



The Pitfalls of the Counter-Offer

Some companies use counter-offers to retain employees who are set to leave. Incentives might include promotions, raises, equity, etc. Counter-offers may be flattering but they can have an adverse effect. Consider these reasons to decline a counter-offer:

- Ask yourself if you were worth x dollars yesterday, why are they suddenly willing to pay you y dollars today when you were not anticipating a raise for some time?
- Consider the fact that your present employer could be merely “buying time” with this raise until they can locate a replacement. Suppose you were given an annual raise as a counter-offer of \$3,000, when they find a replacement for you in, say 60 days, then the actual cost to them is only \$500.
- The company may feel as though they have been unduly pressured into giving you a raise when you announced your decision to leave.
- Realize that you may limit your opportunities if you accept a counter-offer. The possibility of promotion may be limited for someone who has “given notice”. The company is vulnerable, they know it, and may not risk giving more responsibility to someone who was previously committed to leaving.
- Ask yourself, “Aside from my paycheck what will really change?” Consider the new opportunity you will be giving up.
- Your reasons for wanting to leave may still exist. Conditions are just made a bit more tolerable in the short term because of the raise, promotion or promises made to keep you.
- When economic slowdowns occur, your position could be among the first at risk. You indicated your intention to leave once before, so it is only natural that your position could be eliminated in a slow period.
- Where is the money for the counter-offer coming from? Is it your next raise early? Most companies have strict wage and salary guidelines which must be followed. Are they going to make your increase retroactive in order to compensate for underpaying you over the last several years?



Steps to Resigning Professionally

The resignation process can be stressful and filled with emotion, especially if your company culture is very team oriented. There is a good chance that you have developed strong relationships with many people in many different parts of the company.

We recommend the following steps to help ease the process:

STEP ONE:

Ensure you have received confirmation of successful completion of the preemployment process before proceeding with the resignation process. These items include:

- Offer letter received.
- Start date confirmed.
- Preemployment checks completed with no identified issues (if applicable: background check, credit check, drug test, physical, reference checks, etc.).
- Non-compete/employment agreement with your current company thoroughly reviewed to ensure there would not be any barriers to accepting the position.
- Review CSP "*Guide to Counter-Offer*s" in the event this situation arises during the resignation process.

STEP TWO:

Resigning in a professional manner is very important to ensuring your current employer could serve as a future reference, might re-employ you if desired, and to give your current employer the opportunity for a smooth transition.

- Prepare a brief, formal resignation letter. Leave on a positive note and remove any negative comments. Address the letter to your immediate supervisor with a copy sent to your Human Resources Department.
- Resign to your direct supervisor in a professional, unemotional manner. Thank him/her for the opportunities she/he has given you to grow personally and professionally.
- Continue working to the best of your ability while you work through your notice period, which we recommend being no longer than two (2) weeks.
- If your employer asks you to leave immediately, do not let this be a concern. It could be corporate policy and/or your employer may recognize the possible ramifications your resignation may have on the rest of the company.



How to Handle the Money Issue

The question of compensation can be very sensitive and often requires extended negotiations to reach a figure that is fair and acceptable to both the company and the individual. Some points to remember:

- Most companies want to make a fair offer. They want to bring new employees on board at a salary level that provides incentive to change jobs and that is also consistent with the company's existing salary structure for that position.
- The days of 20% and 25% increases in compensation are gone. Inflation rates are down; all corporations are more conscious of maintaining consistency in existing salary structures; the economic growth in many industries has leveled off, and the competition for better positions has increased. Be realistic in your expectations.
- The position/opportunity is the single most important element of your decision. No amount of money will make a poor position/company a good one. A quality position, working with quality people in a dynamic work environment offers rewards that money cannot buy.
- Be flexible! Compensation packages are a combination of salary, reviews, titles and perks. These elements can be arranged/re-arranged, and sometimes, very creatively to satisfy both the individual and the company.
- Keep your Search Consultant involved. Part of their job is to handle sensitive negotiations and move both parties to a fair and acceptable compensation package. They do this for a living and can often offer alternatives that will satisfy both parties. (They are also a good buffer and are able to keep sensitive negotiations on a professional level.)
- If you are asked about compensation, try to avoid quoting a specific figure. Attempt something like this: "I am very interested in the opportunity, and I feel I can make a meaningful contribution. I would be open to a competitive offer." It is best not to name a figure if at all possible. You don't want to over-price/underprice yourself, so remember to discuss all relevant salary and benefits with your Search Consultant.
- If you are asked again later in the process, you may want to re-state what you are earning, and ask what a person with your experience level is worth in their company.



Tips for Writing a Winning Resume

Tailor your resume to the specific position you're applying for

You're basically selling yourself on that piece of paper, so mold the information to reflect what your potential employer is looking for in an ideal job candidate. This is different depending on your industry.

Miriam Salpeter advises in *U.S. News & World Report* that candidates should study the company's web site and "look for repeated words and phrases, taglines, and hints about their philosophical approaches." Then, "mirror some of their language and values in your resume."

Put your name and contact info at the top

This sounds simple, but Peter S. Herzog, author of the book *"How To Prolong Your Job Search: A Humorous Guide to the Pitfalls of Resume Writing,"* says that applicants will try putting this important information on the side or bottom. This is how it should be done:

1. Put your name in bold face and/or regular caps.
2. Include your full address and home, work (optional) and/or cell phone numbers and your email address but do not bold these.

Decide if you want to include an objective

We've heard experts go both ways on this, so you need to decide for yourself if you want to include an objective.

Peri Hansen, a principal with a recruiting firm, tells Penelope Patsuris at *Forbes* that an objective is "the fastest way to pigeon-hole yourself" and if you "specify 'Asset Manager' you may not even be considered for 'Financial Planner.'"

On the other hand, Alex Douzet, CEO of TheLadders, tells us that everyone should include an objective and compare it to a "30-second elevator pitch" where you should "explain who you are and what you're looking for."

The bottom line is to only include an objective if it's not generic.

The length of your resume should reflect years of experience

This might be difficult if you've had a lot of experience and you're proud of all of it. But this doesn't mean it's necessarily relevant. Cut it down.

If you're in your twenties, your resume should only be one page — there's not enough experience to justify a second one, Alison Green writes in *U.S. News & World Report*.

However, if you've had more than 10 years of experience, you can add a second page, Douzet tells us.

Create your own CV template

The pre-made resume templates offered on word processing programs like Microsoft Word just scream "template," Jacqui Barrett-Poindexter writes in Glassdoor. You can use those templates as a guide but create your own final copy.

Furthermore, you should always stick to a format that's appropriate in your industry. Simone Fortunini was an online marketing manager when he decided to create a resume in the form of an interactive web site resembling a Google Analytics page. Fortunini tells us that since his work experience stems from online marketing and advertising campaigns, Google Analytics is a basic tool that those in his industry work with, and he wanted to create a resume illustrating his understanding in online marketing, graphic design abilities and HTML skills.

Use plenty of white space to draw the reader's eye to specific items

Don't include so much information that it gets distracting.

"Make it pleasing to the eye, and balanced with bullets, italics and bold font," Roxanne Peplow, career advisor at Computer Systems Institute, tells us. "Have your name stand out in bigger and bold letters ... bullet point your accomplishments. Too many words on a page are exhausting to read."

Use the right keywords

Peplow says that "you must put some of the keywords from the job posting into your resume, or it will probably never be seen by human eyes." This is because a lot of companies use online recruitment tools to sift through resumes, writes Lauren Weber in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Barbara Safani of CareerSolvers suggests using LinkedIn's skills section to find the keywords that would most likely be used in a company's search query database. To do this, click on the "More" tab in your LinkedIn profile and enter a type of skill or

description into the search box. This will result in a list of related skills popping up, which you can use as keywords on your resume.

Only include relevant work experience

Keep your resume focused and don't include every single job you've ever had. Eve Tahmincioglu at MSNBC writes: "In this economy, there's a good chance a long-term job seeker has a part-time job (or jobs) under his or her belt just to make ends meet. But that doesn't mean you should include every burger flipping, or retail-selling job you've had. Putting too many of those jobs on your resume, especially if they have nothing to do with the job you want, can hurt your chances of landing a new position." "Resumes are a summary of the most important data," Debra Feldman, a job search expert, tells Tahmincioglu. "In my opinion, a part-time job just to pay the bills would not fall into that category."

Peplow tells us that even if you have minimal work experience, this doesn't mean that you have nothing to offer. Highlight your transferable skills, which are the ones that you can use from one job to the next — regardless of the position.

Use bullet points to list responsibilities and accomplishments

Under each job or experience you've had, list your responsibilities and accomplishments in no more than three to five bullet points, writes Jasper Anson in AskMen. And don't use full sentences.

Liz Wolgemuth at *U.S. News & World Report* writes: "[Compare] the process to flipping through a jumbo-size magazine. Readers don't spend a lot of time on each page. Full sentences are, quite simply, too time consuming in today's hiring world."

Put a number to your accomplishments

Your resume is for experience and accomplishments only. It's not the place for subjective traits, like "great leadership skills" or "creative innovator," says Alison Green in *U.S. News & World Report*. You should always try to quantify your accomplishments.

Suzanne Lucas at CBS Moneywatch writes: "Some departments have 1 person, and some have 350. Quantify yours. "Managed a department of 12 analysts" is a lot stronger than "Managed a department." Did you have budget responsibilities? "Managed a \$2.3 Million budget" is very different from "Managed a \$75,000 budget." How many clients did you juggle? 1, 2, 25? Quantify."

If you can't put a number on what you've done, try linking the impact of your projects to the company's "point of sales." For example, if you were in charge of creating a marketing campaign on Facebook, show that you were able to reach the company's target market without having to spend the money that is usually spent on advertising.

"Basically, if you can't prove that you have sales, you can prove that you saved the company money by reducing marketing expenses," Roderick Lewis, international relations director, ISCTE Business School, University Institute of Lisbon, tells us.

Keep information about your education as short as possible

Include only relevant education information: the name of your college, your degree, and the year you graduated.

Susan Adams writes in *Forbes* that experienced workers should include their education at the end of their resumes. If you're a new graduate, you should consider including a list of course work that's relevant to the position you're applying for. And don't even think about listing your high school education and activities — unless you're under 20 and "have no education or training beyond high school," according to Tracy Burns-Martin's book *"Before and After Resumes."*

Don't list your references

If your prospective employer wants to speak to your references, they'll ask you. Also, it's better if you have a chance to tell your references ahead of time that a future employer might be calling.

Alison Green writes at *U.S. News & World Report*:

"Unless the company has specifically asked for something other than a cover letter and resume, don't send it. Sometimes candidates include unsolicited writing samples, letters of recommendation, transcripts, and so forth. In most cases, sending these extras without being asked won't help you, and in some cases it can actually hurt."

Use a chronological resume format

The chronological resume — which is really reverse-chronological — is the format most often used. On the other hand, a functional resume doesn't include a chronological job history, but instead focuses on skills and abilities.

"Many hiring managers, me included, hate [functional resumes]," Alison Green writes in her blog "Ask A Manager." She says: "Generally, the first thing I think when I see them is, 'What is this candidate trying to hide?' That's because people tend to use functional resumes when they're trying to hide an employment gap, or job-hopping, or outdated skills (because it matters if your Web design experience is from 10 years ago or one year ago), or other things I'd rather know about. And if I do remain interested in the candidate, the first thing I'm going to do when I talk to them is ask them to walk me through their job history, with dates — and it's going to annoy me that I have to, and if I have other good candidates I may not even bother."

If you've been unemployed for a while and you're afraid a chronological resume format will work against you, include any volunteer work you did during this gap and use it as an asset, writes Burns-Martin in her book.



Tips for Improving Your LinkedIn Profile

While LinkedIn can be an effective networking tool, it's no easy task to distinguish yourself from the half a billion other users who are also trying to stand out. But just a few small improvements can have a big impact.

Make Your Profile Public

Check your account settings, and make sure that your public profile is visible. This simple change will allow you to show up in searches (and be spotted by recruiters).

Update Your Location

This will improve accuracy when someone searches for say, "Engineers in Dallas/Fort Worth Area". This step isn't just beneficial if you're looking to be recruited; it's one way to take your online network offline. It's how people in your extended network will know you live in their city.

Be Strategic About Your Endorsed Skills

Do you have endorsements for run-of-the-mill skills that do nothing to help you stand out (think: Microsoft Word, Google Docs)? If so, they're detracting. You want your skills section to do two things: include keywords that make you more searchable and reinforce the story you're telling of who you are and what you can do. So, click into that section and do these things:

- Add skills that are key for someone in your industry and role
- Reorder the list so your most important skills are on top

Create a Customized URL

A custom URL makes it so much easier to send people to your profile—and means you no longer have to worry they won't find you. (Case in point: There are 135 Kyle Elliott's on LinkedIn.)

Add a Background

Adding a background allows you to show some creativity—and highlights your brand. Think about what people instantly associate with what you do (photographer—camera; tech—computer, etc.).

Update Your Profile Picture

According to LinkedIn, profiles with headshots are 14 times more likely to be viewed than those without a profile picture. Your headshot should be clear, professional and only include you.

So, take the time to browse through your phone for any photos like that—or snag the one off the team page of your company website.

Add (or Update) Contact Information

Make sure your email, phone number (if you feel comfortable), website and other—professional!—social media platforms are listed on your profile. Remember: LinkedIn InMail is only available to Premium users, and you want to make sure anyone can contact you about great opportunities.

Improve Your Headline

This is your opportunity to impress potential employers and clients, so don't waste this valuable space. Most professionals list their current title or position, but don't stop there. Add one other attribute that'll help you stand out.

For example, “Executive Assistant” becomes “Executive Assistant - 25+ years of experience supporting CEOs, Presidents, VPs, Directors & other key leaders” and “Administrative” becomes “Bilingual (English & Spanish) Finance Professional - 5 Years of Experience Providing Financial & Administrative Support.”

Delete Jargon

Are you a passionate, results-driven team player? These buzzwords don't *really* say anything, and they make you blend in with everyone else. Instead, remember the classic advice to “show, not tell,” by discussing your accomplishments and including recommendations where others vouch for you, too.

Request a Recommendation

Testimonials go a long way. No one goes to a restaurant without first checking the restaurant's reviews, so why would someone want to hire you without a few reviews? Don't be afraid to ask your current or past colleagues, supervisors, or former classmates for recommendations. A good goal is to have a minimum of one recommendation for every role you list.

Update Your Current Responsibilities

Have you just switched jobs and been so busy getting adjusted that you forgot to update your profile? Or, maybe you took on a few new tasks that your contacts should know about. Either way, make sure your current position is up-to-date with your title, location, and responsibilities. After all, that's one of the first things people look at on your profile. Add multimedia components to visually show off your work. This not only provides an actual portfolio piece a recruiter can grab, but it boosts the overall appearance of your profile.



Tips for Gathering References

So you've got your resume just the way you want it. And you're prepared for your phone and face-to-face interviews.

But what about your references?

References remain an important part of the hiring process for companies. Although they don't get as much "press" in this modern age of technology, references are a tried-and-true, old school method of determining which job seekers are worth hiring—so you don't want to overlook them.

It's no longer common practice to list your references on your resume. Although writing "references available upon request" on your resume is now preferred, you must have a solid list of references . . . in case they *are* requested.

Below are tips for gathering such a list:

Make your initial list as large as you can.

Once you do this, you can always pare the list down to your top three references, the ones about which you feel the most confident. As a bonus, you'll be prepared in case an employer requests more than three.

Use references in your area of specialty.

Start with previous supervisors. The key is to list people to whom you've reported, either directly or indirectly.

Identify and use *only* viable references.

It's important to use only references that are willing or able to take the time to help you. After all, if you list somebody as a reference and they don't return the phone calls of a hiring manager, that doesn't reflect very well on you.

Ask previous coworkers.

It is assumed that you will include your past bosses on a list of references, but you do not have to stop there. You can also include coworkers and other people you have worked with – even if it was in a semi-professional capacity. Volunteer groups or community organizations count. Avoid using a friend or relative as a reference. If you do, be certain they can speak directly to your work qualifications.

Contact the people on your list.

If you're not already in touch with these people on a consistent basis, you should re-establish contact with them. For starters, you should ask if they would be willing to provide a reference for you! If they agree, tell them who will be contacting them, as well as the position for which you're applying and the key qualifications. Last but not least, make sure that all of their contact information is correct.



Social Media Do's and Don'ts for Job Seekers

Social media, including sites like LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, can help you find a job and connect with people who can assist you with growing your career. However, it works both ways. Social media, when used the wrong way, can backfire and jeopardize a job offer or even your current job. It's important to be careful and consider what you should do on social media to aid your job search... as well as some bad habits that are best avoided.

Do Create an Online Presence

When you're looking for a job or positioning yourself for career growth, it's important to have an online presence to showcase your skills and experience. Your online social media pages will also help you connect with contacts who can expedite your job search and assist you with moving up the career ladder. Take the time to ensure that all your work-related social pages are updated and ready to be reviewed prior to starting a job hunt.

Do Be Consistent

Does the employment history on your resume match what's on your LinkedIn profile? Does the information you have on your Facebook page (if it's public) match up with the information you have elsewhere online? It's fine if you rework your job descriptions, for example, because targeting your resume is a good thing when applying for a job. What's not okay is if your job titles, companies, and dates don't jive. That's a red flag for prospective employers.

Don't Get Fired

Employers check out candidates on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media sites. And, it's pretty routine to connect with colleagues on social media sites, too. That means that anything you post may be read by your employer or co-workers. If you share company business (good or bad) or post inappropriate content, you could get in trouble with your current manager, and it could even cost you your job, especially if you post on social media while at work. It's not just your current employer — hiring managers often screen candidates' social media and will avoid interviewing or hiring candidates who post inappropriately.

Do Google Your Name and Check What's Online

What shows up when you search your name? Most likely, there's a ton of information, from tweets to photos. It's quite easy for employers to find information you may have preferred to keep private. Much of it can be found by Googling your name. Be aware of what shows up, and if any photos or posts could handicap your job search, change your profile settings or delete the individual posts.

Do Be Careful What You Tweet

Be really careful what you tweet. You don't know who might read it. Just search Twitter for "I hate my job" for an example of what I mean. Hiring managers and bosses are using Twitter, too, and if you say it someone will probably read it. Tweets show up in Google search and you don't want to lose your job because you didn't think before you tweeted, even if you hate it.

Don't Forget Your Facebook Privacy Settings

You may think you're only sharing those photos from last night's very late party with your Facebook connections, but often, people you don't know can see your photos that you're tagged in or read your posts. Take some time to review what strangers, as well as friends of friends, can see.

Do Network Before You Need To

Build your network well in advance of when you need it. Make connections in your industry and career field. Follow career experts. Talk to your contacts on Twitter or the other networking sites. Join Groups on LinkedIn and Facebook, then post and join the discussion. Be engaged and proactive in your communications. By building a network in advance, you won't have to scramble if you unexpectedly lose your job or decide it's time to move on.

Do Give to Get

In a nutshell, give to get. Networking works both ways — the more you are willing to help someone else, the more likely they will be to help you. Take some time every day to reach out to your connections. Write a recommendation on LinkedIn, offer to introduce them to another connection, share an article or news with them. Giving to get really does work — your connections are more likely to return the favor when you've offered to help them.

Don't Connect with Everyone

There is a school of thought that says you should connect with everyone when you're using social media. However, quality is more important than quantity when it comes to connecting. The first question you should ask yourself when making connections is how can the person help me? The second question is what can I do to help them? Before you ask someone to connect, consider what you have in common. That common denominator, regardless of what it is, is what's going to help with your job search.

Don't Spend Time Online on Your Boss's Dime

The temptation, of course, when you're job searching is to spend time looking at job postings, perhaps uploading your resume to apply, talking to contacts, or posting about the trials and tribulations of your job search on a Facebook page. If you were to do that, you certainly wouldn't be the first (or the only) person to do so. Many people job search from work but given the way companies monitor employees, it's not wise to use your work computer or email account for job searching.

DO post as if everything can be seen by everyone.

Even if your Twitter account is set to private and you're sure your Facebook security settings prevent unwanted viewers from viewing your posts, it's better to be safe than sorry. In today's world, your online self is an extension of your offline self. Your personal profile is an extension of your public profile. If you don't want a boss, a friend, or a future employer to see a post, don't take the risk. Keep your online identity positive rather than provocative.

DON'T create a bad first impression online.

Words and photos can easily be misconstrued out of context, so make sure to analyze before posting. If you have to think to yourself "If someone who hasn't met me yet saw this photo, would they have a negative first impression of me?" then ask yourself if the picture is really worth posting. Additionally, vigorously posting about politics, social issues, or personal issues may cause profile viewers to form initial judgments, misguided or not. While your opinions are important to your identity, is your outspoken "Twitter rant" about your former boss worth jeopardizing your future career?

DO use LinkedIn to the fullest.

LinkedIn is arguably the most important site for networking and recruiting in the modern business world. The site is used by people of varying employment levels, including everything from recent grads to big business founders, so make sure your profile stays up to date. Make sure to mention all past work experience, emphasize your skills, and keep your page looking professional. Connect to as many Groups as you deem appropriate. Post positively and reflectively, making sure your presence on the site is demonstrative of who you are. Most importantly, use the networking ability of the site to make real, interpersonal relationships with those you connect with.

DON'T let your LinkedIn detract from who you are.

While sites like LinkedIn are meant to showcase your best qualities, it is easy to turn people off by simply using the site poorly. People quickly will judge you based on your online profile, so try to follow online etiquette guidelines. Don't lie or embellish on your profile. Make sure not to over-post or spam your connections. Never criticize or negatively post in Groups. Don't estrange connections by being generic and impersonal.

DO let your social media profiles become marketing tools for your personal brand.

Consistency is key: keeping information and photos up to date and accurate across all of your social media sites can help market yourself to employers. By emphasizing who you are, what you do, and what you want, it is easy for recruiters to see if you're a

promising potential hire. It also helps you as the searcher understand who you are trying to target with your own personal promotion..

DON'T become a self-marketing machine.

Bragging online is just as bad as bragging in person. If your pages become overwhelmingly self-promotional, they become a deterrent. The beauty of social media is that it allows you to connect with others, so involve your audience; if they feel included in what you say, they'll actually want to see what you post. Additionally, if your posting is mechanical, scripted, or unnatural, it may seem like you exhibit those undesirable traits in real life. Do not let your positive personality traits be covered by impersonal and unrealistic social media behavior.

DO use social media as the beginning point, not the end goal.

Nothing, not even a direct message, can replace a face-to-face, personal conversation. By properly putting yourself out there online, you expose yourself to an internet full of people. Let these online connections propel you to make offline connections. Social media should be used as a helpful tool in sparking real-world relationships.



Sample Interview Questions

- How would you describe yourself?
- Why did you leave your last job?
- What are your long range and short-range goals and objectives?
- What specific goals other than those related to your occupation, have you established for yourself for the next ten years?
- What do you see yourself doing five years from now? Ten years from now?
- What do you really want to do in life?
- What are your long-range career objectives?
- How do you plan to achieve your career goals?
- What are the most important rewards you expect in your career?
- What do you expect to be earning in five years?
- Why did you choose this career?
- Can you explain this gap in your employment history?
- How well do you work with people? Do you prefer working alone or in teams?
- How would you evaluate your ability to deal with conflict?
- Have you ever had difficulty with a supervisor? How did you resolve the conflict?
- What's more important to you – the work itself or how much you're paid for doing it?
- What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
- How would a good friend describe you?
- Describe the best job you've ever had.
- Describe the best supervisor you've ever had.
- What would your last boss say about your work performance?
- What motivates you to go the extra mile on a project or job?
- Why should I hire you?
- What makes you qualified for this position?
- What qualifications do you have that make you successful in this career?
- How do you determine or evaluate success?
- What do you think it takes to be successful in a company like ours?
- In what ways do you think you can contribute to our company?
- Do you have any hobbies? What do you do in your spare time?
- Have you ever been fired or forced to resign?
- What qualities should a successful manager possess?

- Do you consider yourself a leader?
- What are the attributes of a good leader?
- Describe the workload in your current (or most recent) job.
- Which is more important: creativity or efficiency? Why?
- What's the most recent book you've read?
- Describe the relationship that should exist between the supervisor and those reporting to him or her?
- What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?
- Describe the most rewarding experience of your career thus far.
- If you were hiring a job seeker for this position, what qualities would you look for?
- Do you have plans for continued study? An advanced degree?
- In what kind of work environment are you most comfortable?
- How do you work under pressure?
- Are you good at delegating tasks?
- What's one of the hardest decisions you've ever had to make?
- How well do you adapt to new situations?
- Why did you decide to seek a position in this company?
- What can you tell us about our company?
- What interests you about our products?
- What do you know about our competitors?
- What two or three things are most important to you in your job?
- Are you seeking employment in a company of a certain size? Why?
- What are your expectations regarding promotions and salary increases?
- What criteria are you using to evaluate the company for which you hope to work?
- Do you have a geographic preference? Why?
- Are you willing to relocate?
- Are you willing to travel for the job?
- What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
- What have you learned from your mistakes?
- What have you accomplished that shows your initiative and willingness to work?



Preparing for a Panel Interview

Preparing for a panel interview is slightly different than other interviews. Some steps are the same, but there are a few extra areas to focus on when preparing

When preparing for your panel interview, you'll want to cover all of the typical interview preparation steps for any interview – like researching the company, reviewing your resume, coming up with examples and stories you can share to highlight your past accomplishments, etc.

Yet there are some additional things you should do and keep in mind if you want to ace your panel interview and walk in fully prepared for this specific type of interview process. Let's look at the areas to spend extra time focusing on and preparing for with panel interviews.

1. **Body language and eye contact** - Be ready to maintain eye contact with the whole panel, with slightly more attention toward whoever asked the question you're answering. Practice your body language in general – eye contact, posture, keeping your hands and feet still (not tapping), etc. If you don't feel confident or don't have good body language habits, it's going to become a bigger problem in a panel interview or group interview because it's more pressure, more people to make eye contact with and interact with, etc.
2. **Prepare some questions** - It's important to ask a lot of questions in a panel interview. So a big portion of your effort in preparing for the panel interview should be writing down great questions to ask them. When you ask your questions, you can direct a question to a specific person or the entire panel.
3. **Try to find out who will be on the panel in advance** - If you want to prepare to ace your panel interview, you should spend some time learning as much as you can about the people on the panel. How many people are you meeting with? What are their names and job titles? If you're not sure, ask the person who scheduled the interview (the recruiter, HR person, hiring manager, etc.). Then do some research on LinkedIn and find out what type of background these people have. Do they have a more technical background? Is it mostly people from HR and non-technical areas? Does anyone on the panel have the job title you'd have if they hire you? (e.g.

someone who is your peer?). And who are the more senior-level people on the panel, such as your future boss?

All of this will help you feel more confident and relaxed in the interview, and give better interview answer. So don't neglect this part of preparing for your panel interview.

Note: Treat everyone the same in the panel interview. Just because one person is "lower" in the company does not mean you should act any differently or address their questions any differently. In fact, this is good advice for any interview process, and it's something we recommend in the advice across our site. Why? Because you never know who the hiring manager is going to ask an opinion from before making the yes/no decision on whether to hire you. This includes the receptionist too!

4. **Bring a resume for each person on the panel** - This is a simple and easy way to look prepared and make sure everyone in the panel interview is familiar with your background or can quickly catch up at the start of the meeting. So when you prepare for your interview, print out enough copies of your resume so that you're sure you'll have enough to hand out at the beginning. In fact bring a few extras in case someone unexpected joins the panel.
5. **Be ready to take notes** - You're going to be taking in a *lot* of information in the typical panel interview, so this is important. You'll need to remember key facts about the position when you follow-up, when you ask questions later, and when you prepare for future interviews or discuss the role further.
6. **Build rapport and try to make a strong connection** - Do your best to build a connection with as many people in the panel interview as possible. Find common areas of interest when preparing for the interview, share stories, mix your questions into the interview instead of just waiting until the end (this makes it feel more like a back-and-forth conversation, and less like an interrogation). Also make sure to learn everyone's name and use their names in the conversation.

Remember in any interview, and especially a panel interview, they're not just evaluating your skills and experience – they're looking to see how you'll fit in with the current team, company culture and more.

This is also a reason researching the company when preparing for your panel interview is so important.... because you can learn about their current team, company culture and more on their website and social media. Then you can use this information to build a stronger bond and show them the traits they're looking for. But you can't do that if you don't research the company when you prepare for the interview.

How to conclude your panel interview

1. Shake each person's hand and thank them for their time.
2. Get business cards from each person you met so you'll have their names and emails to follow up.
3. Then ask them who will be in touch about next steps, and how long it will take to hear back. That way you'll know when to follow-up after the interview, and who to get in touch with if you have questions.



Interview Preparation

Interviews can be tough – even for seasoned veterans. The interview is, however, your best opportunity to gain insight into the position and company, and to determine how your experience and talent can contribute to the company’s growth and profitability.

Below you will find a list of things you can do to make your interview as successful as it can be. No trick or gimmicks here – just good, solid information to help you prepare and win that job.

- **Do your homework – on the company.** Find out as much about the company, its history, its current situation and its future as you can. Utilize your Search Consultant and the Internet to find periodicals and trade journals, articles, annual reports and 10K reports. Be prepared to ask good questions about the company and its direction.
- **Do your homework – on the position.** Have a thorough understanding of the position, its key duties and primary responsibilities, and what is expected. Be prepared to ask good questions: Who has been successful and why? Who has failed and why? What needs to be done in the first six months? 1st year? Your Search Consultant may be able to provide insight in these areas prior to the interview.
- **Do your homework – on yourself.** Review your career history thoroughly. Review dates, positions, duties and responsibilities and accomplishments. Know your strengths and weaknesses. Be prepared to cite specific examples of accomplishments and how your specific experience can help the company solve some of its problems. Concentrate on your most recent positions, but don’t neglect your early career. Reflect on your successes, so you can adequately impart your strengths when given the chance!

Phone Interview Preparation

Phone interviews are frequently a first step in the interviewing process. In these times, companies often opt for an initial phone interview for the screening of potential candidates. These phone conversations are normally your first contact with a company, therefore your first impression. Make your impact!

Here are a few useful hints to help you through the process:

- Work with your Search Consultant to set up a specific time for the call. This will allow you to be fully prepared to conduct an effective interview.
- Treat the phone interview just as you would a personal, face-to-face interview. Just because it is over the phone does not mean that you should take it lightly or take it less seriously.
- Make sure the phone you plan on using for the call is of high quality. Avoid portable and/or cellular phones.
- If you have an answering machine/voice mail, please make sure your recording is both courteous and professional.
- Make sure family members know how to answer the phone and take messages in your absence. Keep a note pad by the phone for messages and reinforce how important their cooperation is to your search success.
- Be aware of any potential distractions, i.e. radio, television, background conversations, etc. Plan to sit in a quiet room/area where you can speak and think in a productive manner.
- If you have the “call-waiting” feature on your phone, it is best not to interrupt your conversation to answer a call.
- If you have a bad connection and/or have difficulty hearing the other person, offer to call them back.
- Be fully prepared with your notes in regard to 1) the company, 2) the position, 3) yourself (resume). You will then be able to come across as an organized and articulate interviewee.

Again, do not take this step in the interview process lightly. This is a great opportunity to sell yourself and to find out more about the position. Last, but certainly not least, the phone interview is the opportune time to set up your face-to-face meeting. Do not be afraid to ask for the appointment! Have your calendar at hand so you may suggest dates that would be convenient to interview.

Interviewing to “Secure your Success”

Preparation will allow you to enter the interview relaxed and confident which will help you determine if you can fulfill the needs of the company and if they have an opportunity that can enhance your career.

- Arrive fifteen minutes early to the interview, but no earlier. If you arrive any earlier, do not enter the company until 15 minutes prior to be respectful of your interviewer’s time.
- Fill out all applications neatly and completely. Write “negotiable” in the salary section.
- When meeting the interviewer, mirror their demeanor.
- Do not answer questions with a simple “yes or “no”. Sell yourself by using examples and paint a clear picture of where, when, how, what and why you did it.
- Stress your achievements, records and accomplishments.
- Answer all questions to the point; do not ramble on. Role-play some responses before the interview. “Practice makes perfect!”
- Do not make derogatory remarks about previous or present employers.
- Avoid asking questions regarding salary, commission, bonuses or vacation.
- Tell your possible employer what you are going to do for them, NOT what they can do for you.
- Always represent yourself honestly.

Talk to your Search Consultant about specific issues that may be addressed in the interview. Learn about the interview style of those you will be meeting with during the interview.

During the interview you may be asked difficult questions. These questions are designed to see how you will react under pressure and unfamiliar territory. There are no “pat” answers to these questions. Interviewers ask different questions and look for different responses.



Follow-Up Letter

A well-written and timely follow-up letter will enable you to make a positive impression and show your genuine interest in the position. It is an example of both your work habits and writing skills. To gain full advantage of this opportunity, here are a few points to consider:

- Send the letter as soon as possible. This allows you to convey a sense of urgency and a high interest level in the opportunity. Ideally, your letter should go out the next day.
- Be as brief as possible. It shows respect for other's time.
- The body of the letter should address four main points:
 - Thank them for their time.
 - Mention something of interest from your meeting. For example, "I understand the challenges of month-end reporting and have implemented procedures in my current role to expedite the process" or "I remember the days of college applications and hope your son gets accepted to University of Maryland."
 - Express interest and enthusiasm towards the company and position.
 - Highlight experiences/accomplishments that amplify your qualifications, using the manager's own words from the interview.
 - Ask for the next interview.

Have someone carefully proofread your letter, sign a hard copy and drop it in the mail.

Sending thank you letters via e-mail is on the impersonal side, so we recommend avoiding e-mailed thank you letters, unless it is necessary due to timing or special circumstances.

Sample Follow-Up Letter

Date

Mr. John Smith
Vice President
XYZ Company
1234 South Street
Anywhere, VA 12345

Dear Mr. Smith:

I appreciate the time spent with you discussing XYZ Company and the _____ position. It was a pleasure meeting with you, _____ and _____. I feel my qualifications and skills set in _____, _____ and _____ reflect those necessary to be successful at XYZ Company.

At ABC Corporation, I successfully installed a state of the art _____ system on time and under budget, as well as managed a staff of up to fifteen professionals and clerks. I am confident that I have the experience and drive to successfully manage the _____ Department.

I feel an even greater excitement level about the opportunity because it will allow me to attain my goals of _____, _____ and _____.

I look forward to our next meeting to discuss this opportunity in greater detail.

Sincerely,

Michael Brown

This is a sample letter to help you get started. You should customize yours to reflect what is relevant to your interview. If you need assistance with preparing a thank you letter, do not hesitate to contact your Search Consultant for assistance. They will be happy to help you with it.



Best Questions to Ask in a Job Interview

It's your turn! As your job interview comes to a close, one of the final questions you may be asked is, "What can I answer for you?" or "Do you have any questions for me?" Your interviewer will expect you to have some inquiries. Not asking any questions could make you seem unprepared or disinterested, so take the time to have some questions of your own ready to ask the hiring manager.

Asking questions can also give you the opportunity to further highlight some of your qualities, skills, and experience, and show the employer why you're a terrific match for the job.

Responding with very specific questions will allow you to impress your potential employer with your knowledge and interest in the industry while also determining if this is the right job for you.

Make a List of Questions to Ask

Plan ahead and have interview questions of your own ready to ask. You aren't simply trying to get this job - you are also interviewing the employer to assess whether this company and the position are a good fit for you.

Asking questions is a great way to dig into the company culture and the specific day-to-day responsibilities of the job so that, should you be hired, your first week or so in the position won't be accompanied by any major surprises.

You, of course, don't have to ask every question on the list, but having a few good questions ready will help you look like an informed and prepared candidate for the job.

General Guidelines for Asking Questions in an Interview

Avoid "Me" Questions - "Me" questions are those that put yourself ahead of the employer. These include questions about salary, health insurance, vacation time, work hours per week, and other concessions. During an interview, you are trying to demonstrate to the employer how you can benefit the company, not the other way around. Once you are offered a position, you can begin to ask what the company can do for you.

Ask One Question at a Time - Avoid multi-part questions; they will only overwhelm the employer. Each question should have one specific point.

Avoid "Yes" or "No" Questions - Most questions with a "yes," "no," or another one-word answer could likely be answered by searching the company's website. Instead, stick to questions that will create a dialogue between yourself and the employer.

Ask Questions About Multiple Topics - Avoid asking questions about just one subject. For example, if you only ask questions about your manager and his managerial style, the interviewer may assume you have an issue with authority figures.

Ask questions about a variety of topics to demonstrate your curiosity and interest in all aspects of the position.

Don't Ask Anything Too Personal - While it is a good idea to try to establish a rapport with your interviewer, do not ask personal questions that are not public information. For example, if you see a college banner on the employer's wall, you can certainly ask if he went to that college. However, avoid overly personal questions about the interviewer's family, race, gender, etc.

Questions NOT to Ask at a Job Interview

There are some questions that you should avoid asking since they won't present you in a positive light.

- What does this company do? (*Do your research ahead of time!*)
- If I get the job, when can I take time off for vacation? (*Wait until you get the offer to mention prior commitments.*)
- Can I change my schedule if I get the job? (*If you need to figure out the logistics of getting to work, don't mention it now.*)
- Did I get the job? (*Don't be impatient. They'll let you know.*)

Top 30 Best Questions to Ask the Interviewer

Here's a list of suggested questions to ask the interviewer so you can ensure the company is a good match for your qualifications and interests.

1. How would you describe the responsibilities of the position?
2. How would you describe a typical day in this position?
3. Is this a new position? If not, what did the previous employee go on to do?
4. What is the company's management style?
5. Who does this position report to? If I am offered the position, can I meet him or her before making my final acceptance decision?
6. Why is this position available?
7. How many people work in this office/department?
8. How much travel is expected?
9. Is relocation a possibility?
10. What is the typical work week? Is overtime expected?
11. What are the prospects for growth and advancement?
12. How does one advance in the company?
13. Are there any examples of a career path beginning with this position?
14. What can I clarify for you about my qualifications?
15. When can I expect to hear from you?
16. Do you provide professional development opportunities?
17. Do you have any reservations about my qualifications?
18. Do you have a policy for helping new members of the team get on board?
19. What are the biggest challenges of this job?
20. What's the most important thing I should accomplish in the first ninety days?
21. How would you describe this company's values?
22. How has the company changed over the last few years?
23. What are the company's plans for growth and development?
24. What are the biggest rewards of the job and working for this company?
25. What is the best part of working for this company?
26. What's your least favorite part of working here?
27. What type of background do you feel would be best suited for success in this position?
28. Would you like a list of references?
29. If I am extended a job offer, how soon would you like me to start?
30. Are there any other questions I can answer for you?



25 Ways Candidates Strike Out When Interviewing

Companies were surveyed and asked why they did not hire a qualified candidate. The following reasons were noted:

1. Poor personal appearance
2. Lack of interest and enthusiasm
3. Over-emphasis on money
4. Criticism of past employers
5. Failure to have good eye contact with interviewer
6. Limp, “dead fish” handshake
7. Late for the interview
8. Failure to express appreciation for the interviewer’s time
9. Does not ask enough detailed questions about the position
10. Lacks sufficient detail when responding to questions asked by the interviewer
11. Overbearing, over-aggressive, conceited, “know-it-all” complex
12. Inability to express oneself clearly
13. Lack of planning for career and no purpose or goals
14. Lacks confidence, ill at ease
15. Lack of factual information
16. Lack of manners, courtesy
17. Lack of maturity
18. Lack of vitality
19. Indecisive
20. Merely shopping around
21. Cynical
22. Lacks a strong work ethic
23. Intolerant
24. Inability to take criticism/not open to being mentored
25. High pressure type



9 Things Never to Do in a Panel Interview

So you've prepared for the phone interview, a video chat, the one-on-one interview and the salary conversation with HR. But, if you've forgotten to plan for a possible panel interview, you've missed a step.

Panel interviews, for those who haven't encountered them before, involve a candidate sitting across from three or more hiring managers and meeting with them all at once in a 45- to 60-minute interview – cue the panic sweats and vision of a firing squad. Anxiety is normal, but the job interview jitters can be mitigated by anticipating and preparing for these panel interviews. After all, many companies are including these types of meetings in their hiring processes due to time constraints and multiple stakeholders.

As you account for this new step in your job search, there is plenty that you'll need to do to bring your A game. However, there are also nine things you should *never* do in a panel interview – here we break them down.

Do not...

1. **Only address the most senior person in the room** – Everyone in a panel interview may have a vote on whether you join the team, so do not make the mistake of responding only to the senior-level team members. Give everyone your attention, look each person in the eye when responding and give their feedback equal weight.
2. **Forget interviewers' names & roles** – Before any interview, learn the names and responsibilities of every person who will be in the room. Part of your interview prep process is to research each person and get familiar with their names, title and roles. And in the event another interviewer is sprung on you at the last minute, try your hardest to remember their name and address them directly.
3. **Get flustered and give up** – Interview questions can be hard, especially the oddball ones. However, that's no excuse to lose your cool – deep breaths and thoughtful responses are always best. And if you don't know an answer, a great reply is, "I'm not confident in my answer to that one, but I can follow up with you after this interview."

4. **Get defensive** – It's easy to get defensive when interviewers ask about a gap in your resume, recent unemployment or a touchy termination. However, in situations like these, it's best to bite your tongue. You've prepared for these questions, remember? Simply deliver your anecdotal response confidently and whatever you do, don't get defensive. No one wants to hire a hot head.
5. **Ignore your body language** – “You have to stand up straight. You have to smile, look at the person's face,” says body language expert Dr. Lillian Glass. But more importantly, she says, “You have to be interested, not [just] interesting. Be concerned about what you're doing and about what you can do for the company, not what the company can do for you. That's where people really get in trouble, especially millennials. Being too self-absorbed in the workplace can harm your chances for success. You have to talk about what you provide and contribute to the company and your body language [should reinforce] that.”
6. **Rush** – Nervousness can make you whiz through answers and seem harried. Simply put: Slow. It. Down.
7. **Forget to balance answering with listening** – Don't be so worried about the next question that you forget to listen to your interviewers. Be sure you are taking in as much information as you are sharing. After all, the interview process is like dating – each side wants to discover whether the other is the right fit.
8. **Leave the room without asking key questions** – From learning labs to formal mentorship programs, get a sense of what the company offers in the way of professional growth and development opportunities. After all, if you proceed with this company, you want to know that you have a future there and opportunities to be challenged.
9. **Wrap up before getting everyone's contact information** – You want to acknowledge each person who interviewed you, so make sure to get business cards as you go in order to send thoughtful thank-you notes. Also, try to jot down a note or two as you speak with various team members so that you can include a specific detail in each of your correspondences.