Congratulations, you just scored your 1st interview for next week! Armed with a beautiful resume, an all-star LinkedIn profile, and a self-proclaimed ‘Queen of Small Talk’ title, you mingled and strategically networked your way right into a job interview. Well done!

That was no small feat. According to inc.com, every corporate job opening attracts 250 resumes on average, but only 4 to 6 applicants will be called for an interview; only 1 of those will be offered a job. Job market competition is fierce, so you must continue to set yourself apart from the other applicants.

The hiring manager thought you looked good enough on paper to make the cut, but now you have to prove it – in person! That euphoria of finding out that you landed an interview, can quickly turn to panic. “What if they don’t like me?” or “What if I’m not a good fit for the job?” The best way to keep this doubt at bay and nail the interview is PREPARATION.

What Types of Questions Will They Ask?

Vague or open-ended questions can be unnerving. ‘So tell me about yourself” is probably the most stressful of all. It’s often the 1st question asked and sets the tone for the rest of the interview. Keep in mind that this is not an invitation to tell your life history. Rather, it’s an opportunity to position yourself as the ideal candidate for the job - right from the start. Remember, it’s not about you; it’s about them! So focus on their needs / pain points and then highlight a relevant accomplishment through a brief (< 1 minute) but memorable anecdote.

Situational questions are just as difficult: ‘Tell me about a time when ...’. In the resume writing industry, we refer to this as your C-A-R story. The more C-A-R stories you have prepared to discuss, the better. In the eyes of the hiring manager, past accomplishments are the strongest indicators of future performance, so these stories can be very powerful.

- What was the Challenge?
- What Action did you personally take?
- What was the Result?
You have a busy week ahead of you getting ready for this interview. Here are 9 Preparation Tips To Be THE Top Candidate:

1. Research the company’s website and social media activity on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter. Google the company to see if it’s been in the news recently.
2. Practice your pitch in front of a mirror or a good friend. This will be awkward! But it’s much better to stumble through your initial attempts in the safety of your own home.
3. Choose your wardrobe ahead of time and have a backup outfit, just in case. Dress appropriately for the position. Err on the side of conservative when in doubt.
4. Print enough hard copies of your resume to share with interviewers who may not have had time to print themselves.
5. Review your resume as a reFRESHer to make sure that the answers you provide during the interview are consistent with the document that got you the interview in the 1st place – dates, locations, titles, responsibilities should all match.
6. Organize a small portfolio of your work and be ready to share/discuss samples, if applicable.
7. Purchase a new notebook and pen on hand so you can scribble occasional notes.
8. If you receive an agenda with names of your interviewers, research them. Run a Google search. Look for them on LinkedIn. See if you have any shared connections or interests.
9. Prepare your own set of questions for the interviewer. Not basic ones that can be answered quickly by glancing online, but ones that demonstrate your genuine interest in the company.

Good luck and stay tuned for the next excerpt: Interview Tips & Follow Up

YOUR LAUNCH PLAN
Roadmap to Success

#YourLaunchPlan – Fresh Start & Plumtree Financial have joined forces to provide recent college graduates with a roadmap for professional advancement and financial independence. The nice house and corner office don’t just happen overnight. You need a plan to get there. We can help. This was the 5th excerpt from our eBook, ‘5 Universal Truths for Recent Grads’ A Step-By-Step Guide for Professional Development & Financial Freedom’.

ABOUT US

Kate Madden, MBA, CPRW is the founder of the Fresh Start brand – Fresh Start Resumes (writing service) & Fresh Start Careers (staffing agency). She is an award-winning certified professional resume writer whose work is featured in 2 books: ‘Modernize Your Resume: Get Noticed ...Get Hired” and ‘Modernize Your Job Search Letters”’. To learn more about Fresh Start, visit www.freshstartresumes.com and www.freshstartcareersusa.com.
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