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WHITE PAPER

Preparing for an Executive Interview

Research, Research, Research

Beyond hard skills relevant to the role and industry, hiring committees are looking for someone who has researched their company, knows the “hot” projects or initiatives, has read the latest news regarding organizational moves, and could be seen as “ready to hit the ground running.” Consult the organization’s website, which will often include valuable information (such as strategic plans, annual reports, fact sheets, news coverage, and leadership profiles).

Leverage Your **Network**

You should actively network with friends, colleagues, and industry experts to get an inside track on what it would be like to work for the hiring organization. Among the issues to cover in confidential, private conversations are the following:

- What do you know (or have you heard) about the hiring organization?
- What do you see as the organization’s most significant challenges? What is the biggest challenge in the coming year?
- How is the organization viewed by its stakeholders (board members, employees, and customers)?
- How strong is the culture and what does the work environment look like today?
- How do members of the C-Suite work together and collaborate? How does the C-Suite interact with the board?
- Is this an organization where you would want to work?
- Do you see this as an organization where I could perform well and be happy?

The Most Important Questions **Are the Ones You Ask**

Interviewing is about finding the right match on both sides. Developing a thorough list of thoughtful questions will be just as important as preparing for the questions you’ll be asked by executives and board members on the hiring committee. Here are a few questions to consider:

- What industry trends have shaped the organization’s goals, objectives, and priorities for next year? What emerging industry trends are likely to influence this organization within the next three to five years?
- What are the organization’s most critical goals for the next three to five years? What level of influence and autonomy will I have to achieve these goals?
- What are the most important milestones by which this organization will evaluate my performance in this position?
- How do people tend to communicate, solve problems, and resolve conflicts?
- What do you see as the organization’s greatest achievement of the last three years?



Prepare for High-Level Interview Questions

When you've made it to the final round of interviews, you will need to do more than deliver a run-down of details typically found in a resume. Be prepared for probing questions that require you to reflect on the past, focus on the present, and cast a vision for the future. You may be asked questions such as the following:

- How do you explain the success you've had in your career?
- Why do you want to be part of the organization?
- What do you do when you're not working?
- How would you describe your leadership style? How has that style worked in previous positions?
- How would you mobilize your most significant strengths if this organization were to hire you?
- How would you compensate for your limitations?
- What are your reservations about this position and organization?

It's likely that you'll also be asked a few behavioral questions that give you an opportunity to tell a story about your past experience and how it would shape your decision-making in this new role. Expect to see a few questions like these:

- Tell me about a situation where you didn't get along with a C-Suite colleague, external consultant, or board member. How did you resolve it?
- Describe a situation where you were part of a failed program or project. How did you react? How did you apply the lessons learned?
- Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful business situation that required coping and resilience. What was the outcome?
- Give me a specific example of a time when you used judgment, evidence, and logic to solve a business problem.
- Tell me about a time when you had to use your presentation skills to influence the opinions of others. Discuss the process you used to put together a strategic document and presentation.

Closing the Interview and Following Up

At the end of the interview, ask if they still have any concerns. It's a great way to learn if there is anything that you missed, that they misunderstood, or that you didn't explain well enough.

As the interview concludes, ask for the job! Depending on the interview stage you're in, ask about the next step in the interview process and who you would be meeting with, ask about the expected timeline for a decision, or ask them for a formal offer and start date. You can change your mind as you learn more, but you can seldom get back an opportunity once you've lost it.

After the interview, take a few moments to create a personal summary of your conversation in writing, including any positives, areas of concern, and remaining questions. Write down any personal connections you were able to create during the interview. Afterward, send thank you emails within a day of your interview to each of the interviewers. Remind them that you're interested, ready to make an impact, and eager to continue the process.



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