



Interview Preparation

The market is extremely competitive today and we remind candidates that “*It is not the best resume that gets the job offer - rather the person who interviews the best.*” Preparation and planning is critical.

Interviewing is the process of “selling” yourself in to a particular position.

Assess

Before the interview do you know what the hiring manager and company decision criteria are? Once you know what the hiring manager (buyer) is looking for use that information to your advantage in the interview. Do not ask the hiring manager what he is looking for, rather validate your understanding and let the manager confirm.

The goal is to communicate why you are the best person for the position.

Develop your Value Proposition

As you prepare for the interview, make a list of your “value” to the hiring manager: What do you bring to the table that he needs? What are the 3-4 things about you that really stand out – what makes you different or better than the next candidate? Have you consistently achieved your quota and earned Presidents Club? Have you sold in the market segment or space and have a rolodex? Have you sold the specific applications and do you have domain knowledge? Have you been a Top 10% performer in your career? Have you demonstrated leadership and excellence academically? During the interview process communicate your “value” by focusing on these points.

To secure a position you must have a *strategy for winning* the deal (gaining the offer).

Define Your Strategy

Showcase your selling skills by using the interview as a mini sales campaign. i.e. Have you prepared? Have you qualified? Do you proactively ask questions/validate your understanding? Have you shown and communicated why you are the best person for this position? Failing to do these things will eliminate you from the process. Do you actively *listen* and have you developed rapport with the person with whom you are interviewing? Are you actively taking notes?

For hiring managers, “*your selling skills*” is the most important attribute followed by *enthusiasm and interest* for the position. All too often hiring managers come back and say a person “*failed to get me interested in them. If they can’t get me interested in them how can I expect them to get customers interested in us and what we are selling?*”

Research

Along those same lines, every company *wants to be wanted*. Do you know what is going on with the company, their competitors, and the industry? Have you reviewed the latest press releases, financial statements, or done a Google search of the company’s name to see what comes up? Have you done a Google & LinkedIn search of the hiring manager or interviewer? The more informed you are the better you will be perceived.

Do you know what the company’s products do? Do you know how to apply those solutions to business problems? Do you have strategies and tactics for how you would sell them given the position? The more thoughts and ideas you come to the interview with, the better you will be perceived.

Preparation

Interviewing is an art. One must know how much to say and how much to hold back. Interviewing is not about telling the whole story in the first interview, the more they get to know you the more you should reveal.

Never say anything negative. Just one negative comment about a former manager, company, or product will have the interviewer questioning what you will say about them! Negative comments linger and put a candidate in a bad light. Instead, turn a negative into a positive.

Practice

When asked “Why are you looking?” think about your answer. Don’t mention anything that could reflect negatively on you. Instead turn a negative in to a positive: “*I am looking to take my career to the next level*”, “*I am looking for growth*”, or “*I am very excited about what you are doing and want to be a part of a winning team.*” Only positive comments are acceptable.

What can you *do* to set yourself apart from your competition?

Execution

We suggest to candidates that they build a portfolio. In that portfolio should be your resume, any press releases or articles on deals you sold, as well as examples of your work. Do you have a sample account plan to show or territory plan? (Do not leave this in the interview as your ideas could be used even if you are not hired).

Today, many candidates go to the interview with a draft or preliminary Territory Plan outlining how they will attack a particular assignment and what strategies and tactics they will use, how they will approach the territory, and segment and prioritize customers/prospects. Candidates do this to show strength over their competition by proving that they have given the opportunity more thought, and done the planning and preparation for the interview.

Note: The Territory Plan, Market Plan, 30-60-90 Day Plan, or whatever you do does not have to be spot on – no manager would expect that. The message is that you took the initiative, took a shot and made the investment to earn the position.

Another option would be to develop a PowerPoint “Candidate Recap”: a short PowerPoint presentation of yourself (no more than 5-10 slides) showing that you are the best candidate for the position. Open with a summary of the company’s/hiring manager’s criteria or needs and move to address that criteria (how you meet those needs). You may also showcase your results, Key Wins, large deal experience, or whatever you are proud of that speaks to your value.

Questions to Ask

Another important point is to have prepared questions for your interviewer – the questions you ask show your strategic thought process. Don’t ask anything that is too general or available on the company website. Instead, ask questions about the company’s/sales team’s vision, strategy, business plans, challenges, and what the hiring manager’s most critical need is.

Please consider that statistics show that the more the *interviewer* talks (as you listen), the higher they regard the *interviewee*. That’s right. Get the interviewer talking with good questions: Why did they make the decision to join the company? What recommendations would they have for someone coming in?

The days of a “get acquainted” interview went out with the tech bust – today you have a short amount of time to get the interviewer excited about you. Anticipate that there will be someone coming in after you. Have you set the bar? Have you shown preparation and planning? Have you shown *your value*? Have you shown energy, enthusiasm, and desire for the position? If you succeed in this, you will continue on in the process.

Dress for Success

In terms of dress – only one rule – wear a suit and tie. You must present a polished and professional image. *Invest in a new suit, shirt, and tie.* Are your shoes current, clean and polished? Visit the Men’s Warehouse web site for “Interview” attire.

www.menswarehouse.com go to “Occasion,” go to “Interview”. These are acceptable options – not trendy, flashy, or distracting. Use this as your guide. Choose high quality wool and cotton fabrics. Be sure to allow time for tailoring. Women should follow this same strategy – simple, clean, not distracting (i.e., no red nail polish), or revealing necklines. Light make up is best. No perfume or fragrances which could be distracting.

Look at yourself in the mirror and ask “Do I need a haircut?” Presenting a board room image, even with a hiring manager who dresses casually, shows respect for the interviewer and process. Being underdressed sends the wrong message.

Post Interview Follow up

Following the interview write a thank you note recapping the interview. This is your opportunity to continue to sell yourself and reinforce your value proposition. If you meet several individuals in the process each should receive their own personalized note. Recap your value to the organization and express your sincere desire for the opportunity. Everyone wants to be wanted and hiring managers will most often extend an offer to the candidate who wants it the most and has demonstrated their desire for the position.

Good luck!

We look forward to hearing from you. Let’s start a conversation. 952-934-4100



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