

How Do You Prepare For An Interview?



Peggy McKee

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5 Steps to Getting the Job

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This will help you “crush” your next interview!

About the Author

Peggy McKee is an expert resource and a dedicated advocate for job seekers. Known as the Sales Recruiter from Career Confidential, her years of experience as a nationally-known recruiter for sales and marketing jobs give her a unique perspective and advantage in developing the tools and strategies that help job seekers stand head and shoulders above the competition. Peggy has been named one of the Top 25 Most Influential Online Recruiters by HR Examiner, and has been quoted in articles from CNN, CAP TODAY, Yahoo!HotJobs, and the Denver Examiner.



Originally from Oklahoma, Peggy grew up on a 1000-acre ranch. She earned a B.S. in Chemistry and an M.B.A. in Marketing from the University of Oklahoma, and went on to great achievements in the medical sales arena. Eventually, she moved to her adopted state of Texas, where she lives with her husband and two children. She's still a cowgirl at heart and loves ranch work, trail riding, and her favorite horse, Lucky.

In 1999 Peggy founded PHC Consulting, a very successful medical sales recruiting firm. When she consistently found herself offering advice to jobseekers who weren't even her own candidates, she developed a new business model in order to offer personalized career coaching as well as the tools jobseekers need to thrive and succeed in the job search... and Career Confidential was born.

Today, Career Confidential offers more than 30 products, tools, and webinars for job seekers. Peggy receives positive responses every day from candidates who have used them to land the job of their dreams, and she loves that she has been able to contribute to their success.

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Introduction

As a recruiter and career coach for the last 15 years, I understand just how difficult job interviews are and how competitive the job search has become. A lot of people go into job interviews completely unprepared for what they're going to find, and what happens next is really ugly. Even people who try hard to prepare sometimes fall short because there's just a few more things they should have done.

To help job seekers with this very common problem, I put together a complete set of worksheets – about 20 pages of them – that makes sure you are never unprepared for an interview again. These worksheets guide you through everything you need to be thinking about before your interview: the kinds of things you need to research and ask about, the kinds of questions you should expect, the kinds of questions you should ask, and more. They tell you how to communicate. And they just do a really good job of providing you an outline for success in your interview through good, thorough preparation.

When you really prepare for the interview, what happens is amazing. People who use my worksheets to prepare for their interviews email me afterward and say things like,

“I nailed it.”

“I crushed it.”

“I could tell the manager was impressed with my preparation.”

“They're moving me forward.”

“They said I was the best-prepared candidate they ever had.”

“They're going to make me an offer.”

“They made me an offer at the interview.”

These are the kinds of responses that we get when people are really well prepared.

Preparation is key—because you can be the right candidate, the one they need to hire, but if you're not prepared well enough for the interview to communicate that to them... well, it's possible they'll hire someone else. Someone who isn't as good at the job as you are, but who is better prepared to communicate in the interview, could easily get hired over you. So you really owe it to yourself to spend some time preparing for your

interview.

Take the time to go through this ebook. And get online, too – use the links we give you throughout this book, and at the end of this section, to get the PDF and use it as a guide to prepare for your interview.

I really want your success. I'd love to hear in an email from you that you got this book and you prepared for the interview and you crushed it and that you appreciated it. We love to hear those kinds of stories.

I'm going to wish you the best of luck but I know you don't need luck, because the definition of luck is where work meets opportunity. The opportunity is the interview and the work is the preparation you need to do. Now you have the tools you need. I look forward to hearing about your great success.

Use this link to download the free PDF worksheets that accompany this book:

<http://CareerConfidential.com/job-interview-preparation-guide-online-worksheets/>

Step 1 – Research the Company

Job Interview Prep: Are You Keeping Up in the Interview “Arms Race”?



Recently, I asked this question on LinkedIn:

Do you think that a job seeker has to be MORE prepared than before?

I’ve been thinking about how different the job market is today from even a few years ago. Between the current economic times and our ridiculously high unemployment rates, I think that candidates have to be more prepared than ever before—do more research, be more assertive, demonstrate their motivation, and go the extra mile in their follow up. This is what I’m seeing as a recruiter, but I wanted to know if that’s what hiring managers think, too.

I got a very interesting response. The overwhelming feeling is that yes, job seekers do need to step up their game because it’s an employer’s market now and they are able to pick and choose who they want—and yet they’re very surprised by how many job seekers haven’t gotten the message.

Well, here it is: **the bar has been raised.**

One even called the current job market an “arms race.” If you want to win, you’ve got to constantly be finding ways to be better than the next guy.

Today's hiring managers are looking for knowledge, hunger, and creativity in their top candidates. They are expecting you to bring your "A" game every time. And if you don't, they can just wait for the next candidate because it won't be long.

Here are some of the best job search tips I got from this discussion:

- **Start your interview prep well before you have an interview scheduled.** Two days is not enough time to prepare for an interview. Begin researching companies and practicing your answers to interview questions now, so that you're not scrambling to get it all done when an interview presents itself.
- **Research everything.** The internet has made researching a company very easy, and if you don't do it, you just look lazy. Use Google, LinkedIn, Facebook, blogs, news articles, everything you can find about the company—mission, goals, obstacles, enemies, and opportunities.
- **Be able to tell the hiring manager what's in it for him.** Why should he hire you? What are you bringing that the other candidates can't?
- **Develop your brand.** That idea throws some people, but it just means to have a consistent message about what you're an expert at and how you bring value to an employer. If someone else was going to describe you, what would they say?
- **If interviews are going to be more competitive, you need to generate more interviews.** Give yourself the best chance possible. Contacting hiring managers directly is the very best way to do that. And I don't mean 10 of them, I mean 100 of them. If you want a job, you need to approach it like it's your mission in life (and right now, it is). Go all out.

How to Research the Company

“Do your homework” is one of the great clichés of the job search. It means that you should research the company and the job before you go into the interview.

But maybe you’ve heard it so often that you’ve stopped paying attention. Here’s how to tell: if you’ve ever gone to a job interview and the only thing you’ve done is Googled the company and maybe looked at their corporate website, you’ve stopped paying attention.

That kind of approach to what should be a careful and thorough research project will come back to bite you every time, because here’s what happens:

- You will stumble over your answer when the interviewer asks (and he will), “So what do you know about our company?” Stumbling is bad. That will indicate a lack of interest and make you look like you don’t know what you’re doing, which is exactly the opposite of what you want to be projecting right about then.
- You will answer at least some of your interview questions blindly, and you’ll be wrong. You just won’t know, and you won’t know that you don’t know until it’s much too late.
- You won’t have the ability to create a 30/60/90-Day plan, which is a killer interview tool.
- You could end up working for a company that you hate, or that is in financial trouble. You will have made a huge mistake because you didn’t look before you leaped.

So—before you step one foot closer to your next job interview, stop and thoroughly research that company. I want you to be the best-prepared candidate they’ve ever seen. Here are 12 ways to research the company.

1. I do want you to **Google the company**, but that’s only your first step. Read everything you can about them. If they’ve made the news, it will be on Google. You want to know if they have done anything newsworthy lately, or if there are any big changes coming.

If your interview is more than a few days away, do yourself a time-saving favor and set up a Google Alert. Google alerts emailed you with updates of whatever you ask it for. Enter the name of the company, and every time it appears in a web article, it will get emails to your Inbox. Just go to www.google.com/alerts and set it up. It's easy.

2. **Go to the company's website.** Most company websites offer really helpful sections like "About Us," their products or services, their mission, and maybe even their management teams.

The "About Us" or the mission section will give you strong clues to what the company's corporate values are, and if it's a good fit for you. You might even be able to pick up on key words and concepts that matter to them and work that into your interview.

Their products and services sections are where you're going to start gathering some strategic information for your 30/60/90-day plan. What's their main focus? What's their target market? Can you start evaluating their strengths and weaknesses?

You could even focus on the products or services themselves and research them and check out the reviews.

3. Go to the **company's LinkedIn page**. Sometimes you can learn a lot more usable information from their LinkedIn page than you can from their official website.
4. While you're on **LinkedIn**, see if you can identify any current or past employees. Where did they come from? Do they stay with this company for a long time, or is there high turnover? Where do they tend to go when they move on? All of those things are big clues for you.
5. If they have a LinkedIn page, they might also have a **Facebook page**. All of these web pages—the corporate one, LinkedIn and Facebook will have a slightly different focus and will give you a better-rounded look at the company.
6. Don't forget about **Twitter**. Lots and lots of companies and the people who work for them Tweet. Sometimes those employee tweets are particularly telling about what's going on over there.
7. Now that you've done this much research, you can also start looking at their **competitors**. It will give you another perspective of the company, and you'll be

able to tell more about their place in the market. How do they compare against their competitors? Now you can start doing a SWOT Analysis of the company—that's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. That's very impressive to refer to in your interview, and it helps you create a higher-quality 30/60/90-day plan.

8. **Blogs** are another resource that most people don't think of using. Sometimes you can get insider information from them, and sometimes you get insightful perspectives from articles talking about the company. For instance, on my medical sales blog, I've written before about particular organizations and what my experience has been with them and what I've learned from their employees.
9. Speaking of **recruiters**, if you're working with one they are one of the best resources you'll ever find and you should take advantage of that. Ask all kinds of questions about the company, the culture, the expectations, and what they're really looking for in a candidate. If your recruiter has submitted you for a position, they're very interested in whether or not you get it, so they're willing to help.
10. **Ask around.** If you don't have a recruiter, you can ask the person who referred you to the company, someone who used to work at the company, or a current employee. You might have some of these folks in your current network, or you might be able to connect with them on LinkedIn.
11. Get back on LinkedIn and check out industry-based **groups**. Maybe there will be a discussion of the company that you can peek in on or even ask a question. Most people are glad to answer them.
12. Look for **financial reports** of the company. You can look at the company's stock prices, or you can just go to Forbes to see their take on the financial health and future of the company.

Do you see how much better prepared you'll be for the interview when you take these extra steps? You'll make a big impression on your future boss, and you'll have a much higher quality interview conversation. If you want to be the candidate who "wow"s them and walks away with the offer, you will make the effort to do as much research as you can before you get to the interview.

Learn more about 30-60-90-day plans here:

<http://careerconfidential.com/30-60-90-day-plan-how-to-create-and-use-it-to-knock-their-socks-off-in-the-job-interview/>

Download your free job interview prep worksheets as a PDF here:

<http://CareerConfidential.com/job-interview-preparation-guide-online-worksheets/>

Step 2 – Get Ready to Ask the Right Questions

Ask Questions in Your Job Interview



It might surprise you to know that asking questions of your own during your job interview is just as important as answering them. Candidates spend a lot of time on interview preparation, and they should. Doing your research on the company, bringing your 30/60/90-day plan, and preparing compelling answers to interview questions (as well as having some stories to back them up) are guaranteed ways to have a good interview. But one thing that will make you stand out from other candidates is asking questions.

Asking questions tells you what you need to know.

After all, you're interviewing the company, too. Is it going to be a good fit for you? Is it going to be somewhere you'll be able to grow and advance your career? To find out these answers, you'll ask questions about the company, the mission, the typical workday, travel schedules, and so on—just don't ask about the salary or the vacation!

Asking questions shows that you researched the company.

Hiring managers love to know that you were professional enough and interested enough in the company to investigate it before the interview. It's really almost a

requirement. If they realize that you have walked into this interview knowing nothing about the company, most hiring managers will assume that you don't care whether or not you get the job. A couple of thoughtful questions based on your research show that you took the time to look around. Avoid questions that show your ignorance about the company, or questions that ask for basic information that you could have Googled.

Asking questions gives you better answers to interview questions.

Do you want to know what the hiring manager wants to hear? Ask him. Say something like, "What are you looking for in a candidate?" or "Tell me about your most successful employee." Or ask, "What tasks will define success for this job?" You can even ask, "What would sink an employee in this position?" These questions help you uncover information you can't get anywhere else... who's a better source than the person hiring for the job? The answers to any of these questions will define for you what the hiring manager is looking for so that you can show him how you will deliver those qualities and skills he needs when you answer his questions.

Asking questions uncovers doubts the hiring manager might have about you.

When you ask questions like "Do you see any reason you wouldn't move me forward in this process?" or "Is there any reason you wouldn't hire me?" the manager will tell you what he sees as your weak spots. It might be a real one that you can provide a plan for correcting, or it might just be a misconception on his part because you didn't give him the answer he was looking for in a previous question. Once you've uncovered those issues, you can correct them and possibly save the interview.

Asking questions turns the interview into a conversation.

Conducting a conversation, rather than participating in a ping-pong-style Q&A session, helps to establish rapport. It becomes a 'give-and-take' between professionals. It makes you seem confident, and capable of thinking strategically. And, it makes you seem more enthusiastic and interested in the job.

You can't go wrong by asking questions. Asking questions of your own not only gives you the information you need to make an informed decision about whether to take the job, it also gives you the information you need to do a better job at selling yourself.

If you're not comfortable with this, find an interview coach to role-play the interview with you. It's worth it if it increases your confidence and gives you a smoother, more successful interview.

20 Questions Great Job Candidates Ask



Hiring managers always ask in an interview, “Do you have any questions for me?” It’s amazing how many candidates say, “No, I think I’ve got it.” That’s one of the worst responses you can give.

Another big chunk of candidates only ask, “When will I hear from you?” That’s a good question, but it’s by no means the best or only question you should ask.

Truly great candidates ask questions that give them more information about the company and the opportunity. They let that interviewer know that you’ve done your homework and you’re a strategic thinker who’s willing and able to produce results. And they reveal something that many candidates forget in their focus on getting the job: “Is this job the right fit?”

Asking the right questions keeps you from making a mistake you’ll regret while it helps you stand out from the rest of the pack in a very significant way. It gives you the information you need to be much more effective at selling yourself for the job.

With that in mind, here are 20 great questions you should ask in your next job interview:

1. Why is this position open?

The answer to this question can give you all kinds of information you can't get anywhere else about this job. Maybe the last employer was a poor performer. Why? What kinds of things did that person fail to do? The answer tells you a lot about what the company values.

Maybe the last person was promoted. Is that a typical career path in this company? Does the company encourage promoting from within? That's something you need to know... will you have to leave if you want to move up, or could you do it here?

2. How long was the last person in this position?

Their answer to this tells you about the turnover rate for the job. If they name a very short term, your follow-up question should be, "Why?" You want to know if there was a performance issue, a fit issue, or some other issue that might rear up to bite you when you're on the job.

3. What does your ideal candidate look like?

What's on their "wish list" for a perfect hire? Ask this as early in the interview as you can manage. It will give you a strong idea of specifically what type of person the interviewer is looking to hire. You will find out desired skills that might not be in the description (who knows who wrote the description or when they wrote it?). Once you know what the manager really cares about hearing, you'll be able to talk up those related skills you have. You can orient your presentation of skills, abilities and experience towards their specific needs. That's how you can be super-effective with your time. Rather than talk about your technical abilities to a hiring manager who is looking for a 'people person' you will be able to rank your social, customer service skills slightly above your technical skills and have a better interview.

4. What do you expect me to accomplish in the first 60 to 90 days?

Great candidates want to hit the ground running. Employers are excited about candidates who understand that time is money. If they're hiring, they have a problem they need to solve and they need it taken care of yesterday. Asking a question like this says that you're the one they need.

This might be an easy way for you to ease your way into showing them your 30-60-90-day plan. If the employer starts talking about things you know you have on your plan, you can say, "I'm glad to hear you say that, because those are the same kinds of things I put in my own plan of how I could hit the ground running. And I added this and this. What do you think?"

An alternative is to just come right out and say, **“Here’s what I see myself doing in the first 3 months on the job. I’d like to go through it with you quickly and get your input.”** However you choose to phrase it, you should plan to bring this into the conversation yourself. Most hiring managers won’t ask to see your 30-60-90-day plan. But once you get that discussion started, the quality of your conversation skyrockets, and they can start to really see you in the job. They see your knowledge of the job and their company (even if it isn’t completely perfect—that’s OK), they see your strategic- and critical-thinking skills, and they see that you are a go-getter who WILL be successful. It’s very powerful to have that on your side in the interview.

5. What would a successful first year in this position look like?

This should tell you what your goals would be and how they evaluate performance. Can you do well at this job?

It also lets them know that you’re someone who cares about longer-term success than just getting the job. You want to be an achiever in this role.

6. Where do you think your team or organization needs improvement and how do you see the person in this role contributing to that?

This gives you an additional opportunity to respond to their questions with the qualities that they said they needed.

It highlights your team-player spirit, your thoughtfulness and strategic thinking about your contributions to the organization as a whole, and hopefully uncovers any issues you should be aware of before you take the job.

7. What are the common traits of your top performers in this role?

Hiring managers love this question because it’s a signal to them that you care about being outstanding. And it’s a fantastic way to get them to tell you exactly what they’re looking for in an ideal candidate!

Every organization is different, and every organization values different qualities in their top employees. Maybe their top people put in really long hours. Or maybe they’re super-creative. Maybe in one company they’re big on landing new customers while in another they’re more concerned with developing customer relationships.

This really is a question of fit. Do you fit? And can you succeed there?

When they tell you what they value, you can start selling to that point. How do you exemplify those traits?

8. What are the biggest challenges of this position?

This question lets them know that you aren't just excited about your new paycheck. You're focused on how you can overcome obstacles and be successful in this role.

Their answer allows you to say something along the lines of, "My background in X makes me an ideal person to address those challenges for you."

9. How would I be evaluated in this position and who would be responsible for the evaluations?

Finding out this answer will give you more insight into the priorities for candidate and who will be managing you in the position.

10. How does this position fit in with the company's long-term plans?

Here you are hoping for an answer that will define the purpose of this job within the company, the security of the position, and the potential for long-term growth. This question opens the door to the possible discussion of business strategy, and can give you another chance to sell yourself by showing how your strategies will help the company in the long term.

11. How would you describe a typical day on the job?

First, their answer will give you tremendous insight into whether or not you really want to work there. Second, what they say will give you big clues to what they see as the most important tasks for that job, and what they're looking for a candidate to do. These clues will help you tailor the rest of what you say to most effectively sell yourself for that job.

12. What do employees do in their spare time?

This is another question of fit. Will you fit in with the culture there? Do most employees have kids? Do they socialize with each other? Do they all have motorcycles? Maybe the interviewer will say, "What spare time?" and you'll have a pretty clear idea that you won't have any, either.

13. What things really drive results in this company?

This is a great strategic question. If you've ever heard of the 80/20 rule, you know that 20% of any given effort usually produces 80% of the results. What are the most important actions within that company?

This is going to make a big impression on the interviewer, because they will see you as someone who can think strategically, cares about productivity and focuses on results.

And when they tell you, you can hopefully point out how something you've done in the past is similar to what they need for results... so you can connect the dots for them about how you're a great fit.

14. Why would a candidate want to work for you instead of your competitor and why would they stay?

You are giving them an opportunity to sell you on the position now and to give you some ideas about whether the job would be right for you.

15. How do you plan to deal with X?

A great pre-interview research plan will look at the challenges of the industry and the specific challenges that company faces within that arena. A SWOT analysis that looks at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats will give you a very clear picture of the company and a great foundation for asking this question. This company could be facing any number of challenges: a competing business, changing technology, new laws, rising prices... anything.

Asking this question does a few things for you: It lets them know you've done your homework, it demonstrates to them that you're a strategic thinker, and it gives you great insight into the future of the company and your career if you go to work for them.

16. How would you describe your management style?

This person's management style will have a dramatic impact on the majority of your waking hours if you take this job. How do they interact with employees? How do they delegate? How do they react to mistakes? All this will tell you whether or not you can work with this person?

17. What do you like about working for this company?

This is a great question to ask because it should uncover perks about the job you

might not have heard about otherwise. Maybe the culture is very cooperative, rather than competitive. Maybe they're really good about developing people for the next step up. Maybe there's a gym or great childcare or profit-sharing. You'll get insight into the company as well as insight into what's important to this person who may be your next boss.

18. What do you see as my strengths and weaknesses as a candidate?

This question is a winner in two different ways: One, it lets you peel back the curtain to see what he really thinks of you... that's crucial for you to know in an interview situation.

Two, it signals to him that you're self-aware, able to take criticism, and confident. It's a powerful question.

You'll be able to play up your strengths in the rest of your conversation, and you'll be able to address the issues that might cause you to not get the job. Maybe you only need to correct some misinformation, or maybe you need to tell him why that weakness won't be an obstacle to your success.

19. Are you confident that I am someone who can meet the challenges of this position?

Another way to ask this is, "Based on what we've talked about today, can you see me being wildly successful in this job?" I prefer this positive style of asking this question rather than the negative: "Is there any reason I would not be successful in this role?", or "Do you have any reservations about hiring me?" Or, "Is there any reason you wouldn't move me forward in this process?" But however is most comfortable for you to ask it is what you should choose. The most important thing is that you ask it.

Why is this so very important? Because the answer will uncover any doubts or uncertainties they have about offering you the job.

This can be a tough, tough question to ask. It takes a lot of guts to lay that right out in the open. But you have to do it. You'll do yourself a disservice if you don't. While this may feel pretty bold or even slightly pushy, this aggressiveness and honesty in asking for the job is what gets people hired.

Uncovering their doubts about hiring you right then means that you can address them right then. You can head off a lot of issues by being this direct. It may be something you can't do anything about, in which case it will save you a lot of

worry while you're waiting to hear back from them. But it may be a simple misconception you can fix, like they can't afford to relocate you. You can tell them you're perfectly willing to move yourself because you want this job so much. Maybe he thinks you don't have experience in something, and you just haven't talked about it yet. So now you can, and he feels better.

20. When can I expect to hear from you?

It's amazing how many people think this question is too bold to ask, but hiring managers expect you to ask it. If you don't, they'll assume you have decided that you don't want the job.

And it will ease your mind to have the answer before you leave. Now you know when to expect something, so you don't have to worry about "When?" And if you haven't heard anything by that date, you know that's when you should be calling them to see what's up.

This might seem like a long list, but it really isn't. Some of these questions might get answered without you even asking. Some you'll be able to ask during the flow of the conversation. And some you'll have ready to go at the end when they say, "Do you have any questions for us?" You'll ask great questions that help you knock their socks off one more time before you leave the interview.

Get your list of questions ready to go using your free Job Interview Prep worksheets:

<http://CareerConfidential.com/job-interview-preparation-guide-online-worksheets/>

Step 3 – Know How to Answer Interview Questions

5 Difficult Interview Questions and How to Answer Them



Some very common job interview questions put you right in the hot seat. They are difficult, they are delicate, and they can cause you problems if you don't answer them well. Here are 5 difficult, but very common, interview questions:

1. Why should we hire you?
2. Why do you want to work here?
3. Why are you leaving (or why did you leave) your last job?
4. What salary are you looking for?
5. What questions do you have for us?

I'm going to walk you through how to think about and approach your answer to those questions, and show you how to answer them in a positive, confident way and keep selling yourself for the job.

1. Why should we give you the job over the other candidates? Or, Why should we hire you?

Most people are not that comfortable with the idea of tooting their own horn, but that's exactly what you have to do when you answer this question. Tell them why they need you.

To do that, you have to know how your skill set equals the skill set required for this position... and if you can, show how you offer that PLUS a bit more.

You don't need a lot, just one more thing that makes you special and will help you exceed their expectations... one or two specific accomplishments that really highlight you as a great candidate. Everything you say should be focused on how you're going to not just meet, but exceed their expectations.

Say something like, "I deserve the job because I have the skills, I meet the qualifications, I fit you culturally, I've done the work before successfully, (and here's where you give them your example). I'm going to be able to perform successfully in this role, and that's what you want, do you agree?"

It's OK to ask if they agree or if you've answered the question—you need to know if you answered what they were asking. That's just good communication.

2. Why do you want to join this company?

All companies want to know that you want to work for them and not that you just want a job. Your answer to this question should sound like, "I want to join this company because..." and then list at least 3 reasons why.

The first one should show fit in terms of professional skills: "I can see where my skill sets would benefit you in this role, and I would also benefit personally, professionally, and financially from that. If I can come in here and fix this problem

for you, I'm sure you'll have other problems I can fix down the road, and that looks like a great future for me."

This tells them why you're excited about what you can do for them. It's what they're getting out of hiring you.

The second one should show a cultural fit: "I like what I've been reading about the company, and it seems like a great fit for my personality and values and who I want to be working for."

Do your company research before the interview so that you can give specific examples. What does this company do that appeals to you? Is it a top company in its field? Are they known for their cutting-edge products? Do they have a great reputation for customer service? Are they known for being a great place to work? Talk about those things that speak to you about the company.

And then you can say something that personalizes it a little more, like: "The job is in a great location for me. I've always wanted to move here." Or, "It's only 5 minutes from my house, and I love that." Or, "I've always used these products, and I just love them and am really excited about being a part of that." Something that gives you another reason of your own for wanting this job.

Show them your sincere enthusiasm for this job.

3. Why are you looking to leave your current job? Or, Why did you leave your last job?

This can be a delicate subject, because most people don't leave a job that's a positive situation for them. They know there was a problem or you'd probably still be there, and they want to make sure that the problem isn't you.

The sticking point with either question is that you never want to appear negative in a job interview because it reflects so badly on you. Don't start talking about everything you didn't like about your old job. It doesn't matter anyway, and it will only make you look like a complainer to this person.

If you must give a reason, make sure it's something neutral that is a factor in your old job and is not a factor in your new one. Try to put a positive spin on everything.

For instance, if this job requires no travel, you could say, “There’s a lot of travel in the old job and I’m ready to be at home in my own bed more often.”

Or you could say, if you’re moving from a small company to a big one: “I’ve loved my time at XYZ company and learned many skills, but there’s not much room for growth at higher levels there and I’m ready to move up.”

Or if the new job is in another city, you can say, “I hate to leave that company; they’ve been very good to me, but I am moving to this area and need something that’s closer to home.”

If you were laid off, hopefully you can say that it was a mass layoff or a restructuring where it wasn’t you who was the problem. It was a company thing that you got caught in the middle of. They will understand that.

If you were fired, don’t try to cover it up. They will find out eventually, and it will be bad. Just do a little confessing: “I have to be honest with you here. That was kind of a bad situation that I’m embarrassed about. It wasn’t a good decision to take that job—I did it for the wrong reasons, it wasn’t a good fit, etc. I can only say that it was a brief bump in the road of an otherwise great career. I would love to have you speak to some of my references, including my former employer John Smith (who is going to be your boss from a job you’ve had in the past). They will be able to speak to my qualifications for this job, and my work ethic.” If you’re in this situation, be absolutely sure your references are rock solid.

Whatever answer you give, be as brief as you can. Mostly what you want to do here is focus on how it’s not that you’re running AWAY from that job, it’s that you’re running TO this job. Running away is a negative; running to is a positive. Give them a reason you’re running to this job: it’s such a great fit, it offers so many things you’re looking for, and so on... Be as specific as you can about what it is that you’re running to with this company. Why do you like them? Why is it a great fit for you? Tell them that, and you’ll have a great answer.

4. What salary are you looking for?

It’s pretty common for them to try to pin you down on salary early on. But you know you’re not supposed to be talking numbers until you get an offer, so you have to try and dodge this one if you can.

You can turn it back to them and say: “What’s the range for this position?” When they tell you, you can say, “I’m comfortable with that. If you decide that I’m a good fit for the job and I decide it’s a good fit for me, I will be completely fine with discussing a salary in that range.”

Or you can be more straightforward and say, “I’m really interested in finding out more about the job and telling you more about me so that we can see if we’re a good fit before we start talking about the money.”

If that doesn’t feel comfortable, you can say, “I’m looking for a great opportunity, and I’m sure you’ll offer a salary that’s commensurate with the responsibility of this job.”

If they keep pushing you for a number, then say, “My research says that the salary range should be in between X and Y dollars for this position. Is that the range you have budgeted for this job?” And if they say “Yes,” you can again reassure them that you’re comfortable with that range and steer the conversation back to your fit for the job.

Keep the focus on selling yourself for the job—because if they don’t want to hire you, the money doesn’t matter anyway.

5. What questions do you have for us?

By the end of the job interview, when they ask if you have any questions for them, you probably feel like you’re toast. That’s the way most people feel, so the most common response to this question is, “I don’t have any questions, I think you’ve covered everything.”

Never, ever say that. It makes you look uninterested in the job.

Ask questions that make it clear you’ve been listening to what their main problems and concerns are. Clarify, elaborate, or dig deeper. There are lots of good questions to ask.

Ask about the timeline: “How soon do you want to have someone in the role?” That shows you are motivated to get started quickly.

Ask about the last person who was in this role. If the person who had the position before was promoted, ask, “Is that a traditional track for this job?” If the person who was in the role was fired, ask, “Can you tell me how they weren’t meeting expectations so I could understand?”

If you’re speaking with your direct future boss, ask about the biggest challenges of the job and can he see you meeting those challenges?

If you’re speaking with the Human Resources Manager, ask about the company, the growth of the department, where it fits in relation to the rest of the company, and so on.

If you’re speaking with upper management, ask questions that demonstrate your understanding of the industry as a whole and this company’s place in it and its plans for the future.

This is not the time to ask about anything that would benefit you, like salary, vacations, or perks. At this point, they’re like your customer. It’s all about them right now, not you. Just ask a few more questions that show your interest, enthusiasm, and concern for their problem with getting that job done.

I hope you can see that you don’t have to be nervous about answering these difficult job interview questions. Just keep your focus on the positive. Continue the conversation and ask questions to find out more details that will help you move in the direction of uncovering more of their motivations, needs, and wants you can so you can better position yourself as the candidate they want.

Learn more about how to answer interview questions with Career Confidential’s blog series, How to Answer Interview Questions. It’s a series of 101 tough job interview questions and answers that will make you shine in the interview. See the series here:

<http://careerconfidential.com/how-to-answer-interview-questions-series/>

Download your free Job Interview Prep worksheets here:

<http://CareerConfidential.com/job-interview-preparation-guide-online-worksheets/>

Step 4 – Prepare Evidence That Proves You Will Be a Good Hire



Brag Book Essentials for Every Job Hunter

Brag books (aka professional portfolios) deliver great benefits for your job search: they boost your attitude, they help with your interview talking points, and they even act as a kind of a reference that will nudge that hiring manager along the road to offering you the job.

What goes in a brag book?

- A brag book can include just about anything you want:
- letters of recommendation (phone references are best, but written letters won't hurt)
- “attaboy” notes (or any notes that compliment you on what a great job you did)
- annual reviews (if you include some, include them all)
- awards / rewards letters
- types of equipment you've used or marketed
- certificates from career-relevant educational courses you've completed
- financial or PowerPoint presentations
- copies of articles you've written
- brochures you've helped develop
- a college transcript (though ONLY if you're just getting out).
- Usually, these are put into page protectors and gathered into a binder for easy reference.

A brag book is a positive-attitude resource

All that evidence of your success is a great mood booster anytime the job search gets you down.

Brag books are great job interview tools

When you bring the brag book into the interview, it acts as evidence for what you say you can do. You can show specific pages as examples to illustrate an answer to an interview question, or you can show it as a general example of the quality of your work. Either way, it sets you apart as someone who pays attention to the details, who is achievement-oriented, and who cares about giving your best. It's definitely provides an impressive "wow" factor.

Brag books help "sell" you for the job

To the hiring manager, offering you a job often feels like a risk. Many people believe that past performance predicts future behavior, and brag books are another way to make them feel more comfortable about hiring you.

If you haven't already, start putting your brag book together today. You will be amazed at how much it helps you.

Learn exactly how to create a job-winning “brag book” here:

<http://careerconfidential.com/brag-book-podcast-product-reviews/>

What You Have to Prove In the Interview



If you've been in the job market very long, you know how competitive it is out there. But all that means is that since employers aren't chasing you, you've got to bring your "A game" to the interview.

Your mission in the interview is to prove to the hiring manager that

- a. **you understand the job;**
- b. **you will be successful in the job; and**
- c. **you not only won't be a risk to his own employment, you'll make him look good.**

But how do you prove that? He's got more than a few candidates telling him that they have such-and-such experience, and that they're driven, hard-working, enthusiastic, energetic, etc. How do you stand out?

You stand out from the rest of the candidates through your extensive research and preparation.

You've got to be able to address, with as much knowledge as you can, what the company's issues are and how you're the best person to them. That means doing your homework. You've got to know what the company's mission, goals, and biggest problems are. Do you see the shift here? It's a little less "this is what I can do" and a little more "this is how I can help you get where you want to go."

And, the best way to showcase your job interview preparation is through a 30/60/90-day plan.

A 30/60/90-day plan is a written outline of your tasks and goals for your first 3 months on the job. (Many people think about it in relation to sales jobs, but it's completely adaptable to just about every job). You're spelling out for your potential employer that you know what you need to do to be successful. The more company-specific it is, the better--and that's where your research comes in. Don't worry, it doesn't have to be perfect. It's a tool that will facilitate your interview conversation, and you can revise it later. The important thing is that it shows the hiring manager you've thought about how you'll accomplish important goals. It demonstrates your communication skills, strategic thinking, dedication, and commitment.

Putting this kind of plan together takes a significant amount of work--a lot more than most candidates will do. But that's exactly why it makes you stand out as a candidate who can prove why you are the best person for the job.

Why You Need a 30/60/90-Day Plan to Shine In the Interview



The best-prepared candidate is often the one who gets the offer.

And the hands-down, very best way to ensure that YOU are the best-prepared candidate is to construct a 30/60/90-day plan.

A 30/60/90-day plan is a written outline of what you will be doing in your first 3 months on the job. It's divided up into segments--your first 30 days, which are usually focused on training and the getting-to-know-everyone part; the next 30 days (the 60-day part), which is usually the getting-up-to-speed portion; and the last 30 days (the 90-day part), which is where you set goals for accomplishing on your own (like bringing in new accounts, going after new business, or otherwise contributing to the growth of the company).

These plans can be as detailed as you wish, or you can keep it simple. The important

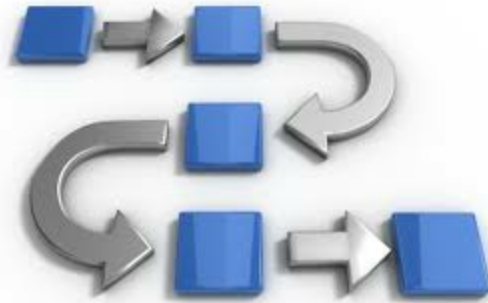
thing is to make it specific to the company you're interviewing with. Not only does that allow you to demonstrate that you've done your homework on the company, it helps you talk to the hiring manager about specific things you'll be doing, which helps him to see you in the job (which is half your battle).

Want more? They also help you have more control over your conversation with the hiring manager. It facilitates finding out what the hiring manager is really interested in, so that you can talk about what's going to sell you as a candidate for the job.

The 30/60/90-day plan takes some effort to put together. The research on the company is the most extensive and time-consuming part (but you need to know that stuff anyway, right?) and then it takes some strategic thinking to actually write out the plan. But just the effort alone makes you shine in the interview because most candidates won't go that far in thinking about their role at the company before they've even got the job. It makes the hiring manager look at you and think, "If this candidate will work this hard and show this much commitment to the company before we've even hired him, what will he do as an employee?" And THAT'S what you want him to think.

To really shine in the interview, you want to blow the hiring manager away with your focus, energy, initiative and dedication right from the start. The 30/60/90-day plan is the way to do that.

How to Write a 30/60/90-Day Plan



If you're searching for a job, you want every advantage you can get, right? Which means, you've probably put a lot of effort into your resume, you've found the perfect suit for interviewing, and you've gone over your answers to potential interview questions as well as your dos and don'ts.

Want another advantage?

Create a 30/60/90-day plan for the job you want.

What is a 30-60-90 day plan? And how do you use it to get a job? Why does it help?

A 30-60-90-day plan is an outline for what you will do when you start the job. Essentially, you spell out for your future employer, in as little or as much detail as necessary, how you will spend your time. To do that, you have to do some research on the company so that you know what you're talking about... a search on Google, LinkedIn, or the company's own website can provide you with the information you need. (It's always impressive to a hiring manager if you can show that you've done your homework before the interview, remember?)

The basics:

The **first 30 days** of your plan is usually focused on training—learning the company

systems, products, and customers. So, most of the items in your 30-day plan should be along the lines of attending training, mastering product knowledge, learning specific corporate systems, traveling to learn your territory (if you're in sales), meeting other members of the team, or reviewing accounts.

The **next 30 days (the 60-day part)** are focused on more field time, less training, more customer introductions, reviews of customer satisfaction, and getting feedback from your manager.

The **last 30 days (the 90-day part)** are the “getting settled” part. You’ve had the training, you’ve met the customers, and now you can focus on sales! It should include things that take more initiative on your part: landing your own accounts, scheduling programs, or coming up with new ways to get prospects' attention (again, if you're in sales), as well as continuing to get performance feedback and fine-tuning your schedule.

The more specific you can be in the details, the better off you are—by that I mean specifying the name of the training you’ll need, rather than just indicating that you’ll “get training,” for instance. That’s why you research the company, not just the position!

This kind of analysis of the position not only sets you apart from other job seekers... it also makes you a better performer on the job. It means you’ve put some thought into what it takes to be successful, and once you’ve written down your goals, they become much easier to attain.

Using a 30-60-90-day plan to show that you’ve done your homework, analyzed the position, and thoughtfully considered how you can best serve this particular company in this particular capacity is very impressive to a hiring manager. This kind of effort is the advantage you need that will set you apart from other candidates and get you hired.

Learn more about how to create your own 30/60/90-day plan here:

<http://careerconfidential.com/30-60-90-day-plan-how-to-create-and-use-it-to-knock-their-socks-off-in-the-job-interview/>

30/60/90-day plans and brag books are included in your free Job Interview Prep worksheets. Download them here:

<http://CareerConfidential.com/job-interview-preparation-guide-online-worksheets/>

Step 5 – Look the Part (Appearance and Body Language)

How to Dress for an Interview if You Want the Job



Do you know that most people develop a lasting impression of you and what you're like based on the first few seconds of meeting you? That's way before you've said anything important... you've barely said "hello." Some of that impression is based off your body language and handshake, true, but the rest is based off how you look—what you're wearing.

Your interviewer is even more focused on you than most people. They're really looking for clues to base their hiring decision on. So, when you really want that job, it's important to keep 'professional' at the top of your mind when dressing for the interview.

A good rule of thumb is to dress one step above what you would be expected to wear on the job. In other words, dress for success.

Suit

For men, this means wearing a full suit rather than coordinates. A full suit shows respect and attention to detail. The suit should be dark in color over a white shirt. The tie should be conservative. At the first meeting, it's better to be safe than sorry.

Besides color, women need to also consider whether a skirt suit or a pants suit is more appropriate. While most hiring managers prefer women in a skirt suit, they tend not to penalize women for wearing a pants suit. It's important for both men and women to remember that the suit should be professional and comfortable.

Comfortable, in this case, is not synonymous with "comfy" which implies sloppy. Since what you wear reflects your attitude, "comfy" clothing will reflect a relaxed attitude that could hurt your chance of getting the job. What comfortable should mean: clothes that fit; that allow you to move easily and not feel restricted. You do not want to adjust your clothing during an interview.

Accessories

Your interview outfit doesn't end with the suit. Coordinating shoes are also important. Women should wear low heels with closed toes and sensible hose and men should wear clean, black leather shoes with black socks. Never wear tennis, or sports shoes. Hiring managers also notice if your shoes are clean and well-cared for.

As for accessories, you want to keep your look conservative: men- a muted tie is a 'must' and a watch is appropriate, but remove earrings and facial piercings. If you are emotionally attached to your beard, keep it closely trimmed and neat. If, however, you have had several interviews but haven't been offered a job, you might want to consider a clean-shaven look and see if that makes a difference.

Women, be sure your jewelry is not too flashy: earring posts or simple hoop earrings are fine, but be careful of other facial piercings that could be distracting and get in the way of landing the job. Speaking of distractions... absolutely NEVER show any cleavage.

When deciding on what to wear to your interview, remember to leave off wearing cologne or perfume. "Clean" is the only smell that should emanate from you during an

interview.

Being ultra-prepared (good resume, 30-60-90-day plan and brag book) and appropriately dressed for the interview means the hiring manager can concentrate on your skills and abilities, and you'll have an excellent chance of landing that DREAM position. Your appearance says it all.

Job Interview Body Language: Be Calm, Cool, and Collected



You know the right body language is important for your interview, right? It's an important way to make a good impression. It's all part of the total package that you are presenting to the interviewer: your body language projects a very strong image that factors into the decision to hire you in a big way.

So what can you do?

Expect a positive outcome from this conversation.

The first thing, before you even think about what your arms should be doing or what your eye contact ratio is, is to picture yourself having a positive outcome for this interview. It's much more than a "dream it and it will happen" kind of thing. If you go into it with a positive perspective, your breathing will be more natural, you'll smile, your eye contact will be totally appropriate, and you'll appear relaxed, confident, and enthusiastic. All good things.

Practice relaxing breathing.

Practice slow, calm breathing before you go into the interview. And remember to keep your breathing even during the interview. Calm means confidence.

Now think about your arms, hands, and legs.

You know these. When you meet the interviewer, smile and give a firm handshake. When you smile, imagine that your interviewer is a friend. During the interview, don't fold your arms, or fidget, or touch your face. (And don't take off your jacket, either.) Don't sit down until they invite you to, but once you do, sit up straight and lean forward slightly to project confidence and trustworthiness (it will help with your breathing, too.) And maintain your eye contact in a natural way. Overall, just think "relaxed, but alert."

There's a reason I put those things last. The first two will make the third one easier. And I don't want you to be so focused on whether or not your arms are crossed that you forget to focus on the real reason you're there: to have that conversation, to sell yourself as a candidate, and close the deal to show the hiring manager that you're the person he needs for this job.

Get many more job interview do's and don'ts in your free Job Interview Prep worksheets. Download them here:

<http://CareerConfidential.com/job-interview-preparation-guide-online-worksheets/>

Must-Have Links

Free Job Interview Prep Kit

Get 20 pages of worksheets that guide you through every step of preparing for your job interview.



<http://CareerConfidential.com/job-interview-preparation-guide-online-worksheets/>

30/60/90-Day Plan

Career Confidential's 30-60-90-Day templates, samples, and coaching will make it easy for you to write and use these powerful tools in your own interview.



<http://30-60-90-day-sales-plan.com/getthe306090dayactionplan.htm>

Brag Book

Brag books are the evidence that you are great at what you do. Get a 10-minute podcast that teaches you the easy way to put one together.



<http://careerconfidential.com/brag-book-podcast-product-reviews/>

How to Answer Interview Questions

Read Career Confidential's wildly popular series of 101 tough job interview questions and answers.



<http://careerconfidential.com/how-to-answer-interview-questions-series/>

Job Interview Questions and Answers App

This fun, easy-to-use Apple and Android app helps you practice your answers to job interview questions.

Job Interview Question-Answer App

Improve your answers to job interview questions in minutes with a personal job search coach

Free iPhone app utilizes **interactive video technology** to help you practice your answers to tough job interview questions in an easy-to-use mock interview format.

1. **Watch** as you are asked a tough interview question--just like in an interview.
2. **Record** your response so you can see what you look and sound like to your interviewer.
3. **See** expert job interview coach Peggy McKee, CEO of Career Confidential, give HER answer to that question.
4. **Learn** to structure your answer to make a strong, positive impression on the hiring manager.

Peggy McKee has been coaching job seekers to success since 1999. Her expertise is at your fingertips with this exciting, simple-to-use app.

99% of users say it improves interview skills immediately.

Available on the **App Store**

<http://jobinterviewquestionsandanswersapp.com/>

Resume Review Pro App

Would your resume earn an 'A' or an 'F'? Find out with this video app.



<http://www.resumereviewproapp.com/>

Career Confidential's Blog

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<http://careerconfidential.com/blog/>

Career Confidential's Job Search Tools Page

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