

Preparing for YOUR Interview

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This guide was put together by members of the M&P Management Team for your use to assist you in preparing for interviews. The content in this guide was gathered from various sources.

Here are two common important tips for interviewing;

1. Appearance: You should keep in mind the popular saying ‘The first impression is the last impression’. You need to give importance to your clothing. Ensure that you are well dressed, looking neat and very professional. Do not neglect small details of your personality which includes the shine of your shoes, your hair cut and also your manicured nails. Do not choose too many flashy or bright colors for your interview. Make it simple and neat under all conditions.
2. Rehearse: Before you appear for the interview you need to rehearse before hand for the interview. You should prepare good and intelligent answers to some common questions which are most likely to be asked. Be prepared and rehearse well to mention about your strengths and weaknesses. Why you would like to work for the company and what are your key skills are, for which the company might choose you over other candidates. It’s good to prepare the answer to some of such questions.

Formulating your response based on the question;

Collaboration and Teamwork

- How have you gone about developing a cohesive, high functioning team atmosphere in the past? How would you do it at my company?
- In your last position, how would your previous co-workers describe you? What was it like to work with you? What would they say about your collaboration and teamwork style?
- Give examples of how you’ve brought out the best in others in a team environment.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. What made him/her difficult? What did you do? What was the outcome?

Communication

- What are your strengths with respect to communication skills? What aspects of communication would you like to further develop?
- If we ask your last boss, how will he or she describe your writing skills? What are your strengths and developmental needs in this regard?
- In what ways was written communication required in your previous jobs? What materials or samples of your writing best demonstrate your writing skills? Describe the technical documents you’ve written in your past two jobs.
- How would your colleagues and/or boss describe your communication skills?

Influencing

- In your current job, describe a situation where you were required to persuade or influence someone to your point of view. What was your approach? How did the other person respond? What happened?
- How would you describe your style of persuasion? What are your strengths? In what ways do you need to become more effective? How do people typically respond to your style of persuasion?
- Think of someone who comes to mind as being especially persuasive. Who? Why is this person persuasive? What have you learned from him or her? How has this person influenced your style?
- Give an example of where you had to bring the best of your persuasion skills into play. What did you do? What skills did you use?

Achievement Focus

- What would people who know you well say about your ability to overcome setbacks, adversity or failure? Be specific and give some examples.
- What has been your greatest personal success regarding your academic or professional career? Why do you consider this to be your greatest success?
- Discuss your key accomplishments in your last two positions (professional or academic). How have you added value in key roles you've held?
- In your last two jobs or internships, discuss your performance expectations and goals. Describe your performance in relation to these expectations and goals.
- Describe some important setbacks or failures that you've experienced. What did you do in response to these situations?
- If you were to create a list of career highlights, what would be on it? Why?

Bias of Action

- What would people who know you well say about your level of initiative and the extent you know when action is a priority. Be specific and provide some examples.
- Give me an indication of the extent to which you are comfortable making decisions on your own without input from your boss. Convince me you are able to make decisions and take action on your own.
- Do you react better to a lot of direction or minimal direction from others?
- What would your previous employer say about your ability to meet demands in a timely manner? Tell me about steps you've taken to ensure that required work is completed.
- How would you rate your ability to remain persistent and follow through on work commitments? Give me some examples that support your assessment.
- What would your previous boss say about your willingness to take responsibility for your work, and to what extent would he or she say you took ownership of your projects or commitments?
- In your current or previous jobs, on what occasions did you feel you should consult with your boss before proceeding with some action? When did you feel it was proper to act on your own?
- Describe a time during your past two positions or internships in which you went above and beyond what it took to get the job done. Describe the situation and

what you did.

Customer Focus

- In your view, what are the ways in which you directly impact the satisfaction of customers (internal or external)? Tell me about how you did this in your last two jobs.
- What do you think are the key needs and expectations of our customers?
- In your most recent position, whom did you consider your primary customers? In your view, what were their needs or expectations?
- Describe a time when you provided an exceptional level of customer service. What specifically did you do? What were the outcomes? Why was it exceptional?
- What would your previous boss say about your commitment to satisfying the customer? In what ways did you fall short of providing excellent customer service?
- In your view, how can the level of customer service provide a competitive advantage over my company's competitors (or, how did customer service provide a competitive advantage in your last two roles)?
- Describe the benefits of good customer service. What are the advantages and what are the drawbacks to poor customer service?

Flexibility and Versatility

- Talk about an experience you had where you needed to change your plan or approach to work on a project. What led to the change, and how did you react?
- What would previous supervisors say about your capability to handle work requirements that are not routine or change from day to day?
- In your previous work, did you encounter multiple demands that needed to be met simultaneously? Talk about how you approached this work to meet these demands.
- Describe a job or work situation that caused you to feel a lot of stress. Were you able to resolve the situation, and how did you do so?

Integrity

- Define what integrity means to you. How do you demonstrate integrity, both professionally and personally?
- Give me some examples of how you have built trust or earned the respect of others. What kind of reputation do you have with your peers? What would they say if I asked them?
- When I ask your previous one or two bosses, what will they say about your integrity? Further, what will they say about the extent to which you meet commitments that you make to others and do what you say you will?
- Describe a time when you lost the trust of co-workers. What happened? What did you do? Why? What did you learn from that?

Business Focus

- In your current or previous position, describe to me how the company operated? How did it make money? What service did it provide to its customer base? How

- did your company's product or services provide business solutions for customers?
- Describe your understanding of my company from a business perspective.
 - When evaluating proposed projects or products, what criteria do you use to determine if they are worthwhile or if they will generate a good return on investment?
 - In your past role, describe some of the key functions, divisions or departments and what division you worked in. How did the various divisions impact each other?
 - In your previous one or two positions, how did you (or your position in general) specifically impact either the organization or department's bottom line? What actions had an impact on the organization's performance?

Creative and Innovative

- On a scale from 1 to 10, rate your level of creativity and innovative thinking. Why did you rate yourself there? Give specifics and justify your rating.
- When was the last time you had a creative or innovative idea. What was it?
- How would your past one or two bosses evaluate your creativity or ability to think outside the box when solving challenging problems?
- Tell me about a time where you developed a new procedure or method that improved productivity. Provide specifics. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- Talk about the importance of creativity and innovation in a company like my company.
- If I were to observe you on the job for a couple of weeks and saw you at your creative best, what would I see you do?

Aptitude

- What would your previous boss say about your ability to pick up things quickly and to learn new technologies, products or services? Why would he or she say this? Give some examples from your past two positions.
- What do you do to ensure continuous learning and to stay abreast of key developments in your field?
- If someone were to ask you why you are an expert about your job, what would you tell them?
- What do you do to stay informed about new products and services relevant to your job/career?

Multi-tasking and Prioritizing

- Describe a time when you were working on two or more projects simultaneously. What did you do to ensure that you would accomplish both tasks accurately and on time?
- What would your previous boss say about your ability to handle many responsibilities at one time and to prioritize effectively among them?
- When you have many things going on at one time, how do you prioritize, and where do you focus your attention?
- From your previous one or two positions, provide some examples of how you had

to multi-task and handle a number of responsibilities at the same time. Give some specific examples.

- What would your previous boss say about your ability to effectively handle multiple responsibilities and to meet all of your commitments in your job, especially when things get hectic?

Strategic Thinking

- Have you ever participated in a strategic planning process? What did you learn from that experience?
- What was the business strategy of your former employer, and in your opinion, was it an effective one? Why or why not?
- What are some key strategic issues that my company needs to consider as it moves forward? What about the particular group you are moving into, what are its strategic issues?
- Have you ever been involved in a disciplined approach to strategic planning? Please describe. What was the situation? What was your involvement? What was the outcome?

How to Answer the ‘Tell Me About Yourself’ Interview Question

Don’t be afraid of this question; instead use it as an opportunity to position yourself for success.

Most candidates find this question to be a particularly difficult one to answer. That is a misplaced view. This question offers an opportunity to describe yourself positively and focus the interview on your strengths. Be prepared to deal with it. These days, it’s unavoidable. Most interviewers start off their interviews with this question. A lot of interviewers open with it as an icebreaker or because they’re still getting organized, but they all use it to get a sense of whom you are.

The Wrong Response

There are many ways to respond to this question correctly and just one wrong way: by asking, “What do you want to know?” That tells the interviewer that you have not prepared properly for the interview and are likely to be equally unprepared on the job. You need to develop a good answer to this question, practice it and be able to deliver it with poise and confidence

The Right Response

- Focus on what most interests the interviewer
- Highlight your most important accomplishments

Focus on What Interests the Interviewer

The biggest mistake people being interviewed make is thinking the interviewer really wants to know about them as a person.

They start saying things like, 'Well, I was born in Hoboken, and when I was three we moved ...' Wrong. The interviewer wants to know that you can do the job, that you fit into the team, what you have accomplished in your prior positions and how can you help the organization.

The employer wants to know a *little* bit about you to begin with — not your life story. Just offer up two or three things that are interesting — and useful. You should take about a minute to answer this question.”

To make sure it is succinct and covers what you want it to cover, write your answer out before the interview, practice it, time it and rehearse it until it sounds natural. Then practice it some more. The goal is to tell the employer enough to pique their interest, not so much that they wonder if they'd ever be able to shut you up during a coffee break at the office.”

Rather than dread this question, a well-prepared candidate should welcome this inquiry. Properly answered, this question puts the candidate in the driver's seat. It gives her an opportunity to sell herself. It allows her to set the tone and direction for the rest of the interview, setting her up to answer the questions she most wants to answer.