

## **Tips for Career Success: Preparing for Interviews**

While the thought of interviewing may make you nervous, interviews are an excellent opportunity to demonstrate your skills, background and interest in a job. With preparation, you can present the best version of yourself in an interview.

### **Interview Preparation Checklist**

#### **Before the Interview...**

- Conduct a mock interview with the CDIC.
- Research the industry, company and position by using LinkedIn and the company website.
- Review your resume and highlight experiences that you would like to use as examples during the interview.
- Iron your suit and shirt/professional attire the night before your interview. Attire should be classic or conservative in style and colors.
- Bring a folder with a pad, pen, interview agenda, questions to ask the interviewer, and 1 -2 copies of your resume.

#### **Day of the Interview...**

- Create a professional appearance through your attire: wear professional clothes, shoes and accessories, wear minimal makeup and have neat and tidy hair and facial hair.
- Wear deodorant/antiperspirant and have clean breath – no smoking before the interview; no gum or mints during the interview. Do not wear perfume or cologne.
- Arrive 15 minutes early.
- Turn off cell phone and leave it in the car.

#### **During the Interview...**

- Be engaging as you wait for the interview and have an upbeat attitude: everyone is the interviewer, even the secretary.
- Be mindful of your body language – it can say a lot about a candidate! Don't fidget, frown, or slouch in your chair. Smile!
- Do not use "slang" or inappropriate language.
- After each question, feel free to take 1-2 seconds to formulate the best response.
- Promote your skills and what you would bring to the position using SAR (Situation, Action, Result) format to respond to questions.
- Be honest, clear, and concise with your answers.
- Ask at least two questions during the interview.

#### **After the Interview...**

- Send a thank you note to the employer within 24 hours – handwritten or email.
- Follow up after 1-2 weeks to inquire about your status in the interview process.

## Using S.A.R. Format to Answer Interview Questions

### S.A.R.: Situation, Action, Result

- S.A.R. format is a useful response format for any type of interview question as providing **specific examples** of past behavior helps your interviewer understand how you will react to a situation in the future.
- Use personal pronouns like “I”, “me”, and “my” to sell yourself.
- If the question addresses a negative scenario (a time you failed, weaknesses, etc.), discuss what you learned and how you will react differently going forward.

**Question: Tell me about a recent project that you successfully completed despite running into obstacles.**

#### SITUATION

- I worked on a team of 4 people for a team project in Marketing Management
- Obstacles: conflicting schedules and a team member who didn't contribute

#### ACTION

- I created a master calendar of all future meeting dates and set up a Google Doc so everyone could contribute between meetings
- Pulled team member aside

#### RESULT

- Completed the project & on time and got a B+
- Improved my communication skills
- Increased patience and understanding of others

### Sample Behavioral Interview Questions

#### Communication Skills

- Tell me about a recent experience in sharing your point of view with a group of your peers.
- Tell me about a time you made sure a quiet person in your group was given the opportunity to express himself/herself

#### Working Well with Others & Relationship Skills

- Describe your best example of working collaboratively with others.
- Tell me about the most challenging time when you and your team members did not see eye-to-eye on an approach and how you attempted to resolve the disagreement.

#### Learning & Developing Abilities

- Tell me about a time you failed at something. What did you learn from the experience?
- Tell me about the last time you proactively pursued a learning or development opportunity.

#### Organizational Skills

- Tell me about the largest project or program for which you were responsible.
- Tell me about the last time you developed a plan for a project in which you were involved.

#### Analysis & Problem Solving Skills

- Give me an example of a time that you were the first to identify a problem that needed to be addressed.
- Tell me about the most complex issue that you have worked on that required thought and careful analysis

#### Ability to Achieve Results

- What is the most difficult project that you had to complete within a short timeframe?
- Tell me about the last time you came up with a creative, new idea to improve your performance.