



INTERVIEW PREPARATION & STRATEGY

Presented by Matt Youngquist,
President & Founder of Career Horizons

OPENING REMARKS

- 1) While some people are naturally more comfortable talking about themselves, interviewing is a skill set that can definitely be improved with practice
- 2) While you can't guarantee you're the most qualified candidate for any given job, it's pretty easy to ensure you'll be the most well-prepared one
- 3) You won't win them all; sometimes the job just isn't the right fit for you, the chemistry is off, or there are behind-the-scenes factors you can't control
- 4) Brace yourself; I'm going to share a lot of different ideas with you in the next hour; while you might not use all of them, hopefully a few of them will stick!

1) GAIN AN EDGE THROUGH PREP



- Study company review sites like glassdoor.com, comparably.com, careerbliss.com, and Indeed.com's "Company Review" pages
- Try to really understand the employer's business model. What are their values? How do they make money? Who are the competitors that keep them up at night?
- Study job advertisements to see if there is any unusual, unorthodox, or emotional language that might signal a key frustration or pain point

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe." Abraham Lincoln

2) ACE THE SOFTBALL QUESTIONS



- Don't bomb the opening "tell me about yourself" question by rehashing your resume; focus on your strengths, passions, and goals
- Be ready to address questions about your greatest weakness, salary requirements, and what interests you about the job/company
- If you're currently unemployed, be ready with a polished and highly positive answer to the question "so why did you leave your last job?"

"A step towards what you fear is a mile towards mastering it." Matshona Dhliwayo

3) HAVE STORIES THAT SHINE



- Be ready for “behavioral interview” questions where companies ask for specific examples of how you’ve applied your skills/strengths
- Come up with a few great stories showcasing your proudest moments, practice them, and think of the qualities they show about you
- Keep your stories to 2-3 minutes; if helpful, use the P.A.R. (Problem, Action, Result) approach to give your stories some structure – and ensure they have a beginning, middle, and end

“Do you know what the most-often missing ingredient is in a sales message? Good storytelling.” Gary Halbert

4) FOCUS ON YOUR CUSTOMER



- Let go of the outcome; don't focus on getting the job, focus on understanding the job, since this will put a lot less stress on yourself
- Don't approach the interview as a "test" where the goal is to give the perfect answer; focus on listening and having a genuine conversation
- Show the hiring manager that you get it and truly understand what needs to be done; ask questions during the chat, show curiosity, and validate key points you think you're hearing

"Your job in an interview is to show how you can be the aspirin to the employer's headache." Anonymous

5) ANTICIPATE OBJECTIONS



- Every candidate has vulnerabilities; anticipate reasons (fair or unfair) why an employer wouldn't hire you and be ready to address them
- Sales people consider objections to be buying signals; view them as a “cry for help” where the manager is looking for reassurance
- Don't get defensive or angry if an employer asks tough questions; embrace them, be confident, and present a series of appropriate counterarguments and rebuttal points

*“Managing objections head-on is dead on.”
Kraig Kleeman*

6) SHOWCASE YOUR WISDOM



- Focus on your future, not your past; act like your best days are ahead of you, not behind you, or you'll likely fall victim to age bias
- Express strong opinions and a clear point of view about your professional field; don't play it safe or try to appease the hiring manager
- Think deeply, in advance of the interview, about the value of your experience; what have you learned about performing your job that you didn't know when you just started out?

“Knowledge comes from learning. Wisdom comes from living.” Anthony Douglas Williams

7) END THINGS ON A HIGH NOTE



- Asking questions at the end is critical; it shows the employer that you're interested, engaged, and have intellectual curiosity
- While pre-planned questions are fine, it's even better to ask questions that arise naturally out of the conversation and show you listened
- At the end, thank them for their time, tell them you feel you have a great understanding of the work that needs doing, and express that you'd love the chance to be a member of their team

“Judge a person by his/her questions rather than by his answers.” Voltaire

THE 4-STEP PREPARATION MATRIX

COMPETENCY	GRADE	EXAMPLE	WISDOM	QUESTION
------------	-------	---------	--------	----------

<i>What are the specific requirements listed in the job description?</i>	<i>How would you rate yourself on this particular competency?</i>	<i>What's a compelling story you could share to prove this quality?</i>	<i>What "wisdom" or insights could you share on this topic?</i>	<i>What's a question you could ask back to learn more about this issue?</i>
--	---	---	---	---

An obsession with customer service	A+	"When I went the extra mile in my last job to calm the client down and rescue the XYZ account..."	"I've found that sometimes when you restore the faith of an angry customer, they often become your biggest fans..."	"Are there some client relationships that would need some immediate attention by the person hired?"
Comfort dealing with ambiguity	B	"When I joined a startup a few years back, I had to build the entire accounting department from the ground up..."	"I think a critical step in these cases is to document things carefully so the next person doesn't have to reinvent the wheel..."	"Have you had some people struggle with this issue and not be proactive enough?"
Strong proficiency in MS Excel	D	"While back in college, I developed a pivot table for a class project to analyze..."	N/A	"Are there certain features of Excel that are most important for somebody to know in this particular job?"

FINAL QUESTIONS?

