

INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

Created by Lavonia, Director of Talent Acquisition with 25+ years of experience training hiring managers and conducting thousands of interviews

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Research the Company

- ☐ Company mission, values, and culture
- ☐ Recent news, projects, and achievements
- ☐ Products or services and target market
- ☐ Key competitors and industry position
- ☐ Leadership team background

Understand the Role

- ☐ Review the job description thoroughly, highlighting key requirements
- ☐ Research typical responsibilities for similar positions
- ☐ Identify specific skills and experiences you can highlight
- ☐ Prepare questions about day-to-day responsibilities

Prepare Your Stories

- ☐ Identify 6-8 accomplishments relevant to the role
- ☐ Structure each story using the STAR method (see below)
- ☐ Practice telling these stories concisely (2-3 minutes each)
- ☐ Include quantifiable results whenever possible

TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Behavioral Questions

These assess how you've handled situations in the past

Common Examples:

- "Tell me about a time when you faced a significant challenge at work."
- "Describe a situation where you had to work with a difficult colleague."
- "Give an example of a goal you achieved and how you reached it."

How to Answer: Use the STAR method (Situation, Task, Action, Result)

Situational Questions

These evaluate how you would handle hypothetical scenarios

Common Examples:

- "What would you do if a project deadline was suddenly moved up?"
- "How would you handle conflicting priorities from different stakeholders?"
- "If you noticed a colleague making a serious mistake, what steps would you take?"

How to Answer: Outline your thought process and decision-making methodology

Technical Questions

These assess your specific knowledge and skills

- Prepare for questions related to tools, methodologies, and processes relevant to the role
- Be ready to provide specific examples of how you've applied technical skills
- Consider preparing a portfolio or examples of your work if applicable

THE STAR METHOD EXPLAINED

Use this framework to structure your behavioral interview responses:

Situation: Briefly describe the context/background (Where? When? With whom?)

Task: Explain your specific responsibility or challenge (What needed to be done?)

Action: Detail the specific steps you took (What did YOU do? Use "I" not "we")

Result: Share the outcomes and what you learned (Quantify results when possible)

EXAMPLE STAR RESPONSE:

Question: "Tell me about a time when you improved a process."

Situation: "At ABC Company last year, our team was struggling with a manual data entry process that was causing delays in our monthly reporting."

Task: "As the team lead, I needed to find a way to improve efficiency while maintaining data accuracy."

Action: "I analyzed our workflow to identify bottlenecks, then researched automation options. After getting budget approval, I led the implementation of a new system, created documentation, and trained the team on the new process."

Result: "The new system reduced processing time by 65%, eliminated data entry errors which had been occurring at a rate of 12%, and saved the company approximately \$45,000 annually in labor costs. The team was able to redirect their time to higher-value analysis tasks."

COMMON INTERVIEW MISTAKES TO AVOID

- ☐ Arriving late or unprepared
- ☐ Speaking negatively about previous employers
- ☐ Providing vague or general answers without specific examples
- ☐ Failing to ask thoughtful questions about the role or company
- ☐ Over-explaining or providing too much unnecessary detail
- ☐ Not connecting your experience to the specific job requirements
- ☐ Appearing disinterested or not enthusiastic about the opportunity

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE INTERVIEWER

From my experience as a hiring director, these questions impress me:

1. "What are the biggest challenges the person in this position will face in the first 90 days?"
2. "How does this role contribute to the larger goals of the department and company?"
3. "Can you describe the team I'd be working with and how success is measured?"
4. "What development opportunities are available for someone in this position?"
5. "Based on our conversation, do you have any concerns about my qualifications for this role?"

VIRTUAL INTERVIEW BEST PRACTICES

- ☐ Test your technology in advance (camera, microphone, internet connection)
- ☐ Choose a quiet, well-lit location with a professional background
- ☐ Position your camera at eye level and look into the camera when speaking
- ☐ Dress professionally from head to toe (in case you need to stand up)
- ☐ Have a copy of your resume, the job description, and notes nearby
- ☐ Close other applications to prevent notifications during the interview
- ☐ Practice speaking clearly and at a moderate pace

Remember: As a recruiter, I'm looking for candidates who can clearly articulate their value and demonstrate how their experiences align with our needs. Preparation is key to making a strong impression and standing out from other qualified candidates.

Need more personalized interview coaching? Check out my professional services!