

Preparing for Your Next Interview

One should never go into a job interview blind. While there are several steps involved in the preparation, three main aspects include conducting research on the company, preparing for interviewers questions, and dressing professionally to make a good first impression.

Do Your Research

So, how do you come across as competent, qualified, and enthusiastic about the position? First, research, research, research. Know your potential employers, their position, their goals, and their values. Strong background knowledge will show employers that you are genuinely interested and passionate about working for them. Here are a few topics to research about the company.

- History of the company
- Objectives of the company, including the company's intentions for the future
- Important figures in the company and position
- Trends involved in the company's field



Photo courtesy of exclusive-executive-resumes.com

Prepare for Common Questions

After conducting thorough research on the company, it's time to prepare for the interview questions. Most employers tend to ask the same general questions during interviews. They are simple questions that may seem complex to interviewees who arrive unprepared. Expect the following prompts:

- Discuss your strengths and weaknesses
- Tell me why you should be hired
- Discuss your résumé

Of these prompts, many find explaining their weaknesses to be the most difficult. When defining your weakness, discuss a trait specific to yourself. Either explain a weakness and how you overcame it, or describe a "weakness" that can also be viewed as a strength.

Perhaps a less difficult, but just as important question is why you should be hired? If asked this question, discuss your interests that pertain to the job and explain what you can provide for the company. Be sure to highlight your experience and knowledge that pertains to the position qualifications.

Finally, when asked to discuss your résumé, give a quick summary while emphasizing the aspects that set you apart from the competition.

Dress for Success

Now that you have done thorough research and prepared for any potential questions, it's time to think about appearance. We have all heard the popular phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover." Unfortunately, when going into an interview, your appearance is the first thing your potential employer notices. Here are a few tips to help you make a positive first impression.

- Wear neutral shades and avoid vibrant colors
- Be neat. No wrinkles, no stains, no rips
- Be conservative. Avoid clothing that is oversized or too tight

Source: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanadams/2013/10/07/16-interview-tips-from-a-job-hunting-classic>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/lisaquast/2014/01/27/8-tips-to-dress-for-interview-success>

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/jacquelynmith/2014/01/15/how-to-ace-10-of-the-most-common-interview-questions>

by Urvi Patel

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EMD@SH

Winter 2014 Volume VI Issue 3

The newsletter of the JMU Student Chapter of the Society for Technical Communication

Professionalism in College Graduates

According to the Wall Street Journal, Data collected last year by the Center for Professional Excellence at York College of Pennsylvania revealed that college graduates are overconfident in their readiness to join the workforce. The study surveyed 400 human resource professionals about their experiences in hiring recent college graduates, and the results were alarming. More than half of respondents reported that new employees are lacking in work ethic and are arriving at the office with a sense of entitlement.

Managers reported characteristics of professionalism such as "appropriate appearance, punctuality, regular attendance, honesty, attentiveness and sticking with the task through completion" were absent in many entry-level employees.

The research suggested that young people model their workplace behavior after their peers, instead of experienced co-workers, and fail to recognize that acceptable behavior amongst friends is not necessarily appropriate in the office. A common problem is the misuse of technology on the job. Young people are more likely to send a text message to their co-workers than to send an email or initiate a face-to-face conversations.

Part of the problem is that college students are not developing the necessary "soft skills" for workplace communication and collaboration. *Dictionary.com* defines soft skills as having "common sense, the ability to deal with people, and positive,

flexible attitude." In other words, soft skills are difficult to teach and harder to learn.

The first step to making sure you won't become a part of the problem is to be aware of this issue. You can assess yourself is

by looking at your behavior in the classroom; using your cellphone, checking Facebook, and zoning out during a lecture are bad habits that will transfer into the workplace if you don't try to break them now. *Careerplanning.about.com* offers the following tips for avoiding the most often-cited problems with young workers.

Arrive on time.

Punctuality isn't limited to arriving to work on time. Be prompt when you attend meetings, respond to emails, and return phone calls. Be considerate—don't waste anyone's time, including your own.

Photo courtesy of www.e-mulsion.net

Dress appropriately.

Dress for success. Yoga pants and leggings might be okay around campus, but in the office you need to appear neat, clean, and well put-together everyday. When you're on the job, you're representing your company, and nobody will take you seriously if your clothes are too revealing or casual.

Watch your language.

It's simple. If you wouldn't say it to the pope, don't say it to your co-workers.

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STC's mission is to create and support a forum for communities of practice in the profession of technical communication.

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EMD@SH™ is produced four times a year. We invite you to submit articles that you wish to be considered for publication. By submitting an article, you permit us to run it in an issue of this newsletter and other STC publications. Please let us know if your article appears in other publications.

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A Message from the President



Christine Donovan
2013-2014 JMU STC President

This issue of EMD@sh focuses on staying professional throughout your job search and interview process. Professionalism is an important quality job employers seek in their future employees. As technical communicators and members of JMU STC, it is important for us to establish our professional brand as we conduct our job search and enter the workforce.

So far, our JMU STC meetings have been focused on preparing for job applications and the job interview. Résumés are what gets you the job interview, and cover letters help to highlight unique skills and experiences that qualify you for a position. As Mr. Marcus Anderson from Career and Academic Planning stated, "a cover letter is a resume in action." Cover letters and promotional videos complement your resume to prove your qualifications and differentiate from your competition.

In our remaining meetings, Dr. Elizabeth Pass will be presenting on Negotiating Salaries; Dr. Jennifer Jacovitch will be presenting on WordPress; and JMU STC will end the semester with a meeting welcoming new officers for the 2014-2015 school year. If you are interested in running for a JMU STC officer position for next year, be on the lookout for information in the coming weeks.

It is always a pleasure serving as your JMU STC President. Please do not hesitate to contact me at donovacd@dukes.jmu.edu, if you have any questions or suggestions for future JMU STC meetings.

Professionalism...

(continued from page 1)

Refrain from telling lies.

Maintain your integrity. Don't lie about your qualifications; if you aren't qualified for the job, don't apply. Don't lie about your mistakes; if you made an error, own up to it and take responsibility. Don't lie about sick days; if you need a day off, take a personal day.

Finally, don't wait until your first day to implement these tips. Begin cultivating your professional image now.

Source: <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887323415304578370722974229716>

<http://careerplanning.about.com/od/workplacesurvival/a/professionalism.htm>

by Lindsey Campbell



Photo courtesy of Keitha Truong

STC Spotlight featuring...

Keitha Truong spent her time at JMU engaging in the opportunities around her, forging connections, and building skills that led her to a job she loves. After graduating in 2007 with a BA in TSC, Truong returned for her MA and found her passion training others.

Currently, she works for Jenzebar, Inc., a company that provides "setup and maintenance" software for universities. As a Technical Documentation Specialist, she draws upon many of the skills she learned in school. Truong says, "I was very lucky to find a job that not only dealt with writing and editing but also focused on training."

Technology Trends in the Interview Process

Technology and social networking are becoming increasingly prevalent in professional atmospheres, which has led to the development of progressive interview trends. In order to market yourself as a valuable, up-to-date candidate, it is important to understand and be equipped to handle these new interviewing and recruiting tactics.

Social Networking

Social networks are becoming popular tools for employers to gain crucial information about potential employees. According to *MonsterWorking*, a blog provided by the popular online employment website Monster, employers are turning to social networking websites for inside information about job candidates. Employers frequently search the web for candidates' profiles. Any inappropriate or unprofessional content found by employers can directly impact your chances of being considered for a position.

Although these sites can be potentially damaging, social networks are powerful assets when used properly. According to *Glassdoor*, a professional community website for employers and job candidates, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are among the most important online profiles that can be used to your advantage. LinkedIn is an effective way to connect with potential employers before the interview process, and using Twitter and Facebook appropriately can showcase your professional skills.

Unconventional Interviews

Employers are also making use of phone or video interviews instead of the traditional, face-to-face option. According to *Business Insider*, these interviews are becoming more popular because of their cost-effectiveness and convenience in a global market. To prepare for these types of interviews, practice answers to typical questions like you would for a face-to-face interview. Take time to answer each question thoroughly without rambling, speed talking, or interrupting; it is more difficult to read the interviewer's nonverbal reactions to your responses over the phone. Ensure that you won't be interrupted by outside stimuli, that your Internet connection or phone signal is sound, and that your device's battery is fully charged.

Online Portfolios

Online portfolios are becoming common ways to supplement your resume and showcase your skills and experience to future employers. *Glassdoor* lists WordPress, Flavors. Me, Weebly, and Work-Simple as the top free platforms to host your portfolio, but it is important to investigate your options and choose a site that fits your needs. For example, Flavors.Me allows you to link a number of sites to one landing page, while WordPress and Weebly allow you to create one site with easy-to-use templates and the option to purchase a domain name.

When crafting your online portfolio, think critically about how to best market yourself. Include samples of your work, your résumé, cover letter, and contact information to give employers a complete view of what you have to offer. Once you've created a portfolio that fits your needs, share the link to your social media profile to ensure that it gets recognized.

Source: <http://www.monsterworking.com/2013/12/30/8-hot-job-hunting-trends-for-2014/>
<http://www.businessinsider.com/15-tips-for-phone-or-skype-interviews-2014-2>
<http://www.glassdoor.com/blog/top-10-job-search-trends-pay-attention-part-1/>
<http://www.glassdoor.com/blog/4-free-tools-build-effective-online-portfolio/>
<http://www.glassdoor.com/blog/online-portfolio-land/job>

by Emily Hudson

10 Tips to Nail Your Next Interview

Preparing for the interview is of the utmost importance when seeking a new job. Here are ten tips to ensuring your next interview is a success.

1. Assure your skills fit within the job requirements
2. Do thorough research on the company
3. Learn about your interviewer
4. Arrive on-time, be professional, look professional, and be focused
5. Be able to explain and give examples of your strengths, weaknesses, and skills
6. Prepare and practice answers to potential questions you may be asked
7. Stay optimistic and committed during the interview
8. Represent the best version of yourself
9. Conclude on a good impression: ask questions, be appreciative, and be courteous
10. Send a follow-up thank-you note: short, sweet, and appreciative

Source: <https://www.fastweb.com/student-life/articles/4089-preparing-for-a-successful-job-interview>

<http://www.linkedin.com/today/post/article/20130912053712-175081329-how-you-succeed-at-every-job-interview>

by Sydney Long

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