**Research and Prepare – Reading Material**

Overview:

There is a minefield of techniques and tests that companies use to ‘filter’ through applicants to find the best fit for their open vacancies. A well-put-together resume is a must! While there’s no surefire way to ensure your resume will be noticed or that you’ll ace every interview. In today’s economy, finding and securing your ideal job can be challenging. For a start, employers are more selective in their hiring processes, and there is plenty of competition vying for the same job opportunities. Knowing how to present in interviews also can be tricky. It doesn’t just come down experience and job/academic performance. To make sure you get noticed you need to go through a self-assessment series so you will have extensive knowledge about the product you are marketing YOU!

**Objectives:**

This reading material is designed to help you:

After completing this topic you should be able to how to identify where your experience can help you control the interview process.

**Skills Identification & Assessment**

**Researching yourself**

Listing your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats will help you envision potential interview questions and how to answer them.

Prior to attending a job interview, it is important to review the organization, anticipate questions that may be asked, and understand yourself in relation to other job candidates. One way to analyze yourself and prepare for this important meeting is to conduct a SWOT analysis on yourself.

In the business world, SWOT analyses are commonplace. A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis is a fairly simple way to understand where your organization ranks within the marketplace. A SWOT analysis is also a way to discover how you rank in comparison to the job competition.

**Strengths**

Listing your strengths can be a fun and rewarding experience. This area may include items such as being organized, dedicated to the workplace, technology-savvy, and excellent customer service skills. Try to discover those strengths that are not commonplace and may set you apart from other job candidates.

**Weaknesses**

Most interviewees dread the interview question: “Tell me about your weaknesses.” Job candidates like to talk about strengths, but want to ensure that weaknesses do not eliminate them from the job pool. Some candidates try to list strengths and turn them into a weakness, thinking that the employer will not notice or will think the job candidate does not have any weaknesses. For example, some candidates may say: “I’m a perfectionist and that is one of my weaknesses.”

Instead, it may be more appropriate to say, “I recognize that I am not the most organized person. To remedy this, I have begun utilizing lists, keep a calendar in my smart phone, and double-check my schedule throughout the day.” This shows the potential employer that you recognize a weakness and are striving to change it.

**Opportunities**

The opportunities section of the SWOT analysis correlates well with how you wish to improve yourself into the future. Think of your future goals, such as additional education, attending workshops, and gaining life experiences. Employers want to know that you have aspirations and a guideline for your future working career. Interviewers may ask, “Where do you see yourself in five years?” Be prepared to answer this question and have a plan to discuss with the interviewer.

**Threats**

The last section of the SWOT analysis, threats, concerns how you compare to the other job seekers. Develop an answer to the question, “Why should I hire you over the other 25 people that applied for this position?” Understanding your competitive advantage and how you can outshine the competition is the key to answering the threats of others.

By reviewing your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats prior to a job interview, you will gain valuable insight into how a potential employer may view you as an addition to the workplace. Revisit this analysis frequently to discover how far you have come and which goals you want to reach in the future.

**Research and Preparation – The Process**

Research and Preparation – The Process

Starting a career with a good job is a dream for all students when they finish their professional college. Placement preparation training plays an extremely vital role in helping a candidate zap the interview.

"Give me six hours to chop down a tree, and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

--Abraham Lincoln

The First step is identifying the stages in the job application process

When you are applying for jobs, it's important to know how the job application process works. How do companies hire employees? The hiring process, from the job applicant perspective, includes several steps. From the time you apply for a job until the time you accept a job offer, you will go through a series of steps as you progress through the hiring process from completing a job application to coming on board as a new employee.

1. **Resume Screening**

Prepare a resume that will pass these screening tests

Initial screening criteria

As hiring managers take a “first pass” through the resumes, there are several criteria which can be used to cull the candidate pool quickly:

1. Location – Does the position require local candidates only?
2. Education/Certification – Does the position require a specific degree and/or certification?
3. Type and years of Experience – How much experience does this position require? Does the candidate have experience in line with the job offered?
4. Management Skill – Does the position require prior experience in managing a team?
5. Technical Skills – Does the position require knowledge of specific software or other technical skills?
6. Industry – Must the candidate have expertise in a particular industry?

**In-depth screening**

Once you move beyond the basic qualifications, it is advisable to take a closer look at the remaining candidates. Referring to the job description, as well as a prioritized list of “must haves” for the position is very helpful at this point.

While the specifics will vary, the hiring manager should pay particular attention to:

1. Relevant accomplishments – Has the applicant worked in similar jobs or on similar projects? What has he/she accomplished in those roles?
2. Career progression – Has the prospect shown a steady progression of responsibilities?
3. Written communication skills – Is the resume clear and well-written? (NOTE: It is not unusual for resumes to be professionally prepared, so the resume may or may not be an accurate indication of how well an applicant expresses him/herself in writing. A poorly written resume, however, is usually indicative of poor writing skills.). Does the resume exhibit proper grammar and correct spelling? Is the cover letter (if any) written in a professional manner?
4. Willingness to work hard – Did the applicant work while attending school? Has he/she shown a track record of taking on responsibilities not normally part of the job description?

Some potential “red flags” include:

1. Below average academic performance ( most companies ask for 60% and above)
2. Gaps in Education
3. Frequent job hops

**2. Aptitude Tests**

Aptitude test is a structured systematic way of evaluating how people perform on tasks or react to different situations. Aptitude tests are designed to test the presence of certain innate abilities required for a particular line of work or study. They generally test students in areas such as Quantitative Methods, Verbal Ability, Logical Reasoning and Basic Domain Knowledge. An aptitude test is used as a process of filtration to reduce the number of candidates for further rounds of selection process.

Obviously when the companies are hiring from campuses they are looking at certain skill sets in an individual. They would like to ensure that the candidates are good with their quantitative skills, reasoning ability and have acceptable levels of communication skills. These they check through a series of tests that they administer.

The Aptitude test that they administer tests the candidates’ quantitative ability to deal with figures and analyze mathematical data that may help arrive at sound business decisions.

The kind of questions that are asked or the topics that are tested depends entirely on the Company. For instance the Infosys test paper has a section on puzzles. The Wipro aptitude test paper has questions on subject knowledge. These sections are critical. So as mentioned earlier there is no uniformity on the kind of questions asked or the topics tested. This makes it doubly important to ensure that one is adequately prepared for the test. And we make sure that students who go through our course are prepared for any kind of a question that is thrown at them. The importance of the Aptitude Tests cannot be underrated .However good one might be in technical skills or in soft skills like language, communication etc. if one does not clear the Aptitude Test one will not go to the next stage.

Tip: Practice makes it permanent – practice tests on

1. http://www.indiabix.com/
2. http://www.wiziq.com/tests/aptitude-test
3. http://www.practiceaptitudetests.com/

**3. Group Discussions**

Many companies and institutes are making group discussion as the first criteria for screening the candidates for face-to-face interviews. And there is reason too for giving huge importance for Group Discussion. First thing Group Discussion is used for mass elimination! And second thing group discussion selection criteria’s are based on actual company requirements.

Communication and Group Discussion skill are two relevant soft skills that are must for software engineers especially software test professionals. Why group discussion should be the first criteria for selecting software professionals? Software professionals communicate with different people like team members, managers and customers. So interpersonal skills is very important for software professionals. During the group discussion you must share your views, or else you will not be able to speak with conviction. To develop a viewpoint, you need facts and awareness. Read newspapers, magazines and watch the news regularly, know the world around you. Awareness will give you sufficient fodder for a discussion and will be huge boost for your interview. During a group discussion you can discuss against or for the topic.

Tip: Form a group discussion (GD) practice group along with your classmates who are serious about cracking the GD. GDs can be tricky affairs because you need to walk a fine line between being too aggressive and too meek. You can’t be too loud or too soft. Practicing in the training sessions will get you the balance right before your interview.

**4. Technical Interviews**

Technical interviews are less about personal goals and past experiences and more about what you know. Some employers use technical interviews to test the problem-solving and communication skills of candidates. Before going into a technical interview, consider three factors: environment, preparation, and mechanics.

**Environment**

The environment of the technical interview differs from the traditional setting in several key ways. Keep these differences in mind for a successful interview.

An engineer will almost always conduct the interview.You will gain valuable experience from speaking with a potential co-worker.

The interviewer will give you problems to work out.

The interviewer may watch everything you write. Expect distractions, such as people working or talking, if the technical interview is on site.

**Preparation**

Many students feel especially nervous about the technical interview because they feel as if they are being tested for knowledge on the spot. Follow these suggestions for a successful interview.

* Practice for the technical interview with a friend.
* Relax before the interview.
* Answer questions slowly. The interviewer is testing more for problem-solving skills than for speed.
* If you cannot answer a question, stay calm. You are not expected to know everything.
* Do not make excuses for a lack of knowledge.
* Expect difficulty. You may not solve all problems.
* Communicate verbally with the interviewer. If you are unsure, explain what you do know.

Remember that it is important to show your problem-solving skills and to communicate effectively. Even if you do not know the answer, tell the interviewer everything you do know, including how you would set up the problem. Also, many times interviewers will increase the difficulty level of the questions until they ask one that you cannot answer. Avoid feeling frustrated or panicked and communicate what you know to the interviewer.

**Mechanics**

The mechanics of the technical interview usually involve a good knowledge of the basics.

**5. Personal or HR interviews**

This is more important than it seems. After all, how can you come out as a winner in your interview if do not enjoy it? Few tips that may help you be successful in HR Interviews

Remain relaxed – There is no need for you to get all worked up before your interview.

Do not show any desperation that you badly need a job – It does not look good in an interview.

Ask questions about the job profile – This shows that you are interested.

Be positive and remain confident.

Think of all your successes and achievement. Get into a positive, confident mood. Visualize your success and expect the best result. Just go out there and have fun. Success in an interview is your ticket to a great future. Plan well, and prepare hard.

**Research and Preparation – The Company**

One of the most important parts of interview preparation is company research. The more you know about the company before the interview, the more equipped you are to answer their questions. Employers want to see that you want to work for their company. They do not want to hire someone that simply “needs a job.” They want to hire someone that wants to work for them.

You should research the company thoroughly before your interview. You cannot know “too much” about the company. Company research is a crucial tool for success.

Information is a critical commodity in job-hunting; the more you know and the easier it is for you to find information, the better your chances of success. Employers value job-seekers who know key information about the company because that knowledge demonstrates your interest and enthusiasm for the company and for the job.

**Step 1: When to Do Research**

One of the most important skills a job-seeker can learn during a job-search is research skills. The quality of your research skills may make or break your job search. So, make the commitment to improve your research skills. You’ll find that that research skills will not only help you in searching for a new job, but will come in handy in many other situations in the future. For most job-seekers, there are three critical times to conduct research. The first is when you are just starting your job-search and looking to identify key companies in your profession or industry, or even in a specific geographic location. The second possibility is when you are applying to an employer; it’s always best to relate yourself to the company and tailor your cover letter and resume to each employer. The third — and when most job-seekers finally do some research — is when you have been invited to a job interview; you’ll want to showcase your knowledge of the company.

The sooner you get started, the better off you’ll be.

**Step 2: Determine What Information You Want**

Start on the Website

Interviewers expect you to know all of the information on their website, especially information relevant to your position. You should know the products they offer and the services they perform. You should know their mission statement and how long they have been incorporated. You should read any news that on their website. Never go to an interview without thoroughly reviewing the company’s website.

**Do a Quick Web Search**

Searching for a company in a search engine will often bring up other websites with information on the history of the company or published interviews with executives. All of these will have information that is useful for the interview.

**Check for Press Releases**

Press releases are a great place to find information for the interview. Information that the company shares to the press is always information that is useful to learn. Often you will find interesting facts and figures about the business through these press releases.

**Additional Company Research Tips**

You only have one chance to impress your interviewers. Company research is the best way to make sure that you are ready for the interview questions. Any source of information should be tapped. Additional ways to find company information include:

**Speak with a current or former staff member.**

Talk with someone who uses their products or services.

See if there are blogs or social media websites that have additional information.

Look for people that you can connect with and contact anyone that may have thoughts or knowledge about the company.

**Step 3: Getting Industry Information**

The next level of sophistication in conducting research is getting a handle on the competitive nature of the industry (or industries) that your lists of companies operate within. It is within the competitive environment that you might be able to spot trends that are either opportunities or threats for your prospective employers.

One good source of industry information is Industry Portals, a listing of links to many different industries.

**Step 4: What to Do With the Company Information**

Researching the company is only the first step. Once you have completed gathering information, you will need to use that information to prepare for the interview. Interview preparation involves several steps.

Familiarize Yourself With Products/Services – Spend some time getting to know the products and services of the company. This information will make it easier on your interviewer and show that you are an informed applicant.

Envision Your Role – Your next step is to imagine what your role will be in furthering the goals of the company. See if you have any skills, ideas or strategies that will be useful to mention during the interview. Once you have reviewed the company’s mission statement and procedures, you should have a good idea of what the employers value, and generate answers accordingly.

Come Up With Questions – Interviews are a two way street. You should have great questions to ask the employer in addition to creating great answers.

No employer expects you to know everything about the company. Their corporate environment, strategies, procedures and practices will not be displayed on a website or listed in a search engine. These are things that you will learn throughout the interview. Company research is not intended to cover every aspect of the company.

What the research will do is provide you with knowledge of the company that you can use to provide answers during your interview that the company will value. You will also show the employer that you are truly interested in the position and have taken time out of your day to learn about the company and what it offers. Employers value that dedication, and it will quickly be evident that you are a worthwhile applicant.

**Research and Preparation – The Language and Vocabulary**

“I am a good leader.”

Or

“I led a group that developed a new product.”

Which statement do you think is more effective? Both state that the speaker is a leader; a good leader or a bad leader will be determined by the interviewer. What’s important is to that the statement used to express enables the interviewer to determine your leadership qualities.

In conclusion the second statement is a better statement as:

* It is not categorizing the quality into good, better, excellent, etc. And
* It is giving the exact context in which the speaker has demonstrated his/her leadership skills.

Candidates need to be focused on what they say in Interviews

Given below are a few words that are good to be used during interviews:

Carryout: To execute a plan or strategy, to make something happen.

"In my previous position as a Business Analyst, I carried out the analysis of business processes for three Multinational Companies.”

Collaborate: To work with others cooperatively to produce something.

"I collaborated with a group of Test Designers to develop a new Test Cases."

Develop: To create or build something

"We developed a mobile apps for parents to track their school going children."

Direct: To lead, to be in charge.

"I directed a project related to software testing."

Facilitate: To assist others in completing a task, to make a task easier, to help people move forward.”

"In my last position, as part of static testing, I have facilitated many review meetings with the testers."

Implement: To carry something out.

"Along with my team, I implemented our HRMS product at 15 client locations."

Introduce: To bring an idea.

"I introduced frugal technology for our product development."

Motivate: To give incentive to do something.

"In my position as Team Lead in my last job, I have motivated my team to meet the project deadlines."

Present: To deliver information to a large group of people (speech or presentation).

"Since past 3 years, I am presenting my innovative approaches to test mobile apps at  the international professional conferences."

Supervise: To be in charge of a group, to oversee performance.

"I have demonstrated my ability to supervise large groups of people."

Vocabulary to Respond to Job Descriptions

### Vocabulary:

The following is a list of some adjectives used to describe the skills or implemented projects:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accurate  Active  Adaptable  Adept | Broad-minded | Competent  Conscientious  Creative | Dependable  Determined  Diplomatic  Discreet | Efficient  Energetic  Enterprising  Enthusiastic  Experienced  Easygoing | Fair  Firm |
| Genuine | Honest | Innovative | Justified | Logical  Loyal | Mature  Methodical  Motivated |
| Objective  Outgoing | Personable  Pleasant  Positive  Practical  Productive | Reliable  Resourceful | Elf disciplined  Sense of humor  Sensitive  Sincere  Successful | Tactful  Trustworthy |  |

The following is a list of some verbs used to express responsibilities and tasks performed:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Accomplished  Acted  Adapted  Administered  Advanced  Advised  Allocated  Analyzed  Applied  Approved  Arbitrated  Arranged  Assisted  Attained | Blended  Brought  Built | Carried Out  Cataloged  Changed  Classified  Collaborated  Compared  Completed  Computed  Conceived  Conducted  Constructed  Consulted  Contracted  Controlled  Cooperated  Coordinated  Corrected  Counseled  Created | Dealt  Decided  Decreased  Defined  Delegated  Derived  Designated  Detected  Developed  Devised  Directed  Discovered  Distributed  Documented  Doubled | Edited  Encouraged  Engineered  Enlarged  Escalated  Established  Estimated  Evaluated  Examined  Expanded  Experienced  Explored | Facilitated  Finalized  Formulated  Founded  Functioned |
| Governed  Grouped  Guided | Handled  Harmonized  Harnessed  Headed | Identified  Implemented  Improved  Increased  Indexed  Initiated  Inspected  Installed  Instituted  Interpreted  Introduced  Invented  Investigated | Justified | Led  Localized  Located | Made  Maintained  Managed  Mechanized  Merged  Moderated  Motivated |
| Negotiated | Opened  Operated  Organized  Originated  Overcome | Perceived  Performed  Pioneered  Planned  Prepared  Presented  Presided  Processed  Programmed  Promoted  Provided  Purchased | Raised  Recommended  Recorded  Recruited  Rectified  Redesigned  Repaired  Replaced  Restored  Reversed  Reviewed  Revised | Saved  Screened  Selected  Serviced  Set Up  Solved  Sorted  Sparked  Specified  Started  Stimulated  Strengthened  Summarized  Supervised  Supported  Systematized | tested  trained  transacted  transcribed  transformed  tripled |
| Upgraded | Validated  Varied  Verified  Vitalized | Won  Wrote |  |  |  |

Conclusion

Preparation helps ease you into a successful interview. It helps relax your nerves and builds confidence as you know that from your side you have done everything you possibly can to be ready for the meeting.