

70+

Tips to
Perfect the
Interview

Advice from Leading
Job Search Experts, Career Coaches,
Recruiters and HR Professionals

Kevin M. Kermes



Welcome!

It's my sincere hope that you'll get a tip or two from this collection of advice to help you "nail the interview" for the job you really want. There's such a focus on getting job leads, but too often what passes for advice when it comes to interviewing misses the mark in closing the most crucial element of your search.

We have **over 70 experts in the job search** who have chimed in with their best pearls of wisdom when it comes to you being successful in your next interview. The sources range from Recruiters and HR professionals to Senior Executives and a myriad of Coaches. My thanks goes out to them all and their willingness to help job seekers by divulging a little bit of their "mindshare" and expertise.

After coaching over 1000 professionals on not only finding opportunities, but nailing their interviews, I can tell you with absolute certainty: Once size does not fit all. I ask you to keep this piece of advice in mind while using this resource. If the advice feels right for you – great, take it and implement it to your benefit. If it doesn't feel right for you – drop it and move on. Coaching styles and techniques are as unique as the individuals they help. Find the voice(s) that work for you and leverage their advice to your benefit.

A HUGE thanks also to [Peter Shankman](#) and [HARO](#). He is the brain child and catalyst behind this amazing (*and free*) resource which made this project not only possible, but reduced the timeline to weeks versus months. If you are ever looking for Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) or want to position yourself as one, tap into this powerful tool. I show my clients how to harness it and – simply put – it gets results for job seekers.

Enjoy, share and I hope some of this advice makes a difference and helps you land a job!

Best,

Kevin Kermes
Founder, [Career Attraction](#)

P.S. Questions or comments? Feel free to email us at info@careerattraction.com

BEST INTERVIEW TIPS

DO:

- Practice introducing yourself in a concise and confident way.
- Plan a neat and appropriate outfit to wear. If you're unsure of the dress code, it's okay to contact the organization
- Review your resume thoroughly – you never know what information a recruiter might ask you to discuss
- Spend at least 30 to 60 minutes researching the organization whose event or interview you are attending so you can show why your skill set is a good fit.
- Review the organization's website to learn about its mission, lines of business, culture and entry-level positions. Do a general web search to review any recent news about the organization and the overall industry in which it operates.
- Prepare at least three questions to ask. When a recruiter says, "What questions do you have?" you want to be prepared. The best questions show that you've done your homework on the organization and that you are genuinely interested in learning more.

DON'T:

- Forget to turn off your cell phone or switch it to silent – put it away
- Forget to shake hands with the recruiter or company representative confidently
- Shy away from making direct eye contact
- Be afraid to request a business card from the recruiter or any professional contacts you meet so you can follow up after the event

Holly Paul, National Recruiting Leader, [PriceWaterhouseCoopers](#)

Never Lack Confidence

Interesting topic don't you think? However, the truth is, many people don't have the confidence that is needed to land a job.

The point is most people are afraid of the rejection that could possibly come with stepping out of the box and going after the very thing that they desire.

Look, it's you up against the world...Now is not the time to lack in confidence.

What is confidence? The dictionary says, "Self-assurance or a belief in your ability to succeed; or have faith or trust in something".

Now take the word self-assurance, which means having assurance or guarantee. When you lack confidence, you're essentially saying that you can't guarantee you're capable of carrying out your responsibilities. What you're telling yourself is that you're too afraid of success.

When a company looks for an expert in any field, you better believe that they're going to choose the

person with confidence, over a timid, wall-hugging cocoon. The company will want someone with confidence to speak on its behalf.

Learning to take control of your life and become confident in yourself is much easier than you think. Sure you might feel like a baby chick when you start walking in your confidence, but like a chick, you'll get the hang of it and be plunking with the rest of the chickens in no time. (Smile)

Here are a few steps you can follow:

- 1.) Though it seems strange, stand in the mirror and begin to speak self-affirmation over your life.
 - I am (Insert your Name); I am talented, successful, and capable of getting any job that my education and/or experience afford me.
 - (Insert your Name) today you will smile and with a warm hello, I will greet every person who crosses my path.
- 2.) Go to a networking event and mingle a little.
 - Take some friends if you're afraid to go alone.
 - Try to talk to five people and get a business card (if applicable)
 - Stay in touch with those new people. Send an email to thank them for connecting.
- 3.) Give yourself a new look.
 - One thing that I've noticed about people when they leave the hair salon or barber shop, they walk differently. Go out and cut your hair, buy an outfit...LIVE A LITTLE.
- 4.) Hold your head high.
 - From this day forward, make a choice to never slouch your body. Hold your head high and begin to walk in confidence.

If you begin to follow those simple, yet very powerful tips, you'll be ready for any interview and your confidence will more than likely seal the deal.

Remember, you're a winner and I'll see you at the top!

Lakisha Nevels, President/CEO, [LNevels Recruiting](#)

Be a know-it-all (in a good way): What we mean by this is to do your research before walking into any job interview. It's so easy these days to check out a company's website, set up a Google alert to follow its latest news, or even follow the company or its employees on Twitter.

Hone your messages: In PR, before we promote a new client or project, we develop our key messages: what we absolutely want to get across in all communications. It's important to identify your own key messages when going for a job. Write down what's unique about you, your best assets and what you would bring to this position. Then narrow it down to the top three messages you want to convey in your interview and let them drive your conversation with the interviewer.

Jessica Kleiman and Meryl Weinsaft Cooper, co-authors, [Be Your Own Best Publicist](#)

Adapt and apply sales techniques to sell yourself on interviews.

You may be unaware that interviewing follows the sales cycle and requires sales techniques to land the job. Prospecting for job leads come first, and then researching the leads to qualify the better opportunities is next.

Relationship building with everyone you come into contact with during the process is a must. You begin with opening questions such as, "You must receive so many resumes, what caught your interest upon receipt of mine?" Speak to their point of view first and then bridge to yours. It is your job to find the path to a win-win scenario.

Your introductory question starts the conversation on the most direct path. Q&A must be a two-way street. Overcoming objections is essential when you are told something like, "*I like you but you don't have experience in.*" A one-two minute story of how you overcame a difficult learning curve either in school or your previous job will demonstrate your determination to succeed.

Immediately ask a closing question, such as "*Do I appear to be the type of candidate you are seeking?*" The only reasonable answer is "Yes!" Finally you will be offered a job at the lowest possible starting salary requiring you to negotiate a better package. You will soon hear, HIRED!

Elinor Stutz - Inspirational Speaker, Author and Trainer, [Smooth Sale](#)

Research the employer (plus the interviewer and other employees, if possible) **very** thoroughly. Someone – wish I could remember who! – summed it up perfectly in a Tweet a few years ago: **Never ask a question in an interview that you could have answered with Google.**

Susan Joyce, Editor/Publisher, [Job-Hunt](#)

Prepare specifically for a PHONE interview.

Phone interviews aren't like talking to a good friend (though, wouldn't that be nice!). The conversation can be awkward unless you've planned accordingly, so try practicing with a friend over the phone. For the real interview, you'll want to demonstrate your ability to interact well over the phone without body language or other social cues to go by. Pick a quiet spot to have the interview, and remove any distractions (turn off your computer, put away random objects on your desk, etc.). The only things you need are a copy of your resume, a list of talking points and answers to common interview questions, a list of important info about the company and your interviewer, and a phone. Smile and use your voice to convey enthusiasm. Don't be afraid of pauses or short silences, and just try to relax. The more relaxed you are, the better the interview will go!

Sara Sutton Fell, CEO/Founder, [FlexJobs](#)

Many companies will first do a phone-screening interview, and below are a few tips for phone interviews. This is important because if candidates don't impress here, they likely will not make it for a face-to-face interview. Some of these also apply to the face to face interview.

Review your work experience and be prepared to highlight what was most significant. Even with a resume in front of them, an interviewer may want to hear you talk about your work experience. Be enthusiastic, but don't overdo it. The interviewer will not have the benefit of non-verbal communication, nor will you. You have to show enthusiasm with your voice.

If the call is with a company that isn't local, confirm the time of the call and the time zone for the time agreed on (it's easy to set a phone call and not realize you're in different time zones and not talking about the same time for an interview).

Turn off the TV, radio and no texting: anything that will make noise and distract you. Also take the call in a place where kids or other family won't interrupt (you can put a sign on the door if you must!).

Occasionally ask the interviewer for feedback like "was that enough information?". This will help you know that they're still on the phone, and they're listening.

Try to avoid using a cell phone for an interview, especially if the cell signal is not reliable. If you use a cordless phone, make sure the batteries are charged. Losing a connection with the interviewer will disrupt any momentum you built in the call.

Be available at the time the interview is scheduled, and answer the phone promptly. Don't keep the interviewer waiting, or make them call back because you're on the line.

Paula A. Soileau, CPA Partner, [Affintus LLC](#)

The biggest complaint I get from employers is that interviewees don't know anything about the companies where they are interviewing. This is really viewed as an insult and lack of interest in the job. Here are some suggestions:

1. Read the employer's website. It is amazing what you can find there.
2. Look for annual reports for the company or the department for which you are applying.
3. Check out the organizational chart.
4. Google the company to see if there are any current issues or controversies.
5. Check the local newspaper archives for the local story.
6. Find out who is interviewing you and Google them.
7. Ask for employee handbook if not on the website.

If you follow these tips, you will be interviewing like a pro.

[Mary Greenwood](#), HR Director, Attorney and Author of *How to Interview Like a Pro; 43 Rules for Getting Your Next Job*

Make it about them, not you. We tend to focus on what we want when the employer really wants to know the answer to one question, "How can this applicant help me?"

Carefully prepare by studying the company and, more importantly, study what the needs are. Contact people at the company if you know anyone. You should have an interview plan that lets them know the following:

I believe these are the needs you want met.

These are the accomplishments in my background that make a strong case I can meet those needs.

Be positive and focus on how you can deliver value to them.

Mark Grimm, [Mark Grimm Communications](#)

During the interview process, job seekers should avoid talking salary expectations or salary history for as long as possible in order to build value for themselves. They can use statements such as, “If we reach an agreement to work together, I am confident I will be compensated based fairly based on the responsibilities of the job and industry standards, not my past earnings. Would that be correct?” This type of deflection does not always work, but it can afford you the opportunity to build value in your candidacy by sharing examples of your past accomplishments as they relate to the job description you are interviewing for.

If that type of deflection of the salary question does not work, job seekers should try answering in terms of their expectations, not past earnings. Doing this requires a little research. I recommend the book, “The American Almanac of Jobs and Salaries,” as a starting point. It is important to have a handle on the salary potential of the job as you go into the interview process and be prepared to deflect the question of salary as best you can.

Ralph Neal, Vice President, Educational Services, [Employers Resource Association](#)

Preparing for your interview is much like preparing for your shot on the Oprah show. This is your 15 minutes of fame and you better milk it! You have to sell yourself and prove you’re the best person for the job. To do this, know your work experience, paid or volunteer, and explain how your skills will help the company reach its goals. For example, if the company is looking for an energetic person to greet customers, tell them about the time you worked at a children’s party and kept all the kids entertained all day! Think of other experiences that would benefit the company and sit with a friend or alone in the mirror and act like you’re interviewing on the Oprah show. This will help you prepare for responding enthusiastically to the interviewers questions. If you can, record it and watch yourself so you can correct your mistakes.

Davina Douthard, Founder and CEO, [Polishing the Professional](#)

When asked by an employer if you have questions for them, you need to demonstrate that you have done your homework. The reverse interview questions (your turn) should consist of those questions of importance to you. For instance, if you want to continue your education you should ask about education or training programs they may offer or if they pick up any education costs on behalf of the employee. One of the best pieces of advice I provide to my clients during interview consultations is to ask things of interest to them such as tele-work options, typical promotion track, mentor or peer-to-peer programs, why the position is open or to whom do you directly report? Quite often employees forget that an interview is a two-way street and you need to know if you will fit into their culture and if they fit into your future.

Allison K. Jones, CEO, [Evolution Consulting, LLC](#)

My best interview tip is more of a strategy for preparation than a function of behavior or tactic. It is simply, or not so simply, to ask yourself this question: "What will it take for me to be confident in this interview?" The response starts with a personal brainstorming list – quickly listing everything that comes to mind in answer to the question. Some items might be to get comfortable shoes, test my deodorant, think of the interview as a conversation, prepare my questions for the interviewer, review interview tips on line, be able to tell a story about every point of experience listed on my resume, know as much about the company as I can, try to find someone who worked there, role-play the interview with a friend, get a good night's sleep, and any number of other items. Then, it is a matter of reading through the list, determining what actions you are willing to do to get yourself prepared enough to feel confident, then doing those things. Some of the things on the list will be true for any interview, while others might be specific to a particular interview. The key is deciding that the best thing you can take into the interview is confidence, then deciding what you are willing to do to build that confidence.

Doreen Petty, Founder, [Doreen Petty Coaching](#)

Your resume got you in the door. The interview is your opportunity to establish a relationship with the interviewer and "nail" your interview. For a potential candidate to stand out he/she must perceive the upcoming interview as a marketing presentation. Thus a marketing plan and creative marketing strategy needs to be developed well ahead of time. Your challenge is to work several key points and salient questions into the conversation. You are there to tell the interviewer your story: Begin with the "Once upon a time" part of your story addressing your educational and work experience. Include two or three of your best assets for this position. After the interviewer exhausts his/her standard questions, gently ask, "What other questions do you have for me?" Then it's time for the "Happily ever after" chapter of your presentation. To stand out from the competition and take center stage, you become animated applying acting skills using your hands, voice inflection, speaking with passion, and using facial expressions.

Ask questions the interviewer has never heard before such as, "What are the two best things **you** like about working for this organization?" "What two things make your CEO most proud?" And then go for a soft close, "How well do you feel my background and experience...and **me**, as a person, would fit in here?"

You get the job the same way you get to Carnegie Hall: practice, practice, practice...along with an aggressive marketing plan.

Dr. Elliott B. Jaffa, Behavioral and Marketing Psychologist

One tip I give job hunters is "interview like a jobholder - not a job hunter - even though you may not be employed." Jobholders are interviewing because they want to, not have to. Many job hunters come off as desperate, needy and anxious. Remember, the interview is NOT about the interviewee, but what value they can present to a prospective employer that makes them attractive. One of the first things a doctor asks a patient, "What's wrong?" It would be a wonderful "tip" for an interviewee to state, "here is who I am, here is what my expertise is, here is how I can help you. What needs do you have that I can help YOU with?" Have a "Plan B" job in mind.

Barry Cohen, University Employment Coordinator, [The City University of New York](#)

Think of the phone interview as a first date. Going out for an ice cream is a great first date: cheap, easy and none committal. If the "ice cream" date goes well, then you may want to spend more time and money on the person so you move on to a dinner or a movie date.

A phone interview is an easy, cost effective way for a company to say, “I’m interested in talking with you”...similar to an ice cream date. If a company really loves you – the organization would schedule a formal “face-to-face” interview in the office, spend more time and money on you.... similar to a movie or dinner date. You will get the second date only if you make a great “phone interview” impression.

Here are tips to improve your phone interviewing skills:

- **Be Yourself, At Your Best** – Do not try to be the person you think the interviewer wants you to be; instead be the person you actually are.
- **Prepare, Prepare, Prepare.** All great accomplishments have their foundation in carefully thought-out preparation. Phone interviews are a lot like open-book test- you can have all your information (resume, cover letters, etc.) right in front of you.
- **Use a landline, and disable call waiting.** Interruptions caused by dropped or incoming calls just add stress you don't need.
- **Have a list of questions prepared.** Well-thought-out questions show you're really interested in the company and the job. Also, have your resume in front of you. Make sure it's the same version the interviewer has.
- **Listen, Think, Speak.** It is important to listen to what the interviewer has to say, and then think before responding. Take a few seconds to understand the question, and then prepare a quality answer before simply blurting out something less intelligent.
- **Never interrupt.** Silently count to two or three seconds after the interviewer stops talking before you start.
- **Ask about next steps.** At the end of the call, ask how well your qualifications meet the company's needs. This will give you a chance to address minor issues immediately. Then ask when you can meet with them in person.
- **Say thanks.** Follow up with an e-mail or a handwritten note. While you're at it, briefly remind the interviewer how your skills and achievements can help the company meet its goals.

Paul J. Bailo, CEO, [Phone Interview Pro](#)

Prove Your Resilience and Adaptability

The everlasting challenge for employers is to find a qualified hire that will stay with them without becoming stagnant. In other words, they want someone who can easily adapt to change and stay upbeat during tough times within a company. Give examples in your interview of how you stayed motivated in difficult situations, figured things out without formal training, and stayed motivated and productive in times of great change. Think creativity vs. complaining and resilience vs. resignation.

How to do this: Research the company in advance. Check all news and online sources. Tell them how your specific resilience and adaptability skills would help meet their business goals. A VP of HR recently told me: “If they know nothing about us or can’t adapt to change, we don’t want them.”

Kate Nasser, [The People-Skills Coach](#), Founder/President, CAS Inc.

Interview Strategy

Discover your preferred sense mode:

- Kinesthetic (moving through space)

- Auditory (listening)
- Tactile (touch and inner feelings)
- Olfactory/Taste (smell and taste)
- Visual (seeing and observing)

Research has shown that the basic human need is to be known. By catering to the sense channel intake of your interviewer through their use of sense language and analogies you will make them feel understood, liked and therefore known. So, by keeping in mind your sense bias and observing them you will wow your interviewer.

Do they move around a great deal? Use action words? They may be kinesthetic.

Are they a good listener and have a pleasing voice?

Are they emotional? Use feeling words...touch, soft, smooth.

Do they have a pinched facial expression? Talk about their last or next meal?

Do they use visual words...I see, It looks like...Is their environment attractive?

This method is unique, and might take a little practice (role play with someone) and has proven to be very successful.

Natalie Robinson Garfield, [The Sense Connection](#)

My tip would be to provide a well-crafted document that can be discussed briefly in the interview but can be left for the interviewer to review more in-depth after the meeting. It can be a marketing piece, white paper, brochure, report, etc. that one has been prepared for their company (or previous company) and it is not proprietary. This way an interviewer can not only review the resume but also have an opportunity to see the actual work you have done. The premise is that the interviewer has a second chance to think about you and what an asset you would be to their company.

Beth Carter, [Certified Professional Executive and Business Coach](#)

I've included a three-point tip for interviewing well and securing the job, because all of the points working simultaneously are basic necessities. They also serve as strategies to winning the hearts and minds of organizations and hiring managers; no matter what job you're applying for, intern or senior manager. Being able to have all three aspects of the following interview best practices clicking at the same time convinces those with the power to offer you the job that they've found the right person and can take the risk in bringing you onboard. It gives them insight into you, as the professional and the person. It's the basics, presented well, that will separate you from the rest of the pack.

- **Do your research on the organization and the leaders!** As we all know, Google and social media are powerful resources for information about organizations and people. Yes, get the basic facts about the organization; but even better, find out how the organization and its leaders are serving the communities in which they do business. This information lets the organization and the hiring managers know that you've gone the extra mile. Plus, it lets you know if you'd like to be associated with the company and become part of the brand.

- **Make sure your PIE is baking!** Focus on successes, contributions, teams on which you've served and how you impacted and influenced the working environment and the people; your **Performance, Image and Exposure/Experiences**. If you're talking about being hired and considered TALENT to the organization, talk about how you made a difference, how you were regarded and what you learned. And then tie your PIE to the expectations for the role. This way, you've communicated how well you match up to the opportunity.
- **Don't under-estimate the power of a great handshake, eye contact and the ability to interview with passion, a solid image and brand!** These basic things still matter. Ultimately, we're all serving internal and external clients. And organizations need to be able to feel comfortable, no matter your role, in presenting you to its clients. Just these three things create impressions that may be the deciding factors in deals getting made and in your getting the job.

John Haynes, Founder, [Regeneration! Life and Business Coaching](#)

“Listen more, say less” is an essential message to all candidates to stay focused, on-point, and reply with matter-of-fact answers that the interviewer is seeking to further learn about you. Listening is a discipline and a highly important skill-set.

How you, the candidate, listens and responds is an assessment of how you process what you are hearing and if your response is relevant to what you heard.

When the interviewer is speaking, so often candidates will not listen. As a result, they will not hear anything that the interviewer is saying, or only hear sound bites to work off of, only thinking of what they're going to say or share. This reflects poorly on candidates and is often perceived as not genuine, lacks the ability to answer the question, lacks being attentive and astute, lacks understanding and lacks respect towards the interviewer.

The interviewer has one objective. The objective is to extract out of the candidate if he/she is the right long-term fit and will he/she achieve what he/she is being hired to do.

Interviewees need to hear, understand what they are hearing, and respond to the context of what the interviewer is saying.

“Listen more, say less” is an effective approach for interviewees to remember to stay on- point and answer questions being presented with a well thought out and specific response.

Kim Cassford, CEO and Co-Founder, [Cassford Management LLC](#)

Read Your Interviewer's Face!

There are easy clues you can spot on the face of the person interviewing you. Identifying them will boost your chances of getting hired. Here are three quick tips:

If your interviewer has:

- **A prominent jaw:** Know that you have about 10 seconds to establish your credibility with them! These are people who'll be very quick to size you up and make a decision about you immediately. It's best to get right to the point and impress them at the very beginning of your meeting.

- **Plump cheeks and full lips:** They value family and they want you to consider the company as your family as well. Emphasize your devotion to the wellbeing of the group as a whole, what a good team player you are. Be prepared to talk about your own family as well; if you don't, they won't feel a connection with you.
- **A large boney nose:** You'd better be on time for your meeting! These people value manners and precision and are made anxious by sloppy behavior. In fact, it's best to re-confirm your appointment the day before - if you do, you'll really score points.

Face reading is actually a branch of Chinese medicine and can be used to understand anyone's personality, values and belief system. The meaning of even one feature can help you see how to establish immediate rapport, speak their language, and gain their trust.

Jean Haner, author, [The Wisdom of Your Face](#)

Don't ramble in the interview!

Many job seekers make the mistake of talking too much in the interview. You want to make sure the interviewer hears all of the relevant information about you and your experience, but less is more.

Job seekers need to learn how to ask substantive questions that elicit conversation rather than launching into the story of their lives. Asking instead of telling offers an opportunity to showcase your unique skills and experience in direct relation to the job for which you are interviewing. For example, telling someone you are an expert at Powerpoint presentations when the job requires absolutely no Powerpoint would be a reason someone is passed over for the job. Asking the interviewer which programs would be utilized in the position then describing your experience and skill with those programs in the correct context will help you ace the interview.

Inquiring about near-term projects and offering useful insights about your previous positions will show how much of a fit you are for this one. Focus on the work and what you will be able to do for them, not what they can do for you. Keep stories short and professional by never speaking badly about previous bosses or coworkers. Name specific instances where you were instrumental in a project or overcame a setback. Never ask questions about compensation or benefits until an offer is on the table.

Remember, you have two ears and one mouth and they should be used in that proportion.

Carolyn Thompson, Author, [Ten Steps to Finding the Perfect Job](#)

In working with many executives and leaders who are now hiring, I'm hearing one clear tip on how to make your interview as successful as it can be. That tip is the old Boy Scout standby: Be Prepared.

But contrary to popular wisdom, this does not mean preparing canned answers to anticipated questions. Today's execs can smell a rehearsed response from a desk away. It does mean investing the time and energy to be prepared well before the actual meeting. Today's standout candidates have done their research on everyone they'll be meeting and know what each person's role is and how it relates to the job at hand. (How do they find out? They ask the person setting up the interview!) They've done their research about what's happening at the organization, and what's happening with its competitors. They've

traveled to the interview location in advance or scheduled a lot of spare time in case they get lost, run into traffic, or discover a time-intensive security process at the corporate door. All of this preparation happens long before the first handshake – and can help make the most of your interview experience.

Darcy Eikenberg, ACC, Founder & Chief Creative Officer, [Red Cape Revolution](#)

So your resume is finished. But will your next employer find it on the Internet when they're looking for you? If you're not sure, then it's time to compile a list of keywords. Open a spreadsheet or table. For the job you seek, create a list of benefits you bring to that position. Next list the features of what you bring. Look at the words you just wrote and pick five to ten priority words. These are words you feel someone looking for the job title you're seeking will use as they search career or the Internet in general. Sprinkle those words or concepts throughout your job descriptions to increase your chances of being found. WARNING: Don't go overboard with the keywords. If you use too many keywords, your resume won't be the professional masterpiece you deserve. You can use this same process to create profiles at social networking websites, too.

Maria Marsala, Financial Advisor Coach, [Elevating Your Business](#)

I think the best move is to do advance research on the company online before the interview. Google the company website and pull little nuggets of information that you can throw out during your discussion. Do this with the intent to impress them a bit, but don't overdo it. I completely understand that in a lousy job market you don't necessarily want their job, but you want **a** job. But don't let them know that. By having detailed information about why you want **their** job you will definitely stand out from the pack. You'd be amazed how many people I'd interview that didn't know anything about the company they were looking to spend half their lives at (probably the majority of candidates). If you ask me about my company's little-known international exchange program and how you could participate, I'm going to be impressed. At the very least, I'll know you know how to use Google and fake interest...which sometimes is actually an important skill for the job you're being interviewed for.

And, please, take your Facebook profile private before walking in the door. I'm going to Google you before you come in (4/5 of hiring managers do this now), and if I see you wearing a bikini in photos from Lake Havasu...you're going to have a hard time convincing me that you're the one for my executive position.

Marc Marcuse, [Reel Management](#)

My best interview tip would be to have at least 5 PAR (Problem, Action, Result) stories prepared. I find that many job seekers stumble when they are asked to explain details about their job; for example, how they dealt with a difficult situation at work or to explain how they overcame a challenge at work. On a personal note, having a variety of prepared PAR stories put at me at ease during my interviews because I felt prepared for any question thrown my way.

Judy Williams, Human Resources, [Big Brothers Big Sisters of NYC](#)

Know your unique qualities: The question I always ask when I interview candidates is, "Given all the many candidates who have applied for this position, why should I hire you over anyone else?" You need to have a ready answer to this question. Think through what makes you special, what makes you so unique that a hiring manager should hire you over everyone else.

Prepare potential interview questions ahead of time: Most people don't take the time to prepare for an interview. But being prepared is the best way to ensure you get called back for a second interview. An easy way to prepare is to review your resume and think through key questions the hiring manager might ask, and then determine a brief response. Keep in mind, hiring managers usually ask questions within these five categories:

- **Background:** Questions focused on gaining an understanding of the candidate's work experience/history, education, and overall qualifications for the position.
- **Job/Company/Industry:** Questions to test the candidate's knowledge and understanding of the open position, company, and industry.
Style/Personality: Questions focused on learning about the candidate's personality, social style, and work style.
- **Skills/Abilities:** Questions to verify/validate the candidate's level of knowledge, skills, ability, and competency on key aspects of the open position.
- **Future Orientation:** Questions that help determine the candidate's goals and aspirations, how well they will perform in the job, and how well they will interact with others.

Be sure to find out where you stand at the end of the interview: Surprisingly, most candidates get so flustered at the end of an interview that they merely thank the hiring manager for the interview, shake their hand, and then leave. But if you end it like that you'll never know what they thought of you. Remember to "close" the interview by posing a question back to the hiring manager, such as, "Based on my background and the skills and experience we discussed, how well do I fit the profile of the candidate for which you are looking?" This question will help you find out what the hiring manager thinks of you and whether or not they believe you're a good fit for the position.

The simple follow on question then becomes, "What are the next steps in the hiring process?"

Lisa Quast, [Career Woman, Inc.](#)

Keep Talking

When given a brainteaser, case study or any type of thinking problem, talk your way through it. Candidates often fall silent not wanting to say something stupid. Rather say, "I'm going to think out loud as I go to help you see how I think..." That's what you're really being judged on, less so the right answer and more so how you approached it. I've hired people who didn't get the right answer but thought through the problem well.

Long Resumes

Resumes are traditionally been one - two page summaries. Even recognizing that people change jobs more frequently a resume shouldn't be more than two or three pages at most. Working in tech, I see a lot of resumes from India, and they seem to list every detail, rather than providing an overview of the person's work history. They are a six-page college essay on "how I spent the last five years." This really defeats the purpose. A resume is supposed to be viewed for about 30 seconds to determine whether or not the candidate is worth meeting. Not only don't I need to know every last detail on the job, it makes it harder to get the useful information when a resume is five to seven pages long. This trend unfortunately seems to be continuing, as I see more and more resumes of US workers following this tactic.

Mark Herschberg, [White Knight Consulting](#)

"When interviewing, always come prepared to talk about your strengths and weaknesses. With respect to your strengths, it is important to be able to provide examples about how you developed your skills or how you have leveraged them in past positions. When talking about weaknesses (which many interviewers refer to as "developmental opportunities,") provide better examples than the clichéd "I work too hard" or "I'm too detail-oriented." When I'm conducting interviews, and someone is unwilling to admit any weakness, it gives me the impression that they are either lacking self-awareness or are being disingenuous. To answer this question effectively, pick something you are truly working on, talk about what you are doing to address it or how you monitor it, and give examples of the progress you have made. Hiring managers do not expect you to be perfect, but they do want to know that you are well-suited to the job. Besides, if you do end up getting a job that you're not well-suited for because you lied about your strengths and weaknesses, you'll probably end up miserable and will likely underperform.

Patricia Thompson, Ph.D., [Corporate Psychologist and Management Consultant](#)

Tip: Be enthusiastic about your potential employer's business.

1. Most people think what their company does is cool, and they want to hire people who are really excited about what the company does, not people who are just interested in the paycheck or the career advancement. This goes beyond the baseline of knowing as much as you can about a potential employer's business – it's about being passionate and energized about it. Beyond the technical skills, employers are looking for the right fit with their organization and for evidence that a new hire will be dedicated and motivated: your passion for their business gives them reason to believe that you'll be excited about working there and will be focused and hard-working.

2. There is also the more subtle psychological dynamic at play that people want to feel good about the place they work, so they are looking for external confirmation that their workplace is interesting/important/fun/cool. As a job seeker, you can provide that confirmation by being excited and impressed by what the company does.

This is not about flattery or BS. You need to develop a real passion for the job and the company. Even if it's not your dream job, there is some aspect of every job, and of the opportunity to do that job well, that is worthy of your true emotional engagement.

Bram Kleppner, CEO, [Danforth Pewter](#)

New and effective interview techniques:

- Research your interviewer on LinkedIn and/or via Google. Find out everything you can about them: it lowers your stress and allows you to interview more effectively.
- Before you interview, create a Google Alert on the company. This will give you the latest and greatest about what is happening in the company. It's also a source of fantastic interview questions at the end of the interview.
- Network before you interview. Ask your network if they have worked there/know someone at the company.
- Have great questions at the end of the interview. Write down five to seven questions because two or three may be answered in the regular interview process. One or two should be about the interviewer. For example, "how did you get your start in this business?" is a great way to get them talking at a time when you can truly listen. Other questions might include "what 2 or 3 skills are most valuable to succeed here?" "What would you like to see me doing in 3/6/12 months from

now?”

- Practice interview questions. The best “interview student” I had Googled the top 25 interview questions. He answered them and recorded his answers. Then he listened.

Connie Thanasoulis-Cerrachio, Partner, [Six-Figure Start](#)

Introduce your professional portfolio well before the interview by replacing the overused phrase “References available upon request” with “Professional portfolio available for review” at the bottom of your resume.

Having a professional portfolio (a small collection of samples of your past work) will make you stand out in the job interview. Anyone can go into an interview and talk about how good they are at something, but being able to have something visual and tangible to illustrate your skills is what sets you apart from other candidates. Don't wait until the interview to introduce your portfolio. Mention it at the bottom of your resume and provide a link to an online portfolio that showcases one or two exceptional examples of your work. This is just enough to whet the hiring manager's appetite. Leave him or her wanting to see more in the interview. This is the opportunity to discuss the details and results of your past projects along with visual proof of your talents. With 85 percent of the information you share in an interview (or anywhere for that matter) retained by sight, this is very important.

Lori Bumgarner, Image Consultant, [paNASH Style](#)

One of the more critical pieces of feedback that I give my career clients goes back to the classic film *Glengarry Glenn Ross*. In it, Alec Baldwin's character Blake reiterates his “ABC” strategy to getting the deal: “Always Be Closing.” The market is so incredibly competitive, that now, more than ever, hiring managers want to know that the candidate is serious and has the hunger to succeed. So he or she must close each interview by asking for the job. It may seem obvious, because you're in the chair, that that's what you're there for. But, holding all other variables constant (skill set, experience, education, etc.), it's the candidate who shows genuine desire for the opportunity that will get the job.

Alex Sukhoy, M.B.A. Career Coach, [Creative Cadence LLC](#)

Once the interview is scheduled, the most creative candidates send links to their LinkedIn Profiles that often includes a profile, references, portfolios, common connections, pictures and video biographies. Prior to the interview, the hiring manager can review the profile, portfolio and references; reach out to common connections; and review pictures and videos. By the start of the interview, the hiring manager has made a personal connection with the candidate and puts “a name with a face.” The hiring manager often feels like they are speaking with someone they know rather than a stranger, which often leads to a more personable telephone interview and an invitation for an in-person interview.

Crystal L. Kendrick, President, [The Voice of Your Customer](#)

As a corporate image consultant, my tip is to dress better than is required. Wear a shirt and tie even if the company advertises business casual attire. If no dress code is mentioned, wear a jacket and tie. You can't go wrong in a navy blue suit.

Women, wear a skirt and comfortable heels instead of pants, and you'll look more experienced (recent college grads always wear pants.) Add power earrings, like chunky hoops. Tiny studs and thin wire hoops shout collegiate and lower credibility. Wear a soft fuchsia lipstick; it has a worldly big city look. Brown

tones and glosses are for teens. Wear a jacket if you're going for a position of responsibility.

The way you look and dress announces the outcome other people can expect from you. When you dress to impress, they know you're a high caliber contender who will go the extra mile. Your appearance also announces how you feel about yourself, so a polished and professional look attests to high confidence which, in turn, bestows increased credibility.

Sandy Dumont, [The Image Architect](#)

Finding a job in today's environment is as competitive as ever and, as such, job seekers need to be 'on their game' when the opportunity to interview presents itself. The best interview tip I can give a candidate is to effectively 'productize' yourself for hire (in advance) by creating and practicing saying your own 30-second 'elevator speech' about what you know best: YOU. This speech would be your chance to quickly tell the interviewer the following bits of information: who you are, why you are qualified for this position, how you came to know the company, and why the company can't live without you on its team. If you, as the candidate, do not have the chance to open with this speech, find the appropriate time to weave it in.

To create your individual professional story for a 30-second sound bite, start with your resume. In narrative form, write the high points of your professional experience, your education and focus on progression of your career. Add specific elements of your career that directly relate to the open position and the organization itself, showing that you did your homework and have truly thought about how you fit.

Remember – don't wing it! Write the dialogue down and practice it so that it flows as in a regular conversation. This tip can help the candidate show confidence, intelligence and preparedness during the often nerve-wracking interview experience, making it easier on the interviewer to make the right choice of hiring YOU.

Daren Fristoe, President, [The Fristoe Group](#)

The Money Question: How to Answer it in an Interview

If this one stumps you, you're not alone. Typically, this is where the candidate freezes up and blurts out a number – or a range. Employment professionals say that this move is risky and will likely not benefit you. First, too high a number may price you out of the position. Alternatively, you're selling yourself short if you reply with too low of a number! What should you do? Your best bet is something like "I am currently earning xxx. I would like to learn more about this opportunity, and eventually I am looking for your most competitive offer." That way, you provide them with a concrete response, but ultimately put the ball back in their court. Now their eventual offer will relate to your monetary value as an employee, not an arbitrary number. Experts say that the individual's current compensation is the most accurate measure of their worth in the marketplace. Like it or not, your prospective employer will need to base your offer on this number.

Bonus tip: use the word "earn" instead of "make." That way, you sound like a valuable member of the workforce, earning your keep!

Brad Lazarus, IT Recruiter, [CPS, Inc.](#)

BEST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The goal of the interviewee is to put the interviewer at ease at the start of the interview.

She can do that by asking the one question that will immediately let the interviewer know that she “gets it.” That question is, “**How can I make your life easier?** That’s my attitude. If I am making life easier for the boss or colleagues, by definition that means I’m doing my job. So if I am hired, what will I have to do to make your life easier?” Moreover, the interviewee should always bring the conversation back to that point.

For example, after responding to a question that allows the interviewee to talk about an accomplishment, she should explain the benefits of that accomplishment for her employer and then say something like, “And that’s how I met my goal of making life easier for my boss/colleagues and that’s what I will bring to your company.”

Bruce Hurwitz, President and CEO, [Hurwitz Strategic Staffing](#)

“What are the 3 month, 6 month, 9 month, and 12 month goals for this position?”

The response will tell the candidate the skills required to be successful the first year. Since humans remember stories better than facts, the response enables the candidate to identify the best stories that demonstrate those skills. These stories demonstrate to the hiring manager that the candidate has the ability to do the job. Additionally after the candidate comes on board, these goals may become the talking points during one-on-ones over the year. There should be no surprises during the annual review.

Bill Humbert, [RecruiterGuy](#)

The last and most important question in the interview is The Peak/End Question. Today it is too competitive out there not to think through every word you utter and every thought you want the hiring manager to have. Research shows that hiring managers hire the person they like the best.

It is an emotional decision and to leverage that we apply Nobel Prize winner Daniel Kahneman’s Peak/End theory. The Peak/End question is key. To develop it we turned to Barbara Walters. She taught us how to get people to talk about themselves. People love to talk about themselves, it creates a real peak. Here is the Peak/End question: “I would love to work in an environment where a person can make a noticeable difference. With that in mind, I would love it if you would tell me about a time when you were able to do something special, something you’re proud of.” Watch out, sometimes the answer takes more than an hour, if it does, experience suggests you’re hired!

Bill Burnett, Author, [The Peak Interview](#)

“So, after two or three years of outstanding performance and success in this role, what would be the next step internally that I could strive for?”

This is a great question, as it shows you are already thinking of committing yourself to the potential employer for a number of years, and it also shows you are ambitious. The first part of the question strikes a good balance. It reveals you understand they are hiring you for *that particular role* and you understand that you will have to do it for a number of years successfully before you feel you, and the employer would

feel you are ready for the next step. No employer wants to hire someone that thinks they are already too good for the current role and are biding time till the chance to step-up.

Tyron Giuliani, Executive Search Specialist –Asia

There are three questions we recommend to our job candidates:

- What do you wish to see changed over the next 6-12 months?
- What do you wish to preserve/not touch during the next 6-12 months?
- What could get me fired in the next 6-12 months?

I find interviewers are delighted with these questions since they are the key questions. It helps position our candidates well as both professional and memorable.

Laurence Stybel, Ed.D., CMF, Stybel Peabody Lincolnshire

“What does success look like for this role after 6 months and after one year?”

Reason to ask:

- Clarifies your understanding of daily job responsibilities and company's expectations from this job/person
- Unearths hidden gems about how work gets done, who role interacts with (other people/jobs), what other things might be required to be successful (skill sets that aren't clear from discussions or job descriptions)
- Helps you confirm whether job is a good fit for you and whether you can meet/exceed expectations
- Can lead to other important, open-ended questions like career path (what job might be next and what it will take to get there) and company culture (values, communication styles, etc.)

Stacey Hawley, Principal, Credo

“What salary trade-off concessions are there?”

One corporation I worked with offered gym memberships at Bali's, although not all locations had a Bali franchise nearby. For those individuals, I suggested they counter their original offer with the equivalent payroll increase of the membership; it usually wasn't more than \$1000 per year, but was enough to appear they appreciated their employees.

Being open to this type of outside-the-norm problem solving is especially what small businesses are looking for. It shows you look at issues from all sides and are willing to offer workarounds that fit everybody's needs.

Regardless of the type of question(s) you decide to go with, remember to learn a little about them. Always phrase questions in a conversational tone (your voice rises at the end of the sentence) rather than a demanding or condescending tone (your voice drops at the end of the sentence).

JaLynn Hudnall, Owner, Ravenwood Forest Consulting

"What drew *you* to this company?"

This question will establish an immediate bond between you and the interviewer. Yes, the answer will give you considerable information about the company, but it will also show the interviewer you are interested in other people and that you have good listening skills.

"To what extent does the corporate mission (which you will have found on the Internet, before the interview) influence the average employee's work?"

This question shows several things. One, that you have done your homework: you have taken time to visit the company's web site. Two, it implies you want to work for a firm that does more than "talk-the-talk." Three, it shows the interviewer you are serious about finding a job and....finding a job in a company with values that parallel your own.

"The founder of Southwest Airlines hires for attitude and trains for skill. Can I take a few minutes to tell you about my work attitude/ethic?"

Again, this question reveals several things about the applicant. It shows he or she knows about business and probably reads extensively. (Herb Kelleher wrote about his airline in a bestseller titled *Peanuts*.) It shows your ability to apply knowledge to an existing situation. Further, it shows a certain amount of proactive behavior--for a few moments, *you* will be leading the interview situation.

Dr. Marlene Caroselli, Author, [Jesus-Jonas-Janus-Triumvirate](#)

"Several changes occurred this year in "XYZ Co's" top leadership. What is the most significant impact of these changes?"

The key factor is that job-seeker questions should be relevant, topical, and specific to the target company. There are standard questions, such as, "Why is this position available?" and "How do you describe the company culture." However, these are likely expected by the interviewer and are better positioned during the body of the interview.

Always have three-four questions prepared by researching the target company. Listen actively during the interview to recognize if answers to your questions arise. Do not ask a question that has already been answered and do not ask a question whose answer is easily found elsewhere. Finally, don't wait for the interview invite: Begin researching when you target the company. The more homework you do, the more likely you will create an impression that you already belong there.

Doreen Petty, Founder, [Doreen Petty Coaching](#)

Interviewers are inundated with applicants who pitch themselves and individuals who focus on "what is in it for me," i.e. what are the benefits and salary, vacation, health plan, 401k, etc. To differentiate one's self as an applicant, research the company thoroughly, as well as their competitors. Get a good sense of its needs and then ask intelligent questions that show your belief in/commitment to the vision/ and product or service.

Ask:

1. What are the one-year and five-year goals for the department I am being interviewed to work for?

2. What are the biggest challenges for this department?
3. Could I be part of finding solutions to those challenges?
4. Ask questions relating to the Company's position in that industry and what they see as trends.

Maureen Daniek, MSW, [Life Coach](#)

"What are the benchmarks you expect me to achieve during my first 3, 6, and 12 months of employment?"

This is a high-impact question that will help inform you as to whether this organization will provide you the environment, tasks, and situations in which you are interested. During the interview process, it is easy to focus solely on selling yourself and lose sight of the fact that the interview also is an opportunity for you to make a job choice that will lead to a productive and fulfilling professional life. Gaining insight into a prospective employer's expectations affords you the opportunity to determine whether the employer fits with your needs. For example, it is better to find out at the interview that your prospective employer expects you to work autonomously, whereas you enjoy working as part of a team.

Alexa Sherr Hartley, Esq., Founder and President, [Premier Coaching For Leadership](#)

"Tell me about the problems that typically occur in (*this deliverable of your job*)?" For a simple example, with an accountant this question might refer to Accounts Receivable. The pertinent query also has a natural follow-up, *"Tell me the things you do to prevent these situations from arising in the first place?"*

You ask this question, and its follow-up, because every job, at every level and in every profession exists for the same reason: for the identification, prevention and solutions of problems within that area of professional responsibility.

This question helps you can separate the candidate(s) who see their work as problem solution and prevention, from the ones who don't. By separating these candidate types, you move a long way towards making the right hire...and saving inordinate amounts of time with candidates who talk a good game but who don't really "get" what's at the heart of the job.

Martin Yate, CPC, author, [Hiring The Best, The Guide To Recruitment & Selection](#)

"What is your company's current use of and future plans for social media as it relates both internally and externally to the organization?"

Rationale: The newest generation of talent – the leaders of tomorrow – are more technologically savvy than any generation in history. As a result, companies who want to attract that talent should adopt an innovative mindset with respect to technology, especially social media. Candidates should be asking potential employers about their current use of and future plans for social media. Internally, social media can be a quick and effective communication method to improve business communications and build a consistent culture. Externally, social media is critical for branding, both at the corporate level and the individual level. Finding the right mix of social media presence is key, and having dedicated resources and budget for this effort is important. When a potential employee asks about a company's social media strategy, it is a sign of that person's understanding and appreciation of innovation as well as their interest

in leveraging technology for the betterment of the organization. Hiring managers should not be taken back by such questions. They should welcome them and be happy when candidates pose them. It is exactly that caliber of candidate that organizations need to improve their current operations and effectively position themselves for the future.”

John Ruffini, National Practice Director, [The Merqis Group](#)

“Describe your performance appraisal system.”

There is no perfect appraisal system. Most people find fault with any system, often fraught with errors and biases. However, the performance appraisal system tells a lot about the company and the value they place on your development and performance improvement. It should be a blend of formal and informal feedback. As the HR person or hiring manager is responding to this query, you need to listen for other concerns:

- Some companies require appraisals all at once. You might wait more than a year before getting any formal feedback. It may also mean that the feedback will be very cursory because the supervisor is cranking out many appraisals simultaneously. Yours won't be very accurate, unbiased or helpful.
- The better systems report on results **and** approach. They will solicit peer and other feedback from those with whom you interact because the supervisor can't observe every moment of your behavior. We often act differently around our supervisors than we do with others.
- Training for supervisors and peers on some of the bias effects--such as how recent incidences could unfairly count more than a year's worth of performance?
- Accountability for timeliness, accuracy and fairness? If not, then the organization doesn't think appraisals are very helpful or a sound basis for consideration in promotions and raises.
- Sole determinant for promotions and raises? If so, only the politically astute will succeed. The organization could be in trouble and could be managed by the incompetent.

Scott Ward, Principal, [Award Associates](#)

“Am I what you are looking for?”

A closing question is a great way to understand if you're in the running for the job. In an interview, you are selling yourself and every salesperson will tell you – ask for the sale. You do this with a closing question like the one above, or “will I fit in well with your team?” The answer will provide a true indication if you are under consideration or not. If you get an objection, now is the time to overcome it. If the answer is “yes,” you can move on to determining next steps. Even if the hiring manager is part way through interviews, you have an advantage when they think back over all the candidates they have talked to – they said, “yes” to you.

Kevin Dwinell, Director, Product & Marketing, [Brand Thunder](#)

“What can you tell me about your company's corporate culture?”

Inquiring about the company's corporate culture is a vital sign for the HR manager as it shows that the job applicant is familiar with the term in the first place. Establishing corporate culture is a relatively new approach, which lies in identifying the company's values, beliefs and behavior. Job applicant's interest in

the company's internal culture shows that he/she is looking for ways to adapt to the company's internal processes as soon as possible. Learning even the slightest details about the company's corporate culture also speaks of the interviewee's willingness to not only get the position in the company, but to integrate in the company's internal community.

Erika Walker, HR Manager, [Best Essay Help](#)

“What excites you – personally – about the future here / in this department?”

This question, regardless of the answer, will allow you to gauge the passion of the interviewer – and objectively assess the potential of the position available. If the interviewer looks down at the desk, or chooses their words too carefully, you may know you're going to be taking on a real challenge. If, on the other hand, they sit back in the chair, eyes lit up and a sincere smile stretching across their face, you may be able to assume the interviewer sees real potential in the company – and in the job you may be asked to assume. If they don't answer at all, citing “corporate policy”... that tells you quite a bit about the company culture (and may be an indication that your best course of action is to run away).

Mark Babbitt, CEO and Founder of [YouTern](#)

"At this point in my career, I want to develop my skills and contribute to assignments that will challenge me professionally. What is your organizational philosophy on employee training and development, and how do employees qualify for those opportunities?"

An interviewer might view your questions as clues to your job-related priorities. So asking about the firm's vacation policy or the usual size of the Christmas bonus could be quite risky. However, asking a question about training and development shows a potential employer that you want to learn, grow professionally, and contribute to the success of the organization. So, while you gain valuable information about organizational expectations and opportunities, you will also be sending a positive message about yourself.

This sort of question is probably most appropriate for candidates who are in the early stages of their careers. At that point, an important factor in the employment decision is often an applicant's perceived potential for growth on the job. So a question about opportunities for training and development will be well received.

Timothy Wiedman, D.B.A., PHR Asst. Prof. of Management & Human Resources Division of Economics & Business, [Doane College](#)

“[INTERVIEWER NAME], what are the critical elements that the successful people in [COMPANY NAME, POSITION] had in common?”

As a general rule of thumb, I always find it critically important to state the interviewer's first name and use the company name/position whenever possible as it makes it very personal and not seem like a canned question. From the “Tell Me About Yourself” question to the final close of the interview, a candidate must develop a theme of critical elements that define them (e.g. disciplined, strong work ethic, leader). This question allows the Hiring Manager to define the most critical elements that they have seen in past successful employees in this position. This will allow for an easy follow-up from the candidate to either

reinforce some of the same qualities that they have already discussed or bring up how they also possess those same qualities.

David Lehmkuhl, Account Executive, [Orion International](#)

- What is the interview process? What are the next steps in the interview/employment process?
- Is there potential for growth and development within the company?
- What are some things your organization does to show how it values the employees?
- How would you describe the culture of this organization?
- This company is known for being a great place to work, why?
- How has the recession/economy impacted your business?
- What is the most important contribution your company expects from its employees?

Jessica Comeaux, Human Resource Manager, [The Houstonian Hotel](#)

“Given my work experience, qualifications, and everything we've discussed, do you have any concerns about possibly hiring me?”

This gives the interviewee the opportunity to dispel concerns in person. Instead of waiting for you to leave to address the potential reasons the interviewer might not want to hire you, this question encourages him (or her) to go through the thought process with you present (which gives you a big upper hand!).

Chrissy Scivicque, Career Coach and Founder, [EatYourCareer.com](#)

One of the keys to asking good questions of an interviewer is to have done your homework on the company and the people you are meeting. That way, you can ask questions to gain information that isn't publically available.

“What happened to the person I am replacing?” Or if this is a new role, “How was the need for this role determined?”

You want to understand why the role is open, and that the company is committed to it and it is not an experiment. An example is that this could be a job previously performed by two people.

What does success look like in this role?

More than just doing the tasks specified on the job description, you want to clearly know the expectations of the person to whom you will report.

Are there certain characteristics that successful people in your company seem to possess? What are they?

You are looking for key words that give insight into culture and behaviors that are valued. If you are told, “People here eat their young to get ahead,” you have to assess whether that suits you.

How long have you been here, where did you come from and how has the transition been?

This is a way to get the interviewer to warm up to you; everyone likes to talk about himself. Weave in a few facts about the person you found doing your research. You might glean insights here about turnover and on-boarding of new hires.

Ginny Clarke, Founder, [Career Mapping](#)

“If I'm hired for this position, what is the first project you'd want me to work on?”

This is a question that clearly demonstrates strong interest in the job. The question should be used at the end of the interview when interviewer says “do you have any questions?” However, if you have a question about the job description, that question should come first.

I generally recommend this question to clients interviewing for a job they want. This question packs the most punch in an interview with the potential manager. It doesn't work as well in an initial screening with an HR representative. The question seems to say that you are so interested in the position you can almost taste it.

Also remember not to ask any questions about benefits or salary until there is an offer on the table.

Bettina Seidman, [SEIDBET Associates](#)

“What do you think is the single most important quality or characteristic that a person needs to be successful in this position?”

The reason I ask this question is to help define the differentiator that a hiring manager is seeking. Most people being interviewed meet the threshold requirements so there are many similarities in the slate of candidates. At the end of the interview cycle the successful candidate will stand out from the others.

Regardless of the how the hiring manager responds to the question, the candidate should tie their own experience back to the response and explain why they meet and beat the expectations for the position.

Charles Gillis, Executive Director of [Munsch Hardt Kopf & Harr, PC](#)

“What are the cultural/personality qualities of the folks who really do well in your organization?”

During the interview let the employer know that you want to understand the business from the inside out and that you are not just interested in punching a clock, but instead are an entrepreneurial individual who wants to become a brand ambassador in addition to handling your assigned job responsibilities.

Also, do your homework so you are an expert on the company you and come armed with ideas of how you will add value in the position. You should already know the answer to the above question, but it is important to ask it as well. This way you can reiterate that you have all of the qualities they are looking for and that you will be an instant fit both in your personality and your professional skills set.

Jennifer Prosek, author of [Army of Entrepreneurs](#) and CEO of CJP Communications

There are two questions every candidate should ask during a job interview. **Does this organization have an employee group that gets together to plan company events like picnics to celebrate**

victories or boost morale? This question tells the hiring manager that you want to get involved in making a difference beyond your standard shift.

The second must-ask question is this: **In your career, who was your favorite boss and why?** This question will give you direct insight into what this hiring manager valued in a boss, and how s/he thrived in that environment - a big hint to what s/he's expecting/hoping from the person hired.

Debra Yergen, author of [Creating Job Security Resource Guide](#)

The single most crucial closing question in the job interview is: **“Do you have any doubt in my ability to do this job, because I do want to work for you?”**

As long as you ask it with sincerity it will be viewed as a humble and honest question. This is the most crucial question because most people do not know how to close a deal. An interview is a deal between you and the employer. You do not want to walk away from the interview unsure. You also want to let them know why it would be an honor to work for them; most people never ask for the job. My view is, 'You have not because you ask not!' Lastly, you can leave the interview much more confidently knowing you did your best and you had a chance to address any concerns they may have had.

Natascha Saunders, President, [Youth Career Coach, Inc.](#)

I always asked where the previous incumbent had gone (if I was applying for a job which had been filled by someone else previously). I hoped that the person had been promoted within the company.

If possible, I asked for a chance to talk with the former incumbent to see what they were like, and what they had to say about the job – most fun, biggest challenges, typical year, typical day, etc.

Susan Joyce, Editor/Publisher, [Job-Hunt](#)

Here are questions NOT to ask:

1. Do NOT ask anything that you could have found out by doing a bit of independent research. That just makes you look lazy and unprepared.
2. Unless you absolutely need to know (i.e. “Can I take 9/9 off for my wedding?”), do NOT ask for special favors or changes in status quo (i.e., “Can I bring my dog to work?”) These questions suggest you think your needs trump the employer's, and that doesn't go over well for a prospective hire.
3. Do NOT ask how long you have to stay in the current position before you can try to move into a job/area you prefer. Even employers who like to promote from within prefer to do so at their own timing. They need you in the position you are being interviewed for--not necessarily the one to which you aspire.

Cheryl Heisler, President/Founder, [Lawternatives](#)

“What technical skills do you look for when hiring and what intangibles, or soft skills, go with those technical skills to make a potential employee one that you would look to bring into your organization?”

This question helps cover the black and white aspect of checking off skill sets, and also approaches the gray areas that managers often respond to more intuitively. There is an adage in the staffing industry that it's not the most qualified person that gets a job but the person that interviews the best. This question will allow the interviewer to provide insight on the culture of the organization and what a successful employee profile looks like beyond role/responsibilities. This certainly applies in most hiring scenarios and lends to assessing much more than just a candidate's technical acumen. It also potentially opens the door for a candidate to let his/her personality and communication skills be highlighted more effectively.

Mike Barefoot, Senior Account Manager, [Red Zone Resources](#)

I think one of the most important questions to ask during a job interview is “What types of projects might I expect to work on during the few weeks and months?”

Why is this an important question? Well, how many times have we heard from job candidates that once they got the job, it wasn't what they expected? By hearing directly from the interviewer what the job entails, it can help the job candidate decide if they are qualified to do the work and if this is the type of work they are interested in doing. Furthermore, while it's important to ask the interviewer questions about the company, its products and services, and its competition, the one thing that will affect your everyday enjoyment of the job is the job itself. You are only going to enjoy your job if you enjoy what you do on a day-to-day basis, so try to find out exactly what you will be doing. In fact, the job candidate should go one step further and ask the interviewer if they can provide hard copy examples of the types of projects they will be working on. When I interviewed job candidates, I would proactively show them a number of different projects so they knew what they were getting into. If someone tells you about the job, it's just hypothetical, but if they can actually show you what you will be working on, you can make an informed decision about whether or not you would be a good fit for the position.

[Andy Teach](#), author, *From Graduation to Corporation: The Practical Guide to Climbing the Corporate Ladder One Rung at a Time*

Are there any divisions/companies/people that I will be in close interactions with on a daily/weekly/monthly basis?

The reason you want to ask this question is because almost every position interacts with someone outside of its immediate company or comfort zone. Many times you will have to interact with marketing, advertising, management, suppliers, etc. This is important because you might find out that you will have a new best friend you didn't think of. It may be someone you want to reach out to in the process before you take any job. Remember you are interviewing the company as much as they are interviewing you. I wouldn't necessarily base any decision on this information, but it might help paint a better picture of the role in which you are applying for.

Are there any new technologies or products that are in the pipeline that I will be involved with in the near future, I noticed on your website that Product X looks new and inventive?

You ask this question for a few reasons: 1.) This shows that you did some research on the company and the products they offer. 2.) This shows that you are putting yourself in the mindset to work on new and inventive things and you're excited about it. 3.) This shows that you are already thinking about being productive in the role. 4.) It tells the manager that you are ready to work, ready to think, and ready to jump feet first into the job.

Is there any reason you would not move me on in the process?

This is an important one. This shows that you are engaged and want to move on with the company's process. Many people forget to actually ask to move on in the process. If I'm interviewing someone and they have done a bang up job on the interview and they don't at least ask, "What is the next step?" I know, they are really not what I'm looking for. You want the interviewer to actually know you are interested in the job enough to know what the next step of getting hired is.

Scott Brent, Author, [Tactical Aggressiveness](#)

"Where do you think the business will be in three years" – but don't ask this outright!

Up your thinking and think from a director's perspective as to where the business and the industry as a whole is heading over the next three to five years and ask a question that demonstrates where your thinking is.

Ask what their best selling product is. Work out what the trend might relate to, and then perhaps get into a discussion about where the interviewer sees this trend going in the future. If you can summarize with a statement that shows you understand where the business aspires to, and perhaps add your thoughts on it, then you are certainly starting to tick the boxes of a forward-thinking, bright addition to the team.

Laura Leigh Clarke, [Money Coach](#)
