

PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

TIPS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST

PART 1 CONDUCTING A MOCK INTERVIEW WITH THE CLIENT

Step 1: Review the job advertisement together with the client to identify the type of position the interview will be for. (If it's not a job ad, then use the description from the job developed.)

From this, the client will gain a clearer picture of what the employer is seeking and be able to formulate a few questions to ask during the interview.

The Employment Specialist will glean from the ad some possible interview questions to prepare the client for, related specifically to the position.

Look up the company on the internet to find out basic and background information and help the client learn more about the company so they will be prepared to answer a question about it.

Step 2: Review with the client interview tips on what to do to ensure their interview is smooth and examples of what not to do in an interview (*see Part 2 of this document*).

Ask the client if they have any questions for you about interviewing and what they specifically think they need help with.

Ask the client about any worries or concerns they have regarding being interviewed.

Help the client formulate a few questions to ask during the interview (use the job advertisement to see if further clarification is needed on something that is or isn't listed in the ad).

Step 3: Inform the client that you are going to help them prepare for an interview by doing a mock interview, like role playing. In this scenario, the Employment Specialist will be the employer and the client will be themselves.

Ask the client if they have any questions or concerns before you begin the mock interview. Locate a quiet room with privacy to conduct the mock interview in, this will help the client stay focused on their performance and responses.

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Step 4: Begin conducting the mock interview by getting into character as employer, simulating an actual interview leave the room and then enter as the mock employer. Be engaging and somewhat straight-faced.

Greet the client in a professional manner and shake their hand as if meeting for the first time, and request their resume.

Employment Specialists will take mental notes on the way the client introduces themselves to a prospective employer to later provide the client with feedback on this step.

Step 5: Ask the client to have a seat, then ask the client a question.

Sample questions: How did you hear about our business? Why do you want to work for our company? What do you know about our industry?

Feel free to take notes on paper to help you later provide the client with feedback. Look for strengths as well as areas for improvement. Pay attention to both content and delivery.

Step 6: Continue to interview the client. Start with, “Tell me about yourself.”

Ask additional questions. Whenever possible, try to keep the interview flowing like a conversation and maintain eye contact with the client.

At the end of the interview, ask the interviewee, “Do you have any questions for us?” Even though the Employment Specialist may not have answers for the client’s questions, it is good practice for the client to be able to ask questions of the mock employer. Simply acknowledge the client’s questions and then let them know they will be provided with real answers during the official interview.

Step 7: Conclude the interview. Thank the client for their time, shake their hand, walk them to the door and let them know that you will be contacting them regarding the next steps of the interview process.

Step 8: Review with the client what just took place during the mock interview. First ask the client how they felt that it went and what they would do differently in the official interview.

Then, go over your notes together. What went well? What needs improvement?

After discussing how the mock interview went, ask troublesome questions for the client again to practice new techniques. Inform the client of steps to be taken following an interview. Use encouragers and remind the client of their strengths.

PART 2 INTERVIEW TIPS FOR THE CLIENT

It's important that the client appears collected, calm and confident during an interview. One way to do that is to be prepared to the best of their ability, then relax for an hour before the interview takes place. Although there is no way to predict how an interview will unfold, by reviewing these simple tips with the client he/she may feel less anxious and be ready to present themselves in a positive manner during their interview. Go over these tips with the client:

1. Do Your Company Research

The more you know about the company and what it stands for, the better chance you have of selling yourself in the interview. What does the company sell? What is the company's value proposition? What sets it apart?

How do your experiences and talents make you an ideal candidate for the role?

2. Dress With Confidence

You only get one chance to make a first impression. Get out your best interview clothes and check them over for spots, wrinkles, and odors. If you feel good, others will respond to you accordingly. Maintain a professional demeanor at all times. Don't chew gum. Do not wear a heavy fragrance. Do not wear jewelry that makes noise when you're talking. There should not be any cleavage showing or tummies peeking out of your outfit. Your clothes should not distract the interviewer in any way.

3. Be Prepared

Bring along a folder containing extra copies of your resume, a copy of your references, pen and paper to take notes. Taking brief notes during your interview makes the employer feel you are listening. Keep your cell phone off and hidden during the interview. Be prepared to talk to the employer about reasons you're the best candidate for the job.

4. Be On Time

Allow extra time to arrive 10 - 15 minutes early to an interview, allowing for factors like getting lost. To lower your anxiety, drive to the interview location a day in advance so you can see if you have the proper directions, how long it takes to get there, what kind of parking is available, and what side of the building you'll be entering on. This will help you enter calmly on the day of your interview.

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5. Show Your Enthusiasm

A firm handshake and a smile will demonstrate confidence. Speak distinctly in a confident voice, even though you may feel shaky. If there is more than one interviewer, look at each person when they speak and that will make them feel comfortable with you.

6. Listen Carefully

Maintain good eye contact. Make sure you are not only listening, but also reading between the lines. Sometimes what is not said is just as important as what is said. Avoid answering trick questions with personal information. Make sure you understand what is being asked, and get further clarification if the question is not clear. Pause and think before answering questions.

7. Give Specific Examples

One specific example of your professional background is required at nearly every interview. Prepare your examples before the interview. Give examples that highlight your successes and uniqueness. Refrain from discussing personal problems or criticizing former employers.

9. Prepare to Ask Questions

The questions you ask indicate your interest in the company or job. Be yourself! If you are trying to say what you think the employer wants to hear, you will probably be wrong! Focus on presenting your best self and show them your genuine interest in working for their company. This is a sign that you're open and honest and well organized. Ask for a business card from all interviewers so you have their contact information for thank you notes. Always close the interview by expressing thanks and appreciation for their time. Ask for the job!

10. Follow Up After the Interview

Whether it's through email or regular mail, the interview follow-up is one more chance to remind the interviewer of all the valuable traits you bring to the job and company. Don't miss this last chance to market yourself. If you have interviewed with more than one person, each person should receive a thank you note.

PART 3 BEYOND THE BASICS PREPARATIONS

1. Does your client want an interview partner? Discuss your role. If you join the interview:
 - a. Attempt to position yourself in line of sight
 - b. Develop ways to encourage without language
2. Prepare for a manic episode
 - a. Develop ways for the client to ground themselves (i.e. sitting on their hands is a technique that makes the client more aware – as a last resort for specific people)
3. Prepare for paranoia or sabotage (felons, borderline, antisocial)
 - a. Set-up the interview ahead of time based on disclosure
 - b. Orchestrate the interview (plan and agree to what part you own and what part the client owns)
 - c. Prepare to discuss strengths that are relevant to the employer need before asking for flexibility or accommodation
 - d. Prepare to answer questions such as, “can you pass a drug test?” or “can you pass a criminal background check?”
4. Prepare for anxiety, even a panic attack
 - a. Normalize
 - b. Utilize grounding techniques – identify ahead of time
(Do something routine together before the interview such as taking a walk, asking for help on a task, listen to a song, etc...)
5. Prepare for disorganized thinking
 - a. Make a checklist together – something concrete to refer to
6. Prepare for attention to detail (i.e. body language)
 - a. How to sit
 - b. Eye contact
 - c. Facial response/ability (practice smiling)
 - d. Personality = connection with the interviewer
(ask the client to come up with a unique but positive way to be remembered)
7. Prepare answers for “hard to answer” questions
 - a. Explain gaps in your employment?
 - i. I left work to help my family. I had a health concern. I moved. I focused on my education.
 - b. Why should I hire you?
 - i. I have the skills you’re looking for and I want to work for you.

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- c. Describe a weakness you have?
 - i. I'm not good at interviews.
 - d. Describe a time you had difficulty with a co-worker and how you handled it?
 - i. I saw a coworker do something wrong and I used my communication skills to talk to the coworker about it and when that didn't work, I communicated to my supervisor about it.
 - e. Describe a personal or work goal.
 - i. To advance from part time to full time. To have a long term career with this company. To get along with my coworkers. To be a good team player.
 - f. Wild card question – what's a generic "safe" response to an open ended question?
 - i. That's an interesting question. I am not certain how to answer this. My focus is on applying my strengths and individuality in a job. I'm really interested in working. Etc...
8. Identify two appropriate questions to ask at the end of the interview
 - a. When will you make your hiring decision?
 - b. Is there a dress code?
 9. Practice, practice, practice
 - a. Interview your client! Have your client practice good listening skills by repeating the question
 - b. Let your client interview you! They will think of all the questions that might be asked of them. They will listen to your answers. They will observe your answers. Interview well and see if they still have suggestions or helpful feedback.
 10. When should the client disclose, if they choose to?
 - a. Help the client with good timing about when to disclose if they choose to, and how to limit the information that they share as-needed (such as making accommodations and scheduling if that is brought up.)
 11. What to say about criminal history during an interview?
 - a. Help the client with good timing about when to discuss a criminal history if they choose to, and how to limit the information that they share as-needed.

PART 4 THINKING FROM AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

First impressions can make a big difference on whether or not you're hired!

The primacy effect proves that most job interviews are non-productive and that the beginning and end of your job interview is the most important.

"Most job interviews are non-productive because studies show a strong correlation between how much the interviewer likes the interviewee and whether or not they get the job. In the end, most of the factual information that comes from the curriculum vitae - the real stuff about the candidate that is a good indicator of performance - is forgotten. What is remembered is the impression the candidate made on the interviewer."

- The Definitive Book of Body Language pg. 348

- 1) When you walk into a job interview, what are the first 3 things you think the interviewer notices about you?

- 2) List 3 ways you can shape a prospective employer's initial opinion of you?

- 3) How can you help an employer remember you positively after the interview has happened?