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PREPARING FOR A JOB INTERVIEW PUT YOUR BEST FOOT FORWARD

Every interview conversation is an opportunity to advance your personal brand, so it's in your best interest to be prepared to make the interview a productive conversation for you as well as for the interviewer. Whether it's a telephone or face-to-face, the interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the candidate to discover how or if each meets the other's needs and wants. As a candidate, you're interviewing to gather information about the company's business goals, challenges and the role for which the company is hiring, so you can compare what you learn to your goals. The interviewer is gathering information to evaluate your skills and experiences to determine if you can add value to advance the company goals. Usually, it's the best prepared candidate who gets hired, not the most qualified.

Your goal in an interview is to learn:

- (1) What does the job involve?
- (2) Can you do the job?
- (3) Do you want to do the job?

Use this document as a tool. If you follow the advice laid out here, you'll advance your personal brand and learn what you need to know to move closer to a new opportunity.

1. Before the Interview

A. Confirm when, where and with whom you will be interviewing. Print out directions to the specific location and budget your travel time to accommodate unexpected travel delays.

B. Research the Company

- Review the company website so you know the following information: What products and/or services do they sell? To whom do they sell?
- Look for company information intended for investors, including googlefinance.com. Notice to whom the company is compared; these companies are their competitors. Listen to the CEO quarterly conference call; listen for the company's challenges, results and focus. Pay special attention to the vocabulary used on the website and in the conference call – it helps you understand:
 - Is revenue, market share or profit most important?
 - How are they addressing their customers' needs?
 - Are they casual or formal in their communications?

- Include the information you glean from their website or news articles into your questions and interview conversation. For example: *"I know you've announced that you are merging with company XYZ. Tell me about the opportunities that will open up."*

C. Research the interviewer(s). Review Google search results and LinkedIn profiles of everyone with whom you are meeting so you can identify areas of common interest or experience.

D. Prepare questions for the interviewer. Ask questions about how the role for which you're interviewing connects with the company's goals and challenges. Ask questions that help you understand if the work you are expected to do is work you can and want to do. Asking questions shows your interest in the opportunity and will help you decide if this is the right one for you.

E. Bring enough copies of your current resume to give to all individuals with whom you'll be interviewing.

F. Dress professionally. This means suit and tie for men, suit (skirt or slacks) with professional blouse for women. Subdued

makeup, hair and jewelry. Tattoos covered. What you wear and your appearance won't get you a job, but it can take away your chances.

G. Arrive fifteen minutes early for the interview and turn off your cell phone.

H. Finally, don't pre-judge the opportunity. You don't know enough about it yet to make an informed decision.

2. Bring Smart Questions

Create a set of questions to demonstrate your interest in the opportunity, the company and the interviewer.

- 1) *"Tell me what success looks like in this position. In other words, if I get the job and am in this role for 90 days, how will you know I'm being successful?"*
- 2) *"How will my success in this role contribute to the company's goals?"*
- 3) *"What are the most important relationships for me to establish in my first 90 days? What's most important to those folks about the person in this role?"*
- 4) *"Tell me about my predecessor. What did the person who held this position do well? And, not-so-well?"*
- 5) *"What do you like about working for the company and what keeps you here?"*
- 6) *"Do you have any hesitations about my ability to do the job?"* You can clarify any doubts the interviewer may have if you can execute the job with the skills and experience you have.

While at the company – observe the following:

- What is the vibe in the building? Energy? Joy? Purpose? Stress?
- How do people interact in the hallway? Wave, greet, smile, laugh?
- Are people on time? Are they purposeful, professional?
- What is the interaction between chains of command? Reverent? Compatible? Fearful?
- Could you see yourself working here, fitting in?

3. Recognize Behavior-Based Questions

Many interviewers ask behaviorally based questions to understand how you have tackled problems or implemented solutions in your work history, and to determine if your skills will transfer over to this prospective new work environment.

These questions usually begin with: "Tell me a time when..." "Give me an example of when..." or "Describe how you..." Use specific examples when answering these questions to show how your specific skills have produced results for previous employers.

Interviewer: "Tell me about a time when you had to sell into a new market and what was the outcome."

Candidate: "In the fall of 2013, I was given the responsibility of expanding our relatively unknown product into our competitor's number one market. I had six months to get five major distributors; here's how I did it in four months..."

Or

Interviewer: "Describe how you meet a deadline."

Candidate: "Let me share with you a project I recently completed two months ahead of deadline..."

If the interviewer doesn't ask you a behaviorally based question, answer their question as if they did. Again, use specific examples of how your work at previous companies contributed to their top and bottom line. Remember, you're trying to demonstrate you have the skills and experience for the position.

4. Other Questions to Expect

"Tell me about you" This is your "three minute commercial" and your answer to the question should include four parts:

1. Summary statement: "I have seventeen years of experience designing innovative medical devices."
2. Specific accomplishments: "My designs have become the standard for the industry."
3. Summary statement: "So you can see my designs have helped increase revenue for the companies with which I've worked."
4. Question to open a discussion: "How does my background compare to what you're working to accomplish at your organization?"

"Why do you want to work for our company?" Researching the company will help you answer this question. Find some of the recent successes or challenges of the company. If they have a YouTube channel, watch some of their recent videos. Your answer should connect your skills and accomplishments with what you learned from your research about the company.

"Why should I hire you?" Think as the interviewer. They're asking themselves what's in it for them to hire you. So instead of saying you have the skills and experience to do the work, say how your skills will benefit them as this example illustrates: "Right now your biggest challenge is keeping cost down on the roll out of XX. I've rolled out similar products into the market and cut cost by streamlining duplicate efforts. I know the pressure a manager feels to keep costs down; it keeps them up at night."

"How much do you want to make?" You never ask about salary. The minute you do, the interviewer will think money, not the opportunity, is more important to you. However, the interviewer may ask you about salary history and expectations.

Here are two ways to answer the question:

1. "Here's what I currently make and (recruiter's name) is aware of my compensation expectations. I've asked him/her to handle that for me and I believe when you and he/she discuss compensation, it will be fair and competitive."
2. "I feel the opportunity is the most important issue, not salary. If we decide to work together, I'm sure you'll make a fair offer."

You have shared with your recruiter what your desired, realistic and walk-away offer is, so let them negotiate the best offer for you. If you negotiate your offer, you run the risk of overvaluing or undervaluing yourself and bruising a relationship with a prospective employer.

"What's a weakness of yours?" The best way to answer this is to share with the interviewer a specific challenge you had, what you did to overcome it and what you learned about yourself. Here's how one candidate answered this:

"Let me share this story: In August of 2006, I just began my new position as Director of Sales for company X and was given the challenge of getting five new distributors in six months. Company Y, our major competitor, had 75% share of the market. I was worried because our brand was not well known. I'm competitive, so I had to learn how to lead a sales team of type-A personalities. It took six months and two weeks to get five distributors. What I learned is that when you believe in the talent you have, they will lead with you."

6. Ask For the Job

Before you end the interview, close for the next step in the process. Ask for the job; it's the difference between someone shopping around and someone who's committed to making a move. Here are some examples:

1. "I like what I've heard, when can I start?"
2. "Do I have your vote that I'm the right person for the position?"
3. "I have my calendar with me. What's the next step?"

7. Follow-up

- A. Go to GRN's UR Hired* app while the interview is fresh in your mind and provide feedback. Then call your recruiter for an in-depth conversation about the interview and to discuss next steps. (* The UR Hired app can be found in Apple's App Store or Android's Play Store by searching 'GRN's UR Hired')
- B. Email a thank you note or follow up note immediately to those individuals who interviewed you; it can make a difference. Include some takeaways you received from the interview experience.

8. Counteroffer

Accepting a counteroffer is a bad idea. Ask yourself, "Why does it take me leaving for my current employer to want to keep me?" If your current employer offers you a counteroffer, they're thinking of themselves and keeping you on as a temporary solution until they find your replacement.

9. Resignation

Your recruiter will give you a sample resignation letter, and work with you to build a professional exit plan.