

Countering the Stress of Interviewing

Interviewing can be one of the most stressful times in the job search process. There are unknowns that create anxiety. Who will interview? What questions will I be asked? How do I handle questions that I don't have answers for? Here are some pointers for interview prep.

You know from experience the value of prepping. It's the same here. The steps vary from your past experiences however the philosophies are the same. It's all about research – you and the company.

Let's talk about you first. The “civilian” workplace's differences are as varied as can be. Large corporations have a different culture and norms from small ones. Manufacturing is different from hospitality. Even in government, cultures vary from local to state to federal. It's important that you know what culture fits your needs. Cultures and environments vary in their degree of risk-taking versus conservatism. Some work allows flexibility in schedules, even work locations. Some are very structured while others are very unstructured. You need to determine what works best for you.

The next major step is to research the prospective employer. Do as much as you can to find out about the company. Find out who will conduct the interviews and the interview structure. Google the potential interviewers. Find out if there is a common factor. I interviewed with one company and found that I had worked in the same hotel as one of the interviewers. She was on LinkedIn. We discussed this during the icebreaker. This helped start the conversation and make it easier on us both. Note that the interviewer can be uncomfortable depending upon their level of interviewing experience.

Here are the points that the interviewer is trying to cover:

- Does the candidate have the skills that I require? Do these skills compliment the skills of the work team?
- How will the candidate fit into the company culture? And how will they fit into the work team?
- What is the understanding of the candidate with regards to the company, its mission and values? How will they fit?
- Does the candidate have the right mind set? What is the attitude and aptitude? Skills can be taught if they don't match exactly while attitude cannot. I learned this from my time at Marriott Hotels. The message from Bill Marriott Sr was that you can “teach skills but not attitude”.
- Finally, how much does the candidate want the job?

As you can see, prepping sets you up for a knowledgeable discussion versus going in blind. We'll talk more about next steps in the interview process. Good luck in your job search.

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