

“WE’D LIKE TO MAKE YOU AN OFFER”

Preparing for Executive Interviews

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An interview means a face-to-face opportunity to convince the company you are the best for the job and to hear the words “we’d like to make you an offer”. Undertaking thorough, professional and intelligent preparation for the interview will get you a long way towards this desirable outcome.

How do you Secure and Ace an Interview?

People make judgments about someone new within 30 seconds of meeting them.

Your resume has 15 to 30 seconds to wow a hiring manager.

Why Should They Hire You?

You’ve confidently sent in your application for that position advertised on the internet. Did you know that possibly another 800 applications have been sent by your competitors for the same vacancy?

How do you make yourself stand out from the crowd? What can you do to make *your* application the one that makes a hiring manager sit up and say, “hey, I pick *you!*”

First Things First: You

- Evaluate yourself: thoroughly, honestly, perhaps painfully. What are your strengths? And weaknesses? Ask your colleagues, friends, family for a balance of opinions.
- Is there a fit between your strengths, experience and personal style and the position?
- Are you armed with a professionally crafted, current resume to effectively market yourself? Your resume must clearly show the value you can bring to the company, and why they should hire you and not the competition.

Seriously consider using expert input and advice such as:

- Hiring an interview coach to improve your performance and increase your chance of getting offers. Practicing with a professional and receiving objective feedback on how you are perceived may help you be more confident in the interview.
- Contracting a Certified Resume Writer to produce a tailored resume that will win you interviews, job offers and bigger dollars! Some resume companies offer to email your resume to multiple recruiters.
- Building strategic partnerships with successful executive placement agencies for advice and coaching. They will market you effectively to the target company, and get you past the ‘gatekeepers’ directly to the company management team.

It is crucial that you are able, sincerely, realistically and confidently, to convince the company – the hiring manager – that you are the panacea to all their problems.

- A career coach can help you develop a standout solution package for the company’s needs. The package may include a business proposal, business improvement plan and perhaps a presentation.

- Your executive portfolio must back up your proposed solutions. You have to possess the experience, skills and knowledge to see the solution through.
- Is your portfolio professionally presented, comprehensive and up to date? Do you have it available in a standard word processing format, such as MS Word, and in PDF format for emailing?

Research the Company

Use your network to find out as much about the company as you can before the interview. Good research is essential preparation for your interview.

- Study the company's web site. Check out the corporate culture, mission statement and performance.
- Research the senior management. Explore your contacts for someone who knows someone in the company.
- Gain a thorough understanding of the company products and services.
- Research something of the company's history.
- Request company reports.
- Find out the hiring manager's name before the interview and make personal contact. Ask about the personal attributes of the person they are seeking for the position, as well as their expectations regarding strengths, skills and experience.

Some final tips

- Compile and practice your responses to the type of questions you can expect in the interview. Some key questions you may be asked are:
 - An example of successfully managing a group in getting a job done.
 - A difficult or unpopular strategic decision. Why the decision was difficult and how you handled it.
 - Details about your most successful project, and why you think it was successful.
 - What your most challenging budgeting issue was and how you managed it.
- Prepare questions to ask the hiring manager. You are also interviewing the employer to determine whether you, the company and the position are compatible. Be thorough in your research: make sure your questions haven't already been covered in the company literature.
- Be prepared to discuss the contents of your resume and portfolio and to quantify your successes, skills, experience and values.
- Be realistic: an employer will want to know your weaknesses as well as your strengths, and how you manage these.
- Emphasize what you can offer the company rather than just what your career goals are.

Bottom line: a successful interview leaves you as the only candidate standing. You're Number One – congratulations!

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