



A ROPELLA INSIGHT

PREPARING FOR AN **INTERVIEW**



BEFORE THE **INTERVIEW**

RESEARCH

Do your research! Preplanning for the interview is important. You need to research, organize, and execute just like you would for any other important business meeting.

Beyond hard skills relevant to the position, companies are looking for someone who takes the interview process seriously and can be seen as ready to “hit the ground running.” Try to find as much information as you can on the company website and/or social media platforms such as the following: company culture, technology, markets served, strategic plans, annual reports, fact sheets, news coverage, leadership profiles, etc

PREPARE QUESTIONS

After you’ve done your research, imagine yourself in the role and write down ten interesting/important questions that you will want to be answered during the interview process. This may seem excessive, but some questions will get answered throughout the conversation, and you always want to have a few remaining for the inevitable “what questions do you have” segment of the interview.

PRACTICE

Take every interview opportunity seriously. Practice before the interview and build confidence by conducting a mock interview with a trusted professional. Have stories and examples prepared that highlight your relevant accomplishments, traits that make you an ideal fit for the role, and even failures that you’ve learned from in your career. Use percentages and quantifiable results when possible.

MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

Arrive or be ready at least 15 minutes early. This applies to phone, video, and in-person interviews. Do everything in your power to avoid missing an interview or having to reschedule.

For remote interviews, find a place where you can be comfortable and confident. Avoid interruptions by making sure your interview location is free of any disturbances and turning off notifications on all electronic devices.

For video or in-person interviews, business professional attire is generally acceptable. It’s difficult to overdress for a first impression. Choose neutrals (deep blue, green, white, black, or grey) over bright colors, and solids over patterns. Dress modestly and polish your appearance by keeping hairstyles, makeup, and jewelry to a neutral minimum.

GOOD FIRST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What did you find interesting about my background for this role?
- How do you measure success for this role — in 90 days, 6 months, or a year?
- What are the key challenges that I would be facing in this role?

BAD FIRST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- What’s the salary range and what does the benefits package look like?
- Are you going to do a background check?
- Why do you need me to relocate - can’t I work remotely?

PREPARING FOR TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

“TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.”

This is a common icebreaker, so have your “elevator pitch” prepared – but avoid a lengthy, rambling story. This question wants you to answer with your experience, current skillset, and how that will drive success in your new position. Be personable, but move through relevant career stops quickly, and stay on-point with a concise and inclusive answer.

“WHERE DO YOU SEE YOURSELF IN 5 YEARS?”

Interviewers are not expecting to hear that you want to be company president, but they also want to know that the current role offered is one you are committed to. Balance your ambition with an understanding that your focus will be on performing at the highest level in your current role, and that promotions and additional responsibility will come as you prove your value.

“WHAT ARE YOUR GREATEST WEAKNESSES?”

Employers want to know that you are self-aware and honest. This question is a great opportunity to discuss a situation that you were able to overcome, despite your known shortcomings. You may discuss a weakness that you have improved over time and/or mechanisms you have put in place to mitigate any impact on performance.

“WHY DID YOU LEAVE YOUR PREVIOUS JOB? (OR) WHY DO YOU WANT TO LEAVE YOUR CURRENT JOB?”

While it can be tempting to throw a difficult employer under the bus, be careful not to overshare negative things about your prior employment. Stick to the facts when explaining prior job changes and focus on the positive, interesting points that motivated you to explore the new role.

“WHAT ARE YOU EXPECTING IN TERMS OF COMPENSATION?”

Especially in early interviews, a straight answer here can be risky if you shoot too high (resulting in no offer at all) or too low (undercutting your value). A simple response is:

“I’m open and flexible... and much more interested in first exploring this great opportunity. If that’s in alignment after the interview process, I’ve found that the finances take care of themselves.”

If they persist after this answer, continue to avoid naming a dollar figure with a “fair offer” statement:

“Well, we’re still early in the interview process and I was so interested in learning more about the role that I haven’t yet come to a decision on that. Of course, it will depend on the total package and, if you think I’m the right person for the job, then I’m confident you will give me a fair offer.”

“WHY ARE YOU THE BEST CANDIDATE FOR THIS JOB? / WHY SHOULD WE CHOOSE YOU FOR THIS ROLE?”

By the time this question is asked, you should be armed with more information about the responsibilities, challenges of the role, and company goals. Focus on your skills and past experiences that have primed you for success to meet those targets. Confidently share your excitement for what you can bring to the table and reiterate that you are dedicated to helping the company/team succeed.



PHONE/VIDEO INTERVIEW TIPS

CONNECTION AND BATTERY

Find a location with good cell reception and/or internet connection. If you're using a laptop, cell phone, or earbuds, ensure that they are fully charged and function well.

BACKGROUND AND LIGHTING

It's critical to set up a video conference backdrop that is professional and free of clutter. After you have found a location in your home, set your camera in front of a large window, desk lamp, or ring light to create plenty of soft lighting around your face. Achieve the most flattering camera angle (head-on and at eye-level) by using a monitor stand or a set of books to adjust your camera accordingly. Have only your torso, shoulders, and head in the video.

SOFTWARE AND TESTING

The day before your interview, make sure that you have the appropriate video software installed and test your audio, video, lighting, and internet quality by conducting a mock call with someone you trust.

LOOK AT THE CAMERA

It's not unusual to want to watch yourself or your interviewer during a video interview session but looking directly at the video camera is the only way to maintain direct eye contact with your interviewer. One trick here is to center the face of the other person on your screen to be right below your camera.



ON-SITE INTERVIEW TIPS

BRING MATERIALS

Bring multiple copies of any documents you intend to share. This includes your resume/CV, identification, sample work, testimonials/references, or a presentation. At a minimum, showing up with high-quality copies of your resume shows that you are prepared and taking the interview seriously.

SHOW UP READY

Remember, the interview starts as soon as you arrive on the business property. It's not uncommon for your potential employer to meet you in the parking lot or watch as you enter the building. Plan ahead and make a pit stop nearby to tidy up your appearance before arriving at the interview location. In addition, nothing leaves a lasting memory like bad breath. Grab a breath mint, if necessary, but never get caught chewing gum as you arrive at the interview.

BE CONSIDERATE

Throughout the interview process, you will likely be interacting with a variety of personnel. Word can travel quickly in every company, so it's important to be polite and considerate to everyone you meet, from the janitor to the CEO.

MEAL INTERVIEWS

If the interview includes a meal, order a light, clean meal and limit yourself to a maximum of only one alcoholic beverage if (and only if) your interviewer has ordered one first.

DURING THE **INTERVIEW**

ENTHUSIASM

Companies want employees who are excited to work for them. Even if you're unsure about the position, being enthusiastic will help you move forward to the next interview stage, ensuring that you maintain the right of first refusal. Even if things don't work out, you will have made an excellent networking connection that could benefit you in the future.

BODY LANGUAGE

Be aware of your body language (handshake, posture, eye contact, and facial expressions). Sit up straight with both feet planted on the ground, use hand gestures (if it comes naturally), and remember to smile or nod.

CONVERSATION

In an interview, you don't want one side to dominate the conversation. Try to create a conversation that engages both parties equally by doing the following:

- Answering the questions that are asked and listening carefully to the question, being sure to answer it in your response.
- Keeping your answers succinct. Stories are great if they're relevant but can lose an audience if they go on too long. Keep a mental timer in your head of about 60 seconds before checking back in with your interviewer to ask something like, "Does that answer your question, or would you like me to continue?" This keeps your interviewer engaged, continues the dialogue, and gives them a chance to dive deeper (or pivot to the next subject).
- Asking good follow-up questions that show an understanding and interest in the subject.

CLOSING

At the end of the interview, ask if they still have any concerns. It's a great way to learn if there is anything that you missed, that they misunderstood, or that you didn't explain well enough.

Always ask for the job! You want to show enthusiasm and express your interest in moving forward by asking about the next steps. Based on your comfort level, ask about the next step in the interview process and who you would be meeting with, ask about the expected timeline for a decision, or ask them for a formal offer and start date. Again, you can change your mind as you learn more, but you can seldom get back an opportunity once you've lost it.



AFTER THE **INTERVIEW**

Take a few moments to create a personal summary of your conversation in writing, including any positives, areas of concern, and remaining questions. Write down any personal connection or rapport you were able to create during the interview so that you can reiterate that connection in a thank you email.

Send thank you emails within a day of your interview to each of the interviewers to remind them that you're still interested, ready to make an impact, and eager to continue the process and learn more.



ABOUT ROPELLA

As the world's leading Executive Search Firm specializing in the chemical, consumer products and technology industries, we understand the challenges you face in trying to find the perfect fit for those highly specialized and complex executive positions.

Ropella excels at finding those select few executive candidates with the right skills, qualifications, background and management style, who fit your compensation parameters and are ready to relocate.

We believe nobody should have to waste time screening resumes of candidates who aren't qualified, don't fit your compensation parameters, aren't serious about the role or aren't ready to relocate. That's why we developed the SMART Search System® to provide our clients with precise and predictable hiring results, giving them a huge competitive advantage.