



JOHN BROWN UNIVERSITY

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO INTERVIEWING

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PURPOSE OF AN INTERVIEW

It is important to remember that the purpose of the interview is two-fold:

(1) THE EMPLOYER NEEDS TO FIND OUT IF YOU ARE THE BEST CANDIDATE FOR THE JOB:

- Can you do the job?
- Do you have the appropriate background, including education, skills, and experience?
- Do you have the expertise needed to make you "stand out?"
- Are you able to learn and adapt? Will you do the job?
- Do you want to work for this company, or do you simply see it as a stepping-stone?
- Are you aware of and honest about your future goals and plans?
- Are you motivated and eager to learn? Will you fit in?
- Do you work well with others?
- How do you respond to supervision and criticism?
- Do you have the skills to balance where their team is currently weak? Do they like you?

(2) YOU NEED TO FIND OUT IF THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU:

- What do I want my typical workday to look like?
- What are my career goals for the next five years?
- What kind of work schedule do I want?
- What kind of work setting do I want?
- Am I willing to relocate?

INTERVIEW OVERVIEW:

"You never get a second chance to make a first impression." Interviews are bound to put a lot of pressure on you. Below is a list of items to review before your interview to help you make your best first impression.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

TELEPHONE

A phone interview is usually used to screen candidates early in the process. You must impress them on the phone in order to get another interview.

- Select a time and location when you won't be interrupted.
- Think about background noise, be inside.
- Turn off all sounds on your phone.
- Arrange all documents you will need in front of you.
- Enunciate and keep your answers short.
- Dress professional, it helps you to be more professional.
- Smile and gesture as if you were speaking face-to-face.

VIDEO INTERVIEWS

Another first round interview or interview from afar. These are increasing in popularity

- Test your technology and be sure to have a reliable Wi-Fi connection.
- Choose a good location, neutral background.
- Make eye contact.
- Get comfortable seeing yourself on camera.

IN PERSON INTERVIEW, ONE-ON-ONE

Most job interviews, see next section for information.

IN PERSON INTERVIEW, ONE-ON-ONE, MULTIPLE INTERVIEWS

You will meet individually for multiple interviews. This is a good sign, it means you are worth their time.

- Review your schedule. Know about your different interviewers.
- Don't be afraid of repetition. Each interview is a new conversation.
- Keep your energy up!
- See additional information in the next section.

PANEL INTERVIEW

These are usually the most intimidating.

- You will not be able to please everyone.
- Maintain eye contact with the person who asked the question.
- Remember names and respond with them.
- See additional information in the next section.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

KNOW YOURSELF.

- What do you have to offer – knowledge, skills, and abilities? What are your goals?
- See page 8 on creating your own elevator speech or 30 second commercial
- Create a list of your strengths. From your research of the company and the industry, refine your list of strengths into three to five attributes that a company might want in an employee. Be ready to offer evidence through scenarios and stories.
- Make the “Fit Test”: Be absolutely clear that the role and company you’d like to apply for really fits with your skills, career track, professional and personal objectives, beliefs and experiences. Conversely, check if you might match with the culture and needs of the company you’d like to join.

RESEARCH THE COMPANY AND POSITION

- Researching the company and the position shows you take an interest. Organizations want to hire people who are passionate about their work and mission. Visit their company website, use Glassdoor, read recent articles about the organization, and note any major changes the company had made recently. Be sure to know basic company information (annual sales, number of employees, geographic location and latest industry trends).

THE KINDS OF THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE COMPANY INCLUDE:

- How long has the company existed?
- What services does the company provide or what products does it make?
- Who are their major competitors?
- What divisions or subsidiaries exist?
- What is the parent company?
- What geographic areas are covered?
- How many people are employed by the company?
- What are the company's assets and earnings?
- Does the company have any international operations?

THE KINDS OF THINGS YOU SHOULD LEARN ABOUT THE INTERVIEW ITSELF INCLUDE:

- If possible, know and be able to pronounce the name of the interviewer
- Find out what you can about the format and length of the interview? Will you meet with a panel?
- Will you meet with several people individually?
- Will you have a lunch meeting?
- Be certain you have clear and precise directions to the interview site (a trial run ahead of time can save you the potentially fatal embarrassment of arriving late)

GET FAMILIAR WITH COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

There are select questions that an interviewer is almost always bound to ask. For example: What are your strengths and weaknesses? Find a thorough list of frequently asked interview questions on page 9.

PREPARE ANSWERS TO INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.

There are several different ways to answer an interview question, but for the most impact we suggest following a STAR format. Look for STAR samples and guidelines on page 6.

KNOW YOUR INTERVIEWER(S):

Today it’s easier than ever to collect information about your interviewers. Spend 40-50 minutes on Google, LinkedIn, etc. and you should be clear about titles, roles, careers, etc. of all the people who’ll interview you.

PREPARE THREE TO FIVE QUESTIONS FOR THE INTERVIEWER

You will be asked the majority of the questions, but to show that you are engaged in the company it is in your best interest to ask questions about the interviewer and the organization. How? See page 12.

DRESS FOR SUCCESS

- An interview (especially a first interview) is your time to make your best impression. To stand out from your competition, dress appropriately for the interview. How do you know what dress is important? Before the interview, ask your interviewer or the receptionist about the organization's dress code. If you feel uncomfortable doing this, it's always better to be slightly overdressed.
- Appropriate attire supports your image as a person who takes the interview process seriously. Even if you are aware that employees of an organization dress casually on the job, dress up for the interview unless you are specifically told otherwise by the employer. Your clothing should be conservative and well-fitting; it should not take center stage. If you are primarily remembered by your interview attire, this is probably because you made an error in judgment!
 - *Standard Interview Attire for Men:* A white or muted color shirt is best. A dark or gray suit, solid or with subtle pinstripes. There is more flexibility with ties, but conservative colors and patterns are most appropriate. Polished, leather lace-up shoes with dark or matching socks. If you have facial hair, make sure it is minimal neatly groomed. Avoid wearing cologne or aftershave on the day of your interview. Be conservative with watches and other jewelry. Note that earrings might not be viewed positively.
 - *Standard Interview Attire for Women:* A neutral business suit. A white or light colored blouse under the suit jacket. If wearing a skirt, it should be knee-length. Avoid high slits. Jewelry should be simple, with no dangly flashy earrings. Consider not wearing perfume. Do not show cleavage. Neutral hosiery with basic pumps, low heel. Avoid open toe shoes or sandals. Light make-up is recommended. Clear or light nail polish. If you carry a purse, keep it small and simple.
- All clothes should be neatly ironed. Suits usually have tacking stitches to hold vents in place before purchase; make sure these are removed. You should also carefully inspect for dangling threads, lint, and missing buttons. Avoid carrying a backpack or large purse to the interview. Bring a portfolio with copies of your resume, transcript, a notepad, pen, and a list of questions for the employer.

BRING PERTINENT ITEMS

- It's important to demonstrate you're organized and prepared with information that will support the fact that you are the right person for the job. Bring extra copies of your resume, any work samples, reference letters or performance reviews. Place them neatly into a folder to make sure that everything is in one place.

ARRIVE 15 MINUTES EARLY.

- It goes without saying that being early is much better than being late. Arrive early in case there is additional paperwork for you to fill out. You can also use that time to mentally prepare for the interview. How? Be sure to print out directions and check the local traffic before leaving for the facility

DURING THE INTERVIEW

MAKE APPROPRIATE GESTURES AND EYE CONTACT WITH THE INTERVIEWER

Your posture, body language and eye contact can say a lot about your confidence and interest in the position. How: If you have difficulties making eye contact, especially in uncomfortable situations, practice your interview questions in a mirror and purposefully make eye contact with yourself.

TAILOR YOUR ANSWERS TO YOUR AUDIENCE

Using “technical” terms specific to your position can be difficult for a Human Resources representative to understand. Showcase your work knowledge and experience when speaking with the hiring manager, but don’t get too technical with Human Resources.

KEEP YOUR RESPONSES RELATIVE

Talking about a situation that doesn’t relate to work or the position you’re applying for can be distracting for both yourself and the Interviewer. Be sure to talk thoughtfully and practice your responses. If needed, take a couple of seconds to gather your thoughts after each question. An Interviewer will appreciate your clear response.

AVOID SPEAKING NEGATIVELY ABOUT PREVIOUS EMPLOYERS

Criticizing a past employer can give the wrong impression to the Interviewer that you are negative and possibly a difficult employee. When speaking about a situation at your previous employer, spin negative situations into positives by focusing on your actions that made a positive difference.

CLOSING AN INTERVIEW

- You’re rounding the final corner of your interview, but how do you end it professionally? Here are a few points to help you.
- Prepare a brief summary of your competencies and strengths, related to the position
- Ask about “Next Steps”, which will reiterate your interest in the position and the company
- Thank the Interviewer for his/her time and consideration. Be sure to smile and make appropriate closing gestures
- Ask for the interviewer’s business card so you can send a thank you letter.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

- Once you’ve ended the interview, be sure to send a thank you letter within 24 hours of the interview. Use your best judgment to decide whether the Interviewer would prefer to receive a note via email or mail. Be sure to send one to all of those whom interviewed you. Remember that hiring decisions can take some time, so don’t feel discouraged if immediate next steps aren’t disclosed during the interview. The Interviewer may need to see other Candidates and discuss with colleagues before making any commitments.
- Secondly, and this is very relevant in case you had not gotten the job, you should contact the company to ask for a personal and detailed feedback of your interview and about your performance. This is very helpful in order to improve for the next interview. In addition, you should reflect on the previous interview(s) and go through it step by step. Review what went well and not so well. Focus on the improvement areas and write down specific action steps on how to better prepare and execute in the future.

INTERVIEW TIPS AND TECHNIQUES:

In this section, we will discuss common interview questions, techniques for answering them, and what employers are looking for.

STAR METHOD

To provide the interviewer with the information needed, apply the STAR technique as outlined below:

SITUATION- Describe the situation that you were in. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.

TASK- Describe the task that you needed to accomplish. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand.

ACTION YOU TOOK- Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did – not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.

RESULT YOU ACHIEVED- What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn? Wherever you can, quantify your results.



And remember, do not think of new details as you answer. Say what you had planned for and end.

MOST COMMON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

There are two types of interview questions: Traditional and Behavioral.

Traditional questions focus on the position, motivations or work history.

Behavioral questions are focused on how you reacted to a situation and are intended to predict future work behavior. The interviewer asks questions that are aimed at getting the applicant to provide specific examples of how he or she has developed the required skill set for the job. Interviewers rely on this method to evaluate the candidate's experiences and behaviors and use them as indicators of the applicant's potential for success.

*[Review a list of both traditional and behavioral based interview questions and answers.](#)

WHAT EMPLOYERS ARE LOOKING FOR:

WORK SPECIFIC SKILLS:

- Examples of these are computer programming, CAD, etc

FUNCTIONAL OR TRANSFERABLE SKILLS:

- Skills that are transferable from one job to another, such as good communication or math skills.

ADAPTIVE OR SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS:

- Are you dependable, a team player, a self-directed worker, a problem solver, a decision maker?

25 COMMON REASON FOR EMPLOYER REJECTION

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Poor personal appearance | 14. Lack of maturity |
| 2. Lack of interest and enthusiasm | 15. Lack of vitality |
| 3. Overemphasis on money | 16. Merely shopping around |
| 4. Weak handshake | 17. Wants job only for a short time |
| 5. Late to interview | 18. Cynical |
| 6. Indefinite responses to questions | 19. Low moral standards |
| 7. Inability to express oneself clearly (poor voice, diction, grammar) | 20. Intolerant; strong prejudices |
| 8. Lack of planning for career -- no goals or purpose | 21. Failure to ask questions |
| 9. Lack of confidence and poise; failure to look interviewer in the eye | 22. Timid; lacks sufficient degree of assertiveness |
| 10. Unwilling to start at bottom -- expects too much too soon | 23. Overbearing; overaggressive; conceited |
| 11. Makes excuses; evasive -- hedges on unfavorable factors on record | 24. Not prepared for interview; no research on company |
| 12. Lack of tact | 25. Lack of knowledge of field of specialization; not well qualified |
| 13. Lack of manners, courtesy | |

DEVELOP A PITCH/30-SECOND COMMERCIAL

As a job seeker, you will need to define who you are, what you are looking for, your skills, expertise and experience. One way to summarize this information is to develop a 30-second commercial, sometimes called a positioning statement or elevator speech. Communicating to employers what your goals and key strengths are in a clear and concise way is essential to your success in acquiring the job of your dreams. Do not assume that your resume, your previous title or the name of the company you worked for will clearly present who you are and what you have accomplished.

Once you have developed your 30-second commercial you can customize it to fit any situation. Your 30-second commercial can be used in several phases of your job search—networking at meetings, school events, and even leisure activities. Use it in phone conversations with potential employers to introduce yourself. Integrate it into your resume and cover letter as a summary statement. During an interview, use it as a jumping off point in answering “tell me about yourself.”

GUIDELINES:

- Be specific – communicate with a defined focus.
- Make your pitch conversational, but not overwhelming with content.
- Emphasize your uniqueness through your skills and shining personality.
- Communicate enthusiasm and motivation.

WHAT TO INCLUDE:

- What are you looking for? (Describe your dream job, professional career field, fulfilling position)
- Recent education/prior relevant work experience.
- Areas of expertise/skills/accomplishments. Include works that emphasize your enthusiasm.

EXAMPLE:

I’m looking for a position to use my business and management skills. I recently completed my degree at John Brown University. During my last year, I worked part time the XXX Center assisting in planning projects for their clients. I secured this position after I completed a summer internship at the organization. Design and development is my thing. My strongest points are my ability to listen to client needs and come up with unique ways to create unique business solutions for their project specifications. I am organized, energetic, teachable and creative. One of my main career interests is XXXX in the XXXXX industry. What are the key qualities your organization looks for in a business developer?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

TRADITIONAL INTERVIEW

1. **Tell me about yourself.** The employer wants to know if you have the ability to carry a conversation. They also want to know if you can do the work and if you are a good fit for the company. Do not give them your life story. Prepare a 30 second to 1 minute comprehensive picture of what you will bring to the organization.
2. **What interests you most about this job?** The employer wants to know if you have taken the time to research the position and all that it entails. They also want to know what you are looking forward to doing.
3. **What interests you least about this job?** The employer wants to know if you have taken the time to research the position and all that it entails. They want to know what you are not looking forward to doing and how you are going to adjust to complete the task.
4. **What interests you about this industry?** The employer wants to know what your motivation is for seeking employment in the field and if your expectations are realistic.
5. **Why do you want to work for this particular company?** The employer wants to know if you have taken the time to research the company and figured out what you like and/or dislike about it, looked at their background, looked at their mission statement, etc. They also want to know if you have researched other companies in the field; they are basically asking if you have done your homework prior to the interview.
6. **What new skills or ideas will you bring to this job?** The employer wants to know what makes you better than or unique from the next person applying for the job, your individual characteristics, what your education has prepared you for, etc.
7. **What do you think are the most important abilities that lead to success on the job?** Three things are important here: desire to learn the job, desire to do good work, and desire to be friendly and cooperative.
8. **What are your strengths?** The employer wants to know if you are self-aware and if you have a good idea of the things at which you excel.
9. **What are your weaknesses?** The employer wants to know if you are aware of your weaknesses and if you are working on your weaknesses. Everyone has them. Focus on your work-related weaknesses, not your character weaknesses. Turn it into a positive, not a negative statement.
10. **Describe your ideal position.** Your ideal position, for the interview, is the position you are applying for and with the company which you are interviewing. It is best to stick with the traits of the job description. The employer wants to know if you will be a good fit and how long you plan on staying with the company.
11. **Where do you see yourself in five years?** Do NOT say that you wish to move up in 6 months. The employer wants to know if you strive for personal growth and if you see your career through a dynamic or a static lens. Now would be a good time to mention that you want to be there for a long time.
12. **What kind of salary are you looking for?** The employer wants to know if they can afford you and if you are willing to work for their pay grade without being frustrated. Sidestep question as much as possible and try to make them answer first. Ask "What salary do you usually offer someone with my skills and abilities? Do NOT give them a number.
13. **Would you be able to work extended hours or travel as necessary to perform the duties of the job?** The employer wants to know if you are willing to go above and beyond, even at an inconvenience to yourself, to complete the task at hand. Even if you have personal constraints that might prevent this, be careful with your answer. If they start hinting at questions about personal life, it becomes an [illegal interview question](#) and you don't have to answer that.
14. **What leader(s) do you admire, and why?** The employer wants to know who you strive to be and what qualities you seek in yourself and others. They also want to know if you are a static or dynamic individual and how you are improving yourself by using other people as examples.
15. **Describe your comfort level working with people of higher and lower rank.** The employer wants to know how you view yourself in relation to superiors and subordinates; they want to know how seeing a person as superior or inferior impacts your working relationship with the person.
16. **What do you do in your spare time? What do you do to relax?** The employer wants to know who you are when you are not at work and what purpose these particular activities serve for you. They want to know if you are well-balanced. However,

make sure that your activities do not limit you geographically. For example, if you are an avid skier on the weekends and do so in order to relax, do not talk about it when applying for a job in Kansas.

17. **What motivates you?** The employer wants to know what drives you to succeed and if you are motivated by intrinsic and/or extrinsic rewards. They are trying to see if they have the time and resources to satisfy you in your job. Money is not a good answer.
18. **Can we call all of your references?** The employer wants to know who the people are that you have listed and why you have listed them. Do NOT say “No” to this question. If you have listed someone who you would rather they do not call, do not put them as a reference. If you are internally interviewing, you can tell them not to contact your current supervisor until they know for sure that you are in the last round of interviews and a possible candidate for the job.
19. **Last year, how many days of work or school did you miss? How many days were you late?** The employer wants to know if you are reliable and if you show up consistently and on time. Give them your track record and be honest.
20. **Have you ever been fired?** The employer wants to know what the reasons were for the firing and if they were legitimate. They also want to know if you are willing to take responsibility for your performance if that was the reason and if the job from which you were fired is similar to the job for which you are being hired. Keep your answer as minimal as possible and do NOT slander the boss who fired you; this is not a time for airing past grievances.
21. **Give me two reasons why I should not hire you.** They want to know what will set you apart from the rest of the candidates and what might be the biggest hindrances to your work. Honesty is important, but with restraint. Something along the lines of “I don’t know” or “I wouldn’t have applied if I didn’t think I would be a good candidate” is an acceptable answer. End on a positive note.

BEHAVIORAL INTERVIEW

1. **How is your experience relevant to this job?** The employer wants to know how your education/training prepared you for the position. Explain both your experience and its application to the position. Experience may include work, work study, internships, resident life positions, etc.
2. **What’s your most productive work environment?** The employer wants to know in what conditions do you find yourself performing most effectively. If these “prime” conditions are not available at the company, they want to see if you can work around the problem and adjust.
3. **Describe your working relationship with previous superiors.** The employer wants to know if you were able to get along with your bosses and how you handled both criticism and praise from authority. This is not a time to criticize previous employers. If you have had a bad experience, tell them how you managed the relationship.
4. **Describe your working relationship with your previous colleagues.** The employer wants to know if you were able to get along with your coworkers and how you handled giving and taking both criticism and praise from peers. They also want to know if you helped develop teamwork or took on a leadership role in the process.
5. **Are you most productive working alone or in a group?** Answer that you are both. Explain to them what your strengths are when you are in charge or part of a team, but also let them know you are able to work alone and are self-directed. One setting may be your strong suit over the other, but you should indicate productivity in both settings.
6. **What type of people do you work with most effectively?** The employer wants to know who you are drawn to in a group and what your personality is in relation to the team. They also want to know how you will adjust to difficult employees already in the company. It is acceptable to talk about people with whom you do not work well, but remember to identify your coping strategies in these situations.
7. **How have you handled tension with previous supervisors?** The employer wants to know if you can work through tension in the workplace to find middle ground with others. Give examples of how it has worked out in the past. This is not a time to criticize your boss.
8. **In your life thus far, what was your greatest accomplishment?** The employer wants to know your priorities, how you might have contributed something to society, your values in life, etc. If your career or education are great accomplishments, those are also acceptable answers.
9. **Tell me about a time when you had to utilize organizational skills.** The employer wants to know if you are organized and if not, if you can organize and prioritize multiple situations as they arise.

10. **Talk about a contribution you've made to a group.** The employer wants to know if you were successful as a group and if you can appreciate teams and what they can accomplish. They also want to know if you recognize your own work and that of your peers in a joint effort.
11. **Give me an example of a time you went above and beyond.** The employer wants to know if you are a self-starter or if you have to be micro-managed to complete a task. They also want to know if you are willing to settle for the status quo or are you seeking change and innovation. They want to know if you strive to do the job with excellence.
12. **Tell me how you've attained a corporate goal.** The employer wants to know if you brought others alongside to help you or if you did the work alone; if you worked with others, they want to know how you involved them in the process. They also want to know if intrinsic and extrinsic rewards were involved and how they did or did not motivate you.
13. **Describe a time when you found it necessary to make an unpopular decision in order to attain a team or corporate goal.** The employer wants to know if you can handle criticism and unpopularity among your peers. They want to know if you can remain professional in adversity and if you can make the best decision even when it's difficult.
14. **Describe a time when you've worked under intense pressure.** The employer wants to know if you can handle stressful situations and if you can handle working under deadlines or projects that come up suddenly which will need your immediate attention. They also want to know how you prioritize in these situations.
15. **How do you manage stress in your daily work?** The employer wants to know if you can work through stress on the job or if it debilitates you and causes you to perform poorly.
16. **Describe a time when you had to alter your leadership style to better suit a team or situation.** The employer wants to know how well you read and adapt to others. They also want to know if you are willing to be flexible in order to be successful.
17. **Describe a time when you tackled a tough assignment and how you handled it.** The employer wants to know if you are an independent problem solver, resilient, able to respond efficiently to unexpected issues, etc.
18. **Describe a time in your work experience when the existing process wasn't working, and what you did to rectify the situation.** The employer wants to know if you are a self-starter. Give lots of detail. They want to see how you define problems, possible options, and subsequent solutions.
19. **Tell me about a project in which you were disappointed with your personal performance.** The employer wants to know if you can pinpoint cause and effect in an issue. They also want to know how you handled your disappointment and what you did to correct it. The purpose of this is to see if you can accurately self-evaluate.
20. **Tell me about a time when you failed.** The employer wants to know if you can overcome and learn from your failures. Admitting to mistakes is a sign of maturity, but remember to avoid examples that will reflect poorly on your ability to do the job. Also, be sure to give examples of how you corrected the mistake to avoid failure next time.
21. **How have you handled criticism of your work?** The employer wants to know if you can remain professional when others criticize what you have done. They want to see if you are crushed when you are criticized and simply recoil and shut down or if you take criticism and see it as part of the improvement process.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INTERVIEWER

Asking targeted and intelligent questions in an interview demonstrates that you have done your homework, research, and are motivated to do well if you land the job.

HERE ARE SOME SAMPLE QUESTIONS RECRUITERS LIKE TO HEAR FROM PERSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES:

1. What does someone in this position do in a typical work day? In a typical work week? What is the top priority for the person in this position over the next 3 months?

Ask this question in your interview with a hiring manager. It shows that you are enthusiastic about the company and want to know about life on the job.

2. Why did you choose to work for this company? What have you enjoyed most about working here?

This question gives the recruiter or hiring manager the chance to “sell” the company and gives you an idea of why someone else picked this organization..

3. If I am hired, where do you see me best suited, which area or division?

If you have learned about the company, its products and departments from their website, be sure to incorporate that information. Again, this question demonstrates your research preparation and interest.

4. What is the natural career progression or path for employees with my skills?

This question shows that you are thinking about the future and would be interested in staying with the company, progressing within.

5. Does your organization have a coaching or mentoring program? What kind of internal and external training do you provide?

Your question demonstrates a desire and willingness to stay current in the marketplace, develop professionally, and shows your desire to continue to learn and grow.

6. How would you describe your company’s culture?

This question offers an opportunity for you and the recruiter to evaluate if you and the company are suited for each other.

7. Does your organization use strategic planning? How often? Who participates? Does the organization have a strategic plan in place?

This question shows that you have considered how organizations work and understand the value of strategic direction.

8. What have past employees done to succeed in this position?

The answer helps your see the positive and negative attributes of your predecessor.

9. What is the compensation range for this position?

Always ask using a range. Be sure this is not the only question you ask the interviewer. Pose it within other questions about the company. If the salary range is posted and known, it is best not to ask at all. This is best reserved until a secondary interview or until the interviewer raises the topic of salary

20 QUESTIONS EMPLOYERS CAN'T ASK:

NATIONALITY OR ORIGIN

- Are you a U.S. citizen?
- Where were you born?
- What is your native language?
- How long have you lived here?
- What do your parents do for a living?

RELIGION/PRACTICES

- What religion do you practice?
- Which religious holidays do you observe?

MEMBERSHIP

- Do you belong to a club or social organization?
- Are you a member of a trade union?

PERSONAL/FAMILY

- How old are you?
- Are you married?
- Do you have children?
- Can you get a babysitter on short notice?
- Do you plan to get pregnant?
- How tall are you? How much do you weigh?
- Do you have any disabilities?
- We've always had a man/woman in this position? How do you think you will stack up?

BACKGROUND

- Do you smoke, drink or take drugs?
- Have you ever been arrested?
- Are you a member of the National Guard or the Reserve?

INTERVIEW PREP WORKSHEET:

Company Name:

Company Web Address:

Company Address / home office or local branch address information as applicable:

Key contacts / decision makers at the firm:

INFORMATION GATHERING

What are the company's main products?

What do you like about this company?

How do the company values align with yours?

What are products or services that interest you?

Who in your network might have done business with or have contacts with this company?

Who are the company's main competitors?

What is this company's position in the market relative to competitors, long and short term economic factors and management reputation?

Job description highlights for this position: Key words and competencies from the job description to connect your talents to THEIR needs: Describe how working for this firm matches YOUR career growth goals:

Now translate your skills, abilities, interests and goals:

WHAT THE JOB / COMPANY NEEDS	WHAT I HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE

BE PREPARED

Know your interviewer: HR person, colleague in the firm, hiring manager – can be a combination of any or all players in the firm. Plan your approach for different interviewer audiences: screening, evaluation, team member, decision maker. Find out in advance who you will see.

Questions I want to be prepared to answer:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Questions I would like to ask the employer:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Practice interview questions. Any responses should be short, about 45 to 60 seconds. Answer the question, do not over communicate. Too much information can be hazardous to your outcome or even eliminate you from consideration.

Impressions are made or broken in seconds. Be prepared.

Notes: