

Make an impression

Career coach offers tips for preparing for a job interview

By Harold Valentine
News and Experts

When it comes to landing the job of your dreams, there are many ways to go wrong in your efforts, said Lisa Quast, career coach and author.

"A few years ago, many professionals were happy simply to have a job as we slowly recovered from the economic meltdown of 2008-2009, which signified years of an 'employer's market,'" she said. "But in 2015, employees have more options, including more jobs in their field, and many are considering other fields, too."

Whether you're just out of college or looking for a better deal with another company, landing an interview takes work. Once you've earned that interview, you don't want to mess it up.

Quast, author of the book *Secrets of a Hiring Manager Turned Career Coach: A Foolproof Guide to Getting the Job You Want Every Time*, briefly reviews eight ways to make the interview a success.

► *Anticipate interview questions and prepare answers.*

There are five groups of questions you should consider for the interview — your background, familiarity with the field/industry, your functionality and competency for key aspects of the job, your style and personality, and how you see your future. It's helpful to think about questions the hiring manager might ask and prepare ways to respond.

► *Prepare questions to ask the prospective employer.*

When you ask relevant questions

during the interview, it indicates to hiring managers that you know what you're talking about. Consider questions about the character of the company; the history, nature and future prospect of the open position; and the department.

► *Conduct practice interviews.*

The more you do something, the easier it gets. Practice runs will not only help your interview performance but will also help you evaluate the content or substance of the discussion. Conduct mock interviews with someone you trust. When you get to the interview, remember to be yourself, and don't be afraid to show your personality. Companies hire real people, not robots.

► *Prepare to answer the toughest interview questions.*

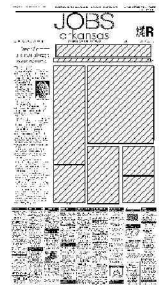
One of the hardest questions to answer is, "What's your biggest weakness?" For interviewers, how you answer this offers insight into your level of self-awareness, the way you handle obstacles and how much you know about the position.

► *Watch the hiring manager's nonverbal cues for important clues.*

People say plenty even when not verbally saying anything. Facial expression, eye contact, posture and gestures tend to work together for an overall impression. What are these cues telling you? The answer could help you overcome challenging moments in the interview.

► *Learn to close the job interview with class.*

You can do just about everything right and miss a key point: Don't forget to ask the hiring manager about the next step in the interview process. When friends ask whether or not you



got the job, how will you know what to say if an interviewer doesn't tell you what's next and you never ask?

► *Make sure all documents are ready for the interview.*

Being prepared says so much in an interview. It's better to have documents and not need them than vice versa. Have multiple copies of your résumé and reference list. Recommendation letters may not be required, Quast said, but they're good "leave-behind" documents. Other items that will either be necessary

or useful include the job description, a portfolio of your work, paper and a pen.

► *Dress for positive impact.*

The dot-com era ushered in a more casual approach to job interviews, but the recession brought back a more "dress for success" style. Dress appropriately for the position, and also the geography. For example, a jet-black pantsuit in Florida during August will be uncomfortable and make you look out of place. Match your attire with the image of the company.



Strategies for acing a job interview include preparing and practicing your responses to standard questions, asking relevant questions and dressing in a professional manner.