



... INTERVIEW PREPARATION ...

GENERAL INFORMATION

Hiring managers always want to understand the reasons why a candidate is seeking employment with their company. Be prepared to discuss why you are pursuing the specific opportunity the firm is presenting. When explaining your rationale for making a change, emphasize the positive. Be sure to focus on how the specific company and job opportunity will allow you to achieve a career goal or ambition. Clearly explain your interest — does it stem from the company's leadership reputation in the industry, the quality of their products or services, the potential for career advancement, the prospect of additional responsibility, a desire to work for a company with a more suitable corporate culture, etc.

Prior to any interview (or phone screen), thoroughly review the job description and research the company to ensure you are well prepared to address questions about your motivations.

Interviewers are on the lookout for "red flag" factors that may be driving a candidate away from a current job. Your objective is to establish that you are seeking a positive change and moving towards an enhanced career opportunity,

rather than "running away" from a negative situation.

As a candidate, you must also be prepared to convince the interviewer that you are the best candidate for the job. While most interview questions are designed to gauge your current skill level and to determine how well your business experience and accomplishments match the requirements of the position,

interviewers are also assessing a variety of intangible qualities that they identify with success. These include business acumen, polished professionalism, confidence, energetic demeanor, positive attitude, willingness to learn, etc. In three to five sentences, you should be able to summarize why you are uniquely qualified for the job. Be sure to touch on your skills, experiences, educational/professional credentials, track record of success, as well as personal

qualities that demonstrate why you are a perfect fit for the role.

BE PREPARED TO ANSWER 2 KEY QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you want to work for the employer?
2. Why should the employer hire you?

Whether or not these questions are asked outright, the savvy interviewer is gathering data throughout a discussion and formulating an opinion regarding your motivations and suitability for the role.



Nicholson McFadden group

KEY SKILL AREAS/SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following key skill areas are discussed in most interviews. Be prepared to discuss several examples of each skill area in response to interviewers' questions.

- **Focused on Results:** Consistently delivers measurable success. Overcomes obstacles and adversity.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS: Give an example of an objective you've achieved and the obstacles you've had to overcome to achieve it. How difficult was it to achieve? How difficult were the obstacles? What would you have done differently?
- **Leads/Adapts to Change:** Adjusts easily to change and understands how to operate in new and ever-changing environments. Enjoys leading and driving change throughout the organization.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS: Describe a situation where you learned of a last minute change of plans. How did you react? What did you do to adjust? Describe a situation where you've had to lead others through change. How did you lead? How did others respond?
- **Communication Skills:** Able to address various audiences equally well. Articulate and to the point. Able to effectively read others' signals in conversations and meetings. Demonstrates an ability to gain others' trust and cooperation.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS: Describe a situation where you have had to influence others on an issue or project they were initially opposed to. What was the outcome? How did you influence them?
- **Utilizes Data/Problem Solver:** Thinks strategically about how to build the business, and uses data to make decisions, sell ideas, and solve problems. Seeks to identify the root causes of problems and creates viable solutions.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS: Describe a recent problem you've encountered, how you've gone about solving it, and the final outcome. What was your approach to the problem? Did you seek others help and/or input? Did you have to choose between various solutions? How did you decide?
- **See the Big Picture/Strategic Ability:** Understands both short-term goals and long-term business strategies. Understand the role his/her responsibility plays in the broader business objectives. Can identify difference between strategy and tactics.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS: Describe your current responsibility in terms of its overall impact to your company. What can you do in your role to impact the company long-term? Short-term?



Nicholson McFadden group

TECHNIQUE FOR ANSWERING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The *SAR Technique* offers an effective way to stay focused and clear in your responses.

SAR = SITUATION → ACTION → RESULTS

S - Characterize the **Situation**

What was the context? Describe the setting, background, or overall situation.

Provide pertinent details, but don't get bogged down in minutiae.

A - Describe the **Action** you took

What specifically did you do? Focus on your role and contributions.

R - Communicate the **Results** of your action

What was the outcome? How did the situation end?

This is most effective when there is measurable result.

THE INTANGIBLES

The manner in which you present yourself during an interview undeniably plays a role in any hiring decision. The typical interviewer has less than an hour to assess whether or not you would be a long-term match for the organization – use every opportunity to make a positive impression.

- **Be Punctual:** Anticipate possible traffic delays, and imperfect directions. A general rule of thumb is to arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your scheduled interview time. Be prepared with multiple contact numbers for your interviewer in case there is an emergency and you expect that you'll be late.
- **Copies of Resume:** Be prepared with several copies on hand – at least one copy per interviewer, plus two extras.
- **Exude Confidence:** Use a firm handshake. Be relaxed, but maintain professionalism — stand and sit up straight. Make consistent eye contact, however don't feel obligated to always maintain it since it may tend to make some listeners uncomfortable.
- **Stay focused:** Err on the side of brevity when responding to interview questions. Once you have answered the question, stop talking. If more information is needed, let the interviewer ask you a follow-up question. Don't ramble on or go off on tangents.
- **Listen to the Interviewer:** Make sure you are really hearing the questions asked by the interviewer to ensure that you are providing appropriate responses.