



## Pkaza Interview Prep

**“The candidate who gets the job is not always the most qualified, but is always the most prepared.”**

There is nothing wrong with preparing for an interview. Over the past few years, I have put together a couple of pointers that can help increase the likelihood of a successful interview. Being prepared shows interest in both the position and with the company and speaks volumes to the potential employer. Not preparing for a job and “winging it” tends to be the biggest reason companies decline a candidate. So read on if interested in landing a job. If you want to wing it, please use another recruiting company.

-Peter Kazella

### **BASIC INTERVIEW PREPARATION: What is needed for all interviews?**

#### **Pre-Interview**

- Address of company and phone number for initial contact person (in case you are running late)
- Arrive 15 minutes early, but don't go in until 10 minutes prior to your meeting
- Know the names of Interviewers- titles, where they fit into corporate structure.
- Go to the company website and review the website, read any articles about the company, and go through the job description thoroughly prior to the interview.
- Type of Attire / Presentation expected- always dress to the environment you will be interviewing for, never more or less. You can ask your recruiter what will be appropriate attire for each company you are meeting.
- Bring (2-3) fresh copies of your PKAZA Resume

#### **In House Interview**

- Turn off your cell phone and no texting during your meeting.
- Have references and dates of employment info ready if you need to fill out an application.
- Filling out an application: make sure that the dates are correct on the application. Most firms do employment verification and check dates, previous salaries, etc.
- Positive Attitude- **a firm, solid handshake, warm smile, "pleasure to meet you" or "thank you for your time"**.
- Be prepared to discuss your background – create a quick bio that discusses your job history that you can mention to the manager – should not be a life story, but a quick 3-5 minute overview.
- Try to come up with some questions that you could ask about the company and/or the position you are interviewing for (use open ended questions – who, what, when, etc.)
- **Eye Contact** - make reasonable amount of eye contact, this is not a "staring contest". Give enough eye contact though to show your interest in the conversation.
- **Ask for a business card**
- *Ask politely, not anxiously, what the next steps in the process might be.* Don't be afraid to let them know that you like what you have seen so far, and want to continue the process. You can say- I have a sincere intent in moving forward. Or you can say, “This is exactly the type of position that I was looking for, where do we go from here or what's the next step?”
- If they indicate that they will be in touch, let them know that you have a few other things in the works right now but you are really interested in the position and that you would like to be kept up to speed regarding updates.

#### **Phone / Video Conference Interviews**

- Make sure you using a reliable phone to take the call. Landline is preferred but if you use your cell, make sure you are in an area with good cell service



- Make sure you find a quiet place with no distractions. Do not pick a room that people frequently come in and out of
- DO NOT TAKE THE CALL WHILE DRIVING UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES
- For video calls, make sure that what you are wearing is appropriate and nothing questionable is in the background.
- For video conferences check connections ahead of time by reaching out to your recruiter a day prior with a test video chat

### **Post Interview Follow Up Etiquette**

- OK, you made it through the interview. but you are not done yet. There is some follow-up etiquette that is good to get in the habit of doing. Go the extra inch and you will stand out miles ahead of the competition as a personable and professional candidate that people want on their team.
- Send a thank you card immediately. Check for spelling (don't rely on spell check) and read it over prior to sending. Emails work to – just be thorough and review your work. If you didn't get a card, just email the recruiter that can forward your thank you email.
- *Always contact your recruiter as soon as possible after an interview.* The sooner you give your feedback the sooner the recruiter can move the process forward.

### **LISTENING AND MIRRORING**

Please also consider that how you **LISTEN** is as vital as the answers you give. Doing everything in this section of this document correctly will be negated if you are not a good listener.

Listening properly also gives the interviewer insight into your interpersonal skills. To be a good listener you must let them finish their sentences and thoughts completely. You may be excited to jump in and add to what they are saying, but instead of showing your intelligence, it actually makes people uncomfortable when they don't get a chance to finish. It's best to **LISTEN** and **NOD** your head **APPROVINGLY**. When they finish their sentence, it's best to reply with a smile and if appropriate, ask another question or add some of your thoughts. The main point is to be a good listener in addition to asking good questions. Good conversation is a give and take.

\*\* We can't emphasize enough how important it is to "mirror" the person who is interviewing you -- e.g., if they are very rushed and quick speaking, you should keep your answers clear and crisp. If they are more "chatty" - then it's fine to be more relaxed in your reply, **HOWEVER**, always addressing the question and being clear. In general, people like people who are "like" them. That's why it's important to pick up on an interviewer's style and presence.

\*\* It can often be very helpful to make sure that you are addressing their question and providing enough information - so we suggest that you ask something like, "would you like additional information or is this fine?" The key is making sure you are clear in providing all the information that they seek.

### **RED FLAG QUESTIONS**

#### **Q: What salary are you making and what are you looking for?**

**A:** This is a tricky question and must be handled carefully. First off, it is ok to answer all of the specifics on what you had last made in compensation. When responding about what you are looking for: Say, "I am looking to evaluate an entire package before I put a number on myself" if pushed: "I trust that you will make a fair and reasonable offer based on my experience and market value." If pressured: say "you are looking for a reasonable increase – from 10-15%" (you want to stay away from pigeon holing yourself over pricing yourself out of a job. Keep in mind to leave the salary desired section blank when filling out an application)

#### **Q: Why are you looking to leave?**

**A:** It is always best to stay very positive about your current firm. (E.g., don't badmouth your boss or co-workers). State that you are interested in "abc" company because (fill in the blank) Say you want to grow in a solid company that places importance on (your area of expertise) and Peter Kazella & Associates, Inc.



had approached you with what sounded like a great opportunity to advance your career." Or through networking, I heard about this opportunity and I felt that it was a great move for my career.

**Q: What are your strengths and weaknesses?**

This is probably one of the most basic questions, **HOWEVER**, many people have lost job opportunities by saying a "weakness" that truly reflects badly on their character or skills (e.g., not organized, have a bad temper, not good with time management)

**A:** For weakness: look at the job at hand. I tend to keep the weakness technical or as a skill, but away from the technology or skills that are needed for the job.

Of course for strengths - please try to mention attributes that the position needs (e.g., Proactive, not reactive; well organized, great ability to translate technical issues to the business, multitasker, etc.)

**MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & HOW TO ANSWER THEM:**

**Q: Tell me about yourself.**

**A:** This is the most common question on interviews, and it should be the easiest. Don't give a life story here; relevant facts about your education, career, and current life situation will suffice.

**Q: What are you looking to do?**

**A:** Briefly mention that you "would like to be a **CONTRIBUTOR** to an organization by using your technical and business skills" - that you would like to "make an impact" and "help an organization grow. Then politely say, "What are your thoughts of the type of candidate that is needed that will be the best fit for this role?"

\*\* Once you hear what they are looking for, you can focus on your experiences that are relevant for the position. In general, always try and gear your responses toward the needs of the interviewer.

**Q: Why are you interested in our firm?**

**A:** Always research the company. **Review their website**, or consult news articles to learn about the company - you don't have to memorize all the information, but you should know the business and the key products / services. If it's a large company, like a Merrill Lynch, you should mention that you've always been interested in joining a top tier organization with a great reputation in the marketplace. If you are meeting with a smaller firm, or a start-up organization, you should stress the importance of wanting to be involved in a more intimate environment. Being in a small firm can allow you to make a bigger, more immediate impact. Also, you can say that you enjoy the "entrepreneurial spirit" that comes with a smaller company that is just getting started.

**Q: Tell me about your job history or background.**

**A:** Keep this short and not a 1 hr response – this is a highlight reel and relevant towards the position you are interviewing. When you know your background well (e.g., dates of jobs and reasons for leaving), you will be able to easily discuss your background. It may seem like you should know this, but it's best to practice the highlights you achieved at each job and a good reason (**NOT MONEY**) for leaving each one. This once again goes back to the concept that practice makes perfect. You will be much clearer and relaxed if you are rehearsed ahead of time.

Speak Positive when discussing a previous employer, it is best to focus on the **SOLUTIONS** you've created, not the **PROBLEMS** that you would like to leave. Focus on what can you accomplish or bring to the table, rather than complaining about the difficulties in your firm. When talking about changing positions it's important to focus on desire for growth and future opportunities.

**GOOD QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWER:**



It's not just your skill set that wins jobs... it's how you separate yourself from the rest of the people interviewing (who could have similar or even better skills). Asking good questions demonstrates your intelligence, interpersonal skills, and values. Some examples are:

**"How can I best help you?"** This shows you are there to be a contributor. Always give off the attitude that "it's not what the company can do for you, but what you can do for the company." A positive attitude will always be rewarded!

**"What are the greatest challenges that you are facing, and that I could help you with?"**

Unless the position has been explained in complete detail, this is an excellent question. It shows that the firm's success is of value to you, and not just your personal success.

**"What are the short term and long term goals or objectives you are looking to reach?"**

This shows that you are interested in the career and the long term outlook of this position, not just a job.

**"What characteristics of the company do you think make it UNIQUE in the marketplace?"**

This shows how others in the firm evaluate the environment. It shows that you are trying to best understand the company and how it fits in the marketplace vs. the competition.

**"What are the characteristics of successful employees in this organization?"**

Exemplifies to the employer that you want to do a good job and want to learn what best works in their environment.

#### **WHEN YOU CAN'T ANSWER - WHAT DO YOU DO?**

During the interview, if you don't know something (e.g., a technical question), its best not to say yes or no to the question. Instead show them that you are intelligent and try to think through the answer. You can say, "Let me see if I can work it through... I believe it's similar to what I've done". Ask them more questions to try to figure out what they are asking. It shows you're a thinker, not someone quick to give up and say I don't know.

If you get very nervous and feel like you're not coming across well -- it's helpful to say "please forgive me, I'm just very excited to be here" -- it's better to say you're excited, rather than nervous. This will give you a few more seconds to think about your answer.