



Introduction to Interview Process

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The interview is a process that can open many doors for you and it can close many doors for you too.

Therefore, an interview must not be taken casually; rather it must be meticulously planned, followed by rigorous preparation. Though, there is no particular and fixed way to prepare for an interview still there are some important points that can be helpful in planning and preparing for the interview.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to guide you about the possible points that can be helpful in planning, preparing, and finally cracking (conquering) the interview.

1.2. MAKE THE FIRST IMPRESSION

Note that the first impression and the last impression can make a lot of difference to you as well as the person(s) you are impressing upon, therefore, be careful and don't forget to make a good impression on both occasions. First we will talk about the first impression.

Nowadays, hidden cameras are placed in reception and waiting areas, from where your conduct is being monitored, starting from your arrival at the reception counter, your interaction with the receptionist, your interactions with other candidates, and your other activities and actions. This conduct of yours before you are called for interview, demonstrates volumes about your emotional maturity and your professional approach. Candidates who lack this attribute of personally are generally asked politely to leave with a false promise (sometimes) they will be called later on.

Therefore, take care of yourself and demonstrate professionalism in your every act/action.

When you enter the interview room and by the time you reach your hot seat, almost half of the interview is over. The interviewers (the persons in the interview panel) already have a first impression of yours which can go in your favour or can go against you. You may be surprised, how?

Here it is important to note that the way you open the door and close the door after entering the interview room, reflects your etiquette, and your confidence. Closing the door gently and abruptly conveys a lot. It may show that are you a calm person or a person in hurry?

The next thing they observe is the way you have dressed up yourself for the occasion. If you are asked to be in college/institute prescribed dress, then it is OK, otherwise the combination you wear speak at a lot about your dressing sense, which reflects a lot about your personality. Further, you may be in college/institute prescribed dress or dress of your own choice; it should not appear to be untidy. For example, the necktie should be properly tied; shirt should be properly inside the trouser, etc.

The next thing they observe in you is confidence. Your body language speaks a lot about you during the distance you travel from the entrance door to the hot seat. The position of your head, the position of your shoulders, the step sizes you take, and most importantly your facial expressions. Therefore, be careful about these aspects while you walk up to the hot seat. Position of your head should be straight and your face should be positioned towards the interviewers. Shoulders should be positioned straight so that your chest opens wide. Your step size during your walk should neither be too small nor be too long, and your walk should demonstrate that you are a calm and confident person not a person in a hurry. Finally, have a smile on your face that should reflect your preparedness for the occasion as well as your confidence.

The final thing that matters a lot is the way you greet the interviewers. It should be pleasant greetings such as “A very good Morning/Noon/Evening to all” depending on the timing of your call. After greeting, wait till you are offered the (hot) seat. After you occupy the hot seat, keep your file folder on the table in front of you, and keep your arms on your legs not on the table, and stay calm and confident till the interaction is initiated from the interviewers.

1.3. DURING THE INTERVIEW

During the interview, keep your calm and coolness, and demonstrate that you are a good listener. Listen to every question patiently, and if you are not able to understand the question properly, politely ask for its repeat, for example, say pardon sir/madam, can you repeat your question? Note that if you have not understood the question properly, your answer is going to be wavering, i.e., off the target. While you answer, maintain eye-to-eye contact with the interviewers. Note that maintaining eye-to-eye contact reflects that you are a confident person.

During the interview process, demonstrate that you are a honest and straight forward person who is always ready to learn. If you are not sure about the answer, frankly say, I am not sure but I can try if you permit; and if you don't have the answer, frankly say, I am sorry sir/madam, but I will learn.

1.4. AFTER THE INTERVIEW – THE LAST IMPRESSION

Once your interview is over, the last question that may come up from the panel is – Do you have any question? Then you can get your doubts cleared about the company, if any. And if you find that no such question is coming from the interviewers, then you take the initiative and say – Sir/madam I have a question, if you permit. And then ask your question.

I am sure, if you have planned and prepared well for your interview, it must have gone your way.

But still, an interview can through up surprises because there is always an element of uncertainty in the interview. With your confidence, you can even handle those questions for which you have not even prepared.

Remember: More you know, less fear you have; less you know, you have only fear. Therefore, confidence only comes with knowledge.

Let us suppose that the interview had not gone your way (as you expected or the way you prepared), still you can force the interviewers to re-think about your candidature by following nice words before you leave your hot seat –

“Sir/Madam, I really enjoyed being interviewed by such enlightened and wonderful people in the panel, and this interview will remain etched in my memory for long, thank you very much!”

I am very sure that after you leave the room, the experts in the panel will re-think your candidature again, and every member of the panel will have a feeling that this candidate seems to be good, and today may not be his/her day, and you are likely to be recalled for another round of interview.

1.5. PLANNING AND PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

In this section, we will take some aspects that will help us in planning and preparing for the interview.

1.5.1 Preparing Resume

A resume is a very important document and it is the only tool for the potential employer to check your suitability/competence for the job, and therefore, writing a good resume for a job is the most important and perhaps the only tool to make a first impression on the potential employer.

Ensure the following points in your resume:

1. Size: Ensure that resume doesn't span more than two to three pages. No one likes to read lengthy articles on your achievements. They would prefer to get it from you in person.

2. Format: Ensure that resume should not have fuzzy look.

- Use a standard and easily readable font consistently in the document.
- Have proper and meaningful headings.
- Italicize characters judiciously and avoid excessive colors.
- Give the resume an overall professional look.

3. Grammatical Errors: Ensure that resume should not have any grammatical errors.

4. Contact Details: Ensure that you have provided contact details clearly at the top of the resume. Don't forget to mention your email id and phone number; preferably a mobile number – ensuring you never miss a call from HR when he or she is looking for you.

5. Multiple Resumes: It is not wrong to have multiple resumes. It pays to customize your resume according to the company's requirements. For example, you might need to sell yourself for an "Embedded Programmer" job with your C knowledge, and for an "Application Programmer" job you may need to emphasize front-end tools.

Note: Always keep a copy of the resume with you, and whenever you are called for an interview, you must go through the resume submitted, and even can carry a copy of the same with you in the interview. Your copy will help you to know what you have claimed in your resume.

Points to Remember

1. Make sure you are familiar with what you write on your resume; and yes ensure that you are well prepared on all the facets of the topics you have touched upon. Your resume is the only source of information for the interviewer and all questions would invariably be directly linked to what you have mentioned.
2. Be crisp and clear. In the project details section, it is recommended that you write about the responsibilities you handled in the project and what you have accomplished in this project rather than a lengthy essay about the nitty-gritty of the project.
3. Highlight technical accomplishments like certifications obtained, training attended, etc.
4. Limit or avoid writing excessively about your personal details.
5. You don't need to have a declaration. Remember it is a resume and not a legal affidavit.

Sample Resume

A lot of material is available in literature about writing a good resume. The following sample resume can enlighten the reader as how a good resume should look. Take some time and try to put all your creativity into your resume.

Priti Sharma

F1-401, 4th Floor

Shourya Greens Apartments, Surya Enclave

Amritsar Bypass, Jalandhar-144009.

Mobile: +91-98156-98156

Res: +91-181-2420004

E-mail: priti.sharma@gmail.com

Objective: To seek a challenging career in the field of design and development of software.

Professional Profile:

Proficient in programming with C/C++ languages.

Good team worker.

Excellent communication skills.

Technical Skills:

Operating Systems : Windows XP/7, Linux

Programming Languages : C/C++/Core Java

Database : Oracle 10g, MySQL

Web Technologies : PHP, DHTML/XML, JSP

Experience:

Project #1:

Company: ABC India Pvt. Ltd. , Mohali.

Project Title: Design and Development of XXX (Academic Project)

Technology: Visual Basic, Oracle

Project: Give brief description of project and your role in the project.

Project #2:

Company: PVC India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi.

Project Title: Design and Development of YYY (Academic Project)

Technology: Linux, MySQL, PHP

Project: Give brief description of project and your role in the project.

Professional Qualification:

Bachelor of Technology in Computer Science & Engineering, Thapar University, Patiala, with First Class upto 7th Semester.

Semester 1	Semester 2	Semester 3	Semester 4
78 %	77 %	80 %	75 %
Semester 5	Semester 6	Semester 7	
80 %	75 %	82 %	

Academic Qualification:

+2 (CBSE Board), Apeejay School, Mahavir Marg, Jalandhar.

Aggregate Percentage : 85 %

Matriculation (CBSE Board), Apeejay School, Mahavir Marg, Jalandhar.

Aggregate Percentage : 80 %

Hobbies: Reading, sports, and interacting with people.

Soft Skills: Winning people, fast learner, and excellent communicator.

1.5.2 Preparing a Questionnaire

Prepare a comprehensive list of questions that are likely to come up in the interview. Once this list is ready, understand these questions and write down their answers in your own language. Grasp these answers because only then you will be able to answer these questions in a crisp manner when they are asked during the interview.

1.5.3 Know the Potential Employer

Gathering background information about potential employers is very crucial for successful interview preparation. This information will help you to know about the company profile, its financial health, technologies being used, HR policies, etc. During the interview, if you can demonstrate that you know a lot about the company, the interviewers will get a feeling that this candidate has a keen interest in our organization, and this factor can go in your favour.

1.5.4 Preparing for Handling the Interview

Most interviewers try to comfort the candidates during the initial session of the interview; hence they try to talk about personal details about which candidates are pretty comfortable talking. This also opens up a channel of communication at a personal level. If you could impress the panel with well-prepared/rehearsed crisp answers, your chances of success are assured better.

It is a scientifically proven fact that only about 10-20% of your communication depends on the words you speak and their contents. Over 80% of communication depends on things on other neuro-linguistic attributes like the tone of speech, fluency of expression, and body language while delivering the contents. Hence, to get comfortable in such situations, organize/attend mock interviews among your peers and host group discussions to improve your communications skills.

1.5.4.1 Some of the Common Ice-Breakers

- Tell us something about you. OR Introduce yourself. OR Who are you?

It is a million-dollar question. The effective handling of this question is going to set the tone for the rest of the interview – you can drive the interview or you are going to be driven by the interviewers.

Give a good account of your educational background, professional competencies, and your passionate hobbies. Even before the actual technical interview begins you can strike a very positive chord with your interviewers by answering confidently and putting forth a concisely prepared brief. Keep it short and to the point. Never elaborate unless requested.

Here is a sample introduction:

I am Priti Sharma, daughter of Dr. L. R. Sharma and Mrs. Kusum Sharma. I passed my matriculation and Plus 2 examinations from Apeejay School, Jalandhar, with aggregate scores of 85% and 80%, respectively.

At present, I am pursuing my B. Tech. in CSE from Thapar University, Patiala, and my aggregate score stands at 82% upto 7th semester.

I am proficient in the subjects of Object-Oriented Programming using C++ and Data Structures. My other subjects of interest are Operating Systems and Software Engineering.

My core strengths are - I am a good communicator; I am a very positive person; I am very flexible and can adapt to a new situation very quickly; I am a good team player; I am a fast learner; and above all a good human being.

My main weakness is that I am very emotional person.

My favorite hobbies include reading and interacting with people from different walks of life.

- **What are your plans for pursuing higher education?**

Such questions are aimed at probing your future retention value to the company. Companies would like to weed out any candidate who is looking at a stop-gap arrangement before they proceed on to their foreign universities.

- **What has been the toughest challenge you have faced in your life so far? Describe your most successful moment in life.**

If you could give an interesting situation, that you faced in your life and how can you overcome adversity, it could help the panel in understanding your personality better. In all personal questions, be honest and truthful.

- **What are your strengths and weaknesses?**

Do enumerate both of your personalities preferably stressing your strength with examples. Also, show how you are working to improve your weaknesses.

- **Why do you want to switch from your field (electronics, mechanical, etc.) to computer? Do you think you can cope with the pressure of learning a new domain?**

Any non-computer science student is bound to be asked this question. But giving a positive answer to this is very important. If you try to show that you are not interested in your own

area of specialization and wish to move just because software looks rosy on the outside, you could be caught off-guard with follow-up questions like “After attending our training sessions if you suddenly realize that software is the place for you, what you will do? Try to depict your versatility and readiness to adapt to change is necessary.

- **Give an example where you have taken initiative in your college. Have you ever organized a college tour/event? Give a brief account of your extracurricular life in college.**

Such questions are posed to test the leadership traits displayed by the candidates in their academic lives and would definitely go a long way in scoring extra points in your overall tally. This opportunity should be used to highlight any leadership initiative you have taken in leading a group towards a common goal.

1.5.4.2 Some of the Trap Questions

- **Are you willing to travel to any city in India and even abroad?**

In the software industry, the requirements for travel are very dynamic and every candidate is expected to give priority to project requirements, Unless you have serious traveling limitations, this issue is best postponed to when the actual travel need arises.

- **Do you have any strong likes/dislikes with respect to technology? Do you mind working on maintenance projects?**

If you have a passion for a specific technology or domain, it wouldn't harm in letting them know about your interests and how your learning curve would be steeper if assigned to these assignments.

- **Do you have any problem staying late in the office or working on holidays as required?**

Late hours working and holiday skipping is an intrinsic part of the software professional's life. As freshers, all candidates are expected to understand and consent to this.

1.5.4.3 Other Questions to Test Your Emotional Maturity

- We see that your marks have not been consistent through your semesters, can you tell us why?
- Which do you think is more important – individual brilliance, team effort or hard work? Rank them in order of your importance.
- A lot of candidates with much better marks have also applied for this job, why should we consider you instead of them?

All projects, software or otherwise, require us to work in groups and be capable of dealing with the complexities arising from it. Coming out of academic life we often see that highly individualistic or uncommunicative people are not preferred everywhere. As always, virtues like hard work, perseverance, honesty, truthfulness, and helpfulness are highly respected.

Some of the possible questions in which you could portray some of the high points of your academic career are:

- What do you consider to be your most significant achievement so far?
- In the software industry, what do you think is the most important characteristic of a

- software professional?
- How do you see your career growth in this organization? Where do you see yourself three years from now?
 - You are the best person to answer these questions about yourself and the better you portray yourself, the better it is for you. As these questions are about incidents in life you have experienced you should always have a couple of ready answers to these questions rather than thinking about them while on the hot seat!

The one question you must prepare for it . . .

- Do you have any question for us?
- This is usually the final question in the interview and should be seized by the candidate to show his interest in knowing the organization better and clarify any concerns he/she has.

This chapter would have given you a peek into the interview process and give an idea of the groundwork you have to do before appearing in a campus interview.

The forthcoming chapters will give you an insight into the technical aspects of the interview, which are, of course, equally important.

Best of Luck!