

## Prepare for Your Interview:

**Advice from a vet:** *"I used to get down on myself, because I thought that I didn't have the experience or schooling my competition had, because while they were building their resumes, I was out serving our country. Now I think of all the skills I learned while serving in the military, and I know I have what it takes. I think quickly, I'm resourceful, I perform under pressure, and I exude discipline and teamwork everyday. Why wouldn't someone want to hire me? Remind yourself of all you have to offer- it's good for your confidence and will resonate in interviews."*

**Do your research.** It's an absolute must that you come to the interview understanding exactly what the company does and what your job function would be.

- Go to the company's website and really familiarize yourself with the content. I suggest specifically going to the "careers" or "about us" pages to get an idea of who is already employed there and what they most likely are looking for in prospective employees.
- Do a comprehensive online search of the company and find out as much as possible: read annual reports, press releases and other articles. If it's a public company, click on the shareholders link and check that out as well.
- Follow and like the company's social media pages ahead of time so you're engaged with the company's messaging. You can even look up the interviewer on his or her personal social media pages. Social media is often a quick and easy way to familiarize you with people, companies, and brands.
- Check social media to see if you can identify anyone that you might know who works at the company, then contact that person and ask for company insight
- Learn the language. As you look through the company's website, search for the department you are applying for and then seek out unique terms and language. The way they describe their tasks, the wording they use, even the job descriptions themselves... then use these terms during your interview to show that you "speak their language."

**Come prepared.** You may feel like it's too much, but it's not. You should know what you're getting into ahead of time, so you can prepare accordingly.

**Prepare questions.** Most interviewers get put off when they sit through an interview with a potential employee, and the candidate doesn't have a single question, not even when asked. It comes across as uncaring.

- **One question.** Come prepared with at least one question. This will better help you understand the role, and it will show the employer that you have actually put thought into the position and are seriously considering the role.
- **What not to ask.** Don't get caught up asking about the wrong things: long vacations, overtime, and short hours- this might seem obvious, but I get this

asked all the time. Most likely these questions will be addressed in your handbook or explained to you prior to the job offer.

- **What to ask:** Here is a list of a few good areas to focus on:
  - Training
  - Advancement
  - Job Responsibilities
  - Company Growth/Your Growth in the Company
  - Company Culture
  - Your Team

**Self-Evaluate.** Once you understand what the company's looking for, think of your strengths and why you would be a great fit for the position.

- Think long and hard of why you're qualified as a perfect match for the company and the job you are trying to land.
- Think of examples of these qualifications and characteristics based on your experience in the military and in your civilian life, and then decide how exactly you want to articulate these examples. Also think about the information you learned about the company itself when you mesh your skills with their needs.
- Get your personal stories and examples all figured out before the interview. That way, they will come to you at the right time.
- You have so little time to sell yourself. Make sure you don't forget anything important. Be confident and be clear that you are the perfect candidate.

**Assume they won't remember your resume.** Often times, the employer has seen so many resumes that they don't remember as much as you would think they do. Prepare yourself to answer the following questions. As you answer the questions, try to relate your answers to specific experiences you have encountered that illustrate your point. This is a great way for you to bring up a positive experience of skill set through one of your real life examples.

- Why should we hire you?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What happened at your last job?
- Give examples of: A time you took initiative, a time you exerted leadership, a time you overcame obstacles, a time you set a goal and met it.
- Talk me through your resume.
- And, do you have any questions for us?

**Practice makes perfect.** Practice answering these anticipated interview questions. You want your responses to be articulated strongly. Practicing helps you sound more assured and prepared if the question does come up. Also rank your best examples and make sure that you bring those up during the interview.

- Try to eliminate “ums” and “likes” as much as you can. It's tough, but practice does help.
- Practice in front of the mirror, set up a video camera or have someone film you from his/her phone. Practicing when you can see yourself will most likely help you overcome nervous feelings at the time of the interview.
- Practice describing your military work- it will definitely come up and employers will want to hear about it. Again, when you are describing your military activity, always relate it to why that would be important in the workplace. For example: working in the commissary might require organizational skills; guard duty might require discipline; and missions might require teamwork. Be sure to pass that on during your interview.
- Practice saying positive things about yourself. It's harder than we think. By practicing it, you'll get more comfortable with it. Interviewers expect you to be able to talk about yourself, and you can do so while still being humble.

**Spin.** Before the interview, look for any weaknesses the employer may notice on your resume, past experience, or even when you're interviewing. Once you determine what they are, think about the best way to address them. An effective technique in turning a perceived deficiency into a perceived strength is to tell story or give an example that has some component of the question they asked. This is where you will pull from your strengths list you prepared earlier. Speaking with confidence will take you very far in leaving the interviewer with a great impression.

**Check and reboot your social media.** Get rid of any history of inappropriate photos, comments, tweets etc. If you don't know if it's inappropriate, chances are it probably is. Don't risk it; it's not worth it. Companies do check out social media of job candidates. I have seen some horrific things when checking on employees that have made me question a hiring decision and even convinced me to reconsider hiring someone based on inappropriate postings. Does your social media presence stand up? Make sure it does.

**Don't overlook the simple things.** It may sound ridiculously simple, but it's really important you don't underestimate the following. Getting lost or wearing unsuitable clothes can be disastrous.

- Find out the location and know exactly how to get there. A little effort and preparation will go a long way. Google Maps, smartphone apps or calling the company directly can help you see exactly how long the commute will take you.
- Allow plenty of time to get there. If the commute typically takes 15 minutes, give yourself 30 minutes. Tardiness is unacceptable.
- Find out where to park and make sure you can find it.
- Make sure your clothes are clean and fit you right. Make sure the attire is appropriate for the company's dress code.
- Print and bring along multiple copies of your resume and any work samples.

- Prior to the interview, check in with people that you are planning to list as references.