

UNDERGRADUATE CAREER SERVICES

# INTERVIEW PREPARATION EXERCISE WORKBOOK



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INDIANA UNIVERSITY

# BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION

This is a foundational tool that will put you in the right mindset for your interviews. It's important to be honest with yourself as you complete it. Do your best to answer all of the questions. You can always change it later on as you gain more self awareness.

## PRESENT:

Why did you choose your degree?

Why do you want to pursue a career in it?

## PASSION:

What did you enjoy most in your coursework and past experiences?

What do you do better than others?

What drives or inspires you?

## IDEAL JOB:

If you could have any job you wanted, what would that job look like?

## IDEAL COMPANY:

Describe your ideal company (i.e., the culture, management, environment, how they treat employees, their values, etc.)

## GOALS:

Short-Term (3 years) Career Goals (if any)

Long-Term (5 years+) Career Goals (if any)

💡 **Tip:** Goals don't have to be specific, they can be general such as, "I'm not sure exactly what I want to do in three years, but I can picture a few different options," or "I know I want to stay in Finance, but I'm not sure yet in what specific area," or "I'd like to be managing a small team."



**Empowered Interviewing**  
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Exercise courtesy of Kelley Alum, Laura Maish - Founder, Empowered Interviewing

# COMPANY RESEARCH

Employers expect you to know something about their companies before you talk to them, both in networking situations and job interviews. In addition to visiting company websites, you can use annual reports, press releases, and news coverage. Begin your company research by answering the questions below.

## GENERAL NETWORKING RESEARCH

What is the company's primary product or service and its history?

What positions is the company hiring for?

What is the relative standing of the company in the marketplace?

Consider the following resources to help you complete your research:

- Company website (marketing tool)
- Google
- Glassdoor.com
- News releases (WSJ, Bloomberg, etc.)
- Social media
- Alumni (LinkedIn, IUAA)
- Company info sessions, career fairs, etc.
- Past interns/current employees
- HireEd - [hired@indiana.edu](mailto:hired@indiana.edu)

# JOB INTERVIEW RESEARCH

Who are the company's typical clients/customers?

List specific details about the job for which you are interviewing.

What is the company's mission statement?

What are the company's values?

What are emerging issues that may affect the industry or the company?

# TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF

Interviews that start with this question give *you* a significant advantage. It allows you to tell the interviewer early on *what you want them to know about you*. Connect your experiences and strengths to the job, show your passion, and tell them why you're interested in the position.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE:

### PRESENT:

- WHY you chose your degree.

### PAST EXPERIENCES:

- Coursework, extra curricular, jobs, clubs that are RELEVANT to the position/your degree.

### PASSIONS/SKILLS:

- What you liked most in your coursework and past experiences.
- What you're good at. What you like doing.
- What drives/inspires you.

### WHY YOU'RE INTERESTED IN THE POSITION:

- Two (2) reasons the job is a good fit for you.
- Draw parallels between their culture and your goals.

 **Tip:** See the following page for an example of what to include in your "Tell Me About Yourself" answer.



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## PRESENT:

- I am intrigued by psychology, strategy, creativity, and analysis and I have found that few other disciplines offer the same reach as Marketing.

## PAST EXPERIENCES:

- I am Chairman of the Philanthropy Committee of my fraternity/sorority and I organize events and write marketing copy for outreach efforts.

## PASSIONS/SKILLS:

- My strong suit is written communications.
- I enjoy writing and I did well in all of my writing courses.
- I do my best writing when I am presenting creative ideas.

## WHY YOU'RE INTERESTED IN THE POSITION:

- You want someone who has a passion for marketing and strong communication skills.
- I am very driven by marketing and it's role in growing a business.
- I'm looking for an opportunity to write creative marketing programs for a consumer product company.
- Your innovative marketing practices seem to be a good fit for my creative talents.
- I'm looking forward to learning more about your company and the opportunity.

## YOUR TURN! TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF.

PRESENT:

PAST EXPERIENCES:

PASSIONS/SKILLS:

WHY YOU'RE INTERESTED  
IN THE POSITION:

# PRIORITIZE YOUR RELEVANT SKILLS & STRENGTHS

**Step 1:** Using the tables below, circle all of the skills and strengths that apply to you.

## SKILL = A DEVELOPED TALENT OR ABILITY. (WHAT YOU DO WELL.)

Ability to Learn Quickly	Attention to Detail	Business Analysis	Creative Thinking	Directing
Getting Results	Good with Clients	Influencing Others	Leadership	Listening
Managing Meetings	Managing People	Managing Priorities	Motivating Others to Succeed	Persuading
Planning	Presenting	Problem Solving	Project Management	Simplifying Complex Issues
Strategic Thinking	Team Player	Time Management	Understanding Client Needs	Written Communication

## STRENGTH = A STRONG ATTRIBUTE OR INHERENT ASSET. (WHAT YOU ARE.)

Analytical	Articulate	Assertive	Committed	Competitive
Dependable	Disciplined	Effective Communicator	Efficient	Energetic
Focused	Good with Numbers	Handle Stress Well	Innovative	Level Headed
Outgoing	Patient	People Oriented	Persuasive	Practical
Rational	Reliable	Responsible	Self-Controlled	Self-Motivated
Sense of Humor	Strong Work Ethic	Thoughtful	Trustworthy	Well-Organized

**Step 2:** Using the job description, highlight the skills and strengths that the employer has identified as important.

**Step 3:** Single out your top three (3) skills/strengths that the employer needs. These are the *most valuable* skills you bring to this position/company.

 **Tip:** It's all right if you don't have all of the skills and strengths they're looking for, but you should have at least two (2). If you don't, stop to think about whether or not this job is a good fit for you.

**Step 4:** Using the template below, come up with one example for each of your top three (3) skills/strengths where you have demonstrated this ability.

WHAT COMPANY NEEDS (FROM JOB DESCRIPTION):	MY RELATED SKILLS/STRENGTHS:	MY RELATED EXPERIENCES
1.)		
2.)		
3.)		



# CONNECT THE DOTS...

“*Why* are you interested in this job?” is the single most important interview question. Answer this thoughtfully and you increase your chances of a second interview, if not an offer. The employer wants to know why you chose to interview with their company. Spell it out for them using this exercise as a guide.



**DIRECTIONS:** USE THE TABLE FROM THE “PRIORITIZE YOUR STRENGTHS/SKILLS” EXERCISE TO CONSTRUCT YOUR ANSWER.



“You’re looking for someone who...”

*(from job description)*

“My greatest strengths are...”

*(from “Prioritize Your Strengths/Skills” exercise)*

“My related experiences are...”

*(from “Prioritize Your Strengths/Skills” exercise)*



“I’m attracted to your corporate culture because...”

*(connect it to something that’s important to you)*

“I’m looking for an opportunity that...”

*(connect what you want to what the position/company offers)*



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## FOR EXAMPLE:

WHAT THEY NEED



YOUR PAST EXPERIENCE

"You're looking for someone who has strong analytical skills and who can communicate well with clients."

"I chose Finance because of my analytical abilities. I've done well in all of my finance classes and particularly enjoyed investments. My internship at XYZ Bank gave me firsthand experience with investments research and I thrived in this work."

"I have an outgoing personality and enjoy meeting new people and getting things done together. That's why I'm actively involved in my fraternity/sorority and in a business club. I believe the communication skills I've already learned will be an asset when dealing with clients."

THEIR CULTURE



WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT IT

"I'm attracted to your culture because you put the client at the center of your investment strategy. Having a connection to the client is an important motivator for me."

"I'm looking for an opportunity that gives me exposure to the analytics of investment with a client service component. This position and your company feel like a good fit. I look forward to learning more about it."

## YOUR TURN!

WHAT THEY NEED



YOUR PAST EXPERIENCE


THEIR CULTURE



WHAT YOU LIKE ABOUT IT


# DUE DILIGENCE QUESTIONS

Due diligence is finding out what you need to know to *set yourself up for success*. You will want to identify *at least* five (5) questions to ask in your next interview. Prioritize them. In the interview, ask the questions that are most meaningful to you first.

**Step 1:** Place an “x” next to up to 10 questions that you might want to ask your interviewer at the end of a job interview.

## COMPANY:

- How would you describe your corporate culture?
- In your opinion, what is the greatest benefit of working for this company?
- How would you describe the management style here?
- How is outstanding performance rewarded?
- How will the recent merger affect the company and your team specifically? (Or another question specific to their recent news.)

## OPPORTUNITY:

- What makes the top performers on your team successful?
- What qualities are you looking for in an outstanding candidate for this position?
- What qualities are important to you for this position?
- What is the biggest challenge facing your department?
- Describe the team and their dynamics.
- With whom will I be interacting in this position and in what capacity?
- What challenges can I expect with this position?
- What objectives do you have defined for this position in the foreseeable future?
- If I do an outstanding job, what kinds of future opportunities can I expect?

## MANAGER:

- Describe how you enable your employees to be successful.
- What qualities do you value most in those who work for you?
- How would you describe your management style?
- How do you interact with your team/direct reports?
- What do you like most about your job?
- Have you always worked in [industry]?
- When did you join this company and what opportunities have you had until now?

**Step 2:** Narrow the 10 questions you selected down to five (5) and list them below according to how important and meaningful they are to you. It is crucial to prioritize your questions in case your time is cut short and you are unable to ask your entire list.

## MY QUESTIONS:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)



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# THE QUESTION BEHIND THE QUESTION

It can be challenging to figure out just what the heck the interviewer is trying to learn from your answer! If you knew you might be more successful and perhaps land that second round or offer. Check out these clues to help you figure out the question *behind* the question and tips for how to answer!

## TRUSTING YOU

What kind of person are you? Are you honest, responsible, dependable, trustworthy?

**CONCERN:** The employer doesn't want to hire someone he/she can't depend on or trust.

**KEY WORDS:** personal ethics, "who are you?"

**RESPONSE:** Respond honestly. Make good eye contact. If you're genuine and your appearance, words, tone, and body language all match, you'll be trusted.

## DOING THE JOB

Are you technically competent? Do you have the skills, knowledge, and abilities to do the job well?

**CONCERN:** The employer doesn't want to hire someone who is incompetent or unprepared.

**KEY WORDS:** skills, abilities, strengths

**RESPONSE:** Focus on your skills and how you can help the organization and employer immediately and in the future. Use examples from your past experiences that relate to the job at hand.

## READY TO WORK

Are you a hard worker? Are you willing and eager to contribute?

**CONCERN:** The employer doesn't want to hire anyone who's lazy, has a bad attitude or won't work hard.

**KEY WORDS:** initiative, attitude, leadership, enthusiasm to learn

**RESPONSE:** Show your enthusiasm and eagerness to work. Tell stories from past experiences about your good work ethic. Talk about how you motivate others to work hard.

## FITTING IN

Will your personality and work style mesh with the company's? Can you get along with others?

**CONCERN:** The employer doesn't want to hire someone who will become unhappy and leave or who will threaten others.

**KEY WORDS:** relations, coworkers, teamwork

**RESPONSE:** Describe positive interactions you have had with supervisors, coworkers, and peers. Get along well with the interviewer!

## STICKING AROUND

Will you stick around or will the employer need to go through this whole process again in six months?

**CONCERN:** The employer doesn't want to invest time and money in someone who will soon quit.

**KEY WORDS:** future, plans, goals

**RESPONSE:** Say that you want to build a career at a company and plan to be there for the foreseeable future. If the job involves extensive training stick around long enough for the employer to recoup the investment in you.

## IN STRESSFUL TIMES

Can you manage your temper and control your behavior? Do you work well under pressure?

**CONCERN:** The employer doesn't want to hire someone who cannot deal with change or stress.

**KEY WORDS:** conflict, stress, change, pressure

**RESPONSE:** You need to show that you can manage conflict. Give examples of how you work well under pressure. Be friendly and positive and don't let them see you sweat!