How to ace any interview: what do I do now?

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> First, master the basics. Remember that most people have gotten
> their jobs, whether those be awesome or mediocre, without
> thinking particularly hard about how to manipulate interviewers.
> That's not to say that telling stories isn't useful, just that
> it's not essential.

1) Practice.

2) Study. If you can't write FizzBuzz on a whiteboard, you're not getting the job.

3) Prepare Stories. This is where you actually get to use the techniques in my last post. But it's still the third because actually running through interviews & preparing for specifics is MUCH more important.

Step 1: Practice

In theory, this is easy. All you need to do is to send out job applications and people will start calling you asking for interviews. Free practice! What can go wrong? Unfortunately, this can actually be the hardest part. See, interviews are very taxing: not only are you putting yourself in a low social status position, you're also opening yourself up to rejection. Here are my recommendations:

> RECORD YOURSELF! You'll find a lot more that's wrong with yourself than anyone else ever could. Keep doing this until you're comfortable watching yourself. In the meantime you'll have improved faster than anyone else thought possible.

If you can set up practice interviews, do so! Seek them out on Meetup or just ask your friends. Often these are more valuable than real interviews: you'll get honest feedback, there's none of the scheduling cost for real interviews, and you can pick specific topics to focus on. That said, you'll want to have real interviews as well; trying to prepare off of mock interviews alone is like trying to learn how to streetfight without leaving the dojo.

If you find interviews aversive and don't want to go out and apply to a bunch of companies, try re-framing it in your mind. Your goal is not to interview. Your goal is to become an expert game-player by taking a series of amateurs to school and back. Take on crazy jobs that you never think you could get and try your best to bullshit your way through.

Rank the companies you want to work at. If you have a top 3, generate 10 which are "roughly acceptable." You don't have to work terribly hard at this, just send out applications. Apply to your less-preferred before your more-preferred. This means that you'll have plenty of practice interviewing before you get to your top choices.

Last but not least, here's a useful full-stack guide on how to hunt for jobs & maximize interviews: http://lesswrong.com/lw/hd1/maximizing__your__donations__via__a__job/

Step 2: Study

What you need to study depends on what you're asked. If you're looking for any sort of technical role, you WILL have to pass a coding test.

Obviously, this depends greatly on your domain. If you're in software engineering, just start off by reading Cracking the Coding Interview. Google for sample problems in your field. If you expect brainteasers, check out a book on "how to get a job at Google" that was written before Google stopped asking brainteasers.

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 Have a tight response loop! If you're preparing and are
actively getting interviews, you'll have plenty of feedback.
Even if it's not explicit, you'll probably have some sense of
what questions were easy, which were hard, and which ones you
didn't expect. Study these in reverse order: the most important
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things to learn are the ones you didn't know that you didn't
know!
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Step 3: Preparing Stories

Ever meet somebody at a party and think "wow, that guy's really funny?" Chances are he has a couple of good stories which he's told many times before. Resist the temptation to be clever and unique, and instead get a "quick list" of stories which you can recite on command. This is synergistic with practice and studying--I recommend keeping a written list of your best stories and, after each interview, mark down which ones you used and what the results were. Here are some common story archetypes--you'll want at least one good one for each of these.

The Victory Lap: You did something well at you last job. How does that make you a good candidate for this one? You should probably have at least three of these that you can use to fit the occasion.

The Progress Bar: You tried something, it didn't work, you used it as a learning experience and did the right thing. Just like The Victory Lap, it's worth preparing several over different parts of your career.

The Fuckup: Sometimes people care that you can admit your mistakes. Find something that you screwed up on and just tell it like it is, taking full responsibility.

The Big Why: Why do you want this job?

The Hobby: What's something cool about yourself? Be prepared to back this one up--i.e. don't say you're in choir unless you're ready to sing to the interviewer.

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