and company stronger? Will you deliver results?)
3. More fun!
4. Enthusiasm! They need to see and hear that you are excited to join their team, and excited about the work. Pssst! If you are not really excited about the job (but you need a paycheck!), find 2-3 things you can get excited about.
5. Likability! Remember to take your best version of yourself, and connect human to human with everyone you meet.

Take your “A game” (In 7 simple steps)

1. Prepare an interview packet for yourself (pen + paper)
2. Prepare an interview packet for them (to leave behind)
3. Dress for success & eat well, etc.

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4. Review your proudest accomplishments
5. Do something that makes you happy
6. Call a friend for a pep talk
7. Start strong! How you enter is how you leave.

Calm your nerves: 20 ways to stop the jitters!

“Facing your fears robs them of their power” - Mark Burnett

Sometimes, when the stakes are high, it can be tough to calm your nerves. Here are 20 more ways to stop the interview jitters:

BEFORE YOU GO

1. Recognize your anxiety for what it is: a primal response. The amygdala is the primitive part of our brain that generates and processes our fear. It prevents us from jumping off cliffs. Yay for the amygdala! However, it also jumps into action when we do not need it (like during job interviews). Remember this next time yours kicks in and tell yourself “Ah-hah! This is my primitive brain responding. I am an adult, with a fully-mature frontal lobe. My fear does not own me.”
2. Face it: Name your greatest interview fear. What is it – really – that worries you most about a job interview? Some of the most common interview fears include: getting asked “scary” questions, saying something stupid, blushing, sweating, exposing skeletons in your closet (“I got fired!”) ... and of course, the ultimate fear: they won’t want me. Figure out what’s really scaring you. Then acknowledge it. Don’t dismiss it! It’s real, and it’s justified. Say it out loud. Write it down. Then plan to rise and meet it.
3. Remember 3 times when you’ve succeeded before. You can do this! You’ve done it before. Think of 3 times in your life when the stakes were high, but you succeeded anyway. Then write them down. Whip them out next time you think “I can’t do this.”
4. Make a plan (“So what?”). If you talk too much during your next interview, so what? What’s the worst thing that can happen? If that happens, what will you do? Having a simple plan will put you in control of your emotions.

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ON THE DAY OF YOUR INTERVIEW

5. Dress for success. If you look good, you'll feel good! Period. You can laugh with them about being overdressed. You can never make up for being under-dressed.
6. Remember: you've succeeded before! Re-read them in your car before your next interview to boost your confidence.
7. Get happy on the drive over. Play your favorite music. Listen to a motivational tape. Or, call a champion (friend) to pump you up and remind you how talented you are.
8. Arrive early. Arrive early. Arrive early!
9. Stop worrying Stop the negative thoughts! When you start to worry, interrupt your thoughts immediately and say "There goes that primitive brain again." If you think you will fail, you are much more likely to fail ("the Golem Effect.")
10. Envision success In stark contrast to the "Golem Effect," if you think you will succeed, you are MUCH more likely to succeed! This is called the "The Pygmalion Effect." Close your eyes and envision yourself being successful (getting the job). World-class athletes do this, and it works!
11. Do a victory pose! Reduce your cortisol ("stress hormone") and increase your testosterone with Amy Cuddy's "Victory pose." (See her TEDTalk: Your body language shaped who you are). Shake your limbs. Stand up, and breathe deeply - 5 times. It really works!

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AS YOU WALK INTO THE INTERVIEW

12. Smile & say “Hello” to everyone you meet. You never know who they are (they may be part of the hiring process) and making positive connections will boost your confidence. 13. Stop thinking “interview.” Start thinking “Conversation.”

Remember: you aren’t sure you want to work with them yet, either. You’re just getting to know each other. It’s a two-way street.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE INTERVIEW

14. Be yourself. Be honest. Be real. It NEVER works when someone tries to play a character.

15. Stop. Breathe. Smile. Repeat.

16. Own it! If you get really nervous, say something. Feel free to say “Wow! I’m nervous.” Or “Gee, I’m talking a lot. Did I answer your question?”

17. Buy yourself some time to think. Look at the person, and say "That's an interesting question," or "That's a good question" and/or "Hmm. Let me think about that." Breathe. Smile. Share.

18. Make sure you understand the question. If you don’t, simply ask "Will you repeat that please?" or ask a clarifying question like "I'm not sure I understood that question. Would you mind reframing it for me?"

19. If you feel yourself talking too much, stop and say "Have I answered your question? Do you want more detail, or is that enough?"

20. Let it go! If you feel like the interview is going south, it may have very little to do with you! Relax, and remember: this is your worst-case scenario, and you’re ready for it! You can handle this. If it doesn’t work out, it wasn’t meant to be. There will be other jobs for you! You can even laugh! Reader’s Digest really got this one right: Laughter really is (almost always) the best medicine. It really is okay to laugh during an interview ... especially at yourself!

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The best thing you can do is this: PRACTICE! Grab a friend and ask them to help you practice your interviewing skills. We have an extensive interview guide in the Job Hunt Toolkit online. Use it! We took year of experience interviewing thousands of people, and hiring hundreds, and packed the best tips and tricks into an interview guide that really works.

How you enter is how you leave

First 30 seconds really matter! First impressions are everything! Studies continue to show that people make a decision about you in 2-30 seconds. Over 50% of their decision is based on your body language. Only 7% is based upon what you say.

10 WAYS TO MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION:

1. Arrive early (10-15 minutes).
2. Treat the receptionist with a smile and professional courtesy.
3. Smile! Like you mean in.
4. Stand tall and confident (even if you're not feeling confident).
5. Lean in for a firm handshake (a little ... not too much!).
6. Make good eye contact.
7. Maintain good eye contact throughout your conversations.
8. Stay positive. Avoid negative body language or words. Never complain about traffic, weather or anything else.
9. Be open with your body language and words.
10. Be curious.

AVOID THE TOP 5 REASONS FOR REJECTION (JobVite Recruiter Nation Study)

- 86% Rude to receptionist or support staff
- 71% Checking phone during interview
- 58% Showing up late
- 52% Bad hygiene
- 39% Interrupting the interviewer

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“You know, sometimes all you need is twenty seconds of insane courage. Just literally twenty seconds of just embarrassing bravery.

And I promise you, something great will come of it.”

– Benjamin Mee (Matt Damon) in movie “We bought a zoo”

Uncover & overcome their concerns

The very best way to figure out what their concerns are is to ask directly – before you leave the meeting. As a consultant, it is especially important to work on this. I promise: asking tough questions will get easier, and 9 times out of 10 it will be the reason you got the job.

For instance, when I was just starting out as a consultant, I asked the CEO “If I could fix just one thing for you, what would it be?” He said “Stop the in-fighting between the sales people and the recruiters. It drives me nuts!” The job posting and most of the interview had been focused on compensation planning and technology platform selection. Had I stayed focused on those, I would have lost the deal. Instead, because I asked that question I was able to talk about 2 of my proudest career achievements: the turnaround of two failing recruiting groups ... and a big part of my success was because I focused on uncovering the root cause of the infighting and worked with both sales and recruiting to stop it. There were two other much more qualified candidates, but he hired me because of my focus on his biggest irritation.

1. Listen
2. Take notes
3. Ask clarifying questions
4. Ask them directly! Sample questions:
 - “Do you have any concerns about me in this role?”
 - “How do I stack up against my competition?”
 - “Do I have everything you’re looking for?”
 - “Am I missing any key skills or experience?”

Note: Some inexperienced managers will be uncomfortable with a direct question about what they think about you, but that is okay! I promise you: it’s worth asking! If you are

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enthusiastic and smile, they will walk away remembering that you are excited about working with them.

Close the deal

There are two key messages they need to hear at the end of the interview: 1. I can do the job – and do it well 2. I want the job.

How to close the deal: Ask final questions and/or deliver a positive statement ... to deliver those two key messages. Here are several methods that work well:

1. “Thank you for meeting with me.”
2. “I’m very interested in this position. Here’s why ...
 - Reason #1 (brief!)
 - Reason #2 (brief!)
 - Reason #3 (brief!)
3. “What are your thoughts?”
4. “What are the next steps?”
5. “Based upon our meeting today, how do you see me fitting your needs?”
6. “How do I compare to other candidates?”
7. “What are the next steps in your process?”
8. “Where do we go from here?”

Remember to say thank you! “Thank you very much for your time today. Based upon what we’ve talked about, I am very interested in learning more.

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How to follow up

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

When to follow up

- Same day with an email

How to follow up

- Same day: Send a thank-you email to everyone you met within 24 hours
- Stand out by also mailing a thank-you card within a week
- After that, stay in touch periodically (but no more than once a week)

What to say

Same-day email:

- Hi (or hello), (the person’s name).
- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today about (name the position you interviewed for).
- I really enjoyed meeting you and learning more about (the company, organization, project, etc.)
- I am very interested in (joining your team / joining the project / working with you).
- It will be great to (learn from you / be a part of ...)
**Pay a compliment or mention something you are excited about. Remember: they are looking for enthusiasm! It’s great to pay a small compliment to the person or the company. A small mention of something specific will do the job. Don’t go overboard.*

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- This is exactly the kind of opportunity I've been looking for. I'm particularly excited about (*mention 1-2 things about the company, the team and/or the boss*).
 - I'm excited to leverage my skills in (*name 1-2 relevant skills*) to help you (*name 1-2 of their key business needs and/or what you will help them do if they hire you*).
- ALTERNATIVE MESSAGE: It will be really fun to ...
- Please let me know if you would like any additional information.
 - Once again, thank you for considering me. I look forward to our next conversation.

Sincerely,

John

John Doe | 201-201-2010 | johndoe@gmail.com

The key ingredient in your follow-up message:

I'm excited to leverage my skills in (*name 1-2 relevant skills*) to help you (*name 1-2 of their key business needs and/or what you will help them do if they hire you*).

How to find the key ingredient:

1. Ask smart questions during your interview
2. Debrief after every interview

*Don't know how to do these things? We can help! Watch the rest of our webinar interview success series, and/or become a member and get instant access to our entire interview series.

OPTIONAL: Include a helpful article, study or upcoming event in your thank-you note. It will make you a REAL stand-out! Here's how:

- Pick one topic you discussed

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- Search for credible article from industry thought leader (i.e. global warming + pdf) that will educate, inform, inspire, yield opportunity
- Add a sentence to your thank-you email:

P.S. I was doing a little research on (the topic you picked) and found this article (*or research paper, upcoming event*). I thought you might enjoy it.

Handwritten thank-you card: What to say ...

- Keep it VERY brief!
- Personal (Hello, Joe. ...)
- I'm excited about the chance to work with you. *That's it! No selling.*
- Let me know if I can provide you with any more information as you make your decision.
- Have a great week!

John Doe

John Doe | 201-201-2010 | johndoe@gmail.com

What to do when you don't hear back

8 Reasons Companies Stop Talking to Candidates:

There are 8 very common reasons why companies stop talking to people after they had an interview. Here they are:

1. They're "buried" (really busy!)
2. Priorities have changed.
3. An internal candidate showed up late.
4. A great referral showed up late.
5. The money has not yet been approved.
6. You're not dealing with the decision maker ... and they can't get the final interviewer to meet with you.

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7. They like you a lot ... but they like some others, too.
8. They HAVE decided against you but haven't let you know it yet.
4 reasons why **they might wait** to tell you they chose someone else:
 - They want to “keep you warm” in case their #1 pick says no.
 - Company policy won't let them reject until someone accepts an offer.
 - It's hard to reject people.
 - They got busy.

What to do if they “go dark” on you

1. Never assume anything. Ask.
2. Get honest: Do you really want the job? Is it worth the chase?
3. Get honest: How did your last interview or conversation go? Did they say you were a top contender? Did they have concerns about you, and did you overcome them?
4. Revisit what they said about timeline (if anything).
5. Ask your inside champion (friend or referral) ... if you have one.
6. Call and leave 1 voicemail + send 1 email
7. After that, call but do not leave voicemail for another 1-2 weeks
8. Be pleasantly persistent (not desperate!)

You can do this! This guide might look intimidating, but it's my job to cover all the possibilities. if you read through this and, most important, prepare for every interview, you will be a stand out every time! Remember what makes you great, consider each meeting a conversation between two professionals and you will do well. - Catherine

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