

## **The Interview**

*People say that luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity. The interview is your opportunity.*

### ***Definition of an Interview***

An interview is a formal consultation or meeting for the purpose of ascertaining and evaluating the qualifications of a person, group of people, or company to fill a particular job situation.

### ***Interview Purpose***

The purpose of the interview is to give the interviewer, and you, the opportunity to determine your suitability for the position. An interview is your chance to provide information that will enable the interviewer to select you as the best candidate. The interviewer will ask questions and evaluate your answers to determine whether you have the necessary qualifications, skills set, attitude, and attributes to perform the duties of the position.

### ***Interview Preparation***

Preparation is the key to performing well in an interview. The following list of suggestions will help direct you in your preparation.

- Research the position you are being interviewed for
    - Pay careful attention to the job requirements listed on the job posting. It is your job to convince the interviewers of your ability to fulfill these requirements.
  - Research the company you have an interview with
    - Ensure you have a good knowledge of the services the CEM Member Firm provides to its clients.
  - Identify your strengths and weaknesses
    - It is important that you know yourself well. Identifying these areas ahead of time will make you better prepared to answer any questions that you may be asked during an interview.
  - Know your resume and cover letter
    - Often the interviewer will want to expand on some information you have provided in your resume, so be sure you can make the connection from your resume to the position you are applying for.
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- Know your experience and achievements
  - Think of example situations from your background in which you have demonstrated the skills listed on the job posting.
  - During the interview, draw upon these examples to demonstrate your capabilities to the interviewer.
- Rehearse your answers
  - At the end of this guide there is a list of typical interview questions you may use to practice.
- Have well thought out questions to ask during the interview
  - Good questions will show that you have a strong interest in the position and the company.
- Be on time for the interview
  - Confirm the time and location to ensure you arrive 10 to 15 minutes ahead of time.
- Dress professionally
  - Make an effort to look your best.
- Make a strong first impression
  - Offer a firm handshake, make eye contact, and have a friendly expression when you are greeted by your interviewer.
  - First impressions are important.
  - Remember to turn off your cellular phone.

In answering questions in a persuasive manner, it is important to draw on examples that demonstrate your capabilities. To help you with this, answer the following questions in a persuasive manner. The material used in answering these questions will aid you in an interview.

- **What do you want?** This is your job target. Your answers to interview questions should be built around your job target.
  - **Why are you qualified to do it?** Outline the skills and credentials that qualify you for the job. List the programs completed or in the process of completing, major areas of study or training, any awards or recognition you have received. You may wish to list memberships that show you have knowledge or experience related to the type of job you want, or show that you have positive characteristics such as personal initiative. Make sure when making a list of your skills, list situations in which you have demonstrated those skills.
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- **Where have you done it?** Outline who you worked for and what you did. Also include any related volunteer experience, hobbies, and other activities that demonstrate your capabilities.
- **How well have you done it?** List accomplishments and special and/or challenging projects you completed, or aided in the completion of. Give examples of situations in which you surpassed expectations. The best examples are those that demonstrate quantifiable results, or your willingness to go “the extra mile”. Ensure that you state clearly what you have done personally. The interviewer is not interested in what the company, or the team you were a part of, has done.

### ***Sample Interview Questions***

One of the easiest ways to build confidence before a job interview is to prepare answers to questions you might be asked. Interviewers often use some general questions to assess candidates, so you'll increase your chances for success if you prepare for them in advance.

#### **“Tell me about yourself?”**

A common opener, this broad question can “throw” many interviewees. It is in fact a “sell-me” invitation. Develop a brief summation of your background leading into your interest and desire to work for the organization, as well as your qualifications for the position. The interviewer is interested in the information about you that relates to your qualifications for employment, such as education, work experiences and extracurricular activities.

#### **“Why do you want to work for our firm?”**

Research the CEM Member Firm before your interview; find out about the scope of services provided by the firm, locations, clients, philosophy, goals, previous growth record and growth plans, how they value employees and clients.

#### **“What are your strengths and weaknesses?”**

This is one of the most well known interview questions, and interviewers often ask it indirectly, as in, “What did your most recent boss suggest as areas for improvement in your last performance review?” Tailor your “strengths” answer to skills that will benefit the prospective employer. When it comes to weaknesses, or areas of growth, build on your answer to include “how you have improved, and specifics on what you have done to improve yourself in those areas.”

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**“Can you describe a previous work situation in which you ...?”**

This question comes in many forms, but what the interviewer is looking for is your behavior on the job. Your answer could focus on resolving a crisis, overcoming a challenging situation, handling a problem coworker, or juggling multiple tasks on a project. The theory behind this type of question is that past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. The key to responding well is preparing real job examples, describing your behavior in specific situations that demonstrate important skills that the job requires.

**“What is your most notable accomplishment?”**

Think of three or four accomplishments and quantify what their actions meant. Being able to quantify your achievements in your career will launch you ahead of the rest, and demonstrate your ability to do the same as a future employee.

**“What major challenges and problems did you face? How did you handle them?”**

When asked the job interview question "How did you handle a challenge?" be sure to include specific examples of how you handled a particular difficult situation. Discuss how you researched the issue and contributed to finding a solution.

**“What was your most / least rewarding job related experience?”**

When answering this question, you want to make sure that the things you say that are least rewarding aren't responsibilities that are going to be a major part of the job you are interviewing for. For example, if the last job you had involved extensive surveying work that you disliked, and if surveying is even a minor part of the new job, don't mention it. Instead, focus on the tasks that were most rewarding and highlight those. When interviewing, always be aware of the job you are interviewing for and tailor your response accordingly. Try to accentuate the positive, regardless of what question you have been asked because you don't want to be construed as someone who is negative about work.

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