

# Interview Prep Checklist

## ☐ Know your stuff

- Do you get nervous during interviews? Everyone does. What's the solution? Be prepared.
- Research the organization. The job announcement should have the duties of the position listed, and you should know those cold. But you should also dig in online to find their mission statement and last quarterly report if public. Who are their main competitors and customers? What is their budget? Where is their money coming from and where it is going? What are the biggest disrupters in their field right now? How are they dealing with them? How are their competitors dealing with them?
- Practice [your elevator pitch](#). What's your story? What's their story? How do those stories fit together? What do you have to offer? What makes you special?

## ☐ Know who's interviewing you

- At a minimum, there should be the hiring decision-maker and someone from HR. Try to find out during the scheduling of the interview who will be there and what their role is. If you can know that going in, you'll know who to pitch specific answers/questions to. Even that little bit of knowledge can help reduce the unknowns of the situation and help calm your nerves.

## ☐ Dress for the Interview

- Dress for the job
  - If this is a senior level position, dress like you're interviewing for a senior level position
  - Do some research. A quick review of the organization's website can give you an idea of the vibe of that organization. A search for the org chart might come with headshots or a LinkedIn search could give you names at positions at the level that you're applying. What are they dressed like?
  - You should give the impression that you put in some effort to dress up but that you are arriving as your genuine self.
    - The old rules have changed. [Only 37%](#) of employers expect men to wear a tie to an interview. If you never wear a suit and a suit and tie will make you sweaty and uncomfortable, don't wear it.
    - But, again, do your homework. Get a sense for the organizational vibe. If you're applying to a bank or law firm, suits are expected.

## ☐ Manage Your Expectations

- There are a lot of jobs and a lot of job-seekers out there
  - Put in the prep work, but don't be so invested in that "perfect" job that you'll be crushed if you don't get it

- Being overly invested in a single job can also cause you to put too much pressure on yourself and then not perform as well in the interview.
- You never know who you're competing against. We know that you're perfect for this job, but maybe there is an internal candidate who makes everyone brownies every Tuesday. Maybe this organization has specific hiring rules that advantage veterans. Maybe there are 750 applicants. Maybe there are two.

#### ☐ Practice your greeting

- If the interview is in person, be sure to shake everyone's hand (if practicable) and make eye contact with everyone.
  - Practice your handshake too. Firm but not aggressive, make eye contact during the shake, and don't shake too long.
  - You are seldom going to know who at the interview is the hiring decision maker and who is just filling a seat because they needed someone from that department or demographic, so try to include everyone in your greeting as well as your eye contact during your responses.
- If the interview is via video call, it's even more important to practice your greeting due to the inherent awkwardness of the format.
  - Don't make a speech, but do have something short but sincere to say so there is not just a vast silence sitting there
- Often, the first question of an interview will be either "Tell us about yourself." or "Why are you interested in this position?" So these are questions that you can have the answers prepared and practiced already too. They're not interested on whether you're a dog person or a cat person, but remember, they've got your resume', you don't need to rehash that either. This should be a version of how your story fits with their story. "Ever since I (the most impressive thing on your resume) I've been

#### ☐ Be in a good mood

- People hire people they like. Be likable.
- Research shows that most hiring decisions are made in the first 10 seconds. Make those first 10 seconds count.
- Breathing exercises, power poses, and positive self-talk might seem hokey but research has shown that they work. Do what you need to do to get in the right frame of mind.

#### ☐ Be Prepared With Questions

- One tip I always tell people is that "You Are There To Interview Them". This flips your perception of the power dynamic in the interview, helps you focus on the substance of what is being said, and can significantly reduce nervous energy.
- Another answer to the test is that the last question in nearly every interview is: "Do you have any questions for us?" You can use this opportunity to highlight your knowledge of the organization or the field: "Your mission statement says X,

how does that inform how you Y in a field where Z is happening?” Or you can demonstrate that you are not just interested in collecting a paycheck, but care about what this organization does and would care about the people who work there: “What is the biggest issue your organization/department is facing today?” “What is the best part of working for your organization?” “How would you describe your office culture?”

☐ Be Prepared For Salary Negotiations

- Some organizations have set and even published salaries for specific jobs. Check the job announcement. Check their website. You can even ask the HR department ahead of time if the salary is open to negotiation. HR seldom controls the budget and doesn't usually care how much you get paid, so they will probably be honest with you.
- If you have specific salary expectations that you're not sure they will be able to meet, you should feel free to be honest with them. “My current salary is X. I will need at least 15% above that for this to make sense for me financially.”
- The old adage is that whoever says a number first loses, and research regarding the anchoring effect supports that, but you don't want to appear difficult either. If they ask for your “salary expectations” you can respond with something like “What is the salary range you typically offer for this level of position?” If they still don't put forth a number you can respond with a range yourself but be sure to include a caveat: “I'm looking for something in the \$Xk to \$Yk range, but that would, of course, be dependent on the benefits package.”
- Body language should tell you a lot about how receptive they are to your offer.

☐ Bring and Take Notes

- This isn't your Geometry final, you can bring notes in with you. You don't want to show up with a huge stack of papers, but it's expected that you would bring a pad or notebook with you to take notes and there's no reason that you couldn't have some notes with you on the research that you did or some reminders of points you want to highlight or questions that you want to ask.
- Be sure to write down the names of everyone in the interview. With the high volume of interviews these days it probably won't keep you from getting the job if you forget to send thank you notes, but it's still the polite thing to do.
- It's also nice to have a business card to hand out at the start of the interview. They already have your info, but if you hand them a card, they'll often give you theirs. This not only simplifies the thank you note process but their job titles might also give you some insight into who is the hiring authority.