

Interview Tips and Tricks

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Objectives

- After today, you'll be able to:
 - Identify important steps to prepare for an interview
 - Identify the major key points of the interview process
 - Recognize and answer popular interview questions
 - Understand and implement the SHARP and SOAR methods for answering questions
 - Understand how to interview in the age of COVID-19

Types of Interviews

- There are different types of interviews that determine your preparation and responses
 - In-Person
 - Panel
 - Online
 - Phone

The Interview Process

- Preparation/Preliminary Interview
- Formal Interview
 - Greeting
 - Personal summary
 - Job related questions
 - Wrap-up
- Follow-up

Preparing for the Interview

- Have a basic understanding of your career goals, both short and long term
- Familiarize yourself with common interview questions and how you would answer them
- Be prepared to discuss everything on your resume or cover letter, especially items that may seem irrelevant to the position
- Ensure you are well-rested

Research the Organization

- One of the best ways to prepare for an interview is to become familiar with the organization
- Look over the organization's website for mission statements, strategic visions, or press releases
 - This will allow you to tailor your responses to the organization's goals and values while also demonstrating your interest in working there
- Be prepared to ask questions to the interviewer(s) about the organization to clarify any concerns you have and to demonstrate more interest
- Sources like Glassdoor.com and LinkedIn can give you valuable insight into the organization

Social Media Etiquette

- Some organizations will investigate your social media accounts upon review of your application so be sure to keep all accounts professional or private
- Try to avoid
 - Embarrassing or inappropriate photos
 - Controversial or inappropriate conversations or posts
 - Comments about your current/previous employer or supervisor

Key Interview Points

- Interviews can be formal or informal, so always be prepared
- Stay positive - being confident in yourself is key to making a good and lasting impression, even when you are asked to critically evaluate yourself
- Do not talk about salary unless the interviewer brings it up
- Ask pertinent questions to demonstrate your interest in the job and the organization

Popular Questions

- There are many questions that you will encounter in every or almost every interview, so it is important to be familiar with them and how you would answer them
- These questions include:
 - Tell me about yourself
 - What are your strengths/weaknesses
 - Where do you see yourself in X years
 - Tell me/us about a time when...
- These questions tend to be at the beginning of the interview so being familiar with your answers will help build your confidence and set a positive tempo for the interview

Do Not Answer!

- There are certain questions that interviewers cannot ask you, but may try ways to find out that information:
 - Your Age
 - Your Marital Status and Family Members
 - Race, Color, Religion, or National Origin
 - Sex, Gender Identity, or Sexual Orientation
 - Disability
 - Citizenship
 - Pregnancy
 - Your current salary/benefits
- If someone does try to ask a question related to these topics, if it is not directly related to the responsibilities of the job, politely deny to answer and instead, shift the focus back to the job

SHARP Method

- The SHARP Method is designed to help polish your answers to more general or informational questions
- Specific
- Honest
- Appropriate
- Relevant
- Positive
- Let's look at an example

SHARP Example

- Tell me about yourself
- Well, I am a mother of 2 beautiful daughters and married to my wonderful husband of 15 years. We love to go camping and spend our free time being physically active. I used to work at BigTech Pharmaceuticals in their research division, but they never listened to anything I had to say so I quit. I really like helping people, so I volunteer with my church a lot.
- What is wrong with this response?

SHARP Example

- Let's look at a more appropriate response using the SHARP Method
- I was a laboratory technician at BigTech Pharmaceuticals for 4 years in their research division. Primarily, I was responsible for entering datasets and researching current medical patents and chemical standards. I worked closely with scientists and was involved in the development of _____. Before BigTech, I worked as a research assistant at the Cancer Research Center of Medical University while I finished my Master's Degree in chemical engineering. There, I assisted PhD students and doctors in preparing laboratory equipment for use and ordering supplies.

SOAR Method

- The SOAR Method is designed to effectively answer questions that focus on your experiences and how you handle conflict or problems.
- Situation
- Obstacles
- Action
- Result
- There is no “right” answer to these types of questions, but rather focus on your decision-making, communication, and critical-thinking skills.

SOAR Example

- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult situation at work. What was the final outcome?
- Well there were a lot of problems I had at my last job with my supervisor who would just never listen to me. He thought just because he was a scientist that he could just ignore what I said. I told him that there was a better way to enter the data, but he just dismissed me. I knew I was right so I just did it my way because I wanted to make sure the data was entered correctly and more efficiently.
- How can we improve this response?

SOAR Example

- Let's look at a more appropriate response using the SOAR Method
- While I worked very well with my colleagues, my supervisor did not like the way I entered the data. I explained to him that I found a better way to enter the data but he was skeptical of the new method. I was able to demonstrate to him that by entering the data in a different way, I was able cut down the data entry time by 25% and capture another element of the data that may be useful if the results need to be replicated. As a result, we were able to finish the research ahead of schedule and save the company some money.

Popular Questions

- Now that we have explored the SHARP and SOAR methods, how would you answer these questions differently?
 - Tell me about yourself
 - What are your strengths/weaknesses
 - Where do you see yourself in X years
 - Tell me/us about a time when...

Interviewing During COVID

- Be prepared for interviews to be conducted remotely
 - Ensure you have a reliable phone and connection
 - Familiarize yourself with popular video chatting/conferencing programs
 - Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, etc.
 - Have a dedicated space, preferably in a separate room
 - Professional looking, clean, and well-lit
 - Some programs allow for background overlays
 - Inform roommates or family members to limit distractions
 - Try to keep children and pets in a separate room.
- Be prepared for multiple interviews.

Interviewing During COVID

- Ask for a “test session” with organization or friend to identify possible issues and ensure all technology elements are functioning
- Dress professionally like you were going to an in-person interview
- Inform interviewer of any potential distractions at the beginning – many are understanding
- Keep eye contact as much as possible and look into the camera
- Ask for phone contact information should issues arise with computer or technology

Summary

- While the resume is your brand, the interview is your pitch
- Be familiar with all aspects of your resume and be able to pull on different experiences to highlight your skills and accomplishments
- Use the SHARP or SOAR method when appropriate to provide powerful answers
- Always stay positive and gracious

Thank You!