

The Key to a Stellar Interview is Preparation

If you are excited about starting your career after college but you don't know where to begin getting ready for your interviews with companies, don't worry. Here are some important points to remember when preparing for an interview.

1) Know the Company You Are Interviewing

Make sure you find out what is important to the company and where its future is heading. During the interview you can then speak intelligently about how you fit in with the company's direction and goals. You can demonstrate how you will help it achieve its goals. Remember that interviewing is a two-way street and employers encourage you to take full advantage of your opportunity to learn more about their cultures and practices. Some issues you may wish to discuss with your interviewer include advancement opportunities, challenges with the company, mobility within the firm, work/life balance and typical assignments.

2) Know Yourself

Let the interviewer know what you will bring to the table. You need to have a clear idea of your value before you can convey it to anyone else. Start by identifying your key strength areas and developing a 20-second introduction about yourself. This helps you to focus on your main selling points and prepare for open-ended questions. Also consider your past accomplishments and determine how you can do the same or more for the company interviewing you.

You should always be yourself. Employers are not looking for a specific type of problem solving; thus, showing them a unique way of thinking will not only distinguish you, but will also ensure that the fit is right for both you and the interviewer. Think hard about what you want out of your career and what sort of firm you want to work for. And say what you think, not what you think the interviewer wants to hear.

3) Leave a Lasting Impression

Thank the interviewer for her time with a confident smile and a firm handshake. Immediately follow-up with a thank you letter. If you met with more than one person, send each person a personalized thank you note or email. Remember to relax during the interview and be yourself!

QUICK LIST OF TIPS TO PREPARE FOR YOUR INTERVIEW

- Analyze the job and the organization. Make sure you know the job description.
- Review each bullet on your resume and prepare a concise explanation for each.
- Practice giving succinct answers to potentially tough questions.
- Prepare questions to ask the interviewer.
- Think through your job objectives and your goals.
- Know what you want and why you want it.
- Practice your delivery using a tape recorder or video camera.
- Watch for nervous habits when practicing. Habits such as knuckle cracking, chewing gum, etc. are distracting and can seem unprofessional.
- Dress like the professional person you are.

Remember to take extra copies of your resume with you to the interview.

Know the time, date and location of the interview, and don't be late.

Remember to be yourself and remain relaxed.