**No-Nonsense Job Interviews - Summary:**

Here are the three P’s of job interviewing:

1. **Preparation**: Find out as much about the company and people interviewing you as you can.
2. **Presentation**: Prepare how you will answer interview questions and tell compelling, relevant success stories that address the employer’s needs.
3. **Post-interview follow up**: Evaluate how you think you did in the interview, and send a thank-you email highlighting relevant info about yourself the employer should remember and asking for next steps.

Create an elevator speech that is a quick rundown of who you are and what you bring to the table for the position you’re interviewing for.

Create success stories of things you’ve done in the past that directly correlate to the position requirements you’re interviewing for. You need to:

* Describe the challenge you faced.
* Describe what actions you did to meet this challenge, **and make it relevant to the job you’re interviewing for.**
* Describe the results of your actions to the challenge. **Make it a happy ending.**

You should have multiple success stories for each position highlighting what you’ve done that’s basically what they’re looking for.

When dressing for the interview, dress in a suit and tie. Stand up straight, talk with head up, smile and engage the interviewer, and sit straight and a little bit forward, giving the interviewer your full attention. Don’t wear too much cologne and make sure your breath is fresh. Also make sure your car is clean, you give a firm handshake (not too firm), and have your feet firmly on the floor at all times, with your backpack by your chair’s side.

**Remember: To ace any interview, the focus needs to be on THEM (the target position and prospective employer), NOT you! Your goal in the interview is to demonstrate with every response how you’re the answer to their needs and challenges.**

When responding to, “What is your greatest weakness?” your answer should place your weakness in the past, and point out its positive aspects. For example, “I used to become frustrated when the work of others negatively impacted progress on my own projects. Now, I’ve come to see that everyone has unique contributions to make, and I offer to assist coworkers with challenges they encounter in order to expedite or improve overall progress.”

When it’s time for you to ask questions in an interview, **ask between two to four questions.**

Here are some example questions you can ask:

* How do you measure success?
* If I’m selected, what would be my two or three highest priority deliverables in the near future?
* What would you say are the characteristics of a top performer in this position?
* Why did you join this organization? How long have you been with the organization? What keeps you here?
* How soon do you anticipate making a hiring decision?

If you’re really feeling comfortable in the interview, or if this is a second or third interview, you can ask these questions:

* What is the company’s vision?
* What ongoing training or development do you like to see in employees? What resources are in place to support this?
* What do you see as this organization’s greatest asset?
* How do you measure an employee’s performance and provide feedback?
* What is the one thing that you know now that you wish you had known when you first started?
* Is this a newly created position? If not, why is this position vacant?

**Ask what the characteristics are for the ideal candidate. Listen attentively to the answer, and then respond by drawing parallels to your own experience. This allows you to make a connection between yourself and the ideal candidate, using the interviewers own words.**

When an interviewer asks an illegal, personal question, you can say in response: “Could you elaborate on your question as it relates to the job so that I can be sure to provide all the information you need?”

When explaining unemployment gaps, always be positive, never blame anyone or anything, and state that you were reevaluating your career goals, training yourself in relevant areas pertaining to the job you’re interviewing for, and that you were simply looking for the right fit, which you believe this position is for XYZ reasons.

**Never discuss salary or benefits until a job offer is made, even if they bring it up first. Here some ways to answer a prematurely asked salary question:**

1. **I’d be pleased to consider any reasonable offer. How about if we come back to the salary discussion after we’ve more fully reviewed the details of the position and what you’re really looking for, and after you’ve determined that I’m a great fit for this position?**
2. **I really need more information about your expectation for this position before I would be in any position to discuss salary.**
3. **Compensation involves so many factors besides salary (for example, vacation tome, medical benefits, etc.) that I would need to understand more about your overall compensation package and how this position fits. I’m sure if you decide that I’m the best candidate for the position, we could come to a mutually beneficial agreement.**

If you’re pushed to answer the salary question, **don’t do it**. Try to table it for later, or ask them back for the range they’re considering for this position. When they give it to you, state, “Well the higher end of the range is close to where I was hoping to be.”

Always defer salary negotiations until an offer is made. Always say something like, “I’d like to find out more about this position and the needs of the company before we talk about salary.”

Thank-you letters are essential! You need to send them 24-hours after you finish the interview. They should:

* Express appreciation and enthusiasm for the job.
* Highlight key points that you believe are important to reiterate or clarify, or bring to the interviewer’s attention.
* Demonstrate that you have absorbed any info you learned about the organization during the interview.
* Reconnect your skills and expertise to the organization’s needs.
* **Close with a call to action or by stating what your next step will be.**

Send **personalized** thank-you letters to everyone who interviewed you.

**Even if you don’t want the position anymore, send a thank-you letter that expresses appreciation for the company’s time and politely tell them the truth that you’re no longer interested in the position and to kindly withdraw your name.**

Here are the parts of your thank you letter:

* Friendly, cordial, and quick reminder of the interview (date, special circumstances, etc.):
  + “Thank you for the opportunity to interview for … at …”
* Applying new info learned at the interview, briefly review key points made during the interview that are especially relevant to the target position.
* Close with a statement of your continuing enthusiasm and interest in the position, including a call to action or your planned follow-up.
  + “As a software engineer with over 17 years of experience, eight in mobile development alone, I am even more enthusiastic about this opportunity than when we first got in contact. I look forward to continuing our dialog about the ways my skills and abilities can contribute to the growth and success of your new venture, and hope to hear from you soon regarding the next step.”

**You need to follow-up with the company after a few days if they haven’t contacted you back.**

When writing the contact e-mail, say this: “As you move through the search process and interview other candidates, I imagine the requirements of the position may be evolving. Are you still looking for the skills we discussed in our meeting last [date]? Or have your expectations for the position changed at all? If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me.”

When brought in for a second interview, ask these questions:

* Has the position description changed since we last spoke?
* Are you still looking for the same skills and experience as when we met last month (week, etc.)?
* Are there any new issues that I may address at this point?

**Ask for the job!**

Even if you don’t get the job, send thank you notes anyways, thanking them for their time and consideration, and letting them know you’re open to other opportunities that they come across.