

WORK FOR WARRIORS GEORGIA RESUME & INTERVIEW WORKBOOK



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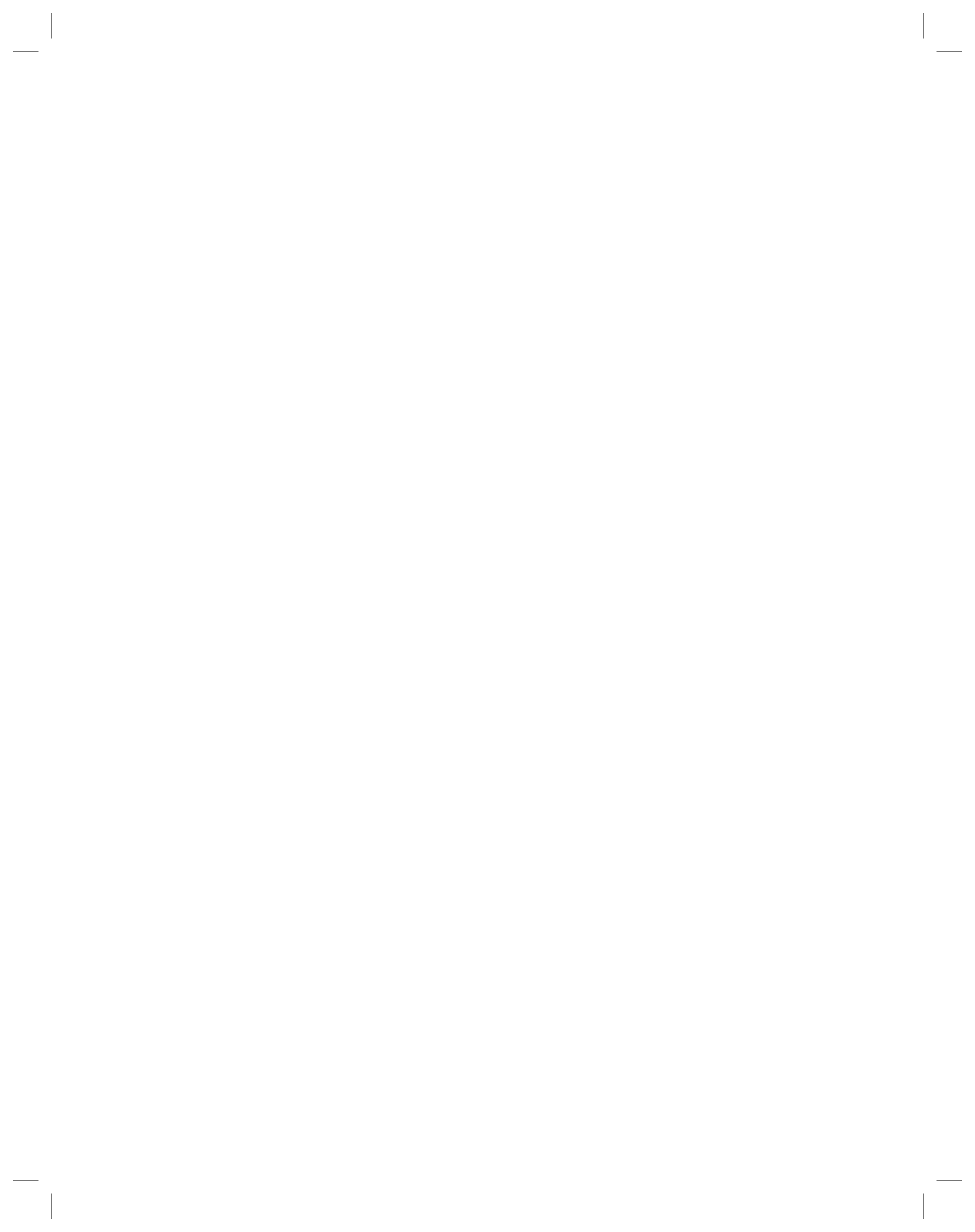
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THE RESUME: YOUR REPRESENTATIVE

Work for Warriors Georgia (WFW GA) part of the Military Family Support Branch of The Georgia National Guard assists Georgia National Guardsmen, Veterans, Reservists, and Spouses with obtaining employment in the civilian sector. This booklet will guide you in creating your resume using the most common elements to ensure you are represented as a capable professional in the industry for which you are applying. Human Resource (HR) representatives spend an average of seven seconds on a resume so it should be clear, concise, and tailored to the job for which you are applying.

Once you have created an effective Master Resume, use it as a template by tailoring future resumes to the job for which you are applying. Tailoring your resume means reviewing the job description to determine what skills and experience the employer is looking for and if you have those skills and experience, ensuring that it is reflected in your resume. This is the key to obtaining an interview and achieving your goal of obtaining employment.

Building Your Resume

Keep a clean appearance with a standard format

As this is your first impression with the employer, your resume should be neat, clean, organized, and easy to read. Here are some additional tips to make a good first impression:

- Use quality White or Ivory paper (preferable that is cotton or linen) with a 8.5" x 11" size for resumes and cover letters
- Use a quality printer such as a laser printer – **Do Not Photocopy**
- Use a plain font – Garamond, Calibri, Arial, or Times New Roman
- Keep to 1 or 2 pages only if you have more than 20 years of experience
- Use proper margins and spacing, utilizing white space
- Use bulleted statements under each job heading – keep bullets basic and when possible they should reflect how many, what percent, what was the impact on the company, department, or unit

Do NOT:

- Use a font size smaller than 11
- Insert Tables
- Use Italics
- Have any misspellings, grammatical errors, format discrepancies or unnecessary capitalization
- Don't try to use a "catch all" resume for a job. This is one of the most common mistakes people make when trying to get a job - they try to submit the same resume for several different jobs and career fields.
- Include a picture
- Use Pronouns
- Utilize vertical columns that add white space

There are several types of resumes

Below are the most commonly used resumes

- **Chronological** – This is the most common resume and should be used in most cases. The chronological resume is designed to show work experience and growth and is written in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent job first (example on page 8).

- **Functional** – This resume is designed to highlight your professional accomplishments. This style is useful if you have a similar job function and multiple employers, and want to highlight your accomplishments vs. your employment history (example on page 9).

The Essentials

Your resume should always be written in the first person using past or present verbs and contain some basic information. The following is considered the “must haves” to be included in any resume:

Contact Information

Include name, city, state, zip, telephone numbers (home and/or cell), email address, and LinkedIn URL on 2 rows maximum. Your email address should be straight forward, for example John.Smith@gmail.com as opposed to best.dad@gmail.com. Make sure your voicemail is able to accept messages and have a professional and basic greeting. Also, make sure your contact information is accurate – if it is incorrect your resume is useless.

Career Objective or Professional Summary

Either is acceptable, however the professional summary is preferred, as an objective can be too vague. Your focus is to attain employment as evidenced by your application for the job. A professional summary is more specific and this is the first place HR learns about you on your resume. A professional summary is a 3-4 sentence highlight of your professional accomplishments, utilizing your soft skills, and stating your goals. This is used to introduce you to the Hiring Manager and provide them with insight as to who you are and what you can bring to the organization.

Experience

Since most resumes follow a chronological format, begin by listing your most recent employer and accomplishments first, then move backwards. Make sure your statements are easy to understand for a civilian; remove acronyms, codes, and other terminology. O*Net is a great resource for translating MOS skills; www.onetonline.org as well as www.military.com.

For each employer include the following:

- List company name, location (city, state), dates of employment (start to end/Present), title and detail your top 3-5 primary duties in a summary and then list bullet points that reflect how many, what percent, what was the impact on the company, department, or unit.
- For each statement – ask yourself, “Does my prospective employer need to know this about me?” or “Does this highlight a skill or my ability to do the job?”
- Start each statement with an action verb (example on page 11).
- Only list your employment history back 10 years unless it is relevant to the job for which you are applying.

Accomplishments

What is it that you are most proud of? Put each one of those accomplishments in a sentence and try to quantify where you can. When quantifying, use starting and ending points. Great questions to ask yourself when writing these bullets are “How did I do it? Did I provide value? Why did I do it?”

Examples of quantified accomplishments:

- Managed an electronic and hard copy filing system, maintaining data entry accuracy at 99% and reducing lost or misplaced files by 85% from the previous year by introducing a file signing system for both hard and e-files.
- Created a new process and inventory control program to track all supplies within the unit, resulting in 100% inventory accuracy and saved \$10,000 annually in last minute purchases due to inventory discrepancies.
- Exceeded Army recruiting goals by 20% for 3 consecutive years, and exceeded retention goals by 25% from previous year.

Honors and Awards

Listing honors and awards of any kind is a great way to highlight your accomplishments. A few things to consider when placing these on your resume; list the names of the award and explain its significance, as well as, consider how many were eligible for the award.

Hard and Soft Skills

Make sure to include your top skills based on competency and/or years of experience. You can list both hard and soft skills, hard skills are measurable – managing, reporting, implementing processes, training. Soft Skills are much harder to quantify and measure because they reflect personality traits – creativity, positivity, team player.

Computer Knowledge and Technology

Employers look for computer related knowledge. Share this experience in your highlight of skills or professional summary so that it is front and center, especially if it is applicable to the position for which you are applying.

Example of a Professional Summary:

- 10 + years as an IT professional with expert knowledge in...

Example as a Skill Highlight:

- Proficient in Microsoft Office Suite
- Expert level Excel user

Make sure to detail any daily responsibilities and tasks that are computer related under each job (as appropriate) to support the statement used at the top of your resume.

Education/Specialized Training and Certifications

Always list your highest level of education on your resume. For example, if you have an AA, do not list High School, as it is understood that you have a High School diploma or a GED. Similarly, if you have a Bachelor's Degree, there is no need to list the Associates or Diploma. If you are currently getting a degree or certification, list the start date with a hyphen followed by "Present" and list the credits earned to date. For example, "Earned 10 Credits; Concentration in Business."

Lastly, list any specialized training and certifications that are applicable to the job for which you have applied. As a lifeguard it would be very important to list your CPR certification but not so much if you are applying to be a diesel mechanic. Ask yourself when listing additional trainings – is this a value added statement for this job?

Volunteer Opportunities

The same goes for volunteer experience – ask yourself if this represents job responsibilities that you may be asked to perform and is it relevant to the job for which you have applied? It can also be used to fill a gap in employment. When listing positions you have volunteered for, keep in mind the audience. For example, if you volunteered on a political campaign – keep it simple, don't identify the candidate or the party affiliation. If you do a lot for your church, keep it to Church Treasurer, Church Youth Leader, leaving out the denomination. Everyone has pre-conceived notions and you don't want to give them ammunition to put your resume in the "No" pile.

Professional References

In the past, it was common to state at the bottom of your resume "References Available Upon Request". In today's market, you will be asked for references when the appropriate time comes in the hiring process. Thus, do not list the above mentioned phrase on your resume. Have an additional one sheet ready with your personal and professional references, to include a minimum of three each. Each reference should include: first and last name, phone number, and email. Also include Company and Title for professional references. Ensure you have reached out to each of your references prior to inform them where you have applied and what you applied for so when the call comes they are prepared. After a reference has been called, send a short thank you to them for being willing to provide assistance during your job search.

Tailoring Your Resume

Craft your Professional Summary for the job for which you are applying

Most likely you will need to change your summary for each position for which you have applied. Ensure your statements show the benefits the company will gain by hiring you – Ask yourself what is in it for them?

Think strategically when listing your work history

HR Managers want to see chronological work history for a few reasons. It shows professional growth as well as significant gaps in employment. However, you also need to keep in mind the position for which you are applying. If your work history dates back 10 years, and you have since graduated college and are in your career field, the fact that you delivered pizzas while going to college is not relevant to an IT field job application. It is still important to list so there is no gap, but just list relevant skills like customer service skills and that is all that is needed. There is no need to elaborate or specify duties, everyone understands what a pizza delivery driver does.

Utilize job-related keywords frequently

After reading the job posting, you want to include the key words used under job responsibilities and duties. Key words are usually used more than once in a job posting. You want them to be repetitive throughout your resume. That way if you list project management as a skill, it needs to show up additional times in the

resume content. This reinforces your proficiency in a skill and demonstrates how you successfully performed it.

A quick tip that helps with this process is to print out the job posting and highlight the responsibilities listed, making sure to address each one on your resume.

Use Action Verbs

No one wants to read the same action verbs repeatedly, make sure your bullet points start with various action verbs and descriptive adjectives that are positive and persuasive. This will draw the reader in as they want to learn more about you. Please refer to a list of action verbs on page 11.

THE COVER LETTER

Once you have created a resume, the next step is to create a cover letter.

Why Include a Cover Letter?

The purpose of the cover letter is to explain why you are sending the resume – do not restate your resume, but expand on your skills and experiences. The ideal cover letter is expressive, it speaks to HR (or the hiring manager) and draws connections between the position you are seeking and what you have to offer.

Cover Letter Format and Appearance

The format and information included needs to be as thoughtfully constructed as your resume. Use the same paper and font as your resume. A targeted cover letter will address the specific position for which you are applying so ensure that you use the job title posted in the job listing. Like the resume, this letter needs to make good use of your white space and be error free.

Use Business Letter Formatting

Contact Information

List your name, city, state, and zip code also include your phone number and email address.

Date

Use the date the letter is sent.

Employer Contact Information

Name of Hiring Manager, their title, company name, mailing address, city, state, and zip code. If you do not have the specific contact name for the hiring manager, you can leave this part off, and simply list your contact information.

Salutation

If you know the hiring manager's name – use it. If not, or when in doubt, utilize either greeting:

- Dear Hiring Manager
- To Whom It May Concern

Body

The body of your letter consists primarily of three basic paragraphs. The first paragraph speaks to the position for which you are applying and explains why you are sending your resume for review. If you were referred by someone, state this here, however, only if permission to do so was received. In short, always ask the referring party before using them as a contact. This is also the appropriate place to describe where you found the job posting.

The second paragraph of your cover letter should tell why you are interested in this job or working for this company. Describe what you have to offer the employer. Make strong connections between your abilities and their needs. Mention specifically how your skills and experience match the job for which you have applied. Remember, you are interpreting your resume, not repeating it. Try to support each statement you make with a piece of evidence. Use several shorter paragraphs or bullets rather than one large block of text.

The final paragraph should include thanking the employer for their consideration, confirming your interest in interviewing for the position, and how/when you intend to follow up. If you state that you intend to contact them about the position in a week's time, make sure that you follow through.

Closing your letter

Whatever closing you choose follow it with a comma, a double space then type your name. In the space sign your name. Examples of closers:

- Best Regards
- Sincerely
- Respectfully
- Kind Regards
- Respectfully Yours

Email Cover Letters

A few modifications need to take place when emailing your cover letter:

Subject Line

Use the title and job number of the posting for which you have applied.

Email Signature

As opposed to the formal business letter format, your email will not use the standard headings and you will also not include the signature line. Your closing will be your contact information – use your online contact information – LinkedIn URL, web page, etc., email address, and your phone number.

Adriana Smith

Springfield, MA 55555 ▪ someone@example.com ▪ 509-555-0155 ▪ LinkedIn URL

Summary

Dedicated Customer Service Manager with 10+ years of experience in “big box” retail and food service settings. Consistently achieve record-high customer satisfaction rankings, improvements to the bottom line and turnaround of underperforming operations.

Skills and Strengths (You may choose to name this differently)

Customer Service Management	Customer Satisfaction Enhancement	Teambuilding & Training
Compliant Handling & Resolution	Front-End Supervision	Cost-Reduction Strategies
Retail Operations Management	Sales & Margin Improvement	Order Fulfillment

Professional Experience

ADVENTURE WORKS – Springfield, MA 10/03 – Present

Customer Service Manager, 9/07 to present

Customer Service Representative, 10/03 to 9/07

Promoted to manager position to recruit, train and supervise 25+ customer service reps and cashiers. Foster an environment in which guests enjoy high levels of service and employees are motivated to deliver top performance. Manage front-end operations to ensure friendly and efficient transactions at checkout. Selected Contributions:

- Won “Service Excellence Award” for instrumental role in driving record-high sales increases, propelling store to improve ranking from #32 in territory to #5 by 2008
- Reduced staff turnover by 15% in 2008, benchmarking a record-setting improvement in staff retention due to the success of employee-development and morale-building programs
- Elevated store’s guest-satisfaction index from 86% to 92% within two years; ensured the swift resolution of customer issues to preserve customer loyalty while complying with company policies

EMPLOYER – Location (City, State)

Month Year – Month Year

Position Title

- Top 3-5 tasks, duties and responsibilities are bulleted and each bullet starts with an action verb
- Keep in mind, questions to ask:
 - Does my prospective employer need to know this?
 - Does this highlight my ability to perform the job I have applied?

Education/Specialized Training

College or High School Name – City, State

Diploma or Degree achieved and yr. of completion (if recent list year, or if in process, list Present)

Name of course/certification/licenses/relevant training and Year received

Awards

Awards received – quantity – year received, personal military awards should also be included.

Lisa Miller

Colorado Springs, CO 81207 ▪ (960) 555-0112 ▪ someone@example.com

Professional Summary

3-4 brief sentences describing your professional accomplishments, addressing soft skills and stating your goals. This is your introduction, ensure it makes a powerful impression.

Highlights of Qualifications

- List highlights and accomplishments that showcase why you are a good candidate
- Add at least 5 bullets and the list should change based on each job for which you are applying
- If you list it here you need to elaborate on it below

Professional Experience

EX. Customer Service

- Oversee front-office operations and provide impeccable customer service:
 - Built a clientele supported by 60% referral business
- Develop and implement strategic marketing plan for business:
 - Launched a thriving private practice, building revenue from \$0 to over \$72K in first three years with minimal overhead
 - Create special promotions, write/design print and outdoor advertising, and coordinate all media buying
- Won over a highly skeptical medical community as the first chiropractor to target MDs for informative in-service demonstrations, classes, and booths:
 - Presentations resulted in standing-room-only crowds of 50+
 - Four MDs subsequently became patients, and referred family members as well
 - Increased client base by one-third resulting from MD referrals

Choose a strength (Management, IT, Project Management, Process Improvement, etc.)

- Top 3-5 tasks, duties and responsibilities are bulleted
- Keep in mind, questions to ask:
 - Does my prospective employer need to know this?
 - Does this highlight my ability to perform the job I am applying for?

Choose a strength (Management, IT, Project Management, Process Improvement, etc.)

- Top 3-5 tasks, duties and responsibilities are bulleted
- Keep in mind, questions to ask:
 - Does my prospective employer need to know this?
 - Does this highlight my ability to perform the job I am applying for?

Education/Specialized Training

College/High School Name – City, State

Degree/Diploma

Certification

Name of Certification

Employment History

Month Year – Month Year | Employer | Location | **Title**

Month Year – Month Year | Employer | Location | **Title**

Cover Letter and Email Letter Example

Your Name
Your Address
Your City, State, Zip
Your Phone Number
Your Email Address

Date

Hiring Manager's Name
Title
Company Address
City, State, Zip

Dear "appropriate title",

Paragraph 1 – The first paragraph of your letter should include information on why you are writing. Mention the position for which you are applying. Include the name of a mutual contact, if you have one. Be clear and concise regarding your request.

Paragraph 2 – The next section of your cover letter should tell why you are interested in this job or working for the company. Describe what you have to offer the employer. Make strong connections between your abilities and their needs. Mention specifically how your skills and experience match the job for which you are applying. Remember, you are interpreting your resume, not repeating it. Try to support each statement you make with a piece of evidence. Use several shorter paragraphs or bullets rather than one large block of text.

Paragraph 3 – Conclude your cover letter by saying you would like to interview for the position. Mention that your resume is enclosed. Thank the employer for considering you for the position. Include information on how you will follow-up. State that you will do so and indicate when (one week's time is typical). You may want to reduce the time between sending out your resume and follow up, if you fax or e-mail it.

Closing Term,

Handwritten Signature

Typed Signature

If Email

Subject Line – Applying for job#364585
Remove addresses etc.
Greeting, Body and Closing remains unchanged from above example

Signature format changes to:

- Your Name
- Your Email Address
- Your LinkedIn Profile, or URL
- Your Phone Number

Action Words

Accelerated	Directed	Influenced	Planned	Solved
Accomplished	Distributed	Initiated	Presented	Spearheaded
Achieved	Documented	Innovated	Processed	Specified
Adapted	Doubled	Inspected	Produced	Spoke
Advised	Earned	Installed	Published	Stabilized
Analyzed	Eliminated	Interpreted	Recognized	Standardized
Appraised	Encouraged	Introduced	Recommended	Steered
Approved	Energized	Launched	Reconciled	Streamlined
Arranged	Enlarged	Lead	Reduced	Structured
Assembled	Evaluated	Maintained	Referred	Submitted
Assessed	Excelled	Mastered	Reinforced	Supervised
Awarded	Expanded	Mobilized	Reorganized	Supported
Balanced	Expedited	Motivated	Represented	Surpassed
Billed	Facilitated	Negotiated	Rescued	Tabulated
Budgeted	Forecasted	Observed	Researched	Taught
Built	Formulated	Operated	Revamped	Tested
Communicated	Gained	Optimized	Revealed	Transformed
Compared	Gathered	Orchestrated	Reviewed	Translated
Compiled	Generated	Ordered	Revised	Traveled
Convinced	Graduated	Organized	Revitalized	Tripled
Coordinated	Guided	Originated	Saved	Tutored
Counseled	Identified	Oversaw	Scheduled	Typed
Created	Implemented	Participated	Scouted	Unified
Delegated	Improved	Performed	Screened	Updated
Demonstrated	Improvised	Persuaded	Served	Utilized
Designed	Included	Pinpointed	Set up	Visualized
Determined	Increased	Pioneered	Simplified	Won

Descriptive Words

Active	Constructive	Friendly	Organized	Resourceful
Adaptable	Creative	Helpful	Original	Responsible
Aggressive	Dependable	Honest	Patient	Self-confident
Alert	Determined	Imaginative	Perceptive	Self-reliant
Ambitious	Diplomatic	Independent	Personable	Sensible
Analytical	Disciplined	Industrious	Pleasant	Sincere
Assertive	Discreet	Intelligent	Positive	Sophisticated
Attentive	Economical	Inventive	Practical	Stable
Broad-minded	Efficient	Keen	Precise	Successful
Capable	Energetic	Logical	Productive	Supportive
Competent	Enterprising	Loyal	Prudent	Tactful
Competitive	Enthusiastic	Mature	Quick	Talented
Confident	Extroverted	Methodical	Rational	Tolerant
Conscientious	Fair	Objective	Realistic	Trustworthy
Consistent	Forceful	Optimistic	Reliable	Versatile

Military Titles to Civilian Titles

General Office/Admiral	CEO, COO, Administrator, Senior Director, Managing Partner
Commander	Director, Senior Manager
Executive Officer	CEO, Deputy Director
Field Grade Officer	Program Director, Program Manager, Executive, Manager
Company Grade Officer	Operations Manager, Section Manager, Project Officer
Warrant Officer	Senior Technician, Technical Advisor, Department Manager
Senior NCO/Senior Chief	Operations Manager, Senior Advisor, Division Supervisor
First Sergeant	Personnel Manager, Group Supervisor
Platoon Sergeant	Supervisor, Foreman
Squad Leader	Team Leader, First Line Supervisor
Supply Sergeant	Supply Manager, Logistics Manager
Operations NCO	Operations Supervisor
Crew Member	Team Member
Infantry	Security Personnel

General Terms

Military	Business
AI	Additionally Skilled In
Assigned	Employed, Worked, Responsible For
Battalion	250 personnel
Combat	Hazardous Conditions
Company	Company, Department, Organization, Section
Deployed/TDY	Temporarily Assigned, Business Travel
Medal	Award
Military Personnel Office	Human Resources
Mission	Task/Function/Objective
Military Occupation Specialty/Classification	Career Specialty, Career Field
Squad or Platoon	Team, Section
Reconnaissance	Data Collection, Analysis
Regulations	Policy, Guidelines
Service Member	Employee, Personnel
Subordinate	Employee, Direct Hire

List of Transferrable Skills

Problem Solving	Interpersonal	Time Management	Leadership
Self-Starting	Team Building	Training	Quality Control
Analysis	Advising	Conflict Resolution	Counseling
Communications	Marketing	Public Relations	Presentations
Computer Knowledge	Facilities Management	Office Experience	Planning
Trouble Shooting	Research/Writing	Bookkeeping	Data Entry

INTERVIEW TIPS: YOUR KEY TO SUCCESS

Your resume has done the job, and you have been selected for an interview! Think you are all set? Not quite. You should not fear an interview, however, you also shouldn't take it too lightly. No candidate can win every time, but the following guidelines will ensure you are better prepared and increase your rate of success.

Do Your Research

Educate yourself about the company

Hiring managers will often tell you that candidates do not know anything about what their company does. While there is no need to memorize the CEO's biography, you should be familiar with the company's products and/or services. When you are prepared with additional information about the company and its culture you are better suited to "sell yourself" as a fit for the job.

How do you do your homework? Start by visiting the company's website, searching the internet for news and articles about the company. It is also recommended to check out websites such as www.glassdoor.com and www.linkedin.com to learn more about the company's environment and culture. If it is a large company, you may be able to find specific information regarding the company's typical interview styles and tactics. The more you know in advance, the more confident you will feel.

Suggestions for resources during your search:

- Internet
- Published Reports
- Trade Journals
- Promotional Literature

What should you bring to the Interview?

Bring extra copies of your resume to the interview, even if the hiring manager has an electronic copy. There may be additional people at the interview. Depending on the type of work you do and if appropriate, bring samples of your work – this is typically within the creative field such as graphic arts.

Have a note pad and pen available, be sure to ask if it is okay to take notes at the start of the interview. Also, have a list of all questions you want to ask even if you think you have your questions memorized. Have several questions prepared, as some may be answered during the interview process.

Dress Appropriately

Always arrive at the interview dressed professionally and neatly groomed, even if the work environment at the company may be casual. Your research will play a huge part here. By now you know their culture, business, and working environment, and this will assist you in planning your interview attire. Most places today utilize a corporate casual dress code. If you are unsure and you have been unable to find any information on the company you are interviewing with, this is a good way to go.

Best practices for personal appearance:

- Iron clothes
- Polish shoes
- Do not smoke immediately before the interview
- Keep cologne/perfume minimal
- Brush hair and teeth
- No Hats

Advance planning of your route and allowing sufficient time for commuting issues that may arise

Make sure you have the correct address, meeting time and know the name of the person you are scheduled to see. If a company has multiple locations, make sure you have the correct location for your interview. If you are not familiar with the area, get door to door driving directions. You can use www.googlemaps.com or use a GPS. It is strongly encouraged to drive there the day before to ensure you will not get lost. Sometimes the GPS is not always right!

Plan on arriving 10-15 minutes early, this will also help if you encounter some unpredicted traffic. If you are running late or unable to make the interview appointment, call the hiring manager prior to your scheduled interview time. Let them know you are on the way, or what the situation is, and see if the interview can be rescheduled. If you don't call and simply don't show up for your scheduled interview, it is unlikely you will get a second chance at the opportunity. Another benefit of arriving early, it allows extra time to take a deep breath, collect your thoughts, and review your resume.

Prepare for the conversation

Know your resume and be prepared to discuss it

If it is on your resume, it is fair game for the interview, even if it is irrelevant to the job for which you are interviewing. Make sure to be current with all your skills and software you have listed on your resume and be able to discuss it more in depth at the interview.

Make sure to review past work experience and lessons learned. Consider past experiences such as; how you succeeded or struggled in past jobs, specific stories from each position that will highlight your strengths, or show how you overcame challenges.

Know the specifics of the job requirements

Study the required knowledge and skills of the position, keeping in mind specific examples from previous work experience. This will build upon your resume, highlight your expertise, and provide a solid basis of your capabilities. Also, be ready to discuss past projects you have been involved with that are similar to this job and how that experience makes you a good fit for the role and their company. Remember, always bring it full circle, back to the core of "What can you do for your employer?"

Be prepared for various interview styles and questions

You will most likely have one of two types of interviews – behavior-based or situational questions. Practice is key to a successful interview. After practicing both styles of interviews on your own, utilize a close friend, mentor or spouse to assist you through a mock interview process.

Behavior-based questions – You will be asked to provide an example from a time in your past when you demonstrated a particular skill. These questions are based on the idea that past performance is a strong indicator of future performance. Your answers should include – explaining the situation/task, what actions you took and the results of those actions. This method is referred to as the "S.T.A.R." method, which stands for situation, task, action, result (example on page 21).

Situational questions – You will be asked about a hypothetical situation and how you think you would handle it. These questions are designed to look at your communication and problem solving skills, as well

as, your ability to think on your feet. They are often intentionally vague. Please, ask clarifying questions to get the big picture of the situation prior to answering (example on page 23).

Formulate questions you want to ask

One of the most overlooked portions of the interview is – the interview is a two way street – you are interviewing the company as well. Hiring managers are looking for candidates who ask intelligent and well thought out questions. Pertaining to the role, the team, the project, and the company. By researching the company you can prepare ahead of time.

There is potential you will meet multiple people from the company, as most interviews are conducted by a panel, so you want to have multiple questions prepared. You do not want to ask the same questions repeatedly, and good questions show your interest in the position as well as the company.

Unfortunately, many qualified candidates miss out on opportunities because they appeared uninterested with the position or company. This opportunity also allows you to determine if the job is the right fit for you!

What to say and do during the interview

When meeting the hiring manager be calm and confident

Make sure to make eye contact, this shows confidence while suggesting honesty and sincere responses. They want to hire the best person for the job, and you want to demonstrate that you are the right fit. Make their decision easy, smile pleasantly, and shake hands firmly. Make sure they know you are happy to be there. This is the first step to an exciting new position with this company.

Show your enthusiasm and excitement for the job

While this may seem obvious to you, it is not to the hiring manager so make sure to let them know why you want the job, what you like about the position and the company. If this comes down to two candidates that are equally qualified, employers will choose the one who expressed the most interest. Employers want to hire people who are excited to learn and love their job.

Keep these tips in mind:

- Be Positive! – think about why you want a new job and why you are leaving your old position
- Know exactly why you want this job and to work for this company

Answer questions completely and succinctly

Questions often can be multi-faceted. So, it may be helpful to repeat the question back or ask for clarification if you don't understand it. It is perfectly acceptable to pause for a few seconds, collect your thoughts and consider your answers. After all, you don't want to blurt out and ramble on or appear confused. Remember, questions can purposefully be vague. They want to test your ability to seek out the challenge/issue before determining an answer.

Stick to the question at hand, and don't ramble, your typical answer should not take longer than 1-2 minutes. You can elaborate by asking if they would like more details, but once you've answered the question, stop

talking. Be comfortable with the silence, hiring managers can be taking notes, or formulating an additional question based on your response. If you do not know the answer, be honest.

During the interview, spin negatives into positives

You will at one time or another be asked to describe a weakness, or a time you failed – we are human and will make mistakes. It is how you handled the mistake and learned from it. That is the important take away. Make sure to address this, pointing out the benefits you took away from the situation.

Never take a strength and make it a weakness. For example telling the hiring manager “I work too hard” will sound insincere. Be honest about what your weaknesses are and the steps you have taken/are currently taking to overcome them. Saying “I struggle with keeping my clients files current and updated in a timely fashion. What has helped me become more efficient with this task is, I block out time every Friday to work only on my files.”

When the interview is over, make sure to end on a positive note

Let them know you want the position, a potential question for the hiring manager may be, “Do you have any additional questions for me I can answer to let you know I am the right person for this position?” Thank them for their time and the opportunity to interview. Ask what are the next steps and what you can expect in regards to communication pertaining to whether or not you received the job.

Write down names of those you had the interview with

It is considered good form to hand write a thank you note to each person you interviewed with. To expedite this process, ask for a business card from each person, this will include addresses, titles and names for each individual.

What NOT to say or do during an interview

Do not let your guard down

From the minute you enter company property to the minute you leave it, you are being interviewed. Be aware of your behavior at every step, from getting out of your car to entering the building and being received at the front desk. Frequently, the front desk person will be asked about overall impressions and interaction with the candidate. Saying goodbye as you exit, exchanging friendly banter – all of this can impact a hiring decision.

Resist the urge to tell the hiring manager what is wrong with a project or their approach to a project

It is surprising the number of candidates that embrace this approach. You may have different opinions and ideas on the direction they should take. Your ideas may be valuable to the company, but telling someone you just met that they are doing something wrong is a sure way to NOT get the position for which you are applying.

Do not criticize your former employer, team members, company, projects, etc.

A rant on the incompetence or lack of managerial skills regarding your last manager or employer is unprofessional and never helps you land a new job. This may well end up reflecting poorly on you. If asked

about situations that may have ended up less than pleasant, do your best to emphasize the positive results you may have learned or skills that you took away that were a positive.

Never bring up pay or benefits or pay during an interview

No matter how badly you may want to do this, don't! The interview is not the time to negotiate, wait until you have an offer in hand, or the hiring manager brings it up. If you ask it may appear you are only interested about the money and the benefits, not the actual position for which you are interviewing.

If the hiring manager asks what you wish to make, be prepared. Your goal is to be flexible, not price yourself out of the position, and not under value what you bring. The best way to do this is do your research in advance. Look up average pay rates for the title, industry, and the location's cost-of-living. You may opt to provide a realistic salary range, or state that it depends on the position and total benefits available.

Another option is to defer this question until there is an actual offer made, by responding vaguely that you wish to be paid fair market value or asking what the salary range is, if you have not done your research. However be prepared with this move because most likely the hiring manager will press you at this point. Always better to have done your research, again it shows you want this job.

Do not provide information about yourself that is protected classification

What does this mean? There are topics that an employer cannot ask you about such as: age, religion, family status, and disabilities. Do not volunteer any of this information about yourself or expect special treatment. For example, if you are a disabled veteran, do not tell your potential employer, it is irrelevant to the conversation and now puts the potential employer at risk.

If you encounter these questions during an interview, politely ask "Does this relate to the job responsibilities of the position?" Hopefully this will require the hiring manager to reply with a "yes" and offer more information, or "no" and change the course of the interview. The idea being to gently call attention and change the topic.

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

Not all interviews are the same. Below are some simple tricks to manage a successful interview depending on how it is given and help you increase your rate of success.

Preparation for the in-person interview

Most of this we have already discussed, here are some additional key points to make the most of your in-person interview:

- Most often it will be a panel interview or more than one interviewer done individually – expect anywhere from 3-10 participants.
- Interviewers will be made up of various managers, team members, and directors from different areas of the company.
- Each interviewer may have a different style – some may be technical experts and looking for knowledge and aptitude, others may focus on soft skills and how you deal in different situations, management style, etc.

Body Language Matters

Smile. Show interest by leaning forward in your seat, never be too comfortable or slouch, this suggests disrespect and arrogance if you appear too comfortable. Remember, you want to make a good impression. Various studies suggest a low percentage, approximately 7%, of feelings and impressions comes from words. The rest is from facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language.

Preparation for the web-video interview

Dress appropriately

Even though you are not in an actual office environment, they can still see you and will be treating you just like you are in the office and seeing if you do the same. Therefore, dress just as you would if going to an interview in person. Follow the same interview tips for in-person interviews.

Check your surroundings

Make sure your webcam is positioned in a direction that shows a clean and professional environment. The entire area that is captured by the webcam needs to be free of clutter, distractions and personal items.

Test your computer's connections

Issues are common if unfamiliar with the program being used to conduct the interview. Test it out in advance and make sure you are comfortable with, and know the general functions of, the program.

Eye Contact

If you look at the monitor it will appear as if you are not making “eye contact”. Make sure to direct the majority of your eye contact towards the webcam view finder. The monitor on the other side of the interview in the hiring manager's office will show you are looking at them.

Preparation for the phone interview

Treat the phone interview as if a hiring decision will be made from this interview

It is incorrectly assumed that a phone interview is not as important as an in-person interview. This is absolutely not true. Candidates fail to recognize that a decision is made at the end of a phone interview, whether to move the candidate forward through the hiring process or not. This is a prequel to the in-person interview, if you do not do well here you will not get the in-person interview.

Make sure your environment is quiet and without distractions

Plan for the interview by creating a quiet workspace. One that feels professional, allows for space to write notes, and keep a glass of water handy. It is recommended to use a land line to avoid the call being dropped. We suggest 10-15 minutes prior to the phone interview, be in position and collect your thoughts – just as you would arrive 10-15 minutes early to the location for your in-person interview.

Be aware of your voice

Since the opportunity is lost to view body language your voice inflection is all they have to go on. Go out of your way to show expression in your voice. Keep a smile on your face, though no one can see it, because it shows in your voice. If you prefer, keep a mirror available to watch your facial expressions.

AFTER THE INTERVIEW: FOLLOW-UP

The Thank You Note

Why write it?

The interview may be over, but the decision is not made. The thank-you note is one of the most overlooked parts of the process and is a very critical piece of the process. This could be the deciding factor for the hiring manager, especially when competing with other equally qualified candidates.

The letter should include the following:

- Thank them for their time and consideration
- Include any insights you may have gained from the interview
- Explain why you are excited about the role
- Handwritten is best

If you decide it is not the right job for you

Tell the hiring manager. It is considered polite and best practices to take yourself out of the running and remove yourself from consideration. Same goes if you have accepted another position, make sure to let them know you are no longer a viable candidate for the job.

Waiting for the call

Check in

If you do not receive a call right away, don't panic. Employers often have a long interviewing process and need time to evaluate candidates and discuss potential candidates amongst the team. If you have not heard from them after a week or two, making a polite follow-up call for the position is wise. It is also important to remember you may not get a call back or an explanation for the reason you were not selected.

Keep interviewing

Keep your options open and continue to seek out additional opportunities. It is a competitive market. You know you have done all the right things after your last interview – sent the thank you note, followed up with a call, and are excited about the possibility – be happy and pleased with your performance and know you did all you could and move on to the next opportunity. There could be a variety of reasons you don't hear back – companies decide to postpone hiring due to budget constraints, mergers or changes to the overall economy. Continuing on your search could also lead to receiving multiple offers and being able to choose the right fit for you.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS: INTERVIEW

Behavioral Interview Techniques – The S.T.A.R. Approach

Situation or Task	Describe the situation that you were in or the task that you needed to accomplish. You must describe a specific event or situation, not a generalized description of what you have done in the past. Be sure to give enough detail for the interviewer to understand. This situation can be from a previous job, from a volunteer experience, or any relevant event.
Action you took	Describe the action you took and be sure to keep the focus on you. Even if you are discussing a group project or effort, describe what you did -- not the efforts of the team. Don't tell what you might do, tell what you did.
Results you achieved	What happened? How did the event end? What did you accomplish? What did you learn?

Use examples from internships, classes and school projects, activities, team participation, community service, hobbies and work experience -- anything really -- as examples of your past behavior. In addition, you may use examples of special accomplishments. Whether personal or professional, such as scoring the winning touchdown, being elected president of your Greek organization, winning a prize for your artwork, surfing a big wave, or raising money for charity. Wherever possible, quantify your results. Numbers always impress employers.

Remember that many behavioral questions try to get at how you responded to negative situations; you'll need to have examples of negative experiences ready, but try to choose negative experiences that you made the best of or -- better yet, those that had positive outcomes.

Here's a good way to prepare for behavior-based interviews:

- Identify six to eight examples from your past experience where you demonstrated top behaviors and skills that employers typically seek. Think in terms of examples that will exploit your top selling points.
- Half of your examples should be totally positive, such as accomplishments or meeting goals.
- The other half should be situations that started out negatively but either ended positively or you made the best of the outcome.
- Vary your examples; don't take them all from just one area of your life.
- Use fairly recent examples. If you're a college student, examples from high school may be too long ago. Accenture, in fact, specifies that candidates give examples of behaviors demonstrated within the last year.
- Try to describe examples in story form.

To cram for a behavioral interview right before you're interviewed, review your resume. Seeing your achievements in print will jog your memory. In the interview, listen carefully to each question, and pull an example out of your bag of tricks that provides an appropriate description of how you demonstrated the desired behavior. With practice, you can learn to tailor a relatively small set of examples to respond to a number of different behavioral questions.

How do I prepare for a behavioral interview?

Companies that employ behavioral interviewing have predetermined the skill sets they require for a particular position. These skill sets could include: decision making and problem solving, leadership, motivation, communication, interpersonal skills, planning and organization, critical thinking skills, team building, and the ability to influence others. The company determines the skill sets by doing a detailed analysis of the position they are seeking to fill. Job seekers also must go through this same process. To conduct a job analysis the job seeker should ask questions such as:

1. What are the necessary skills to do this job?
2. What makes a successful candidate?
3. What would make an unsuccessful candidate?
4. Why have people left this position previously?
5. What is the most difficult part of this job?

Once you have landed the interview, keep in mind the following points. Be detailed and specific. You should have developed three stories that illustrate your past performance. Remember that the interviewer will be operating under the premise that "past performance in a similar setting is the best predictor of future performance."

The best way to accomplish this is to use the three-step STAR process or

1. Situation or Task
2. Action
3. Result or outcome

For example, you might recount a time when communication within your work group had broken down (situation). To resolve the problem, you organized informal lunch meetings for people to discuss relevant issues (action). Morale then improved, as did the lines of communication (result). Using this three step STAR process is a powerful way for you to frame your experiences and accomplishments for the interviewer.

Limit rambling and tangents. While you cannot control what is asked, you can control what you say. Listen carefully to each question. If you are unsure, rephrase the question and ask for clarification. When you respond, be sure to recall your past accomplishments in detail. Practice your behavioral stories using real-life examples. It is very difficult to make up behavioral stories, which is why behavioral interviewing is becoming more popular. By practicing, you will be able to recall with confidence your past accomplishments.

Sample Questions

Communication

- Give me a specific example of a time when a co-worker criticized your work in front of others. How did you respond? How has that event shaped the way you communicate with others?
- How do you ensure that someone understands what you are saying?
- Tell me about a time when you had to present complex information.
- Tell me about a time in which you had to use your written communication skills in order to get across an important point.

Decision Making

- Give me an example of a time you had to make a difficult decision.
- Describe a specific problem you solved for your employer. How did you approach the problem? What role did others play? What was the outcome?
- Give me an example of when taking your time to make a decision paid off.

Initiative

- What did you do to prepare for this interview?
- Give me an example of a situation that could not have happened successfully without you being there.

Planning and Organization

- Describe a situation when you had many projects due at the same time. What steps did you take to get them all done?
- How do you determine priorities in scheduling your time? Give me an example.

Flexibility

- Describe a time where you were faced with problems or stresses that tested your coping skills.
- Describe a time when you put your needs aside to help a co-worker understand a task. How did you assist them? What was the result?

Leadership

- Tell me about a time when you influenced the outcome of a project by taking a leadership role.
- Give me an example of when you involved others in making a decision.

Time Management

- Tell me about a time when you failed to meet a deadline. What things did you fail to do? What were the repercussions? What did you learn?
- Tell me about a time when you were particularly effective on prioritizing tasks and completing a project on schedule.

Situational Job Interview Questions

Situational interview questions, more commonly known as “hypothetical interview questions”, are questions an interviewer uses to find out how you would approach certain problems if they were to arise. This type of questioning is designed to help the interviewer with determining how you would handle a certain situation. Unlike behavioral interviews which you are required to provide examples of how you handled a certain situation, situational questions ask you to envision and hypothesize how you would handle a particular situation if it were to arise.

Examples of Situational questions:

- If you found out an employee was stealing from the business how would you approach this employee?
- What would you do if your supervisor asked you to do something that you felt was unethical?

- Imagine you have a deadline and you are running out of time. What would you do?
- How would you handle an employee that is disrupting the work environment?
- In a position of management, how would you handle a heavy workload if you were short staffed?
- If your supervisor makes a decision you do not agree with how would you handle this?
- How would you react if a team member was not contributing towards a project?
- As a leader what would you do to build team spirit?

Keys to answering situational interview questions:

Remember that situational interview questions deal with hypothetical situations and not necessarily past experiences – while a hypothetical question may seem daunting to answer, the best way to prepare yourself is similar to the steps involved in a problem solving exercise.

Rule 1: Be prepared and have a definite understanding of the role and the position for which you are applying. By understanding the position, you can already second guess the questions that an interviewer might ask. For example, if you are applying for a managerial position, it is more than likely that the situation questions will be about how you would handle certain scenarios as a manager.

Example: “How would you react if a team member was not contributing toward a project?” By researching the type of organization and hierarchy you are in a better position to answer this question.

Rule 2: During your research, make a list of events that happened in your previous role or in your past that led to a positive outcome. If you’re a recent graduate or entry level, draw on other areas such as volunteer work or memberships you belong to.

Rule 3: Develop a few short stories about specific examples where you solved the problem and how you solved the problem. Most important is to have a clear understanding of how you resolved the issues.

Rule 4: Apply these examples to the questions.

Sample questions and excellent answers:

Question 1: How would you react if a team member was not contributing towards a project?

Answer: Unfortunately, I have been in this situation before where one team member was not contributing, and it caused a detrimental effect on the whole team. I would handle this situation with honest communication at the very beginning. What I have found is that the more you ignore the problem, the worse it can get. Speaking with the team member in a non-confrontational way is the best approach. Often the reason for a team member not contributing is that they don’t understand the work or what is expected of them. By communicating with the individual, I am at least able to find out what the cause of the problem and then be able to work toward a solution.

TIP: As you can see from my answer I have drawn upon my experience, listed the event that occurred and presented a positive solution to the problem.

Question 2: If you believed your supervisor was wrong how would you handle the situation?

Answer: I would present my reasons to the supervisor and provide an alternate solution. In my experiences, I find that telling someone they are wrong without providing facts or examples is the wrong way to go about it. I would ensure that I was fully prepared and had analyzed the situation before speaking to the supervisor.

Most importantly, I would discuss my reasons in private, in a one-on-one situation, not in front of other team members.

Question 3: How would you react if a project you had been working on suddenly changed or the deadline had been changed?

Answer: My first response would be to speak with the supervisors to get an understanding why the project had been changed and ensure that I had all the facts and answers before approaching the rest of the team. As soon as I had the answers, I would notify the team to let them know things had changed. Once everyone was aware of the changes, I would want to sit down with the team to develop a new strategy to move forward with the project.

Impressive Questions to ask the Interview Panel/Interviewer

1) How long have you worked here and what do you like most about it?

If they have answered the first part at some point during introductions do not ask, stick the second part only.

2) What other department have you worked at within this company?

This will speak to availability to move within the company and hear stories of growth and internal promotion and long-term opportunities.

3) Are there opportunities for relocation?

Another question that will show interest in the company for long-term career prospects.

4) How has this position evolved since it was created?

This will give you a good idea if it has grown or stayed stagnant.

5) What is the top priority for the person in this position over the next 3 months?

A great way to find out what to focus on if you are picked for the position and you can hit the ground running on your first day.

6) What are the qualities of successful managers in this company?

If interviewing for a managerial position – you will want to ask this and hear what they find to be positive tendencies in a leadership role and what they value in their company culture.

7) Any questions I can address or elaborate on from earlier response regarding any hesitations about my qualifications?

This question tells the interviewer that you are comfortable addressing and openly discussing areas you are vulnerable. It also shows your willingness to be coached and open to constructive criticism.

8) What does a typical day look like in this position?

Basic overall good question to get an idea of who you will be interacting with and work load.

9) If I am offered this position – who will I be working most closely with?

Another basic question to get more information about who you will work with and possible reporting structure.

INFORMATION & RESOURCES

Helpful Links

www.workforwarriorsga.org
www.dol.state.ga.us/Access/Service/ListCurrentJobFairs
www.military.com/veteran-jobs
www.linkedinforgood.linkedin.com/programs/veterans

Job Search Websites

Department of Veterans Affairs – www.vaforvets.va.gov
MOS Translator/Additional Resources O*Net – www.onetonline.org
USA Jobs – www.usajobs.gov

For questions or comments contact:

Work for Warriors Georgia
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