

HEAVY CIVIL RESOURCE CONSULTANTS

# HOW TO **ACE** THE INTERVIEW



**CREATE A POSITIVE FIRST  
IMPRESSION AND SECURE THE JOB  
OR OPPORTUNITY YOU DESIRE.**



# INTRODUCTION



The better prepared you are when you sit down for the interview, the more relaxed and comfortable you will be.

Remember it is not a test, though it may feel that way especially if you really want the job.

Practice your answers ahead of time (speculate on questions they may ask), and do your best to project confidence.

Make a list of your strengths. Be honest. Don't overshare. Answer the question but don't go into great detail unless it is warranted. Avoid contentious topics like politics and religion. If you want to include attending church or religious functions as part of your answer to a question (such as "Tell me about yourself" do so as you would any other interest. Don't use it as a platform to preach or proselytize.



# SOME QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT EXPECT

## 1. Tell me about yourself.

This is a very common one, and also a difficult one. It's open-ended, and it's vague. Where do you start? If you are shy or introverted, it's difficult to talk about yourself, much less blow your own horn. What they really want to know is if you are a good fit for the company. This is where it really helps to be prepared, by knowing as much about the company as you can when you step foot in the interview room. Since this will probably be one of, if not the first question you are asked, it's an opportunity for you to build a rapport with the interviewer. Employer wants to hear why you are interested in this industry, what has driven you in your career. What's the journey you have gone through to get to this point work-wise.

So what's a good answer? Keep it brief, the equivalent of one written paragraph. You want to tell them something that they won't have gleaned from your resume. You might stress hobbies or interests that showcase any talents you have that would be useful in



the position you are applying for (for example, your energy levels, your commitment or passion to something you believe in, your love of travel, your ability to communicate with others, or your intellectual prowess (chess club for example)) Or you might mention your education and how that has helped you in your career so far, emphasizing how it relates to your goals for your future. Be sure to touch on something in your personal life, such as hobbies or interests, so they see you are not one-dimensional.

Share your strengths, but not all of them. Throw out a few and save a few for later, to be revealed as the interview unfolds. You can do this without bragging. Emphasize how important your career is to you and how important it is to you to do your best work.

Be careful not to overemphasize your interests and love of family time, etc. They want to know you will be a committed and dependable employee.

## **2. Why do you want this job?**

Here you want to mention how your qualities and experience fit with the job you are applying for and the company as a whole. Know the company culture, employer brand and history as much as possible.



Emphasize how the position fits with your career goals.

### **3. Why should we hire you?**

Be confident, and specify how your experience, education and/or skills qualify you for this position. Remember you want them to see you as the best candidate for the job. Employer wants to hear that you understand them, and what they are trying to do. Explain that you understand what their values are, and how what you have done before is related to what they are trying to do. Give them the core qualities or qualifications you possess, then give them above and beyond that, bonuses that aren't necessarily required for the job but would be nice to have.

### **4. What is your greatest strength?**

Choose one that will tie in to the specific job you are applying for, and make you a strong candidate. Pick something that is critical to the position.

### **5. What is your greatest weakness?**

This sounds like a trick question, and in a way it is. They want to know that you aren't perfect, yet they are



looking for someone who will be a perfect fit, right? There are a couple of ways to answer this question. You could reveal something about yourself that, while a weakness, isn't likely to interfere with your ability to do this job. In other words, something that isn't critical to performing the job at hand. Another option is to stress a weakness (again, unrelated to the job they are interviewing you for) that you have begun to turn into a strength. A third option is to take a strength and present it as a weakness. For example, I am very detail oriented, to the point where I double and triple check my work. I wish I were more confident in my ability to get it right the first time.

## **6. Why are you leaving (or have left) your current/previous job?**

Be honest, but try to keep it positive. Don't nitpick about the details of your previous employer, boss or environment that were less than ideal (and may indeed have led you to leave). Emphasize instead the opportunity you see in this new job, and how it fits with your career goals. Use words like challenge, opportunity, and future or next step. They want to hear that you are growth oriented.



## **7. What are your salary expectations?**

Think of the interview as a chance to sell yourself. This is an opportunity for you to establish your value and hence gain some authority in negotiating an offer at the appropriate time. Only after you have established your value with the decision makers should you share salary expectations. I advise that on a first interview that you deflect the question by answering; “I am open to considering and fair and reasonable offer.” If pushed further then I think that it is appropriate for you to deflect expectations by sharing your current compensation package.

## **8. How do you handle stress and pressure?**

Again, be honest. If you don't thrive in a crisis, say so, but also express the ways in which you cope when the inevitable crisis does arise. Give an example if possible of a high stress situation in your current/previous job and how you got through it.

## **9. Describe a difficult work situation or project and how you handled it.**

Again, be honest, but emphasize the skills you possess that allow you to deal with these inevitable situations



when they arise. Emphasize the action you took and how it connected to the result.

**10. What are your career goals? They want to know that you are planning to stick around, so emphasize how this job fits with what you are hoping to achieve in your career.**

Be prepared to ask questions at the end of the interview. Example questions: “What are some of the challenges you foresee in the next 6 months, for the individual in this position and/or the company as a whole?” “What made you choose to work here, or what is your favorite part of working here?” Ask questions that you couldn’t easily google the answer to, and that are relevant to the position and you making a success of the position. You may ask what the next step is in the hiring process. You may ask what the daily routine looks like. Ask about number of job sites typically visited in a day, number of hours typically worked in a week, for example. Ask good questions that will help you make a decision about whether or not you want to work there. Decide what’s important to you and ask about that.

You might want to ask them why they invited you in for an interview today. Chances are they won’t be



expecting that question, but it forces them to elucidate some of the very qualities you possess that hopefully make you the right candidate for the position you are interviewing for. Asking them this question is a good way to recap, to trigger any additional gaps you may want to fill before leaving, and to be remembered.



# BODY LANGUAGE IS THE REAL LANGUAGE

Be aware of body language, and tone of voice (delivery) as much as content. Good posture, shoulders straight - expresses confidence. Convey enthusiasm with your voice.

## The 7-38-55 Rule

- **7%** of what we say is communicated by our words (content)
- **38%** of what we say is communicated by our tone of voice (delivery)
- **55%** of what we say is communicated by our body language

What to do with your hands: According to Molidor and Parus, palms up is the best position, conveying sincerity. Conversely, palms down indicates dominance. Concealing your hands may suggest you have something to hide, and tapping your fingers gives the impression you are impatient. Try not to overuse hand gestures, as they can be distracting.



When it comes to body language however, take your cue from that of your interviewer. If they are flinging their hands around in an animated fashion, it probably won't do you any good to sit stiff as a board with your hands in your lap. If they speak softly, consider lowering your tone. And so forth. Avoid using a monotone however. Your goal in the interview is to express yourself, to portray why you are the best person for the job, and your voice will help get this across - using modulation in pitch and volume, which sounds far more natural than practiced, and avoiding halting or long pauses, will convey a sense of purpose and intelligence.

**Make eye contact periodically**, but especially when you first meet and shake hands. Be friendly, and let your enthusiasm show, but don't plaster a smile on your face and keep it there. Smile naturally and when you feel it, but don't force it.

**Be able to explain gaps in your resume:** They want to know you were doing something to better yourself while you weren't working.

When asked about why you want the job, be sure to address the core values of the company (that you can find online beforehand) and how they align with your



values and career path.

You may be asked where you see yourself in the next 5 years (10, etc). Align yourself with where the company is going, and how you see yourself in their big picture. If you are asked what you are most proud of, keep it career related, or goal related, not about your kids or family. Education, being a mentor, etc.

If asked to describe your current job, mention what you do now that will carry over to what you will be doing if you get this position. They want it be related to what they are looking for you to do.

**Management style** - if asked, they are testing to see if you have a style. Have you been doing this long enough to acquire a style, and do you recognize what it is? Be genuine, the style doesn't matter so much as knowing that you have one and being able to convey it. Why is it effective? Why does it work for you?

They may ask you what you know about the company, so be sure you've done your homework.

If asked if you are open to relocating, be honest. If yes, ask "What did you have in mind?"



## Things not to say

Definitely don't say negative things about your current and previous job(s) or employer(s). Don't say that you'll do anything, don't appear to be desperate. Don't use cliché adjectives to describe yourself (self-starter, good leader, go-getter, results oriented etc) instead explain how you accomplished tasks, projects etc. Show don't tell. If asked if you can do something, try to find something similar you have done to talk about if it is something you haven't specifically done. Give them some measure of understanding so you don't seem incompetent.

Remember it's not a test, with right and wrong answers. It is a picture of you that you are giving to them, and what you can deliver to their company if they hire you. Be flexible when you go into the interview, and be accommodating. This demonstrates that you want the job. Use their language in your responses. Be reflective of the way they speak (buzz words, industry terms).

They are looking for people who are like-minded.

If you don't know the answer to a question - ask for clarification. Don't say anything if you aren't sure what they are asking for.



Be sure when the interview is over that you express that you want the job. That you are looking forward to the next step in the hiring process. Show enthusiasm and be specific about what you are looking forward to doing.



# OTHER INTERVIEW MATTERS

## Scheduling Your Interview

When it comes to scheduling your interview, if you are given a choice of times, try to pick a late morning slot, around 10:30 for example. You don't want to be the first interview of the day, or a "first item on the agenda" for the day either, when the interviewer is likely to feel distracted with thoughts of how much they have to accomplish before the day is over. Before and after lunch can also be problematic times, depending on what their plans are, what and how much they eat, and other variables. Likewise, the last appointment of the day, when the interviewer is tired and possibly already thinking about what awaits them at home, is not ideal. If given a choice of days, Tuesday is typically a lower-stress day for most people than other days, especially Mondays.

If you know when a particularly strong candidate or candidates for the position will be interviewing, try to schedule your interview for a different day. Consciously or not, your interviewer is going to



## What to Wear

According to *CareerBuilder*, the colors of the clothes you wear to the interview should be chosen with care. Supposedly blue suggests you are a team player. Black that you have potential, and white that you are organized. Project the image that you want to project. Bright colors like orange and red should probably be avoided, as they tend to be distracting and may be regarded as unprofessional. This doesn't mean a handkerchief, scarf or other minor accessory shouldn't be colorful, only that the dominant color of your outfit shouldn't be glaring.

## Age Does Matter

Bear in mind the age of the interviewer when you answer their questions. According to [Crazy Good Interviewing](#) by John B. Molidor, Ph.D., and Barbara Parus, the generation the interviewer belongs to will be a determining factor in their value system and definition of work ethic. If they are in their twenties, emphasize your ability to multi-task. If they are between 30 and 50, they'll be more interested in the importance you place on balance between work and family life, and how you achieve it. Those closer to retirement, from about 50 to 70, will be impressed by



your drive and ambition, and will appreciate any recognition you offer to them about their own accomplishments thus far in their career. Lastly, if you are interviewed by someone over 70, it is your loyalty and commitment to past employers that you will want to be sure to mention.

### **Build Rapport**

When presented with the opportunity, try to build rapport with the interviewer. For example, find something in common with them if you can, and work it into the conversation. Along the same lines, compliment your interviewer and even more importantly, the company, by acknowledging some aspect of their policy, culture or brand, and express your enthusiasm for being a part of this company.

### **Be Confident But NOT Cocky**

Don't confuse being confident with being cocky. Nobody likes a blowhard, whether it be in a personal or professional context. Boasting about your accomplishments or bragging about your many skills won't gain you ground, especially if such statements aren't backed up with hard evidence. This doesn't mean you need to be humble. You do want to let them



know what you have done and that you feel good about it, so present this information when the opportunity arises, and be sure to share responsibility with others when that is called for. They'll need to know the kinds of work that you have done and the areas in which you've been particularly successful, as these are indicators of your likelihood to perform well in the future. If you don't have extensive experience in a particular area where you will need skills or experience, emphasize qualities you possess like enthusiasm, persistence, and the ability to learn quickly and retain information. This will showcase your potential.



# WANT A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW? BE PREPARED!

## BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

**First, do your homework.** Learn everything you can about 1) the person, 2) the company, and 3) the industry sector before you have your first conversation or meeting. Check out the Website, financials, friends or acquaintances who might know about the company.

**Second, review your resume from the CLIENT's perspective.** Remember, most of what the company knows about you is what is listed on your resume. So get your stories down solid. Have SHORT answers about career movement and job changes. The goal here: Be brief, be honest, be diplomatic.

**Third, write down all your accomplishments (project list) you didn't have space to include on your resume.** Your accomplishments are the distillation of your career; they communicate "why" you are good. There are only three things you can ever do for any company that will make them hire, retain or promote you: **MAKE**



**MONEY - SAVE MONEY - SOLVE PROBLEMS.** Always use numbers.

## **DURING THE INTERVIEW: 4 THINGS TO REMEMBER**

### **1. Personality**

- Let your personality shine through
- Talk about family, hobbies, how you got into construction
- Commonalities go a long way

### **2. Have a Business Conversation**

Write down all the professional and work-related questions the interviewer is likely to ask. One big deal killer: “What are you looking for now?” The only good answer is the job for which you are interviewing. Another deal killer: “Why are you looking now?” If they ask, find a way to be positive about your current situation. Don’t go negative.

Write down all your questions.

- Ask about past, present and future of company.
- What are business plans for the future?
- Due diligence: anything you need to know to decide whether to join the company.



- Ask about the details of the position.
- Typical day, week?

### 3. Sell Yourself

- Write down the 2-3 qualities you would bring to the company.
- Think of projects/accomplishments that illustrate those qualities.
- Tell them a story about each project.

### 4. Ask for the Job

- If you like what you've heard, tell them.
- Ask to move to the next step.
- Get passionate! In addition to all the great skills and experience you have, remember that your energy, passion, enthusiasm and initiative need to shine through.

## AFTER THE INTERVIEW

**Say thanks!** At the end of the conversation, get their business card or ask for their e-mail address. Send them a note. In that note, you say three simple things. First, thank them for their time. Second, say anything you forgot to say during the interview. Third, if you're



interested, say so.

Before you click “send” or seal the envelope, triple check the spelling, grammar and punctuation. Do not rely on spellchecker! This is your first chance to demonstrate your written communication skills. People who have never met you will read this note and form an impression about you as a person based on this simple note. Get it right!

## THINGS NOT TO DO

**Make it a conversation.** Don’t simply sell; remember you need them to sell to you as well. Talk no more than 65% of the time; listen no less than 35% of the time.

**Stories are great, but. . .** Weave your stories naturally as part of the conversation, but get to the point! Don’t bore the interviewer with the technical details.

**Don’t discuss salary.** It’s too early in the process. If a client asks directly, tell them what you make, but break it down: base, bonus, car, etc.

If any potential employer asks what you need financially, never say a number; you’ll either “highball” or “lowball” yourself. Either way, you lose.



A good response would be along the lines: “I would seriously consider any offer which is fair and reasonable.” A statement like this is **1)** honest, and **2)** puts the ball in the client’s court, which is where it should start. You may not agree about what that number should be, but you can’t disagree with the statement.

### **Don’t assume that you understand something.**

- **First**, never assume you understand the question, especially open ended questions .
- **Second**, never assume you’ve hit a home run with your answer. We’ve all been in situation where we’ve had to think on our feet and picked the wrong story or the wrong example. If you’re not sure, ask! “Does that make sense?”
- **Third**, never assume you understand what they’re talking about! If you don’t understand, ask.

### **Don’t sell yourself short**

If they ask, “What are your weaknesses?” be careful. First, don’t select a core competency! Choose something you would like to learn more about – Spanish, finance, or a certification – which, if you achieved would even add more value to your client’s business.



# WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

**First**, I need your openness and complete honesty. Is this opportunity something you're truly excited about? Any issues we need to discuss? Relocation? Family? Money?

**Second**, if you're working on other career choices, I need to know. We do our best to work as career consultants. After all, half of my clients are candidates I did NOT place. And whether this works or not, I want to continue to stay in touch.

**Third**, is there anything we need to know in your background? (Most of our clients do a thorough background check.) Criminal convictions? Health problems?? DUIs? Bankruptcies? Is your resume completely honest regarding educational degrees and Employment history? (Most gaps or glitches can be explained; withholding information is a deal killer.)

**Fourth**, I need prompt communication from you. If I call, I'll expect a call back from you within 24 hours or less, depending on the urgency. And if you've just finished an interview, I'll expect your call to give me a



debrief ASAP.

**Finally**, IF we get to the end of this process and my client extends an offer to you, I ask you for your decisiveness. It would be unfair of me to ask you to say “Yes”, but I would normally expect the offer and acceptance process to take no more than 24 hours. This is what I will do for you in return: **First**, I’ll represent you to the best of my ability. **Second**, if my client decides to go another direction, I’ll call you and let you know. **Third**, if you are not selected, I’ll give you my candid feedback within the bounds of my confidential relationship with my client.



# FACE-TO-FACE STUFF



**Dress for success.** Have twice as many of your resumes in your briefcase as you expect to hand out.

**Get there early! Firm handshake. Eye contact.** Remember this is a conversation, not a note-taking contest. If you're meeting with more than one person at the same time, make sure that your answers – and your questions – are directed to every person in the room.

**If you have a meal, order “light”.** No alcohol. No dirty jokes and no swearing, even if they do so.

**Taking the tour.** If you take the tour of the site, they're looking to see what you notice – and what you fail to notice. However, it's almost always better to ask questions than to make a statement. You may think



something looks pretty awful – and the person you're speaking with ordered it to be done that way. Be observant, but be careful!

## **Do Your Due Diligence/Be Prepared**

The should do research on who they are meeting and the company. I suggest find interviews profiles on LinkedIn. Visits the company website. Take notes.

Have the contact information of the person that they are interviewing in case you are running or something happens contact them as soon as possible.

Prepare a written list of questions and have copy or two resume with them as well.

## **Here are a few ideas about some questions to ask**

The list question:

- Understanding the business plan (2 year, 5 year, 10 year)?
- What is the culture of the company?
- What is position? Why is it open?
- Opportunity for growth.
- Are there typical 50 hour a week M-F? Night shift or Weekend?



Before the interview is over review list of question make sure they are answered if still applicable (shows thoroughness)

**Look at this as a business meeting not necessarily interview.**

Use good communication/listening skills. Also, be aware of your body language.

Make sure you understand what information they are looking for. If they ask a very general question like, "Tell me about yourself." Try to gain clarification as to what information they are trying to get.

Starting off the conversation try to build rapport. Get them to talk about themselves about their career?

How did they get to where they are in the company?

**If money comes** defer by focusing on the opportunity for their long-term career firstly then say I would consider any fair and reasonable offer. If pressed let them know what their current package looks like.

Be able to **explain career moves** in a truthful and concise manner. Be direct and to the point. Try not to



Speak poorly about previous employers.

**Be prepared to talk your accomplishments.** Ways you have made money, saved money, and solved problems. Give examples and try to quantify even if they are estimates or guesses. Generally, project specific for most.

### **Try to prepare for the tough question**

Examples are:

- Give an example of a time you were not getting along with a supervisor or peer. How did you handle it? Someone not doing their job. How did you handle it.
- What are some areas that you can use some improvement?

Have a plan to improve. Talk about how you have implemented the plan.



# 4 POINTS OF CLOSING AN INTERVIEW



When the interview is winding up:

1. Express direct your interest or desire for the job (a lot of people forget to do)
2. Express why you are interested (information gained in the interview, Research the candidate has done, Companies reputation)
3. Explain how your career and experience can help the company with reaching their goals
4. Get the next step in the process? Push for at least a time frame and follow up if you have not heard from them after the timeframe that they mentioned. Be



proactive in scheduling a second interview unless the you are prepared to decline or accept and offer based on just the information from the first interview.