

10 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

Want To Land Your Dream Job?

Interviewing can be stressful and exhausting when you don't know what's expected of you. Here are ten tips to help you prepare and feel more confident while trying to land your next job.

1. You don't have to be matchy-matchy, but you need to look like you fit in.

Your appearance is one of the first things an interviewer (and the rest of the staff) will notice as soon as s/he sets eyes on you. Dressing like you already work there is a big step towards making a great first impression. It's also completely within your control. Don't obsess but do look at every detail to get it right.

- Do your research and show up looking like you already fit into the culture.
- If you have a recruiter, ask what you will be expected to wear.
- Look at the company website or do a drive by of the company to watch people walk in and out during lunch and see how they're dressed.
- Form a mental "dress norm" for the company, which will give you an idea of what's acceptable.
- For your interview, take that norm up one notch. This will show the interviewer that you care about the details, you are perceptive, and won't have to work hard to fit in at the office.
- If you dress the part, they're more likely to see you as part of their team.

2. No need to over-explain why you lost your job.

Most people talk too much during interviews due to stress and anxiety. While it's hard to avoid, talking too much shows insecurity and usually indicates you're uncomfortable with your own answer. An inability to communicate clearly, or a need to over-explain yourself, may leave the impression you're still feeling the pain and/or grieving the loss of your prior job. If this is the case, your interviewers will think you haven't moved on and you aren't ready to start a new job.

- Be clear and concise. This is one of those situations where less is more.
- Be honest and tell the truth. If you were let go due to performance, you need to own up to what you should have done differently and what you've learned from the experience.
- If you're interviewing in person, look at the person when explaining why you're no longer at the company. Looking away or down says you're uncomfortable with what you're saying.

3. Do your research about everything important to the company and interviewer.

It's good to look at the company's website, but if you stop there, you won't stand out amongst the other candidates. Before an interview your job is to learn as much as you can about the company. Researching the company before an interview should include the company's:

- Industry
- Products and Services
- Customers
- Competition
- Economic Influences
- Regulatory Factors
- Environmental Issues
- Financials (if public)
- Press Releases and News Items
- People: direct manager, team, executives

All this research will help you ask questions that will impress and give answers that show you understand who they are and where they sit in their industry. If you're asked what you know about the company, don't simply quote or reference that you looked at the website. Go beyond the obvious. Peel back the layers of who they are and understand their "big why".

As best you can, research the people you'll be meeting, others in the department, internal business partners, important stakeholders, etc. LinkedIn is a great tool for this. Find out where their career path has taken them and what they do in the company. It's even possible to find some common interests or experiences (maybe you went to the same college) to help you make a connection with them during the interview. Use this information to ask relevant questions - such as what they learned in their career that's helped them be successful.

4. Interest and enthusiasm are catching!

You may feel like you should hold your cards close to the vest, but every hiring manager wants to hire someone who is genuinely enthusiastic about working for their company.

- Show that you understand the position, what the company does, and who they do it for.
- Ask questions that show you already know their issues and make it clear that you're already thinking like you work there.

Two of the most common questions asked in an interview are, "Why do you want to join our company?" and "Why should we hire you?" These may sound like easy questions to answer, but a lot of people fumble through them. Answer with your "big why". Don't know your big why? Here's a great resource, [Watch this Ted Talk Simon Sinek – Start With Why.](#)

5. Show and share your humor, warmth and personality

Not only does the interviewer want you to have the right experience and talent to be successful s/he also wants your personality to be a good fit for the team. Show them that you're relatable and approachable. You don't have to become best friends with your future colleagues, but you want to make enough of a connection that the interviewer can see you on the team. A few guidelines:

- Smile and be as relaxed as possible, while still being professional.
- Share something about yourself that the interviewer would not glean from your resume or LinkedIn profile. (hobbies, interests, etc.)
- It's okay to mildly poke fun at yourself if the situation calls for it.
- Feel free to tell a relevant story (remember to keep it short), which brings a lightness to your character.
- Remember, no jokes or sarcasm. You don't know your audience well enough to show this side of you, yet.

If asked, "Tell me about yourself," use the 80/20 rule, meaning 80% professional and 20% personal. First answer from a professional standpoint; why you do what you do and how you got there. Then speak a little about what you enjoy and like to do outside of work.

6. Punctuality is Key.

Your interview is scheduled for a specific time and the person you're meeting with has squeezed you in between other meetings and deadlines. Honor their time. Don't be late, but also don't be too early.

It's smart to arrive at the office parking lot early enough to guarantee you have plenty of time to find a parking space, but don't enter the company's lobby any sooner than 5 minutes before your scheduled interview time. These five minutes will give the receptionist time to track down the interviewer and still be on time, but arriving any earlier sends the message that you aren't honoring the time.

Arriving late – that's a flat out no-no. Even one minute late is not good. It shows poor planning and sends the message that you aren't reliable. If you know you're going to be late for your interview, call the office immediately to give the interviewer a heads-up, but be prepared for a cool reception once you arrive.

7. Sure, we all want to know what's in it for us, but...

Companies hire someone to fix their problem. The person who gets hired will be the one who convincingly demonstrates they will be a good fit and will help the company or team be more successful.

It's important to understand this before you start barraging the interviewer with questions about where you will be in a year, when you may be promoted, what benefits they offer, what your compensation package would look like, etc. Too much focus on what's in it for you, can kill the interview.

Managers see the importance of helping others manage their career, titles and compensation, but before a candidate has even started s/he should be focusing on the work and being a great employee.

Interviewers look for someone who is in the present and interested in furthering the success of the team, department and firm. Me-centered professionals are not a hiring manager's first pick.

8. Practice so you sound natural, not rehearsed.

Being prepared for your interview is vitally important. All your research, planning, preparation, and practice will help put your best foot forward. But remember, the purpose of practicing is so you can sound natural and comfortable, not like you are reciting a checklist or following a formula. Practice enough so you sound sincere and authentic.

If you can, practice with a friend, former colleague or coach. Be open to their feedback. You may need to practice the same questions several times until you know what you want to say and are able to say it clearly and concisely.

Be rehearsed enough that you can answer most questions with good detail. Make sure to have some stories about your career accomplishments and lessons learned. Don't try to get every point across in your answers because it will sound too formulaic. Feel confident in your preparation and know you are ready for anything!

9. Presentation, posture and poise could make or break your interview.

On an interview, you want to come off as engaged, sincere and confident. How do these traits translate best? Through your body language. Your handshake is the first thing to be aware of; you don't want it to be overly aggressive or weak.

Also, respect the other person's personal space throughout the interview. Don't invade their space by leaning in with elbows on the desk. That sends a message of dominance and is very off-putting.

Show you are confident and sincere by looking people in the eye, smiling when appropriate, and sitting in a relaxed position.

Here's a tip if your interview is by phone: Record a conversation ahead of time and listen to it. How do you sound? What was your pace? Your tone? What was the impression you think you made? In a phone interview your voice must make up for the facial expressions and body language the interviewer is missing.

Pro tip: Remember, your voice and pace are controlled by your posture. If you are looking down, your chin is collapsed, and your voice won't project. Slouching forward and back can change your presentation. Try speaking in these different postures to notice the difference. Does it give you energy to walk and talk? Pick the position that makes you feel confident and comfortable, and allows you to speak in a clear, friendly and approachable manner.

And our #1 tip for landing that job...

10. Ask for it!

Many experts agree that even the best candidates may not actually ask for the job, which is a big mistake. Asking for the job shows enthusiasm for the position and company and your willingness to take the next step. Some great ways to ask:

- “I would really love to work here as part of this team. When should I follow up?”
- “I can see so many ways I can contribute to this company. I look forward to hearing from you about next steps.”
- “I’m really excited about the opportunities here. Is there anything else you’d like to know about me to help put me at the top of your list?”

Caution! Never ask “Is there a reason why you wouldn’t hire me?” Cringe!

This question is uncomfortable for the interviewer and changes the tone of the interview. An interviewer is not able to tell you that they are not going to hire you. Putting your interviewer on the spot like this is a deal killer. Instead, a great question would be, “Is there anything else about my background I haven’t covered or would be useful to you?”

Once you have asked about following up, be sure to restate your potential contribution to the company!

Interviews make everyone nervous and skittish. Use that extra energy boost before your interview to carefully prepare and plan on making the best impression possible. Practice your answers, diminish any distracting mannerisms and make sure you can hold up your part of the conversation with poise and confidence. Take a deep breath and relax before you begin. Know that your preparation will carry you through with flying colors.

Feel like you need professional help polishing your interview skills? [Contact us](#) to see how we can help. We can work together to smartly prepare you for your next interview!

Julia Holian

julia@juliaholian.com

925.451.3183

www.juliaholian.com

www.linkedin.com/in/juliaholian