

# **Last-Minute Interview Preparation**

*By Doug Hardy, Monster Staff Writer*

Even if you have less than a day before your job interview, you can outshine the competition with a little interview preparation.

The following four tasks will take you about four hours, plus a five-minute phone call, to complete, and you'll walk into the interview confident you'll be successful.

## **1) Conduct Basic Interview Research**

To prepare for an interview, find out as much as you can beforehand. Call the person who scheduled your interview and ask:

- Who will you be talking to?
- Will you meet the manager you'd work for, or will you just talk to HR?
- What are the interviewer's expectations?
- What's the dress code? Dress better than suggested. Most times, it's best to wear a professional suit. You'd be amazed how many candidates show up looking like they're going to class, not presenting a professional demeanor.
- Get directions to the office. Plan to leave early. Keep a phone number to call if you get stuck on the bus or in traffic. If you arrive late and stressed, the interview will not go well.
- If you don't have a detailed job description, ask for one.

That's the five-minute phone call!

## **2) Learn About the Company Online**

Do some fast Web research, which will give you something to talk about in addition to the job description. Go to the employer's Web site, or search the Web for information such as:

- How big is the company in terms of annual sales or employees?
- What does the company say about its products or services?

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- What recent news (such as a new product, a press release, an interview with the CEO) can you discuss?
- If the company is public, the boilerplate at the bottom of its press releases will tell you a lot.

Basic research should take you about an hour.

### **3) Think of Some Stories**

Be ready to answer typical interview questions with a story about yourself.

To prepare, write down and memorize three achievement stories. Tell about times you've really felt proud of an achievement at work or school.

These stories demonstrate all those hard-to-measure qualities like:

- Judgment
- Initiative
- Teamwork
- Leadership

Wherever possible, quantify, with specific numbers, dollar amounts and percentages, what you've done. For example:

- Increased sales by **20 percent**
- Cut customer call waiting time by **50 percent**
- Streamlined delivery so that most customers had their job done in **two days instead of 5 previously**

By the way, non-work achievement stories are good too; if you volunteer for the local food pantry, write down a time you overcame a big challenge or a crisis there.

Achievement stories make you memorable, which is what you want. There's an exercise in *Monster Careers: Interviewing* called "Mastering the Freestyle Interview," which helps you develop these stories into compelling sales points.

Take the time you need: at least three hours on this task.

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### **4) Pick Your Outfit, and Go to Bed Early**

Lay out your interview outfit the night before, get a good night's rest and always get an early start.

The last thing you want is to waste all of your interview preparation by arriving flustered and panicked because you couldn't find a parking space!

**(End)**