**Mastering Common Interview Questions**

* Different interviewers will ask different questions, and may have different expectations, depending on their role.
  + An HR manager is looking to make sure the candidate has the minimum qualifications for the role and is a good fit.
  + A supervisor is most interested in your past experiences and the specific skills you can bring to the job.
  + A potential coworker will ask questions to determine if you are a good fit for the team.
* Ask the recruiter for a schedule of the interview and the names of interviewers.
* Review the company website, as well as press releases and media mentions about the company to determine company culture and get a sense of company norms.
* Common question formats:
  + Behavioral: draws from past experiences to show skills and knowledge. “Tell me about a time…” “Give me an example of….”
    - STAR Method
      * Situation/ Task- describe the assignment or project
      * Action- define the steps you took or solutions you considered
      * Results- explain the outcome of the task, and what you learned from it
    - Experience + Learn = Grow Method
      * Experience- describe a past experience that relates to the position
      * Learn- discuss what you learned from that experience
      * Grow- explain how you grew from the experience and how you will apply that knowledge in the future
  + Situational: shows problem-solving, analytical, and planning skills. “How would you…”
  + Resume-based: asks about specific experiences from your resume.
  + Technical: asks about specific technologies, concepts, or projects related to your field
* “Tell me about your strengths.”
  + Interviewers are trying to determine your competency for the job.
  + Identify the skills required for the job, and prioritize what you would focus on.
  + Prepare specific examples of a time when you utilized the strengths.
* “Tell me about your weaknesses”
  + Be realistic and honest.
  + Analyze the job description, and determine which qualifications you don’t have. Determine which of the qualifications are the least important, or that you could learn quickly.
  + Describe a plan to improve upon the weaknesses.
* “Why are you interested in our company?”
  + Explain how you would contribute to the position.
  + Express interest in the company and demonstrate that you understand the position.
  + Employers might also be asking this to determine how long you might stay in the job. Explain how the company fits into your long-term goals.
* “Are you willing to relocate or travel?”
  + Preferred answer is yes, but do not be insincere.
  + Ask questions to better understand the company’s needs: “Can you tell me what career trajectory I can expect within the new position?” “How long is the average stay at a project site?”
  + Be honest if the answer is no, and give a valid reason.
* “What would you like to accomplish in the first 90 days?”
  + Use past experiences to demonstrate how you will perform in the future.
  + Highlight what’s good about the organization and describe how your skills can improve the company. “I really like x project, and I think it will be even better if we can also use xyz skills to improve it.”
  + Make a few realistic recommendations based on what you know. Let the interviewer know that this may change as you learn more about the position and the company.
  + Address how you will work with your supervisor and team.
* “When have you gone above and beyond at work?”
  + This is a behavioral question intended to determine work ethic.
  + Have a few examples prepared about how you have exceeded expectations, but make it clear that your example was not a one-time thing.
  + STAR Method or Experience + Learn = Grow Method
  + Three motivation types:
    - Achievement- motivated by a sense of accomplishment
    - Authority- a drive to lead or be heard by others
    - Affiliation- motivated by helping others
  + Relate your examples to the current company.
* “Tell me how you handled a difficult situation”
  + Use this question to demonstrate your problem solving and people skills.
  + Show your critical thinking skills as well as your ability to fit into company culture.
  + Develop your answer to show integrity, initiative, and professional growth.
  + Do not speak ill of coworkers or the organization. Do not use an example in which you did not learn or grow from the situation.
* “How did you handle a disagreement with your boss?”
  + Understand the company’s conflict culture.
  + Choose an example that highlights your understanding of different viewpoints. Make sure your example has a positive outcome, and describe what you learned.
  + Explain how you advocated for your point of view and show that you listened to the other person’s side of the issue.
* “What makes you interesting?”
  + Focus on the role and why you should be hired; don’t discuss topics unrelated to the job.
  + Showcase your personality through a story, and be excited about the project/company.
  + Describe any specific skills or experiences that relate to the position, especially if they go above and beyond the job description.
* “What questions do you have?”
  + Always ask questions at the end of the interview, otherwise you may seem uninterested in the position.
  + Prepare different questions depending on who you’re interviewing with (for example, questions about specific projects aren’t appropriate for an HR manager, but they would be for a team lead).
  + Ask about company culture, and ask for specific examples.
  + Good topics to ask about: work environment, collaboration, criteria for success.
  + Use this time to re-address any answers you weren’t confident about earlier in the interview.
* Prepare thank you notes ahead of your interview and mail them ASAP. Send a thank you to each person you interviewed with.