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# 7 Tips To Prepare For The Big Job Interview

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How to prepare for the interview ICLIPART

By Dianna Booher—

There's more to a job interview than showing up on time. Much more. After my client Melissa recently snagged an interview for a senior executive position at a Fortune 10 company, she knew serious prepping was expected.

If you expect to win that next big offer—whether for a new job or a big promotion—pay attention to Melissa’s play book. Here’s what she’d already done to get ready for her dream-job interview.

## Preparing for the Big Job Interview

### Do a Deep Dive in Researching the Company

A cursory review of the prospective company’s website won’t cut it. Melissa researched their company website, of course, but also the sales and marketing literature for their products, articles written about the company, journal and blog articles published by company employees, their social media posts, press releases, and so forth.

Additionally, through a friend-of-a-friend connection, she even arranged to talk with a senior executive at the prospective employer about its values and culture.

### Develop a List of Potential Questions

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Melissa developed a list of more than 40 potential questions that interviewers frequently ask: Questions from various blogs on job-hunting, recruiting, and career sites. Questions that she'd been asked in past job interviews. Questions friends had passed along to her from their own job-hunting experience.

Her extensive list covered questions about past employment history, about character traits, about skills and leadership style, about judgment, and about her future plans.

## **Write Your Answers**

Before you say "no way" can I put in that kind of time, reconsider. What better investment than actually pre-thinking the interview?

I'm not suggesting that you draft your answers in complete detail, word for

word. But I do recommend a bulleted list of key points and/or examples—just a word or phrase. If you draft answers in complete sentences, that will do you little good—for two reasons.

In the middle of an interview is no time to be glancing at notes as you answer questions. Neither do you want to memorize and recite verbatim answers. That kind of recitation would make you sound canned and inauthentic.

Keep in mind that the purpose of these written answers (in a crisp, word or phrase bulleted list) are only for your preparation—not for use during the actual interview. You may recall poet E.M. Forster’s comment: “How do I know what I think until I see what I say?”

Melissa prepared a 22-page document containing the anticipated questions, along with her bulleted answers. Similarly, I prepare in the same way for my guest spots in the media: questions (often sent ahead by the interviewer) plus a bulleted list of key points I plan to make.

Without that prework, the results can be unfocused discussions that wander way off topic. (No doubt, you’ve heard such

“rabbit-chasing” on your favorite podcasts.)

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Considering and reviewing your future answers deeply enough to “know what you’re going to say” produces thoughtful answers, clearly articulated at the critical moment.

## **Record New Questions as You Receive Them**

Unfortunately, when interviewing for a new job, it’s rarely “one and done.” The hiring process with most employers includes several interviews for applicants they’re seriously considering: The “gatekeeper” interviewer. The HR interviewer. The supervisor interview. And often the senior-executive interview.

As you move up to the next level of interviews, you’ll hear different questions. Your prep sheet—“talking points” as executives refer to them for their own media interviews—should be a living document. That is, continue to update it with new questions as you get them. Chances are, you’ll hear them again during the second, third, and fourth interviews because potential employers look for inconsistencies in what you’ve said previously.

## Prepare a Resume “Walk Through”

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Rare is the interviewer who does not expect you to dive deeper than what you’ve included in your vitae. Reciting what your résumé says proves unhelpful.

Instead, expect to elaborate on things such as projects and accomplishments: The steps involved in a particular project or results you’ve achieved. The “how you did it” when discussing a huge accomplishment. Gaps in your résumé may also raise questions. So be ready to elaborate on anything listed in your vitae.

## Be Willing to Do a Case Study

Some employers may ask you to do a small project or case study aligned with the job you’re seeking. Consider this a test of how well you’ll do your job after hired. Follow instructions and be comprehensive, detailed, and accurate—in both your content and your presentation of the work.

## Have a Ready List of Your Own Insightful Questions

Never waste the interviewer's time to answer questions about things you could easily research for yourself. Instead, appropriate questions should focus on things like responsibilities of the role you're interviewing for, the culture, their expectations for your future with the organization.

## **Polish Your Structure and Delivery—In Person or Virtually**

It was at this point in her interviewing process that Melissa finally contacted me. She knew all the research in the world would not compensate for a poor delivery—particularly a poor virtual deliver via Zoom or another platform.

Some applicants spend almost all their time on the above steps and very little time on their delivery. Big mistake! A polished delivery makes all the other prework pay off.

A polished delivery flows from practice. Interview yourself by recording your answers on Zoom (or another platform) and then listening to the playback or reading the transcription. Or ask a friend or colleague to do a mock interview and analysis with you.

Demonstrating personal presence will prove critical to your success. And practice makes that possible.

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The final step? When you get the big offer, celebrate!

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