How-To Have the Interview of Your Life:  
5 Steps to Prepare  
by Christa Quintos

Do you have an upcoming job interview in a week? In a couple of days? Tomorrow? Are you ready to walk into that four-cornered office to have the interview of your life? My hope is that you will say “YES!”

There are numerous ways of preparing for an interview. The ultimate goal of this process is to reduce your stress and have the confidence that you will have the interview of your life. Whether you are prepared or trying to be, here are 5 ways of preparing for a job interview.

1. How well do I know myself?

Conduct a career exploration to determine your interests, talents, values, and your opportunities within your career of interest. Greenhaus et al. (2010), author of Career Management, demonstrates that through a thorough career exploration lies self-awareness. Awareness of yourself and the environment of your career can help determine your truest aspirations in personal and career lives. Self-awareness is a significant characteristic because it shows that you have expressed great efforts in truly knowing what you want.

2. Research The Company and Job Position.

Review the company’s history, mission, and objectives. This will show the interviewer that you have actually taken time to prepare for the interview (Thornbory & White, 2006). What does the company represent? Would you share the same values as the company? Applying your knowledge and values with the company’s interests will also provide advantages during the interview. This will display that you have done your work to connect yourself with the interests and desires of the company. Explore the company’s benefits, pay, union, environment, HR involvement, etc., career relations that are valuable to you. Knowledge of these types of information about your career will be a benefit when marketing yourself to companies of your choice, especially when you have acquired the job.
3. Review/Practice Possible Questions That The Interviewer May Ask.

Think of yourself in different situations and how you would handle them. Situations may include: problems with coworkers, boss, customers, and time management. Arthur Lazarus (2004) mentions that numerous companies use a performance-based hiring process, which looks at past behaviors of the candidates as best predictions of their future performance. Some questions that may be asked are, “Tell me about a time when you had to make a tough strategic decision. Why was the decision tough and what did you do?” and, “Can you give me an example of a time when you successfully took charge of a group and helped guide it into getting a job done?” (Lazarus, 2004). Be honest and provide answers that would be unique to your personality. It is best not to say answers that would please the audience, but answers that reflect your values (Willets, 2012). You may want to organize a mock interview with a friend or a family member. This will allow you to have a more practical experience and let you see which areas you need to improve. You may also want to record yourself for self-evaluation (Scudder, 2013).


The Nation Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) concluded that the way you present yourself has a major impact on employers. Marilyn Mackes, executive director of NACE, states “[Job candidates] are marketing themselves to employers as potential employees and that part of marketing is the packaging” (Anonymous, 2000). The way you carry yourself impacts not only those around you, but also yourself. The significance of workplace attire creates a positive influence in self-confidence and outcomes of situations (Peluchette et al., 2006). Leaving a good impression solely on the way you dress and the boost in confidence it comes with will be an easy cross off the checklist on your way to success. Dress the job and be the job the company wants.

5. Rest.

Do not underestimate the power of a restful sleep. Make sure to have a good night’s rest and wake up early to have enough time for breakfast. Have a couple of printed updated resumes ready. This act may seem like common
sense, but recognizing that you have rested and have conducted multiple preparations to ace your interview will boost your confidence and reduce your stress.

There are multiple ways to have the “interview of your life.” All of this depends on you and what you feel will prepare you best. Preparation and delivery techniques will prove significant in interviews. Your personality, characteristics, uniqueness, and self-presentation will help interviewers remember you, so don’t be afraid to be yourself.

Exploration, research, practice, and rest should be areas of pre-interview activities that everyone should practice. These simple steps can sure make a difference. Five ways of preparation, for example, may not be enough for many people, but these steps will surely help interviewees, such as yourself, become more prepared and confident with your ability to have a successful interview.

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References


