**INTERVIEW PREPARATION GUIDE**

**BASICS**

1. **Attire**

* We put this first b/c it might require a run to the dry cleaners or shopping. Make sure what you want to wear fits and is clean and pressed. Interview attire often sits on a hanger indefinitely until an interview comes along. Make sure you’re ready to look good.
* We still lean towards a suit for first impressions. The rule has become more flexible but ‘business casual’ or ‘nice jeans and shirt’ has too many different definitions. Know your audience. Choose wisely. It’s tough to go wrong with a suit. It’s easy to go wrong with business casual.

1. **Information**

* Confirm address, who to ask for and names and titles of people you’ll be meeting.

**HOW TO PREPARE**

Preparing is more than reading a job description and picking out the right suit. Taking notes is one of the most important and underrated steps in the preparation process. It sounds remedial to some. In my experience, even the most seasoned executive comes across more confident and concise when taking notes before the day of an interview. It allows you the necessary time to determine what you want to share and prioritize. Additionally, after taking notes and reading over them several times, you actually come across as prepared instead of sounding like a broken record regurgitating memorized lines. The act of taking notes is as important, or more, than the notes themselves.

1. **Review Job Description & Resume**

* Write down examples that relate: Responsibilities, projects, accomplishments, results.
* Think about how you would summarize and communicate your experience. You can’t cover everything when summarizing your background. Tailor your presentation based on the interviewer, the position, the company and their needs.

1. **Research**

* Company: Website, press releases, any recent news, google the company name, financials.
* People: Search for the interviews on LinkedIn. Understanding their background could lead to better questions or commonalities in your experiences or connections.

1. **Self-Evaluation**

* You must evaluate not only your strengths and weaknesses but also competitive advantages and disadvantages. Your strength isn’t a competitive advantage if the top 3 candidates have the same strength. Strengths are important but dig deeper. After making the list of finalists, what can separate you from the others?
* It’s important to think about your weaknesses. It is rare to find someone with 100% of any job description. Don’t leave an interview without addressing a specific weakness. If it’s an experience or skill set you’ve not had the opportunity to develop, highlight a skill you picked up from scratch. Don’t just say you’re a quick

learner. Communicate a time and situation where you learned something from scratch. Additionally, having the opportunity to learn something from scratch probably means someone had confidence in you because they thought you could handle it.

The interviewer didn’t bring up your weakness? Find a way to work it in. If you don’t, it will likely remain on the “con” side of the ledger. If discussed, you at least have a fighting chance. It shows you did your homework and came prepared to give a strong pitch for yourself. That’s often more attractive than someone more qualified that interviews like they already have it in the bag.

1. **Questions**

* **Questions to ask:** Be sure to think about questions you want to ask. Be sure you have unique questions that show you did your homework and are genuinely interested in learning more about the opportunity and the organization.
* **Questions they will ask you:** There are questions you always want to be prepared for such as what are your strengths, why are you interested in this opportunity, why are you interested in our company. Some of these questions are your chance to show you’ve done your homework. Tailor your answers to this specific opportunity and organization. If you don’t, they’ll know. If you do your homework your answers to these questions will be sincere and specific to this particular opportunity.
* Our career center has lists of questions you can review: [Platinum Recruiting Career Center](https://www.platinumjobs.com/accounting-jobs-indianapolis-in/career-center/preparing-for-interviews/)

**WRAP-UP**

1. **Review**

* Done taking notes? Come back to the notes after taking a break and just read over them a few times. I would even read them out loud. Sometimes your message sounds different verbally than it does written or in your head. You don’t need to memorize your notes. You shouldn’t. The notes are all things you’ve done or experienced so it should be pretty natural. Reading over your notes a few times will simply solidify in your mind what you want to share during the interview and how you want to share it.

1. **Get a Good Night Sleep**

* Sure, we all stayed up late cramming for plenty of exams back in the day. Don’t do that. While you might think this guide seems long, it’s more of a reference. It honestly doesn’t require that much time. Maybe an hour a few days before an interview and an hour or two the day before. The work, which is your experience, is already done. Preparing is just gathering, summarizing and prioritizing what you want to share.