

Interview Coaching – Top 18 Suggestions for Success

- Top 3 reasons why candidates don't get hired
- Evaluation Criteria
- How to set yourself up for **success** to **impress** your interviewers
- How to effectively communicate your strengths and brand
- Common interview pitfalls
- Tactics to leave a lasting impression
- Follow up protocol suggestions



Effective Interview Preparation will only enhance the likelihood that you'll have an enjoyable interview experience and will position yourself as a frontrunner!

Who am I?

Erica Woods

- Manager, Contractor and Community Relations
- 9 years of IT Staffing
- Project and Program Management of initiatives that support our national IT contractor base
- Support of our nonprofit and technical communities
- Social Media Strategy
- Career Coaching
- MS SQL Tips Professional Development Author

Apex Systems

- 2nd largest Tech Staffing Firm
- Contract, CTH, and direct hire
- 64 offices nationally
- Columbia, Rockville and NoVA
- Infrastructure Practice Group
- Want tech job alerts? Register for our Talent Network – itcareers.apexsystemsinc.com

3 Main Reasons Why Qualified Candidates Don't Get Hired

No Passion

- Lack of enthusiasm and professionalism prior to, during, and following the interview.

Lack of Prep

- Poor interview preparation.

Inadequate Presentation

- Poor communication by the applicant to the client why he or she left previous jobs.

The 3 Ps



Preparation and practice are necessary to successfully perform!



Best Practice: Prepare accordingly a couple days prior. Don't overwhelm your brain trying to prepare the day of an interview!

Discussion

What's the main piece of advice you provide a friend/colleague before they go on an interview?



Interviewing 101: The Basics

1. Know interview details! Who, where, what, & when.
2. Remember, your interview begins as soon as you drive into the parking lot (everyone matters!).
3. When answering questions, be concise and avoid tangents, share examples (success stories) and use numbers where applicable.
4. Show appreciation to everyone you meet.
5. Don't be afraid to follow up on opportunities/interviews.
6. For phone interviews: stand, smile and ask questions to gauge whether you should expand on answers

Best Practice #1

Familiarize yourself with your past

- Re-read your resume.
- Review highlights from your past. Think through and/or make lists of:
 - Achievements
 - Strengths
 - Stories
 - Improvement Areas
 - Learning Experiences
 - Potential Concerns



What if I'm no longer familiar with a technology or skill listed on my resume?
Have no fear... Just further prepare!

Best Practice #3

Research the company & your interviewer(s)

- Be prepared to answer:
 - Why do you want to work here?
 - How familiar are you with our organization?
 - Did you have an opportunity to look at our website?
 - What attracted you to our organization?



Ask questions that demonstrate you did your homework!

Best Practice #4

Prepare questions

- What are the top skills you need this individual to walk in the door with?
- Break down your technical landscape for me.
- What are the goals of the executive leadership team for this company over the next 1 year? 5 years?
- What are the goals for this department?
- What's the culture like?
- Are there any concerns about my background that I can address for you?



What do you want this individual to come in and accomplish over the next 3 months? 6 months? 1 year?

Best Practice #5

Prepare your elevator pitch

- Prepare your 30 second “elevator pitch”
 - What’s your brand?
 - What have been your focus areas over the last 3-5 years?
 - What contributions are you most proud of?
 - What are your technical competencies?
 - Why should I hire you instead of other applicants?



Preparation is the
to success!



Best Practice #6

Research the unknown

- Are there aspects of the job description you're not familiar with? Then do a couple minutes of research!



Going the extra mile to research technologies, concepts, etc... you don't have exposure with shows initiative, curiosity, and a strong interest in the position!

Best Practice #7

Consult with Recruiter &/or Account Rep.

- 'Interview Prep' Guides
- EX. 'Post Interview Follow Up' thank you templates
- Technical Assessments (Provelt, Brainbench, etc)
 - Helps you determine opportunities for improvement
 - Gets you into right mindset
 - Can help further differentiate you
- Example Interview Questions for specific skill sets
- Additional insight into Manager, their team, our track record with them, etc...



Best Practice: ask
"Is there any other information, best practice guides or other resources you can provide me to help me have a successful interview experience?"

Best Practice #8

Prepare for unique questions

What celebrity do you want to meet?

What restaurant do you think is under-rated?

If you had to get rid of one state, what would it be?

How much would you charge to clean all the windows in Baltimore?

If you could be any animal, what would you be and why?

What was your favorite Star Wars movie? SciFi book?

I'm getting breakfast from McDonalds. What should I order?

If you could be any fruit, what would you be?

If you were a car part, what would you be?

If you were a punctuation, which one would you be?

What super power do you want?

Best Practice #9

Focus on improving your mood

- Get yourself amped up the day of! Generate endorphins!
 - Remind yourself why you're qualified
 - Treat yourself to a good breakfast/lunch
 - Have an enjoyable conversation prior to the interview
 - Work out
 - Go out of your way to show appreciation to someone



Best Practice #10

Communicate your qualifications

- Communicate your skills, contributions, and interests.
 - Focus on what you've done, not what you've seen others do.
 - Explain how your experience/skills will be beneficial. Concentrate on the employer's needs, not yours.
 - Summarize your understanding of the role, the priorities, and how you can contribute at the end of the interview.



*Focus on
standing
out from the
crowd!*

Best Practice #11

Ask the questions you prepared

- Ask at least 2-3 questions
 - Express that you've done your homework on the company.
 - Interview the Interviewer!
 - Ask questions that show you're interested in the company long-term



*Asking ZERO questions is a quick way to get disqualified. If you have **no questions**, assume the interviewer thinks you have **no interest** in the position!*

Best Practice #12

Demonstrate your interest

- Express Passion/Excitement
 - Are you communicating your interest in the company, group, project, and role?
 - Reiterate your interest and qualifications near the end of the interview!

Best Practice: Jot down reasons why you're interested in the opportunity and company!



Don't let a perceived "lack of interest" be the reason you're not selected for a position!

Best Practice #13

Establish a connection

- Find a way to connect & relate
 - React and relate to comments the interviewer is saying
 - Establishing a common interest, group, person, etc. is a quick way to potentially establish credibility and set yourself apart!
 - Is there an opportunity to establish a personal, community, or technical connection?



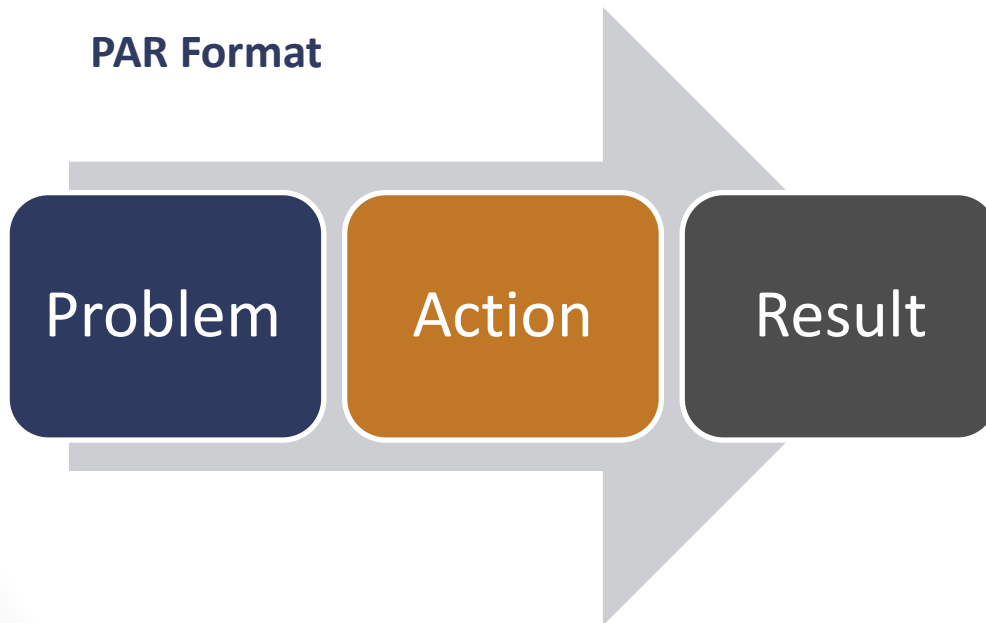
*“You’re a member of the ____
.NET User Group? Me too!
I really enjoyed the
presentation they did last
month on MVC! Did you
attend?”*

Best Practice #14

Share Successes

- Share your stories. Follow the PAR or STAR formats!

PAR Format



The Star Model:



Best Practice #15

Be honest about experience

- If you don't have experience in a specific area, don't fret. Walk through how you'll gain experience or get up to speed.
- Follow the 80:20 rule!



“While I haven’t had the opportunity to work with xyz technology, I’m confident I could pick it up. It’s similar to xyz technology, which I worked with at ABC corporation, and I can do some self-training prior to starting.”

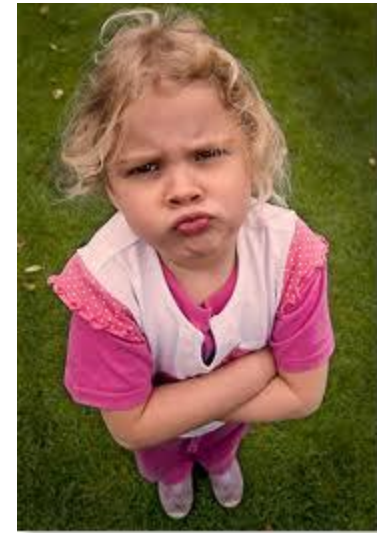
Best Practice #16

Focus on your non-verbal communication

Remember that the majority of perceived communication is based on non-verbal cues (i.e. facial expressions, body movement, posture, arm placement)!

Focus areas:

- Lead and close with a firm handshake
- Eye Contact
- Good Posture
- Don't frequently touch your mouth
- Don't fake a cough to think about the answer to a question
- Don't fold or cross your arms



Your nonverbal communication is often your first impression!

Best Practice #17

Offer additional 'sales ammo'

- Proactively offer:
 - References
 - Portfolio
 - URL to personal website and/or LinkedIn profile
 - Samples of work
 - Personal/pet projects
 - Projects for charities



“Would you like to see samples of my work that I think would relate to your particular need? or is there anything else I can provide you to demonstrate my qualifications?”

Best Practice #18

Send a follow up 'thank you'

- Send a brief thank you email in a timely fashion.
 - Avoid being generic.
 - Show appreciation for their time.
 - Reiterate qualifications and interest level.



What do Managers Evaluate?

- How do their skills align with the role?
- Are they interested? Excited? Passionate?
- Do they have a good attitude?
- Do they have good communication and interpersonal skills?
- Did they demonstrate initiative?
- Are they adaptable?
- Do they have good follow up and follow through skills?
- Are they resourceful and solution oriented?
- Are they team oriented?



Are you making a concentrated effort to demonstrate these skills?

Q&A Session



Additional Resource: Interview
Prep Guide!

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Do you have questions on
Interviewing?

Have suggestions for other
'Career Services Workshops?'

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