



## The Opportunity Network: Interview Tips

### **PRE-INTERVIEW**

**Research yourself.** *Understand what skills and assets you have that would match up to the specific job you are interviewing for. Use the job description and your research to figure out what skills and assets you plan on marketing during the interview. Also think about your transferable skills (interpersonal, analytical, writing, etc.) that would make you a great candidate for the position.*

**Research the company.** *(1) The company's reputation. (2) The company's benefits. (3) The company's mission, vision and goals. Knowledge is power, and in this case, the more you know about the company, the better off you'll be at the interview. You will stand out among the candidates -- whoever interviews you will be impressed that you took the initiative to do this, because most job seekers do not.*

**Study the job description carefully.** *Make sure your application and/or resume complement what the company is looking for.*

**Plan what to bring to your interview.** *Have a few extra copies of your application and/or resume.*

**Prepare questions you will ask during the interview.** *"Do you have any questions for us?" Of course you do! Most job seekers do NOT have questions, so here's another opportunity for you to set yourself apart from those other candidates.*

**Health and hygiene.** *Get a good night's sleep, eat a healthy meal and brush your teeth.*

**Look the part.** *Dress professionally and plan what to wear to your interview ahead of time so that there are no wardrobe malfunctions the day of the interview.*

**Have important information written down.** *This means important names, phone numbers, and addresses.*

**Bring business cards.**

**Know where you are going.**

**Arrive early.** *Visit the interview location before your interview or be sure you know how to arrive on time (hopstop.com). Assume the interview is going to begin 30 minutes before the actual time.*

### **DURING THE INTERVIEW**

**Cell phones OFF.**

**Manners.** *Be polite and courteous to support staff, such as secretaries, front-desk receptionists, etc. They often have the ear of decision makers and will not hesitate to provide informal feedback on you, especially if you are not respectful.*

**Firm handshake and smile.** *It is your first chance to show confidence.*

**Attitude.** *Project energy and enthusiasm. If these are lacking, you won't get an offer.*

**Relax.** *The more you are relaxed and at ease, the more the interviewer will be relaxed and at ease.*

**Active listening.**

**Body language.**

**Ask questions.** *In addition to asking thoughtful questions about the company, ask questions about the interviewer. People like to talk about themselves so ask them about themselves.*

**Do not ask about money.** *You can find this information out later.*

## **POST-INTERVIEW**

**Thank you note!** *Be sure to write a thank you note or email within one day of the interview.*

**Follow up.** *Do not call anyone until you speak with OppNet about the best plan of action. A message or email is much more effective without stalking the person you are trying to reach.*

## **PHONE-INTERVIEWS**

**Phone etiquette.** *Confirm who will be calling who prior to the interview. If the interviewer is supposed to call you and they haven't called after 5 or 10 minutes, then you should call them.*

**Setting.** *Choose a quiet place where you have good cell phone service for phone interviews. Don't conduct a phone interview outside, in a cafeteria, coffee shop, or any place with a lot of noise. Let family members know you are on an interview if you are having the phone interview at home. You should be somewhere without any distractions.*

**Resources.** *You can have your resume and other notes in front of you during a phone interview. You can have your computer on, but it's unprofessional to be typing during a phone interview. Since the interviewer can't see you, it's fine to have your resume, cover letter, application, etc. printed out and in front of you during the interview.*

**Awkward Silence.** *Since you can't see the interviewer(s), it's difficult to gauge their reaction to your answers. If there are any long pauses, assume that they are taking notes regarding something you said. You can always check in and ask if they heard your last statement to ensure you haven't been disconnected.*

**Thank you.** *Ask the interviewer(s) for their contact information and repeat it back to them to ensure you have the correct email address so you can send thank you emails.*

**Professional Dress.** *Wear business casual attire during a phone interview to feel like you are on a face to face interview. Don't roll out of bed and get on a phone interview.*

## **SKYPE/VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS**

**Setting.** *Choose a quiet place where you have good wireless signal or internet service. Don't conduct the interview outside, in a cafeteria, coffee shop, or any place with a lot of noise. Test the internet connection and the application (Skype, Google Hangout) before the actual interview. Let family members know you are on an interview if you are having the interview at home. Don't use your phone for a virtual interview. **Create a professional username.***

**Professional Dress.** *Dress professionally like you would for a face to face, in-person interview.*



## **Common Professional Interview Questions**

### **Sample Mock Interview Questions**

- Tell me about yourself.
- How did you become interested in this field?
- What are your major strengths?
- What is your major weakness?
- What are some of your short and long-term goals? How are you preparing to achieve them?
- Give me an example of your leadership ability.
- Do you perform better as part of a team or solo?
- What internships/jobs/experiences have you had that have prepared you for this experience?

### **Questions & Guidelines**

#### **Tell me about yourself.**

You walk into the interview room, shake hands with your interviewer and sit down with your best interviewing smile on. Guess what their first question is? "Tell me about yourself."

Do you "wing it" and actually tell all manner of things about yourself? Will you spend the next 5 minutes rambling on about what an easy-going, loyal, dedicated, hard working employee you've been? If this is the case, you stand a good chance of having bored your interviewer to death thus creating a negative first impression.

Because it's such a common interview question, it's strange that more candidates don't spend the time to prepare for exactly how to answer it. Perhaps because the question seems so disarming and informal, we drop our guard and shift into ramble mode. Resist all temptation to do so.

Your interviewer is not looking for a 10-minute dissertation here. Instead, offer a razor sharp sentence or two that sets the stage for further discussion and sets you apart from your competitors. Remember to use what you learned in the Marketing Your Assets and Elevator Pitch lessons.

#### **Be Prepared**

When you walk into an interview, remember to always expect the "tell me about yourself" question. Prepare ahead of time by developing your own pitch personal branding statement that clearly tells who you are, your major strength and why you would be a good fit for the position you are interviewing for. The advantages of this approach are that you'll quickly gain their attention and interest them in knowing more. You'll separate yourself from your competitors. You'll also have a higher chance of being positively remembered and hired.

#### **What are some of your short and long-term goals? How are you preparing to achieve them?**

The best way to respond to the interview question "What are your goals for the future?" or "Where do you see yourself in five years?" is to refer to the position you are interviewing for and keep in mind that you will be about to graduate from college in about five years. So you should talk about the goals you have and how this internship opportunity connect to those goals.

Your long-term goals should include gaining experience in the field that you are interested in and being a top performer in your internship and in the classroom. You should also talk about wanting to go to college and excel academically to prepare you for a position in the field after you graduate.

### **What interests you about this internship?**

When you're asked what interests you about the position you are interviewing for, the best way to respond is to describe the qualifications listed in the internship posting, then connect them to your skills and experience. That way, the employer will see that you know about the internship you're interviewing for (not everyone does) and that you have the qualifications necessary for the internship. If you do not have any direct experience or skills you can talk about your transferable skills or your soft skills such as your research skills, leadership skills, analytical skills, research skills etc.

In all cases, you will want to convey your enthusiasm for the opportunity to interview, along with your solid ability to do well at the internship.

### **Are you a team player or an individual?**

Keep in mind that the ability to do both is important, but be honest about your preference. Give a few examples of the qualities that make you more successful as a team player or as an individual. Also have examples of steps you use to ensure you can do both effectively depending on the given task.

### **Why do you want this internship / How did you become interested in this field?**

You want the internship because you see it as an opportunity to excel in a field that you are interested in. You should have concrete and specific reasons why you became interested in the field. Was your interest sparked because of an academic class or an OppNet session or some other experience? You want to give as many details as possible.

### **How would you describe yourself?**

When you are applying for an entry level position this is a typical interview question. Here are sample interview answers which you can edit to fit your personal experiences and background:

- I'm a people person. I really enjoy meeting and working with a lot of different people.
- I'm a perfectionist. I pay attention to all the details, and like to be sure that everything is just right.
- I'm a creative thinker. I like to explore alternative solutions to problems and have an open mind about what will work best.

### **What do you know about this organization?**

A typical internship interview question, asked to find out how much research you have conducted, is "What do you know about this organization?"

Prepare in advance, and in a word, research, so, you can provide relevant and current information about your prospective employer to the interviewer. Start by researching the company online. Review the "About Us" section of the company web site. Google the company, read blogs that mention it, and check Discussion Boards and social networking sites.

Use the information you have gathered to create a bulleted list of relevant information that you can easily remember during the interview. Taking the time to research will help you make a good impression with how much you know about the organization.

### **Is there anything I haven't told you about the job or company that you would like to know?**

It's your turn! As the interview comes to a close, one of the final questions you may be asked is "What can I answer for you?" Have interview questions of your own ready to ask. You aren't simply trying to get this job - you are also interviewing the employer to assess whether this company and the position are a good fit for you.

#### *Questions to Ask the Interviewer:*

- How would you describe the responsibilities of the position?
- How would you describe a typical week/day in this position?
- How many people work in this office/department?
- What do you like about working here?

### **What motivates you?**

Here are sample interview answers which you can edit to fit your personal experiences and background:

- I'm motivated by personal achievement. I like to work hard and achieve the goals I have set out for myself.
- I really enjoy helping people, and when I see the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life, I take the initiative.
- I'm motivated by a challenge. The more challenging the project, the more I want to be successful in getting it finished.
- I love to learn new things, so projects that challenge me intellectually motivate me tremendously

### **What accomplishments are you the most proud of? Why?**

This question demonstrates what you value personally, academically and/or professionally. Have concrete examples in each area and share the ones that are most relevant to the flow of the conversation. Don't be shy to share accomplishments that make you unique. Before giving the example, you can also specify whether you're sharing a personal, academic or professional accomplishment to set the tone and expectation.