**Interviewing**

**Know company and know problem better than anyone else.**

Problem – what is the problem?

What is hiring managers problem?

Company problem?

That is why they hire – to solve a problem.

Work to help solve problem. Why job open? Why you would be hired? See job description. Study the job description. Ask the worker, what is the company’s problem? What problems can you solve? What problems did you solve in the past that are similar to their problem?

Write down 3-5 examples that they can share.

Define the problem: What do you understand about this role? Tell me about you (really saying tell me about your profession and what you do / know), as related to this job. They are not asking about your personal life, they have a problem to solve.

Early on, before I learned that I need to share this information with workers in more detail, a worker went to an interview, and in the course of that interview, shared a deeply painful family memory. If you’re there to solve a problem, focus on that, not on your personal problems or family life. It only sends a red flag to an employer.

**Ability to understand problem prior to interview is key.**

Look at each line of a job description. You don’t have to know everything, just cover a lot of it. Why is it that the company wants these skills and lists these requirements? What is the outcome of someone who does this?

Find likely problems and address them.

**Underlying interview questions –**

Who are you?

What problems can you solve? What are your skills / experience?

Can you help me and my business? Hiring mngr will make decision. Understand how help company and individual will help, so you can articulate how you can do this job and solve this problem.

Do you have proof?

Is it worth considering you further?

An interview is a series of steps, not everyone you talk with will understand the job.

**Objectives of your interview**

Connect with other person (do you care about helping them solve problem)?

Discuss the problem and how to solve it (discuss work you will do, how organization will be better). Even if not asked, find ways to bring it up.

Get to the next step (don’t get to end, it’s a process). Get to next step, not jump to end. May be multiple conversations (don’t ask about vacation, benefits, salary) until they bring it up. **Don’t make it about you at this time. You lose an opportunity if you ask those questions.**

**Remember, not preparing likely means one won’t get the job. Only 25% of candidates who are interviewed are offered the job. The worst thing that can happen is a worker tells you they had an interview the other day, and they just winged it.**

**\*\*\*Interview not about you. \*\*\* Interview is not about you. Interview is not about you.**

**Don’t mention things that will give them reasons to screen you out. Don’t give reasons to not hire you, ie, have to leave early on Wednesday’s (not at first interview). Let them like you first. Don’t be so honest that the whole truth comes out, injury, prior mistakes, employers (don’t badmouth past employers). If you need an accommodation, don’t ask at interview, as per above, wait, let them like you and get to know you, first.**

**Prepare \*\*\* most important. Don’t wing it.**

Understand the company (what do you know about our company)? Write a one page short summary, location, what they do, other locations, headquarters, how do people describe the culture? Growth? Revenues. Events, blog if they have one?

Be able to describe company and what they do.

About us page is a good place to start.

Another place to do this – linkedin. About. Glassdoor (take with grain of salt).

Micro decisions (not one big decision) to hire you.

**Prepare questions that matter after doing the research.**

**What sets someone apart? Big part of reason is how they behave and what they knew in the interview process.**

**Steps in an interview**

Before your interview

Opening the interview

Answering questions

Asking questions

Closing the interview

**Brand summary:**

Tell me about yourself, tell me about your background. Even if they don’t ask, it will still help.

Interview is a conversation, not just there to answer questions. Remember, you’re there to help them solve a problem, not divulge your life history and put the interviewers to sleep.

Come up with a blurb about yourself (related to job you are applying for).

**I am a \_\_(title)\_\_ and a \_(certified x professional)\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**I help (I love to help customers feel valued and know their needs, or I love to solve problems and keep**

**things running smoothly), or fix things right the first time so customers are happy.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Solve \_ x types of problems.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Using skills that include \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Know answer to tell us about yourself isn’t about you. Tell us about yourself with your ability to help me be successful and your ability to do this work and how it will make a difference.**

**Most people answer something else, like, I was a project manager and I kept projects on schedule and before that I was a project manager.**

Interviewer tuned out, looking backwards (boring). I was a, and here was the job description.

Or

I’m a hard worker and I have a strong work ethic. Everyone has that, right?!

Doesn’t work.

Describe yourself in a meaningful way, such as:

**I’m a network engineer with these certifications and I love to help busy IT departments with being productive. My skills include x, y, and z.**

**Change to:**

**I am a Dispatcher. My goal is to make a driver’s day goes smoothly using skills in scheduling, communication, systems, and driving experience.**

**How to answer questions?**

**Why should we hire you.**  First step, define the problem.  See job description.  In a few sentences write down their problem.  How can you solve it?  Remember your brand statement?

**Why do you want to work here?**  What can you contribute?  What is the mission statement?  What are their values?  See website.  Why does it seem like a good company?  Do their values resonate with yours?  Sincerity is important, so find a reason you’d want to work there.  See website, about us.  What do customers say about them?  Are they local or all over Washington State?

**Write down 3-5 success stories or knowledge or skills you have or experience. Could be in school, a project, internship, or transferable skills from a prior job. Try to make it relevant to job.**

**Likely Questions:**

1-2 minute answers. Too little answer says you didn’t give it much thought. 1 minute okay, but less…

If shy, harder. It’s awkward if answers 2-3 words. 30 seconds – minute. Beyond 2 minutes gets boring.

1-2 minute answers best.

**Answer every question (not personal characteristics), keeping in mind you are there to help them solve a problem.**

I understand the structure of x, and I’ve had experience with x.

Tell me about the experience you have.

Have you used Access? No.

That is negative, so avoid it. Instead say, I’ve used Excel and tables in Excel, and understand Access also uses tables. I’d like to increase my skills and learn Access, and when I get home, will look at online tutorials. How does your team use Access?

See how we asked a question, turned it back to them to make it a conversation, and show interest in their problem?

**I don’t have much experience. Don’t say that. If you have a little experience, then state that here is my experience in this area, that is very similar, and here is what I know about this. I understand the problem is x, and you’d need to do y.**

Instead of saying, I don’t have much experience. Negative. Do you have any or transferable experience?

Instill confidence.

In my classes and in my certification, I’ve touched these tools or done this type of thing.

**Pattern for a good answer – Intro answer, then illustrate with stories. Conversation.**

Tell me about your experience with x.

This is a great tool. Would it be okay if I tell you a little bit about my experience with x.

Let me give you an example. Conversation.

**Study done with Waiters – when order repeated back, higher tips, rather than just saying, good choice. Repeat back what they’re saying.**

Do you have experience with x?

Experience with x. Let me give you an example with x.

How do you all use x? Hand conversation back to them. Or, does that answer your question, or would you like to know more about this? Best interview is a conversation.

Tell me about yourself - brand statement (see prior) I am a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_, skills, working with teams in x.

Why should we hire you? Kinda like brand statement, same. Many people talk about other people or compare, I’m the hardest working. I work so hard and do all of these things. Don’t do that.

What are your greatest strengths?

Greatest weakness? Most common response is -take a strength and present as a weakness.

Suggestion: be honest, but say what you’ve done to overcome it.

When you don’t know the answer, give an example of how you’ve found answers to problems in past.

I have never run into that before, but let me tell you how I’d approach that. Come up with how you’d approach it. Look into books or policies, if not sure, do some research, google. If something important, run choices by co-worker. Tell a story about how you would solve it.

Alternative is to tell people that you don’t have much experience in that. Not best answer.

If you run into barriers, didn’t know how to do it and so I stopped. Solve problem, answer question. **You can’t know everything.**

**Prepare questions –**

**Show interest in the problem.**

Demonstrate your ability to solve the problem.

Interested in creating success for boss / team organization.

What are ways I can contribute to your success? (not just for me, but for the team).

What are your goals?

Ask about the problem. What about the team and what creates success?

First ?’s should be about how you can contribute and create success.

What do you like best about the job. How can I best help you be successful? You’ve been here x years. What are your greatest successes? What motivates you most?

Don’t talk about you, benefits, what’s in it for you.

People like to talk about themselves. Give the interviewer time to talk about themselves.

Other tips:

Dress for the job – dress appropriately. Dress one step better than the way you’ll dress on the job.

No cologne or perfume.

Arrive 20 min early. Know how to get there. Get to the parking lot 20 minutes early.

If late, game over.

Go into the office 5 minutes before interview.

Stress not to go in 10 minutes before interview. Why? The receptionist will always call the interviewer even if you ask them not to. It’s their job, and now you’ve interrupted the interviewer, who feels pressure because your waiting.

Turn off phone volume.

Interview not about you.

**Not going to get a job, I’m going to see whether I can help these people.**

Likelihood of getting job goes up, focus not on you. Prepare.

Be yourself. Have fun with it.

Problem solver, not job seeker.

Review notes in parking lot. What do you know about the company?

What is the problem? Can you help them solve the problem?

Small talk part of interview. Receptionist could be in interview process – how did they treat you?

Interview starts from moment you pull into the parking lot until moment you leave.

Greet people makes a difference.

Be friendly.

Always shift back to focus on problem. Not about you.

If interviewer is looking less at you, but together talking about problem, team, and not focused as much on you, went well.

Always shift back to problem and how you’ll solve it.

What do you know about x? I know y, and let me tell you about an experience…

I saw you all have 250 employees. You’re hiring 20 people per month, or it’s pretty stable, or are you undergoing change?

Do you have management experience?

I have experience training new team members, being a mentor, and when the supervisor is away, opening and closing the store.

Respond to questions with results. 1-2 minute answers.

Every q asked. Results, lessons learned along way.

**Be results oriented, not task oriented.**

Not just experience, but also results, or problems along way. Tell stories where you can highlight problems solved, improvements made, tweaks, adjustments, things you did well, or learned from.

Ask good questions and never say, I don’t have any questions. You want to show you are interested in helping them solve their problems. Makes sure questions aren’t focused on you, and what’s in it for you.

Compensation – If it’s brought up during first interview or later –

Don’t give a range, don’t low ball. Don’t throw out a number unless you’re prepared to accept it. Research online, try to give a range if you have to (look at other jobs, glassdoor, indeed salaries about individual companies, Onet online should give salaries for different job titles).

Try to let them give you a range, and you can also say -

Clearly compensation is important, however, I’m in career transition, these are the things that matter. What is the team I’ll be working with, or

As long as the compensation is around market value, then I can’t imagine not moving forward.

Close with next steps.

Never leave without contact info.

Do you have a business card (ask at beginning of interview).

Don’t leave without knowing next steps.

If they don’t know, ask, this is important, when should I expect to hear from x?

If I haven’t heard from anyone, would it be alright if I follow up if I haven’t heard?

When you follow-up, not bugging them. I promised you last week I would reach out to you.

How motivated are you to solve problems, not just interested in this job.

The things that I’ve learned in this conversation, x and y, are motivating to me. I think I could bring this value, and would energize me to do my best.

What is it you will do and why exciting to you?

Send email - thank you. **Wait until next business day after to send note.** That way you remind them of who you are, and hopefully, they don’t want to forget.

Follow-up, don’t just say thank you. Add something. I appreciate your time. Since our conversation, I learned this, or here is an article related to this topic.

Give them something of value.

Another example:

Susan, Goodyear, AZ. Job goal: Receptionist. I didn’t need to do much with her for interview prep, but somehow we must have missed that key point about salary negotiations. The interviewer practically offered her the job, they really liked her, but that changed when they asked her, what are your salary requirements? $18 / hr. She didn’t hear from them and her claim closed.

What could I have done better to prepare her?

Don’t make that same mistake. Susan needed to understand that reception jobs weren’t paying that much. She needed to adjust her salary expectations.

Reminder. Drill it into the worker. Don’t mention LNI or prior workplace injury in an interview, unless it’s with EOI, and your negotiating a lighter duty job. If someone needs an accommodation, interview not time to mention it. Let them like you first. If someone had a hidden disability, do you think they would mention it in the interview? If they’re going to a lighter duty job, it may not even be relevant. Don’t make the interview about the worker, but solving problems.

**A few key points to remember**

Brand statement. Examples, results, are important.

Ask questions. Make it a conversation. You’re there to show them how you can help them solve their problems.

Be enthusiastic. Don’t be afraid to tell them (in the interview, or thank you letter), that you are excited about helping them solve problems. What aspect of the job are you excited about?

Credit: Gary O’Neal, Recruiter, based off his webinar on interviewing

**Best practice tip for a resume - One VRC who assigns me resume to-do’s obtains instructor feedback for retraining plans, and uploads the document with quotes from instructors, which I can then add to the resume, which often say, never missed a class, one of my best students, etc.**