PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW

RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER

- Mentioning information you found through background research on the company highlights that you are truly interested in, and enthusiastic about, interviewing with the company.
- The more you know about the job/company/industry, the better you will be able to determine whether the job and company “fit” your career goals and interests.
- Having an understanding of the company and the job will help you better address questions asked during the interview and may even bring up potential questions for you to ask the interviewer.

It is important to have an understanding of the:

- History of the organization
- Mission/vision/values
- Services or products
- Organizational structure
- Size of the organization
- Prospective growth opportunities
- Sales, assets, and earnings
- Corporate philosophy
- Reputation
- Standing in the industry
- Competitors
- Recent developments

Research by visiting the organization’s website, LinkedIn, and social media platforms. It is also important to learn information about the company from external sources. Consider conducting a web search using a major search engine like Google to read through news articles related to the company. Use the Employer Research page for other search engines.

PREPARE FOR QUESTIONS

Although you cannot anticipate every question the employer will ask, it’s helpful to formulate answers to most commonly asked questions. In doing so, be mindful of your experience and skills related to the position. Consider participating in a mock interview at the Career Center or use Big Interview – available on the Career Center website (all students can utilize this resource). Also, develop strong questions to ask the employer to better understand if this role is a good fit for you.

MAKING A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

- Plan appropriate attire. Typically, business casual to business professional is appropriate.
- Plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early. Account for possible traffic congestion and parking needs.
- Prepare printed copies of your resume to give the interviewers.
- Introduce yourself professionally to the receptionist or the first person you encounter and let them know who you are there to see. The interview starts the moment you enter the building and doesn’t end until you exit.
- Pay close attention to the interviewer’s name and repeat his/her/their name when you greet them.
- Show confidence, interest, assertiveness, and enthusiasm. Do not be arrogant, aggressive, or immature.
- Be yourself. Smile! Be friendly (but not “chummy”). Be courteous, polite, and respectful at all times.
- Allow the interviewer to lead the interview. Don’t try to insert yourself in any time there is a silence.
NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

• Shake hands firmly with the interviewer(s) and anyone else you may meet throughout the interview.
• Make eye contact when speaking with someone. If you struggle with this, look just slightly above their forehead.
• Wait until you are offered a seat or until the interview takes his/her/their seat before you do.
• Be aware of your posture – stand tall, sit up straight, and lean slightly forward in your chair.
• Be aware of talking with your hands too much.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS DURING THE INTERVIEW

• Use proper grammar. Avoid using “um”, “like”, and “you know”.
• Think about your answers before speaking. It is okay to pause and collect your thoughts before answering.
• Express yourself clearly and succinctly and keep your answers concise and to-the-point.
• Make sure you answer the question asked. Validate or repeat the question if necessary to ensure you heard the question correctly. Avoid volunteering more information than you are asked for.
• Avoid sounding as if you have memorized answers to typical interview questions – the interview should be a natural flow of conversation. If you sound too “rehearsed” your interview will not be effective.
• Explain how you would accomplish a task rather than just saying that you could do it. Use specific examples to exhibit your strengths, skills, and abilities.
• Admit a “mental block” if you can’t think of an answer. Or explain how you would handle a situation if you have yet to experience it.
• Don’t be evasive. While past failures or problems need not be volunteered, don’t try to cover them up if they present themselves in conversation. If you do have a blemish in your past professional experience, utilize it as an opportunity to explain what you have learned from the situation or have worked to turn that into a strength.
• Never speak poorly about former supervisors, colleagues, or employers. You never know who might know who – especially if they are in similar industries. If you were unhappy, simply explain that it was not a good fit.
• Don’t discuss personal issues or problems during the interview.

ENDING THE INTERVIEW

• Reiterate your interest in the position.
• Summarize, giving specific examples of your knowledge, skills, and abilities that would make you a successful fit for the position.
• Ask for a business card at the closing of the interview to ensure that you have proper contact information.
• Thank the interviewer(s) for their time and shake hands again firmly with each individual.
• Indicate that you look forward to hearing from them soon and welcome them to contact you should they need further information.
• Send a thank you letter to each interviewer within 48 hours to express your continued interest in the position.
• If you do not hear from this employer within the time frame indicated during the interview, make a follow-up phone call or email to let him/her/them know you are still interested in the position and to find out if there are additional questions you might address.