

How to Land Your Next Dream Job by Interviewing Like a Consultant

Exciting news! Your hard work in the job search has paid off—you've landed an important interview! Now it's time to hunker down and prepare. What will you say? How can you best position yourself? What questions should you ask? How can you keep your confidence high during what might be a nerve-wracking, winner-takes-all interview?

For answers to these questions, let's turn to the world of management consultants. Management consultants, experts at gathering, assimilating and communicating information that demonstrates value to an organization, have much to teach us about tried and true interview success tactics.

When Margita L., ex-consultant extraordinaire, secured an interview for a promotional opportunity at corporate headquarters for one of the largest consumer electronics outlets in the United States, she prepared for it by leveraging tools she gleaned from her previous experience as a consultant at a global consulting firm. "Interviewing is like scoping a new project," says Margita. "The initial preparation determines success." Her approach worked—it translated to a leadership role.

Here, Margita shares four interview preparation tactics culled directly from her experience as a management consultant. She also tells you about the personality trait that clinches success at the interview.

1. Conduct a cursory organization assessment. Gather as much information about the company as is possible. Review the company's Web site and search the Internet for information about key executives. Dig for organization maps and financial information. Become an expert in product and/or service offerings. Find out how your prospective job role contributes to the overall success of the company. After this step, you'll clearly see where and how you'll be allocating valuable career time should you secure the position.
2. Conduct a SWOT analysis to uncover the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the organization. Identifying internal and external factors that are favorable or detrimental to the organization provides clues as to whether the company is a good fit for you. Also document lingering questions from your research and determine if you'll need this information to inform discussions during the interview.
3. Define key stakeholders. Gain clarity in the types of individuals and groups that interact regularly with your prospective job role. Savvy management consultants develop stakeholder maps to understand constituents and their level of power and influence in the organization. For your interview preparation, this step translates into identifying the key personality traits you'll need to succeed in the

role; it is also the step that helped Margita crystallize how to position herself as the ideal candidate. “ I identified the criteria leadership would use to measure the success of the division—and what value I would be expected to add as its director.”

4. Analyze research results. Ask the question, “Why me?” Margita agrees. “Know yourself,” she says. “Don’t pretend to be something you’re not.” Really analyze your research results. Is there a problem the role is tasked with solving? How can I add value to the organization? Confirm that the role fits into your overall career plan and then build the business case for optimizing your candidacy to secure the position.

And finally, be curious. Curiosity as a personality trait comes across as passion and enthusiasm. It’s also a scale-tipper in the eyes of hiring managers. Ask insightful questions and thoughtfully answer those asked of you. Actively engage in the conversation—remember: an interview is a two-way discussion. Now you’re ready, armed with knowledge and confidence, to go forward and conquer!

Written by Dianna Sadlouskos. Ms. Sadlouskos is a management consultant whose professional experience includes 20 years work with companies big and small across a variety of industries facilitating breakthrough strategies and actions for innovating organizational effectiveness. She is also a veteran career coach—guiding clients in maximizing career potential. For more information go to www.sadlouskos.com.