

What I've Learned About Interviewing

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I have always loved the limelight ever since I was a kid, and presenting in front of large groups was an adrenaline rush I continually sought after. During my junior year of college, I got an interview with a company I dreamed of working for, and I was thrilled and couldn't wait to absolutely KILL the interview. I didn't have any thought to prep, maybe it was ignorant pride, because this was it. My big opportunity. I thought I was going to absolutely KILL the interview, and I didn't even think to prep. Maybe I was prideful, but moreover I simply didn't understand that prep work is important for everyone!

During the interview, I sweated profusely through my dress shirt and suit jacket, and left with noticeably wet armpits. I tripped over my own words, trying to sound articulate, instead finding myself in loops of run on sentences and random tangents and nonsensical and wordy explanations. I left that interview dejected, but renewed with a newfound determination to never again fail at an interview. I'm happy to report, I have left every subsequent interview feeling like I did my best, which ultimately is the only thing within my control. Here are a few interview tips I learned the hard way.

- 1. Be prepared** –That seems broad, but it was my first mistake, to think I was good enough that I didn't need to prepare. Putting aside time to prepare for an interview, no matter how small or big, is key to your success. Preparation comes in many forms, it will include researching, practicing, and even figuring out what to wear, so read on for more on how to prepare.
- 2. Do Your Research** –There is not enough emphasis on doing research, whether it's a college, a team, or an employer. Look online, what is their mission statement, their history or their objective? Do they have a slogan? My favorite part of technology now is how useful websites are now, with online campus tours, videos of student testimonials, and more! Use If you're looking at a school, take a tour of the campus online, and remember to use the power of technology to do some detailed research.
- 3. Sell Yourself** –If you don't, who will? You are presenting yourself so you must do it in a positive light, talking about your accomplishments, finding ways to show your strengths and minimize your weaknesses. Avoid saying things like, "I'm not that good at..." and instead emphasize what you are good at! There are certain words that have negative connotations associated with them like "lazy" which are sometimes synonymous with more forgiving descriptions like "procrastinate" or "unmotivated" and likely more accurate, so remember that when you start to draw on adjectives you might have heard your parents use to describe you.
- 4. Know Yourself** –This means why do YOU want to work for this company or join this team or gain admittance to this college? YOU have to know why YOU want to go there, or WHY you want to work in a specific industry or job. Was there some pivotal moment that made you decide this the right fit for you? Is there some other interest that

profoundly impacts you and why you've decided to apply for this role? If it's a school you're interviewing with, what about the location of the school intrigues you?

5. **Use Examples** –Simply saying you are organized won't be enough. Most of that stuff is already on your resume. Now that you've gained an interview in person, you want to be able to succinctly explain why you are organized. Do you like to use boxes inside of boxes, are your books arranged in alphabetical order, do you meticulously time manage with a checklist, calendar, or planner? These are the examples that color an otherwise black and white image of you. Use them to your advantage! I encourage everyone to prepare some stories. It's often hard to improvise on the spot, but if you've given some thought to anecdotes with yourself that demonstrate your team player abilities, leaderships skills, overcoming obstacles,
6. **Think Ahead** –What are some questions they might ask you? A simple google search will show typical interview questions, but sifting through these questions will give you some confidence around your preparation. If you want to go one step further, try typing out your answers to sample interview questions. Sometimes it's easier to write out an answer than it is to think of one on the spot. You can edit it to make it more succinct, flow better, etc. and then do not memorize, but practice in general based on what you've written down. The same goes for preparing questions you might want to ask. Think about what you really want to know that you can't just find out online from the school or employer website. Ask about the people, or about your interviewer in particular. Find out about their connection to the school or employer.
7. **Practice** –Practice is important, but try doing it in front of a mirror or taking a video of yourself. Take a look at how your face reacts or what type of gestures you use. Sometimes this is the only way to actually notice that thing you do with your hand. For the ultimate practice session, wear the clothes you plan to wear for the interview while practicing.
8. **Look the Part**—Think about what you are going to wear for your interview ahead of time. If it's something you're not comfortable with, try practicing in it first. But it's not just about dressing to impress. Make sure you do your hair, girls and boys, so you don't have bed head, and are not constantly playing with hair to push it back or get it out of your face. What about your nails, or your shoes? Make sure everything looks tidy and won't detract from you talking about yourself. Check your teeth before you go in for the interview, you don't want anyone focused on that piece of salad stuck in your teeth when you're explaining your biggest accomplishments.
9. **Be Yourself** –Sometimes we have the tendency to try to be someone we're not. When interviewing, this is a huge risk because we're trying so hard to toot our own horn while having a meaningful conversation with our interviewer. But don't stray so far away from who you are fundamentally, that you are no longer being yourself. When asked what you enjoy in your free time, do tell what you really love to do, and stay true to yourself.

- 10. Give Thanks** –Don't forget to send an email or even snail mail to thank your interviewer for their time. I suggest mentioning something you discussed during the interview to help them remember you.

