

Interview Prep

Overview of You – Mindset of the Interview (worksheet (separate) – example at the end)

** For 10 years I went through this exercise every time I had an interview **

- How would you describe yourself? (Words or short phrases)

- Why I am interested in this position? (What peaked my interest in this position and/or the organization?)

- Strengths (What you bring to the job – words or short phrases)

- Weaknesses (Areas for improvement – words or short phrases)

**Level-up* If you want to expand on:*

- Strengths – why it's a strength and how you use it

- Weakness – why it's a weakness and what you're doing to work on it

- The time is now (aka: Waxing Philosophical) – It's hard to talk about yourself and talk yourself up. Write anything to make you feel like you're the #1 candidate for this position. Getting is the mindset.

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Make sure you have Questions for the Interviewers.

Standard first and last questions, then 3 solid questions about the position.

1. Is there anything I have said that you'd like more clarification on? (*This is an opening to potentially clarify, or edit, a past answer*)
2. ...
3. ...
4. ...
5. When will you let me know? (*Only ask if they don't say it first*)

A few of my favorite questions to ask:

1. How do you define success for this position?
2. What are the short and long term goals for this position?
 - Short-term (6 mos – 1 year)
 - Long-term (2-5 years)
3. How would you describe your management style?
4. Why do you stay with this organization?
5. Do you have any existing ideas/tasks you'd like this position to carry out? What are they and why?
6. What are the qualities and/or characteristics you're looking for in the person who will fill this position?

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Nicki's top prepping-for-interview pointers:

1. Remember:
 - 1) Soft skills and Technical skills.
 - 2) Think of a few projects/scenarios ahead of time.
2. Shake the interviewers' hands and introduce yourself.
3. Take your portfolios (clear report covers):
 - Keep one for yourself, only reference it at the end of the interview for your questions to ask:
 - Blank cover (your name on the bottom of the page)
 - Questions to ask interviewers
 - Blank paper (1-2 pages – for notes)
 - Cheat sheets
 - Cover letter
 - Resume
 - References
 - Certificates
 - Give each interviewer one, to keep:
 - Cover letter
 - Resume
 - References
 - Certificates
4. Be confident, not cocky...but also be human.
5. Ask for questions to be repeated, if needed...even more than once if needed.
 - It happens (it happened to me).
 - They'd rather have someone who will ask for help, than someone who thinks they know everything.
6. Think before you answer.
 - Be aware of the things you say, so you don't ramble.
 - This was good for me; it allowed me to be confident in the things I said and reference them in future questions if needed.
7. If you get hung up on a question, or start to go in the wrong direction.
 - Stop and say "I'm sorry, I'm just excited for this opportunity. Do you mind if I get back on track with this question?"
8. Most importantly, breathe.

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EXAMPLE: Overview of You – Mindset of the Interview (3 pages)

Interview – <Month Day and Time> – <Organization Interviewing With>

- Leader
- Organized
- Technically Inquisitive
- Focused
- Project Experience
- Mentor
- Driven
- Hard worker
- Innovative
- Dedicated
- Loyal
- know-how-show-how-doer
- Enthusiastic
- Work well with others
- Not afraid to ask questions
- Learn quickly / Enjoy learning
- Take the time to do it right the first time
- Manage my time well

Why am I interested in this position?

- My skills are an excellent fit
 - Project experience, allows me to know what to expect and how I'd like to manage a project
 - Organizational mastermind
 - Top notch documentation skills
 - I use my leadership skills regularly, within my group and others
- Personal growth
 - This will give me an opportunity to guide others
 - My past project experience will help shape and create a cohesive project experience for my team
 - Enhance delegation abilities, instead of individual work
 - Learn new tools and processes
- I run my current workload like a mini-project
 - I try to use time estimates, prioritization, and communication as I'm working through my personal daily/weekly/monthly workload
 - I like the challenge of setting goals and trying to achieve them within the timeframe I set

Strengths:

- Opportunistic
- Organized
- Allow others to provide feedback
- Know when to ask for help

Weaknesses:

- Haven't been good at delegation
- Have a hard time saying "NO" to people, even if my plate is full

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Premier Agency:

The longer I'm here, the longer I believe this. The Department of Revenue is a premier agency.

People work here because they want to. Because they believe in the work we do. We grow people, opportunities, and innovative ideas. We move state government forward.

DOR has been great to me: 11 years and counting. Of course like any job, there are ups and downs, but there is no place I'd rather be.

Strength(s):

Opportunistic

I use my surroundings as opportunities. My life is my canvas and I make the most of it. I always look at it as being a part of something. I want to use my knowledge to make a difference. It's mainly about being observant and catching those small moments, the glimmers of hope, that others dismiss and making something out of them.

Organized

I am constantly trying to be more organized. As I think to myself "Is this even possible?" I have always had a way about my personal organization, something that people envy, something they want. It's very hard to describe. I don't think I've had to work at this...if anything I have to work on not being so OCD about the process. A place for everything and everything in its place!

Allow others to provide feedback

Not just feedback, but ideas. I want everyone to work together and have input. It's something I've learned a lot over the past year...getting people's buy-in. Make people feel like they're a part of something, they'll follow you anywhere. Earn their respect, not just talk over them. Listen to their valid points and justification, let people speak their mind and have ownership over the end result.

Know when to ask for help

I do not know everything, even though my 'Nikipedia' reputation seems to speak otherwise. I am knowledgeable about quite a bit, and I even push myself to find the answer, but at times enough is enough...ask someone more qualified. Even then, I don't always look to get the answers handed to me, but to guide me in the right direction. I try to choose wisely when looking for leadership, and so far it hasn't let me down.

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Weakness(es):

Haven't been good at delegation

As the years have gone on, this is something I've gotten better at, but it doesn't mean it cannot be improved. Most recently I've tried my hand at leading the ESS Training Committee. This required a lot of teamwork and asking (and sometimes telling) others to take on tasks. I found that by instilling trust in others, asking for their feedback, and working with them on the end result, I can be just as happy allowing others to help get us to the finish line. Now, it's just keeping in line with that mentality over time.

Have a hard time saying "NO" to people, even if my plate is full

I thought I had gotten better at this...and then the past year has proved otherwise. Not necessarily saying "no," but the time it takes to accomplish things, and allowing other tasks to be piled on. I've had to try my hand at resistance and "normal" work hours, but I push to get it done and make everyone happy. ...and everyone else is happy, and I'm the one who suffers. I need to set more personal boundaries for myself when it comes to a work/life balance.

The time is now:

Yes, the time is now. Believe. Believe in myself, my abilities, and in my willingness to make a difference. I have so many people telling me that this would be great for me. We need more people like "you." ...and I am trying to be that person. I feel like that person.

The more I work on myself and improving my 'brand,' the more I struggle with what I want. Last year it was the BA Supervisor position. My first real defeat in the interview/employment world...but it was worth it, and honestly at the time that was the goal. I struggled, I worked, I endured, and I succeeded. I have gained the respect of others. I have mentored and helped others promote. Everyone else is moving on and achieving their dreams and goals, and I want to be there too.

This position is just another form of leadership. I can be that leader. I am that leader. Will they let me? I hope they will. They know me; know my work ethic and what I can provide. Is that enough? What do I have to prove? What do I have to show them? Honestly, just me and that should be enough. So, where does that leave us?

I come in: prepared with war paint on, game face on. Let's do this. It's go time. Watch them watch you. Be the candidate they want, that they've dreamed of. Make a difference. Change their minds. As I've said before: You've gotta risk it to get the biscuit. Go – Be – Do. Eye of the Tiger!