



# INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE

## Congratulations!

You've passed the test. Your resume did its job. You answered the prescreening questions correctly. And now you've won a chance to interview...but are you ready?

Unless you're a professional job hunter, the answer to this question is probably "no." Time and time again, we see high level professionals arrive at interviews without the knowledge or preparation necessary to win the job. When it comes to your work, you'd never go into a project meeting without the right planning and preparation. The same should hold true for your job interviews.

This guide was created to help you get prepared. At Global Network Recruiting, we've been working with hiring managers, coaching technical professionals and executives for more than 20 years. This guide presents a quick synopsis of the best advice we've learned throughout our careers. Follow these guidelines and you'll maximize your chances of getting the offer!

## The Key to a Successful Interview

The goal of a job interview is very simple: to find the most qualified candidate for a specific job opening. But how companies determine who's the best is no simple matter. Some companies focus on skills. Others on experience. And still others look for a cultural fit or chemistry between the candidate and the employer.

Some companies will follow a lengthy and highly structured evaluation process, while others employ a more freewheeling approach and rely on a gut feeling.

As the person being interviewed, you're going to walk in not knowing what to expect. Very few employers will tell you in advance exactly what they want or how their process works. The key to getting the offer is to be thoroughly prepared – and to ask the right questions.

**With these points in mind, here are our 10 tips for a successful interview:**

## Tip #1 - Take notes

Make sure you have a paper and pencil handy to document information about the company, names of key contacts, questions you want to ask, and follow-up actions you are expected to take.

Taking notes demonstrates your interest, keeps you focused, and gives you a paper trail to refer to for follow-up communication.

## Tip #2 - Prepare

It may sound like a cliché, but preparation really is the key to a successful interview. Do not take your background or the interview for granted. This is a sales situation, and in sales, success goes to the organization that can best position its product as a solution to the customer's needs. To be successful in your interview, you must be prepared to clearly demonstrate why you are the best solution for the employer's hiring need.

Here's how to prepare:

### RESEARCH THE COMPANY

Understand what they do, who the key players are in the organization, who their customers are, who their competitors are, what challenges they face in their industry, and what technologies drive their success.

### DETERMINE HOW TO BEST POSITION YOURSELF

Why would you be an asset to this company? How can you prove your value? Why are you the expert they need?

### PREPARE QUESTIONS

Have questions prepared upfront about the company, division, position, market, etc... Good engineers ask good questions – they show preparation, drive, initiative, and interest. On the flip side, think about what questions might be asked of you. Put yourself in the interviewer's shoes. What questions would you ask yourself? Write those questions down – including your responses – prior to the interview.



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## Tip #3 - Make a great first impression

While some companies are disciplined enough to withhold making judgments until the end of the hiring process, most people form opinions very quickly. Making a strong, positive first impression is critical to your success.

Creating the right impression starts well before the interview. It starts with the look of your resume and how well your technical knowledge is presented. It includes the quality of any correspondence you've had (e.g., cover letters and pre-interview emails). And it continues through the first five minutes of the interview.

In all cases, you want to convey your expertise, professionalism, and interest in the job. You want to demonstrate that you've done your homework and you are an exceptional fit for the requirements of the job. In writing, on the phone, and in person, you want to appear confident, interested, and knowledgeable.

## Tip #4 - Get the offer first

When you are being phone screened, your job is to get an interview. When you are interviewing, your job is to get an offer. Don't worry about what the offer will be – you can make decisions and negotiate after you have the offer, but you can never accept an offer you don't receive.

## Tip #5 - Remember TED

Over the years, we have helped thousands of people get hired. Time and time again, the difference between those who get the offer – and those who don't – comes down to three factors:

### Technology, Enthusiasm, and Dependability.

Here's how to use TED to your advantage:

#### TECHNOLOGY

Be technical. Be specific. In your responses, give examples and use appropriate jargon to demonstrate your expertise.

Research the technologies the company develops. Review blogs, white papers, and college books so that you understand the theories and the fundamentals of these technologies.

Develop 10 technical questions that relate to the technologies the company is developing.

When you don't know the answer to a question or don't have relevant experience, do not just answer questions with "NO." While you are not expected to know everything or have experience with every new technology (that's why we have engineers to develop new technology), you should respond with examples of similar experiences you have had. And if you don't know an answer at all, then explain how you would find the answer. When it comes to evaluating your technical skills, how you handle questions that you don't know will be as important as the one's you do know.

#### ENTHUSIASM

Show excitement to be interviewing.

Demonstrate sincere appreciation for the opportunity to interview. Tell them how much you want the job and why you want it. Companies are looking for candidates that have "drive", a proven track record of success, and passion for what they do.

Let your responses demonstrate your skills, technical expertise, and DRIVE FOR RESULTS.

Look the interviewer straight in the eyes. Be confident. You've been invited to interview because you have something they want!

If you find that your technical expertise may be lacking for the position, provide examples of your ability to learn and build your skill set. Oftentimes, a lack of technical background can be overcome by character.

#### DEPENDABILITY

Prove to them that whatever they give you, you can handle. Use specific examples of times from past work experiences where you have successfully handled tough challenges.

Never point fingers at others. If an issue comes up regarding something in your past that was not 100% successful, take ownership of the failure. Explain what you did to resolve the situation, and how the experience helped expand your capabilities. Most great technical advances are the result of perseverance through failure!

Have examples ready that demonstrate how you have taken on responsibility – even when it wasn't yours.

Have examples ready that demonstrate your willingness and ability to assume a leadership role.



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## Tip #6 - Be prepared to ask and answer probing questions.

Before you respond to any interview question, make sure you fully understand the context and meaning of the question. Ask probing questions to clarify or confirm the intent of the interviewer's initial question. Part of the employer's goal in interviewing you is to evaluate your thought process and they expect that a good engineer will ask the right questions.

Also, when an interviewer asks follow-up questions based on your responses, this is a sign that the interview is going well. Interviewers ask probing questions so they can understand the depth of your experience and expertise. But if you find the interview jumping from topic to topic, this may signal that you are not being specific enough. Try to add more detailed explanations of relevant past experiences to your responses.

## Tip #7 - Be prepared to discuss your weaknesses.

At some point, you're certain to be asked, "what are your weaknesses?" Do not respond with something fake. Everyone has weaknesses. Be candid about a specific weak point, and in your response show the steps you have taken overcome the weakness.

Here is an example of how to properly handle this question: "I can be messy and unorganized. AS A RESULT, I have put a plan together to help me solve this problem. Every Wednesday I make sure my desk is cleaned off. I have a folder system for each project. I go through my emails at 5pm every day."

## Tip #8 - Don't make relocation an issue.

When asked if you are open to relocation, just say YES. Remember, the goal is to get an OFFER...then you negotiate.

## Tip #9 - Do NOT make money an issue.

Before you can discuss salary, you need to get a clear understanding of the company's total compensation and benefits package. If you are asked about your current salary, be honest about where you are at today, but do not specify a base salary requirement. Make it clear that what is most important to you is the company you work for and the opportunity the position offers.

The money you want will come with the success of the company and the position. Again, your goal is to get an offer first – and then deal with the money.

## Tip #10 - Stay positive.

Interviewers are all looking for the potential problems. Keep everything positive. Be excited that you are interviewing with company and make it very clear at the end of the interview that you are interested in working for this firm.

## YOUR INTERVIEW CHEAT SHEET

Whether it has been 10 days or 10 years since your last interview, approach the process as you would any technical project.

- Seek understanding.
- Look for problems.
- Think about how your expertise is the best solution to the employer's hiring need.

### As a reminder, here are the keys to your success:

1. Your ONLY goal is to get an offer.
2. Research the company, what they do, and who their customers are.
3. Probe to clearly understand what the interviewer is looking for.
4. Have questions prepared about the position, the company, and the key technologies they develop.
5. Be detailed and specific with you answers.
6. Provide relevant examples of your past experiences, responsibilities, and leadership skills.
7. Be enthusiastic – show your sincere excitement to be there.
8. Don't make geography or money an issue.

If you need more advice, GNR is always here to help.