Preparing for the Interview

1. **Research the organization:**
   You should know basic information about the organization. To find the information, study the organization’s website, note the organizations or associations that they are affiliated with. You can also talk to anyone in your network that has a connection with the organization or research them on LinkedIn. If you know the names of your interviewers, it may help to review their profiles. Write down any questions that might come up during your research so you can ask the employer during the interview.
   - What services or products do they offer?
   - What is their philosophy, value, or mission statement?
   - What are some of their significant past or present projects?
   - What significant trends, issues, or opportunities exist within the industry?

2. **Prepare examples and stories to demonstrate your qualifications:**
   It is extremely important to provide the employers with specific examples of when you have demonstrated your competencies, skills and personal attributes in past experience. You should spend some time preparing your examples before the interview, so you don’t have an awkward silence while you try to come up with a good example. Here is an exercise to help you prepare:
   - Draw a line down the center of a piece of paper. On the left side, make a bulleted list of what the employer is looking for based on the job posting. On the right side, make a bulleted list of the specific times in the past that you have demonstrated the corresponding skill/competency that the employer is seeking.

3. **Research salaries to determine your worth:**
   You can visit alis.alberta.ca/wageinfo or payscale.ca to research the average salaries for similar positions. Prepare your desirable salary range based on the information you find.

4. **Confirm your references’ availabilities:**
   People go on vacation, get sick and leave jobs. Make sure your reference contact information is correct and that they will be available to provide references in a timely manner. Inform your references of your upcoming interview. Send them a copy of the posting and your resume so that they can be prepared.

5. **Prepare questions to ask the interviewer:**
   Good questions to ask include questions about orientation, training, professional development opportunities, the work environment and the position. Avoid asking about the compensation. It is to your advantage to discuss the compensation package after the employer has made the offer.
6. Plan for your professional appearance:
A pant/skirt suit is a safe choice but not necessarily your only option. For males, a pressed shirt with a tie and dress pants could do. For females, a nice blouse and tailored skirt is a good combination. If you are unsure whether an outfit is appropriate or not, err on the conservative side. It is better to overdress than to underdress. Keep your make-up, accessories and cologne or perfume to a minimum.

Common Interview Questions:
1. Tell us about yourself.
   - Do not recite your resume or tell your life story.
   - Briefly explain your education and highlight relevant experiences/personal attributes.
2. What are your strengths/weaknesses?
   - Focus on the strengths that will help you do the job well. Give examples.
   - Be honest about your weaknesses but also explain steps you have taken to improve them.
3. Describe your ideal job/supervisor.
   - Job: List a few characteristics of your ideal job and relate them to this job.
   - Supervisor: Focus on how you want to be treated/managed and do not say anything negative about the supervisor.
4. Why are you interested in this position?
   - Explain how the position matches your career goals, interests, strengths and experience.
5. What do you know about our organization?
   - Do not pick the low hanging fruit, i.e., the first thing you can see on their website.
   - Spend time doing research and identify key information about the organization that resonates with you.

Behavioral or Hypothetical Questions:
- Tell me about a time when....
- When was the last time you...?
- What would you do if...?

Tackle these questions with the STARS method:
- Situation: describe a specific event or situation
- Task: describe the specific task that needed to be completed
- Action: explain the actions you took in response
- Results: what was the outcome of your actions?
- Skills: what skills did you develop/demonstrate?

Need some practice? Book a mock interview appointment through MacEwanLife.