



INTERVIEW --- PROCESSES

REROUTING INC.

ROAD MAP SERIES

Part 4 - Mastering the Interview Process

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MASTERING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

Interviews can be one of the most daunting aspects when it comes to finding a job! Even confident professionals have bombed interviews before! No joke, I have had two in my life where I thought.... oooooh THAT.WAS.BAD. when it ended.

1. I was super sick and felt terrible, but I didn't want to "call in sick" because it looks bad. I went, couldn't focus and was not my happy engaged self. I was miserable and itching to get out of there.
2. I did not leave myself enough time for a telephone interview. I was at a work conference and rushed up to my hotel room in between breaks to call a recruiter for an initial telephone screen. I was so worried about getting back to the conference that I rushed through the interview and did not take the time to listen to the questions the recruiter was asking me – I know this because she kept probing and I kept apologizing for not understanding the question the first time. My mind was elsewhere.

Not only have I learned from my experiences, I have also learned from being on the other side of the table.

As you go through **Part 4: Mastering the Interview Process** I will guide you through:

- interview processes,
- the most used interviewing methods – informational, situational, and behavioural based interviews,
- how to manage nerves,
- what you should bring to an interview,
- what questions to ask at the end of an interview and ones you should avoid,
- and finally, we will wrap up with a list of my random pointers!

By the end of **Part 4: Mastering the Interview Process**, you should have a strong foundation of knowledge about interviews and the processes that go along with them, but moreover, you should have developed the confidence to ace your next one and land the jobs you interview for moving forward!

Let's get started!

Interview Processes

Each organization has its own recruitment and interview processes. When it comes to interview processes, organizations may have formal or informal processes. There may be a standard procedure (formal process) for making a hiring decision and what key decision makers are involved in the interview and selection process.

I have provided an example below of a typical standard procedure within an organization (not using an outsourced recruitment firm).

1. Applications reviewed by HR or Recruiter.
2. Depending on the role, the recruiter may proactively seek out candidates, especially if they feel the pool of qualified candidates is sparse.
3. HR/ Recruiter will complete a telephone screening interview with top candidates (top candidates as determined by resume reviews).
4. HR/Recruiter will debrief hiring manager on applicant pool, resumes received, candidates screened. If they do not have 3 qualified candidates, they will go back to the drawing board and search for more to find a minimum of 3 qualified candidates.
5. The top (usually 3) candidates will be presented to the hiring manager and an agreement is made to bring them in for an interview with the hiring manager.
6. Candidates come in for an interview with hiring manager afterwards hiring manager debriefs with recruiter/ HR.
7. Top candidate(s) may return for a second interview to meet with a second level manager (hiring manager's manager) or another key decision maker.
8. Decision makers debrief and either bring final candidate in for a third interview or a decision is made, and an offer is given. Or, if there are no successful candidates, they will return to Step 2.

So... here is the thing, if you have gotten past a phone screen and had an in-person interview, you are closer than you think to landing that job! In **Part 3: Preparing Your Marketing Materials** we went through how to get yourself through the resume review step – now let's dive further into the actual interviews so you can wow them and start getting more employment offers, with less overwhelm.

Interviewing Methods

It's important to understand the different kinds of interview methods/ techniques so that you can master them. Recruiters and hiring managers are often trained to complete standard and structured interviews (all candidates asked the same set of questions) – so they can fairly evaluate one candidate from the next.

There are 3 main types of interview methods that are used - informational interview questions, situational based interview questions, and behavioural based interview questions.

Let's look further at the different methods of interviewing.

Informational Interview Questions

An interviewer will normally begin an interview with information-based questions. These are usually easy questions and often a means of getting the interviewee to relax and feel more comfortable. Informational questions will likely be asked at all stages of the interview process, so you may feel like you are repeating yourself. Here is the thing, if you're interviewing with three different people, they will likely look for consistency across all interviews and ensure that you delivered the same information to everyone. So...don't lie, be consistent and honest in every conversation you have.

They may ask you about yourself (use that elevator speech you created in the last module), they may then probe to find out more in-depth information about something that you stated in your elevator speech.

- DO NOT use this as an opportunity to get personal. In fact, employers hate when you mention any information in an interview that could lead to biases based on protected grounds of discrimination. The protected grounds are: citizenship, race, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, ancestry, disability, age, creed, sex/pregnancy, family status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, receipt of public assistance (in housing) and record of offences (in employment). So... don't talk about anything tied to the topics above.

They may ask you to go through your resume and highlight to them your responsibilities and achievements in your previous roles.

- Use this as an opportunity to review your resume with them (but don't read it verbatim) - provide a summary. Key word here is a summary. Don't spend half an hour going on about yourself, keep this brief and concise highlighting the information that is relevant in the job you are applying for.

They may ask you what you liked about your previous positions and what you didn't like.

- Use this as an opportunity to demonstrate your positivity. When they ask you about your dislikes – be cautious that you aren't saying anything negative about a previous organization or manager.

As an HR professional, this is how I tend to answer this question...

"Unfortunately, as a general HR practitioner, employee relations falls under my role and I dislike having to manage employee relations issues. As much as I dislike having discussions and conducting investigations that can be sensitive in nature, it is a strength of mine. (Insert big smile) But...I don't enjoy it! The reason why I continue to work in this role is because there are so many positives as a general HR practitioner, that the good aspects of the job outweigh the bad. What I enjoy the most is..."

See how it doesn't really look like a negative, and I have managed to turn it around to I don't like it, but I am good at it, and I do it anyway. Question #7 inside the Career Discovery worksheets should help you reflect on this answer and be genuine. Now work on a way that you can turn around any dislikes of your previous positions and prepare yourself for being asked that question.

Situational and Behavioural Based Interview Questions

Although situational interview questions are not the “in” thing right now, its still a method that is widely used and important to know so you can understand the difference between situational and behavioural based interviews.

Situational based interview questions are posed in such away that a candidate is given a situation and asked how they would handle the given situation.

“What would you do if...?”

Whereas behavioural based interview questions are posed to a candidate by asking them to draw from their previous experiences. “Can you tell me about a time you.....?” Behavioural based interviewing is popular as theory states that the best predictor of someone’s future behaviours are their previous behaviours.

Those that don’t know the difference between the two styles, and candidates who may not be listening to an interviewer when they pose the question, often fail to recognize that a recruiter is looking for an exact example. Since they are not following the instructions given by the recruiter, the recruiter will either give them a prompt - a second chance to demonstrate their listening skills and answer accordingly.

[Here is an example of how a candidate is responding to a behavioural based interview question with a situational answer:](#)

Interviewer: Can you tell me about a time you had to handle an irate customer? What happened and how did you manage the situation?

Candidate: Oh, if I ever have a customer that is upset, I listen to them, communicate back that I understand they are upset and then I try to help them. If I cannot help them, I get my Supervisor for help.

Interviewer (probes): Okay, thanks, now can you provide me with a specific example of how you have handled an irate customer? What happened and how did you manage the situation?

Candidate repeats same answer above – they are reiterating a general answer to how they handle irate customers. Not a SPECIFIC example.

Sometimes it may be hard to decipher, the key here is to look at an interview like a conversation. Ensure you are calm and listen, once the interviewer is finished posing the question, take a moment to think about your response. Are they asking how I WOULD respond, or are they looking for an example? If you are unsure, ask them to repeat the question.

Unfortunately, I cannot provide you with answers for exact interview question, but what I can tell you is that an interviewer is looking for more than the right answers to their questions.

They are looking for your personality, your genuine interest in a position and a company, your ability to listen and communicate. There is so much more about an interview than the actual questions being asked. We will go through some pointers at the end of this module.

How to Manage the Interview Jitters

Everyone gets slightly nervous when they go on an interview – some people have straight out anxiety over it. This is understandable, someone is evaluating you, your personality, your experience, your ability to learn and contribute...yikes! Its not multiple-choice questions with right and wrong answers, there is no real study guide because every hiring manager is different with different expectations and needs.

Here are some tips on how you can keep the nerves at bay, so you don't tank your interview!

- Schedule the interview first thing in the morning – that way you don't have to think about it all day
- Get a good night sleep beforehand
- Leave yourself enough time to get to your interview 30 minutes early. That way if you hit a bit of unexpected traffic, you don't have to stress about being on time for your interview. You should always check in for your interview 15 minutes early (at reception).
- Avoid drinking too much caffeine and eat a healthy meal beforehand.
- Use the bathroom before your interview.
- Bring a bottle of water – dry mouth brought on by stress can be the worst and make it hard to speak.
- Over prepare! Don't memorize, understand what the organization is all about and what it stands for!

When you feel prepared, you'll be less anxious!

What You Should Bring to an Interview

The truth is, you don't really need to bring anything to an interview – unless a recruiter has specifically asked you to bring something.

However, when you do bring what is listed below, you will be better prepared.

- As mentioned above, a bottle of water for yourself.
- A notepad to jot down notes – but don't be a note taker in an interview.
- A pen
- Extra copies of your resume – one in the event that someone attends the interview and does not have a copy of it and one for yourself in the event that you need to use it as a prompt (for speaking points about your experience) etc.
- Questions to ask the interviewer – written on your notepad, not on your phone. Your phone should either be left in your car or away for the entire time you are in the building.
- A portfolio binder to hold your items.
- Your portfolio (work samples) if you are interviewing for a role that requires one.
- Your A-GAME, but most importantly a smile and positive energy!

Now that we have gone over what you should bring, we might as well go through some of the things you shouldn't bring. As a reminder, leave your cell phone off and in a purse or bag. Attend the interview alone, don't bring your parents, friends, or partners. No gum. Avoid wearing scents perfumes/ colognes etc.).

Questions to Ask During Your Interview

During a job interview it is a good idea to have questions prepared for the end of the interview to demonstrate your interest. I wouldn't say it is required, as I don't think it would lead to an interview fail, but it does provide you with the opportunity to ask intuitive questions which can work in your favour. I wouldn't worry about asking questions during a phone screen, but if you are invited in for an in-person interview, an expectation is that you'll have some questions.

What I have noticed about inexperienced candidates who have attended very few interviews and are looking for feedback - they have made some rookie mistakes. Look at [this blog post](#) for questions you should DEFINITELY not ask and how you can rephrase them if you decide to use them.

When it comes to constructing intuitive questions, they should show that you understand the role and the company and are looking for more information. If you ask questions that have already been outlined in either the job posting, on the company website, or something they already reviewed with you in the interview - it may look...like you're not the brightest bulb. So, it may not work to your advantage to ask questions just for the sake of it. If you ask let's call them stupid questions, it may show that you really don't understand the role or the company so how passionate can you be about the position. Or, it may demonstrate that you have poor listening skills if they already provided you with that information verbally.

You need to be strategic, engaging, and insightful.

You should ask questions that demonstrate that you are looking for additional information to understand more about what you are getting into should you get and accept the offer. You should be assessing the employer as much as they are assessing you to determine if the job and company is a right fit for you and your future career goals.

[Here are some examples of questions to ask at the end of your interview \(assuming they have not already provided the info\):](#)

- Can you tell me a bit about your management style and how the (Marketing) team works in collaboration with on another other?
- What are some of the challenges that I could expect to face in this position?
- What are the characteristics of an employee that is successful in this role and within the organization?
- Can you tell me about the future of the (Marketing) department and some of the projects that you are excited about?

If you truly don't feel you have any questions to ask, at the end of the interview state:

"I had questions coming in, but you have been extremely thorough and answered the questions that I originally did have. I appreciate how much information you have given me about the role and the company."

This will wow them (assuming they were thorough) and will also act as a compliment to them and their communication skills.

I feel like I can't stress it enough, so I am going to say it again... don't ask questions just for the sake of asking questions. They can either make or break an interview if not done properly!

My Random List of Interview Quick Tips!!

This final section of mastering the interview process is a random set of pointers that I have learned over my 10+ years of either working as a recruiter or overseeing recruitment processes and receiving feedback from hiring managers. They didn't require a section in and of themselves... but these quick points to help ya master all the upcoming interviews you are about to go on - with the amazing resume you build in the last module **Preparing Your Marketing Materials**.

- Know exactly what jobs you have applied for and the reasons why you have applied for them in the first place. A common phone screen question that a recruiter or HR rep will ask is "why did you apply for this position". When an applicant responds with... "sorry, what company are you calling from?"... or "what position was it that I applied for at your company?", it looks B.A.D. Use the job application tracking spreadsheet provided to you in **Job Searching 101** to prepare yourself for this question.
- There's A LOT of competition for entry level roles. And, for the most part, employers understand that students and recent graduates are not going to have a lot of experience. In saying that, they are looking for more of an organization and team fit, with the expectation that they will have to train you. Are you trainable? How do you respond to feedback? How will you work with the team? Will you be a good fit long-term for the organization? It is so important to come across as genuine, polite, positive, and someone that has a good sense of humour. [Smile throughout the interview!](#)
- When trying to decide what you should wear for an interview, always air on the side of being overdressed. Leave the yoga pants for the gym, and the ripped jeans for a club – buy one suit if you don't already have one and use it for all your interviews.
- Don't open your computer while completing a phone screen and google answers as an interviewer is asking you them – they can hear the keyboard on the other end. YES...people do this! ALL.THE.TIME! Be genuine, authentic, and honest. Remember, this is a conversation.
- Don't over talk and overtake the interview. Be concise with your answers and be careful you don't talk yourself in circles.

- Be prompt in any correspondence you have with HR reps, recruiters, or hiring managers. Delayed responses demonstrate poor follow-up skills.
- Always send a thank you email to the individual that has interviewed you. If you don't have their email, ask for it! Keep it short, sweet, and simple – a novel is not required.
- Display confidence, but don't be cocky!
- Practice good manners – this should be how you live your life in general but more so with a potential employer. Especially the receptionist! If I have ever had a strange first impression about a candidate that I couldn't put my finger on, I have gone and asked the receptionist what kind of a first impression the candidate made when they came in.

Well, **Part 4: Mastering the Interview Process** has come to an end. You should now have a good understanding of recruitment processes and interviewing methods used so you can know how to respond to the types of questions being asked. With the tips provided in this section, you should be well on your way to landing the jobs that you are interviewing for!

Best of luck on your next interview!