



# CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON BUREAU OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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## Interviewing for Success **GO FOR IT!**

3/25/2016

Interviewing is a competitive process. Becoming the candidate of choice does not happen by accident. Being successful takes practice. Here are some techniques to help you:



### **STAR!**

When answering interview questions, think **STAR!** Then formulate your answers by describing:

**S**ituation, or  
**T**ask, and  
The **A**ction you took, and  
The **R**esults you achieved.

### **THE BASICS:**

- ★ Do not assume that the people interviewing you know all about your skills, abilities, and experience
  - ★ Use complete examples
  - ★ Avoid using acronyms or jargon
  - ★ Describe yourself positively – talk about your accomplishments and successes
  - ★ Use any “insider” knowledge to your advantage
1. **Do your homework.** Review the organization’s website, mission, vision, and core values, as well as current programs and information that is relevant to the job you are applying for. That way you will have information to talk about in the interview that shows the interview panel you are really interested in the position. Read the recruitment announcement carefully. Write down the technical and interpersonal qualifications for the position, and make notes about how your own skills, abilities, and experience match those qualifications. Then, prepare to tell the interview panel about how your knowledge, skills, and experience match the job and the organization, and also how this position fits into your career goals.
  2. **Have fun!** Relax and try to enjoy the process. Take a deep breath before you speak. Make friendly eye contact with everyone on the interview panel. Try to remember their names. You might even try responding to a specific question asked by someone on the panel by using their name.
  3. **Look for “Transferrable Skills”.** Relate your current or past experience from jobs, volunteerism, internships or education to the job that you are applying for. Be prepared to give one or two examples from your experience that demonstrate your knowledge and skills for the position for which you are applying.



### *Examples of Transferrable Skills:*

Communication – interpersonal, written, presentations, sales, persuasion

Computer – data entry, reports, letters, long documents, trouble-shooting, training new users

Leadership – performance management, coaching, driving goals and results, leading a project

Customer service – serving external or internal customers, meeting service goals such as selling products or reducing complaints, taking orders, answering phones, greeting walk-in customers



4. **Remember the good stuff!** Hopefully you have been keeping a “brag book”, which is just a file where you store your career successes/achievements (awards, certificates, “kudos” e-mails to your manager about how you “wowed” your customer, etc.) and other great things about you. Also keep an evolving list of your strengths and your best qualities. That way, you can make a list of your successes and strengths as they relate to the job you are applying for. Write a few notes on what the keys to your successes were. If you have difficulty identifying specific achievements or admirable qualities, reach out to others. Colleagues, friends, or former employers will gladly provide feedback and examples of your excellence. You may also want to review past performance appraisals for common themes or achievements you may have overlooked. To remember all the projects you have worked on, go through your calendar for the past year.

5. **Co-manage the process.** First, really think about how your skills and experiences match what the hiring job will require. Then, find ways to talk about those skills and experiences in the interview, even if the hiring manager doesn't *specifically* ask you about them. Be proactive in the conversation. For example: *“It seems like this job needs someone who is outgoing and comfortable with people. My experiences as a foreign exchange student gave me the opportunity to meet all kinds of people. That was an experience that really helped me to become comfortable meeting people. I also learned how to help other students feel comfortable in those situations, too. I can see how that experience could help me become successful in this job.”*

6. **Understand the organization/team.** Prepare at least one or two well thought-out questions, for when you are given the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview. Your questions should let the panel know that you have done some homework. **Examples:**

- This position fits well into my long-term goals to obtain a management position. Would this position offer opportunities for lead work assignments?
- The recruitment announcement discussed \_\_\_\_\_. I am interested in this area. Can you elaborate on \_\_\_\_\_?
- Could you please tell me something about the orientation and training for this position?

7. **TELL THEM why you are the best candidate.** Even if the panel does not ask you why you are the best candidate for the job, be prepared to tell them at the close of the interview. This is not “bragging” – it is just helping the panel to clearly see some specific reasons why you would be the best candidate.



8. **Ask for the job.** If you want the job, tell the interview panel at the close of the interview. **Example:** “This position seems like it would be interesting, challenging, and a job where I could really contribute to your organization. I really hope that you will consider me for this position.”

9. **Say “Thank you”.** Thank the interview panel for the opportunity to interview for the position. Then, leave your interview with confidence!

#### INTERVIEW ALERT!



10. The **absolutely essential** thing you must do is **PRACTICE!** You must practice speaking out loud about your qualifications, and you must practice *timing* your answers. There is **no substitute** for practicing interview questions by *speaking out loud*.

**Need more information?** Go to [www.PortlandOnline.com/BDS](http://www.PortlandOnline.com/BDS) and click on [Career Opportunities](#) to find our **Helpful Hints for Applying for City Jobs**. Or, visit the City of Portland Online Career Center, at: [www.PortlandOregon.gov/JOBS](http://www.PortlandOregon.gov/JOBS).

With these 10 tips – plus some solid practice time - you will be ready to **GO FOR IT!**