



Win/Win Interviewing Action Guide

Interviewing is a step in the hiring process. A very important step, in that it selects final candidates from many applicants and strongly influences who will be first to get the job offer.

Why call this Win/Win Interviewing? Good question. We see you as someone early in your professional career, perhaps even a student internship. Later in life you will harvest the value of your knowledge and skills, but now, you need to augment your education by applying and learning new skills under pragmatic working conditions. Your primary goal, therefore, is to find a job with an organization committed to developing you.

The hiring organization also wants real value from your current skills. If you win the job offer and accept the job, then commit to meeting or exceeding their expectations. Sure, take on a challenge, but don't oversell. Hence, Win/Win.

The Hiring Process:

Search	Resume & Cover Letter	Interview Preparation	Win/Win Interview
There are lots of talented people seeking job opportunities. You need to pursue many to ensure that you will be offered one that meets your needs.	Your resume previews YOU to the hiring organization. It becomes YOU until you meet in person. Resumes and cover letters earn you invitations to interview and are the first step in interview preparation.	The most important step in the hiring process. Weak preparation leads to poor interviews. Research prospective employers. Think through what makes you special and valuable to the employer.	We will develop this in this Action Guide. Relax, listen, tell the truth and explain why you are an outstanding candidate for this job and this organization.

Note that we haven't included a step for negotiating compensation. Athletes and entertainers negotiate compensation because they are commodities with career risk. You are a professional with unique skills and you plan to increase your value over time. You want "fair" compensation and expect to earn more in the future.

Search – Go to your favorite search engine and enter "Job Search Strategies". You will find plenty of good advice and tips.

Resumes and Cover Letters - Again, search for “Resumes”. You will find many great resources and examples. Also see some excellent References at the end of this Action Guide.

Here are some tips we see as important. Most resumes are initially reviewed, for a minute or less, by screeners who eliminate “unqualified candidates”. Your resume has to beat the screen. Believe us, details count. Your resume should be 2 pages or less, have no spelling or grammar errors, and be laid out for easy reading with sufficient white space.

Resume preparation actually begins your interview preparation. Always emphasize those skills and accomplishments that may benefit the hiring organization. For example, if you played on a sports team that won the state championship, that’s important to you but of no interest to an employer. If you were elected captain of your team, that indicates leadership potential.

In your planning, think about your two to four greatest accomplishments that an employer would see as valuable. Emphasize these in your resume. Remember that you only have two pages, so be focused and concise. You are special, so don’t be boring; use a high energy, active writing style that motivates them to interview you. Don’t forget to include contact information and remember, you’re in the business world, so frequently check your email account and respond promptly. Finally, include computer skills and foreign languages (we live and work in a global world). Don’t clutter your resume with references, just state that they are available upon request.

The Cover Letter or introductory email is an important adjunct to your resume. It should be brief, ½ page maximum, and powerfully written. (Note: See the APEX writing style, Appendix C, in the [ZF Career Strategy Guide](#)) Learn about your potential employer using the internet and talk to people who may have worked or done business with them. Customize your Cover Letter by describing why you fit well for them and close by asking for a personal interview.

Interview Preparation

Your interview isn’t about you, it’s about how you can fill your potential employer’s current and future needs. Interview preparation, therefore, is learning what’s most important to them and matching your unique skills and personal qualities to their critical needs. Hence, preparation.

In today’s world, access to information is easy. Quality preparation, however, requires time and concentration to learn from the information. Start with websites, most have “about us” and many have a greeting by management. If the employer is a larger, public company they will disclose much more including a letter from the CEO to shareholders in their Annual Report. Next, think about anyone you know or know of who may have worked there or done business with them. Once you find one contact, they can introduce you to others. Then assemble your notes and ask: What’s important to them and how can I best contribute? If you are energized by their needs and believe you can really help, you’re on your way.

Create three lists:

1. Employer Profile
2. My Profile
3. Culture Profile

Employer Profile

Think career; beyond the specific job opening. Sure, you're likely to change jobs, but seek a long-term opportunity. Start with the basics:

Do they have a stated mission?

What are their products and/or services?

Who are their customers? Do you use their product or services?

What is their reputation among their customers? Are they a market leader?

Are their customers other businesses or the retail consumers?

If a public company:

How large are they? Are they growing? Trends?

Are they profitable? Do an internet search on investment research about them. Read the conclusions.

Is it a subsidiary of a larger company?

Speak with current or former employees. Contact any you might know. If not, try LinkedIn (linkedin.com). Note: If you're not a LinkedIn member, consider joining because it's an effective site to begin building your professional profile. You will probably find employees by simply entering your potential employer in LinkedIn Search. You can scan profiles to find interesting people to contact.

From speaking with current or former employees, do people like working there? Why? What are any common complaints? Do they have high employee turnover?

From this research, what do you think are their highest priority needs?

Start drafting questions you want to ask during the interview. During the actual interview, the fact that you've invested time preparing should impress them.

My Profile

As you go through this, you will identify questions that you will want to discuss during the interview.

Start with your resume and begin a personal assessment. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Do you have any special constraints; such as location, travel, working hours, etc.?

Assuming this job is early in your career ask yourself:

1. Am I seeking an opportunity to learn and grow?
2. What strengths do I want to build my career on?
 - a. Technical skills such as science, engineering, math, finance and accounting?
 - b. Interpersonal skills such as marketing, sales, human resources, leadership?
 - c. Some type of combination?

You will likely modify these as you gain experience, but you need to understand your current thinking.

Also, question how the company helps develop their employees to help them reach their potential.

Culture Profile

Just as individuals have personal values, organizations have shared values – called culture. Their true culture is how they operate; not necessarily, their formally stated culture. An effective culture reflects leadership and builds organizational trust. A self-serving culture typically leads to politics and Win/Lose behavior.

In many ways the match between the employer's culture and your personal values will determine your energy and enjoyment working there. Does this employer share a vision or mission statement? This often discloses elements of their culture.

A great question to ask employees is: "What do you think are senior management's top priorities?" Are they customer and employee centric or do they emphasize shareholders and management?

Does the organization invest in their products and employees? Beware of a wide use of Gigs or contractors. Employers may use contracting in place of hiring permanent employees because they have an immediate need for a specific skill, but want the ability to end the contract when no longer needed.

Your conversations with current or former employees should disclose their values and culture.

Get Ready:

With all this in mind, go to [Tony Beshara's Cheat Sheet](#) and develop your answers to these highly likely questions. Beshara is a highly experienced author and advisor on finding the right job. Note: Cheat Sheet is an unfortunate term, this is a professional interview preparation guide.

Clicking the link will put you in Tip #42, questions a good interviewer will ask you. Develop your replies and practice answering the question, when asked. At the bottom of Tip #42 it offers a click to Tip #43. This tip suggests specific questions you might ask to learn more about the employer and its culture.

Good preparation is a lot of work and if you don't prepare then don't be surprised by the outcome. Remember; you're a professional.

Interview:

If you're well prepared, your interviews will be fun and rewarding. Even if you are interviewing for a junior, entry-level job, be professional. Professionals are positive and rarely complain, they look for solutions and learning opportunities. Just like great athletes and entertainers, professionals' practice to achieve superior skills.

You have limited time, stay on topic and don't get distracted into unimportant topics. Don't oversell. Dress professionally, even for virtual interviews. Relax.

Habit number five in Stephen Covey's widely read "7 Habits of Highly Effective People" is:

Seek First to Understand ... Then to be Understood

Listen carefully because the interviewer will disclose what's important to the employer. And, if you're well prepared and ask good questions, you will be ready to describe why you are uniquely qualified to meet their needs.

Expect to see a growing use of virtual interviews. Interviews go beyond just exchanging information; you want to begin building trusting relationships. Focus on the interviewer, you will likely be interviewed by more than one person, the hiring manager and others whose opinion he/she values. This is an election and they all have a vote.

Learn about Personality Styles (See References: Tony Beshara's "Acing the Interview" Chapter 2).

Try to identify each interviewer's personality style and adapt your style to complement the interviewer. See the brief table below – for example give Analyticals lots of detail, but less to Expressives or Drivers. You might share some personal information with Amiables and not with Drivers.

Beshara and others recommend understanding personality styles. This awareness and skill will help you throughout your career and life.

Personality Styles	Characteristics
Analytical	Focus: Details, Numbers, More Information & Analysis Characteristics: Organized, Scheduled and Risk Averse.
Driver	Focus: Control, Action & Urgency Characteristics: Blunt, Busy, Wants Power
Amiable	Focus: Relationships, To be liked, Consensus Characteristics: Easy going, Trusting, Patient, Risk Averse
Expressive	Focus: Limited details, Energy and Enthusiasm, Loyalty Characteristics: Outgoing, Visionary, Risk Tolerance

A powerful questioning technique is to ask "open ended" questions followed by clarifying questions. For example, if the job is a customer service call center, you might ask what are the biggest challenges reported by others doing this job? The answers might include angry customers. You might then ask, what approach works best when this occurs?

Request the interviewers name and contact info and send a brief email thanking them for spending time with you. Mention something that you found helpful or, perhaps, ask a clarifying question.

References

[Zenie Foundation Career Strategy Guide](#)

[Zenie Foundation – Interview Resources](#)

Three excellent books by Tony Beshara: Clear and easy to read references

[The Job Search Solution: The Ultimate System for Finding a Great Job Now!](#)

[Acing the Interview: How to Ask and Answer the Questions That Will Get You the Job](#)

[Unbeatable Resumes: America's Top Recruiter Reveals What REALLY Gets You Hired](#)

Note: Zenie Foundation has no relationship with Beshara or his publisher. These are clear and easy to read references.