



Proven Interview Skills: Get A Competitive Edge In An Increasingly Competitive World



"The number of students applying to graduate school and for professional positions are at an all time high, especially in this economy," says Bob Salvin, William Simmons & Greg Slayton of Salvin Dental "and that means acceptance rates are at unusually lower levels.

Our goal is to share our best practices and experiences learned as we built our business into an award winning organization, so that the students who seek our help, and are willing to listen, will have a competitive edge when they are stacked up against their equally educated peers."

Objective

This material in this program is an extension of our commitment to serve our customers, and their college age children.

We have learned that “head knowledge” does not always translate effectively into “heart knowledge”, and most students tell us that interviewing and personal presentation skills were not covered well, if at all, during their college experience.

For 30 years, you have allowed us to become partners in your success. We want to honor that relationship by providing this material for you and your family.

About Salvin Dental

Starting from the trunk of a used car in 1981, Salvin Dental has become a globally respected brand, now selling throughout North America with a direct sales force and through distributors and direct in over 100 countries.

Salvin Dental has been recognized multiple times as a PriceWaterhouseCoopers / Bank of America / Business Journal “Fast 50 Company”, and is a multiple time Business Journal “Best Places To Work” company. The company has received the Governor’s International Trade Award, and has been featured in numerous magazine articles and business books. Founder & CEO, Bob Salvin is an Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year® Award winner.

The company’s culture is one of hiring the best and brightest individuals and providing them with unlimited opportunity to grow and prosper. As a result, Salvin Dental is a highly energetic and collaborative environment with a global team approach toward serving their customers.

Interviewing Is Not An Adversarial Process

Most people think that interviewing is an adversarial process where the interviewer's goal is to ask trick questions to eliminate people.

Not true!

Given a stack of resumes, where everyone "looks qualified", every interviewer we know really wants to find people that they can enthusiastically advocate as winners for the position.

Every Encounter Is Part Of The Selection Process

Every "touchpoint" within an organization is part of the interview / selection process. The decision to accept / hire you is made from input from all directions.

Every person you encounter is potentially part of the overall interview process. This includes everyone from the person that greets you at the door to the person that walks you out to your car.

Master The Elevator Speech

You have arrived for your interview and find yourself in the elevator with the Director of Admissions or President of the company. You have less than a minute – 250 words to make a positive impression.

Describe who you are:

Keep it short. What would you like the listener to remember most about you?

Describe what you do:

Highlight results. Think of it as your tag line. This information will help the listener quickly grasp the value you bring to the organization.

Describe how you are unique:

What differentiates you from your competition? What unique benefits do you provide to the organization? Demonstrate how you're different or better than others.

Describe your goal:

Share your goal. Make sure it is concrete, well defined, realistic and with a set time frame.

Tips for an effective elevator speech:

Avoid jargon, "business speak" or trendy buzzword. Use your own voice.

"Own" your elevator speech – it is an informal conversation, not a "canned" speech.

Be passionate. Your enthusiastic presence will be more memorable than what you said.

Verbs are more powerful than adjectives – Use the active voice

"Jim hit a home run" is much more powerful than "the home run was hit by Jim"

Practice your elevator speech – have several versions to adapt to the appropriate audience.

Be flexible – if the individual begins asking questions, be prepared to move the conversation forward.

Adapted from: <http://www.alumni.hbs.edu/careers/pitch/>. Harvard Business School Elevator Pitch Builder - this site will help you develop an effective elevator speech.

Four Referability Habits

If you really want to stand out from the crowd, master and live by these four habits.

- 1. Show Up On Time**
- 2. Do What You Say You Will Do**
- 3. Finish What You Start**
- 4. Say Please & Thank You**

We are blown away by the number of candidates, salespeople and entire businesses who fail at these skill sets every day. Most, if not all, of these people will never be truly successful in their lives and are clueless about why.

To prove how important this is to yourself, find three or four successful people you admire.

- 1) Ask them how important these characteristics are to them in the people they deal with.
- 2) Then ask them how often they are disappointed by individuals and companies who don't think this is important.
- 3) Finally, ask them how these characteristics affect their choices of who they hire in their companies, which companies they choose to do business with, or which applicants they select for admission in their professional programs.

Source: Dan Sullivan & The Strategic Coach™ Program, Toronto, Canada

We Hear Three Kinds Of Conversations:

Fluff

The guy in the back row of the stands or the Monday Morning Quarterback

Super Fluff

The sportscaster who is sitting out of the rain in a heated sky box

Conversations That Make A Difference

The conversation between the Head Coach and the Quarterback, prior to the last play, of the fourth quarter of a tied Super Bowl game

Source: Tony Robbins

For The **Crucial** Conversations That Make A Difference,

Examples: Final interviews, Closing the sale, Asking for the loan, Proposing marriage, Presenting treatment to a patient, Delivering the final argument to the jury.

There Are Three Kinds Of **Crucial** Conversations

1 - "Puke"

90 to 95% of what all of us hear every day is "Puke".

2 - "Nail It"

Generally, only 5% of what you hear is "Nail It"

Comprised of "to the point, direct answer, action provoking and initiating" statements

Very few people speak "Nail It"

"Nail It" speakers rarely speak "Puke"

3 - "Relevance Statement"

This is a conversational "closing tool" that takes you to the top of the list for anything that you do

Example of a "Relevance Statement" is:

"...and what that means to you is, because of my experience in working in a marketing company and the excellent references they will provide, you will already have a proven winner if you add me to your team"

1 - "Puke"

90 to 95% of what we hear is "Puke".

"Puke" is "throw away" language that most people use ...while they are thinking of the right answer.

"Puke" is "throw away" language that most people use ...if they don't have the right answer.

"Puke" can be additional "noise" that surrounds and minimizes the impact of having the right answer.

"Puke" is language that does not powerfully answer the question.

"Puke" can be language that surrounds or clouds the answer, but hides the "meat". Just because you are talking doesn't mean that you are saying anything

"Puke" buries the "Nail It" answer.

"Puke" does not get to the point, does not grab the attention or interest of the listener, and is not relevant to the question being asked.

"I wish this person would get to the point and answer my question."

2 - “Nail It”

Only 5% of the population speaks “Nail It”

“Nail It” language gets right to the point and powerfully communicates the right answer.

“Nail It” language does not hide the right answer in a “Puke” or “Fluff” sandwich.

“Nail It” language offers the opportunity to express confidence based on your tone of voice and delivery.

The “Nail It” statement or answer is one that makes a clear concise statement or answers a question directly and leaves both you and the interviewer with a feeling of “Wow”.

The “Nail It” statement or answer paints a picture for the interviewer that answers their silent question, “Can I see this person representing my company, my profession, or my university?” The answer needs to be a resounding YES!

The “Nail It” answer speaks beyond the resume, shows conviction and passion, and clearly and confidently answers the question.

The “Nail It” statement tells a story that will help to provide a memorable reference for the interviewer to use when ranking you against the other candidates.

“This young man or woman has the right stuff to be in our program”

3 - "Relevance Statement"

"...and what that means to you is..."

Connects experience supported by "Nail It" statement to value appreciated by interviewer.

People are interested in your experiences but are much more interested in how your experiences benefit them.

Most people's "Relevance Statements" are "Puke" or "Fluff"

"Relevance Statements" begin at the end of your "Nail It" answer and start with the phrase ".....and what that means to you is..."

The "Relevance Statement" takes a WOW! "Nail It" answer to the next level in the interviewer's continuing perception that you are the one!

"Relevance Statements" use direct, powerful language. They become compelling units of proof that add emotional reasons for someone to advocate for you.

"This young man or woman has the right stuff to be in our program"

Example: “Puke”, “Nail It “ the “Relevance Statement”

Specific Critical Question

“Congratulations on having an overall GPA of 3.8. However, we noticed that your science GPA is 3.1. Can you please explain the discrepancy?”

Puke Answer

“Thank you for recognizing that my overall GPA is 3.8 which puts me in the top 5% of my graduating class. You are correct that my science GPA is 3.1. I faced several challenges adapting to collegiate life, including the time management and discipline needed to succeed. I became heavily involved in extra-curricular activities which were a significant distraction. During my freshman year, I earned a C in a chemistry class. I had what I thought was a schedule that I would be able to handle, but it took me a while to figure college out. To prove that I could grasp the science needed to succeed in dental school, I took three additional science classes after I graduated and earned an “A” in each one. I really feel like I am a great fit for this university because I have wanted to be a doctor since I was in middle school. You won’t find a candidate that wants this opportunity more than I do. I am thoroughly impressed with the University of Western New Mexico, and this is my first choice. If accepted, I will do whatever it takes to represent this establish in a professional manner. “

Nail It Answer

During my freshman year, I earned a C in a chemistry class. I had what I thought was a schedule that I would be able to handle, but it took me a while to figure college out. To prove that I could grasp the science needed to succeed in dental school, I took three additional science classes after I graduated and earned an “A” in each one.

Relevance Statement

During my freshman year, I earned a C in a chemistry class. I had what I thought was a schedule that I would be able to handle, but it took me a while to figure college out. To prove that I could grasp the science needed to succeed in dental school, I took three additional science classes after I graduated and earned an “A” in each one...and what this means to you is that I fully understand the academic rigor needed to be a successful dentist.

Example: “Puke”, “Nail It “ the “Relevance Statement”

Specific Critical Question

Tell me why you are interested in becoming a CPA?

Puke Answer

I have always excelled academically, and math has been my favorite subject. I scored a 1550 on the SAT, while scoring 800 on the mathematical portion. I took a career aptitude test when I was a freshman in high school and the top suggestion for me was becoming a CPA. I have spent the past four summers working as an apprentice for a family friend who owns a small CPA firm in Chattanooga, and I love it! I enjoy the combination of using my mathematical problem solving skills to help solve complex tax and estate planning issues. My hope for the future is that there will be companies that will continue to build relationships with CPA firms in the United States as opposed to sending the work to be completed in other countries for much less money.

Nail It Answer

I have spent the past four summers working as an apprentice for a family friend who owns a small CPA firm in Chattanooga, and I love it! I enjoy the combination of using my mathematical problem solving skills to help solve complex tax and estate planning issues.

Relevance Statement

I have spent the past four summers working as an apprentice for a family friend who owns a small CPA firm in Chattanooga, and I love it! I enjoy the combination of using my mathematical problem solving skills to help solve complex tax and estate planning issues. What this means to you is that I hope to use my passion for mathematics combined with my interest in both accounting and business to build a successful CPA practice and help other businesses become successful as well.

Example: “Puke”, “Nail It “ the “Relevance Statement”

Specific Critical Question

“In the 2 minutes that we have left, is there anything else you’d like to tell me about your qualifications or experience that make you a fit for Acme Paper and Recycling?”

Puke Answer

“Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this afternoon. I think that we’ve covered everything thoroughly. I hope I have satisfactorily addressed any concerns that you may have about my being a contributing asset to your organization. I appreciate learning more about what you are looking for in this position. I believe I am the best candidate. I have a proven track record of showing up on time, completing projects, and earning the trust & confidence of my peers and superiors. My experience working as an intern at AAA Printing Company has given me a real world perspective on the demands and expectations of the customers in your industry. I believe I have the skill set, the ability, the commitment and the work ethic to continue the success of the Acme Paper and Recycling Company.”

Nail It Answer

“I have a proven track record of showing up on time, completing projects, and earning the trust & confidence of my peers and superiors. My experience working as an intern at AAA Printing Company has given me a real world perspective on the demands and expectations of the customers in your industry.”

Relevance Statement

“I have a proven track record of showing up on time, completing projects, and earning the trust & confidence of my peers and superiors. My experience working as an intern at AAA Printing Company has given me a real world perspective on the demands and expectations of the customers in your industry...and what that means to you is that I can “hit the ground running” immediately to serve your customers. That translates into my becoming a producing member of your team sooner than later. My plan is to leverage my proven initiative to be the leading sales producer in your organization within three years. I’ll do a great job for you and you will not regret hiring me!”

Example: “Puke”, “Nail It “ the “Relevance Statement”

Specific Critical Question

Why are you the best candidate for this program / position?

Puke Answer

“During my collegiate career, I had the opportunity to serve on a mission team in South America. I learned just how important it is to me to have a life of service and I believe an obligation to myself to use my knowledge and skills to the best of my ability. My natural aptitude for science and excellent hand/eye coordination give me the talents and skills it takes to be an excellent surgeon. But more importantly I have the passion, commitment and personality to help the people of my community. I believe that I will be an exemplary student at Central Wyoming University’s Medical School. I will then have the additional education to make a difference in the health of my immediate community and around the world.”

“Nail It” Answer

“My natural aptitude for science and excellent hand/eye coordination give me the talents and skills it takes to be an excellent surgeon. But more importantly I have the passion, commitment and personal goal to go back and practice in my hometown.”

Relevance Statement

“My natural aptitude for science and excellent hand/eye coordination give me the talents and skills it takes to be an excellent physician. But more importantly I have the passion, commitment and personal goal to go back and practice in my hometown...and what that means to you is, if you choose me I will be an excellent student and will go on to be a credit to the profession as an excellent surgeon.”

Example: “Puke”, “Nail It “ the “Relevance Statement”

Specific Critical Question

Describe what you consider to be your greatest achievement. Explain how you achieved it.

Puke Answer

Most people have achieved something that they can be proud of. Their achievement could be a winning sports team, a high score on the SAT, or serving others in some way. The twelve-year commitment that it took for me to earn my Eagle Scout has been thus far, my life’s greatest achievement. I reached this milestone by practicing the virtues of being a scout, such as honesty, integrity and resilience, which I used to persevere through each stage of the Eagle Scout process. I hope that you understand the amount of sacrifice and effort that it took to reach this goal.

Nail It Answer

The twelve-year commitment that it took for me to earn my Eagle Scout has been thus far, my life’s greatest achievement. I reached this milestone by practicing the virtues of being a scout, such as honesty, integrity and resilience, which I used to persevere through each stage of the Eagle Scout process.

Relevance Statement

The twelve-year commitment that it took for me to earn my Eagle Scout has been thus far, my life’s greatest achievement. I reached this milestone by practicing the virtues of being a scout, such as honesty, integrity and resilience, which I used to persevere through each stage of the Eagle Scout process. What this means to you is that I have the dedication and resolve needed to complete long term goals, while doing so with dignity and honor.

Example: “Puke”, “Nail It “ the “Relevance Statement”

Specific Critical Question

Speak about a time that you had difficulty in completing a task and tell me what you did and what the end result was.

“In 2001 I was hired by Congresswoman Susan Smith to be the Finance Director of her reelection campaign. My task was to help generate \$800,000 in campaign contributions, manage campaign volunteers, develop and execute events of high level executives and political leaders and to handle the finances of the campaign.”

Puke Answer

“Susan won her reelection with 72% of the vote, we raised \$ 830,000 in the midst of a recession. I brought together and led an effective team of 8 committed volunteers. I worked hard and did whatever it took to get the job done, lots of hours and preparation. I went to special classes to learn the FEC skills. I leveraged my business connections and creativity to create new signature events which increased revenue and participation. I used my writing skills to increase revenue by repositioning Sue as a business and homeland security expert and I created a networking group of industry peers to guide me through the election process.”

Nail It Answer

“I leveraged my business connections and creativity to create events which increased revenue and participation. I used my writing skills to increase revenue by repositioning Susan as a business and homeland security expert and I created a networking group of industry peers to guide me through the election process.”

Relevance Statement

“I leveraged my business connections and creativity to create events which increased revenue and participation. I used my writing skills to increase revenue by repositioning Susan as a business and homeland security expert and I created a networking group of industry peers to guide me through the election process...and what that means to you is that I’ll use these same skills to help you achieve your company’s goals, I’ll look for new solutions and opportunities, I’m not afraid to take on new challenges or the extra effort it may take to master them.”

Example: “Puke”, “Nail It “ the “Relevance Statement”

Specific Critical Question

Have you ever been in a leadership role? If so please describe the situation and what you accomplished

Puke Answer

“I am glad you asked. I feel like I am a born leader as I have shown throughout my life. I have always led my sports teams and my school classes in every way. Any of my references or former teachers or coaches will tell you that I was the person they counted on to lead the others. One of my many leadership opportunities was serving as the president of the Alpha Beta health sciences honors organization at Michael Jordan University. In this capacity I led many fundraising and charitable projects. One of my favorite projects was leading a team of students that went into local elementary schools and communities to educate students and parents about the importance of proper dental health and regular dental visits. I feel great about the outcome of this project because it effectively reinforced to the kids and their parents that proper dental care affects your entire well-being and we made a difference in the future health of many people. This is an example of how I have always been successful as a leader and will always continue to be.”

“Nail It” Answer

“One of my many leadership opportunities was serving as the president of the Alpha Beta health sciences honors organization at Michael Jordan University. I led a team of students that went into local elementary schools and communities to educate students and parents about the importance of proper dental health and regular dental visits.

Relevance Statement

“One of my many leadership opportunities was serving as the president of the Alpha Beta health sciences honors organization at Michael Jordan University. I led a team of students that went into local elementary schools and communities to educate students and parents about the importance of proper dental health and regular dental visits...and what this meant to me was to see the appreciation and interest from these kids and their parents.”

Preparation Worksheet

Think about how you would respond to the following questions.

The Deficit Question

What are you most afraid of or concerned about being asked in the interview?

(i.e.: Low GPA first two years of college)

The Differentiation Question:

What life lesson, unique experience, success or failure have you had that make you stand out from the crowd?

(Hint: Include what you learned from that experience.)

The Closing Question:

We have a number of very qualified Candidates. Why should we choose you?

Preparation Separates The Winner From Second Place

1. Most People Know That Real Estate Is All About Location, Location & Location.
2. Very Few People Really Understand That Interviewing Is All About Preparation, Preparation, & MORE Preparation.
3. Your preparation time will be very well spent!

Be Prepared - Understand the real questions.

Ask yourself the question: What are they really asking?

For example, if they ask what your 5-year goals are, they are as interested in knowing that you have goals as they are specifically what they are.

If they ask you what your biggest mistake was, they're not trying to find out your biggest mistake as much as they are what you've learned from it. If you said you haven't made any mistakes, then you may find yourself being shown the door faster than you think. People are looking for people who can adapt and learn and continue to adapt and learn.

Predict the biggest hurdle question.

What is the biggest hurdle you've had to overcome?

Predict the due diligence question.

We'll be doing our due diligence, a thorough background check. What should we be prepared for?

Predict the "tell me about yourself" question.

What they are really asking is for you to tell them something they can't get from your resume or references.

Score high on the "mistake" question.

The interviewer will ask you "what mistakes have you made?", however the real question is "what did you learn from the experience?"

Predict the "strengths & weaknesses" questions.

Describe how your strengths will benefit you in the position you are looking for. Describe one or two weaknesses, whatever your answer is, don't go on and on.

Rehearse your strengths and weaknesses question before the interview.

Solve the problem but don't win the Nobel Prize in storytelling by going on and on.

Prepare for the "lying" question.

The interviewer may ask you "have you ever lied or cheated in your life?". This is a "heads you lose, tails you lose" question but you need to be honest and if you have lied, talk about what you learned and what you would not do.

Expect trick questions. Some will be situational.

This is not as much about your answer as it is about discovering how good you are in solving problems. Be concise. Solve the problem. Don't win the Nobel Prize in storytelling by going on and on.

Prepare for the "do you have any questions?" question.

This is very often a hidden agenda question, where the interviewer wants to know how thorough you are and how much thought you've given to the position.

How many vacation days do I get is probably not the best question to ask.

"Not really" is not the best answer either.

Be prepared with a list of a few questions you could ask.

If you need to, write them down and pull the sheet out and refer to it, being very careful not to ask a question that has clearly already been answered.

Some Material Adapted From "Games Companies Play" by Dr Pierre Mornell

Potential Interview Questions

Tell me about yourself.

Tell me about your strengths. Tell me about your weaknesses.

We'll be doing our due diligence, a thorough background check. What should we be prepared for?

Tell me about a recent failure. What did you learn?

Where do you see yourself in five years and how do you expect to get there?

Describe what you consider to be your greatest achievement. Explain how you achieved it.

What has been your greatest challenge? How did you approach it? What was the outcome?

How do you recognize incompetence? What do you do about it?

How do you recognize excellence? What do you do about it?

What about yourself would you most like to improve?

What makes you lose your temper? Tell me about the last time it happened.

What will you do if you don't get this position?

What will you do if you don't get into (medical, dental, law) school?

What is your biggest fear in accepting this position?

Have you ever lied or cheated in your life? Please explain the situation, the outcome, and what you learned from the experience.

Why do you want to work for us (go to school here)?

Why should we hire you? Why should we accept you into this program?

How do you resolve conflict?

Have you ever gone out on a limb or taken a chance? Tell me what happened.

What is the biggest mistake you have made?

What is the biggest hurdle you've had to overcome?

What is the biggest decision you ever had to make?

Tell me something I won't hear from any of your references.

Speak about a time that you had difficulty in completing a task and tell me what you did and what the end result was.

Speak of a time that you had a conflict with a peer and what was your role in overcome that?

Tell me about a time when you had to adjust to a classmate or colleague's working style in order to complete a project or achieve your objective.

Tell me about a goal that you did not reach, what steps did you take? What obstacles did you encounter? How did it make you feel?

What are the most important qualities or character traits you look for in a leader and why?

Describe a situation in which you were able to use persuasion to successfully convince someone to see things your way.

If I were to ask your professors to describe you, what would they say?

Do you work more effective alone or with a group? Why?

Have you ever been in a leadership role? If so please describe the situation. How did you rate the outcome?

What do you do to relax? Hobbies?

Tell me about your leadership style.

Game Plans & Strategies For Success

Strategies To Help You Achieve Your Primary Goal

Develop a clearly defined understanding of your game plan for success

What is the step by step process to achieve your goal? (*Application, interview, transcript, resume, etc.*)

What homework, training, classes do you need to complete to prepare for this process?
(*DAT, LSAT, extra classes in a subject I am weak in, etc.*)

Who do you need to know that can help you strategically to achieve your goal?
(*Professionals in your field of interest, professors, current students or recent graduates in your field of study*)

What training, internships or job experiences should you seek to give you a strategic advantage over your peers?

Who in your life will hold you accountable to help you complete the tasks needed to achieve your goal? (*Parent, Mentor, College Advisor, Peer, etc.*)

Plan B Strategies

You need to have an answer to the following question:

"What are you going to do if you do not get this job / do not get accepted into this school?"

Sample Answer:

"I will take additional classes in the subjects where I need improvement and will re-apply."

If necessary, consider alternatives to your first career or school choice:

"If you aren't accepted to the space program, maybe you should consider being a fighter pilot"

Take advantage of career assessments offered at your school or in your community to match your skills and talents with your career choice.

Stand Out from the Crowd / Go to the TOP of the List “To-Do’s”

Be Persistent

“Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination are omnipotent.”

Prepare for an initial phone call

It will probably come at a time of day that you won’t expect. Even if you expect Vinnie to call you to go out for a beer, do not answer your phone by saying “Yo”. You may be called to answer specific questions, to forward additional information or to confirm the details of your arrival. Be prepared, be professional and be aware the way you handle the call and the way that you follow-up is part of your interview.

Details can make or break your opportunity

Every question they ask, every step they ask you to complete, phone call to return, etc. is an indicator of how you would do in that position. If they ask you to call them on Tuesday, then call them on Tuesday. If you call on Wednesday, you may have already blown your opportunity. Very often, the people who most promptly and most consistently return phone calls and respond to requests for additional information become the “heads up” winners for the opportunity that they are interviewing for.

Research company / school / industry

Make a commitment to go to the library. Not all information is on the “free” internet – sometimes it is restricted through paid subscriptions – most public libraries subscribe to industry publications. Incorporate that information in the course of the conversation – not say...when I was researching your company, I learned that at – you want to come off as knowledgeable – not a know-it-all. Research who will be interviewing you. LinkedIn – learn their successes and their background.

You are what you read

Broaden your reading to be up to speed with regard to recent local and national issues – that will help with general interview and casual conversation – don’t live on the sports page. Your reading will show a continued commitment to learning and expanding your horizons.

Bring additional copies of your resumes and references

You may be interviewed by a group of people at once, or will meet a number of people in the process. Have a copy of your resume available for each of them

Expect changes in the interview schedule

Don't be discouraged but also be aware that throwing change at you may be a way that the interviewer wants to measure your ability to adapt. People are looking for flexibility but more importantly the ability to adapt and make decisions on the fly.

Have your pitch down pat

Be yourself

Maintain eye contact

Answer concisely – answer yes or no questions with “yes” or “no”, then elaborate with specifics

Make a statement, support the statement, summarize and then shut up. Your answers should be about 20 seconds and certainly no longer than 2 minutes.

Ask thoughtful questions about the position, the school, the company

Most are industry professionals – ask them what they see in their profession going forward

What concerns them about their candidate pool today

Use that opportunity to counteract something negative said – how are you different?

Be positive, enthusiastic and polite

Use the same respect that you would give your grandparents.

Be deferential to everyone.

Focus on remembering people's names and use their names

“Thank you very much Mr. Salvin. I really appreciate the opportunity.”

“Greg, thanks very much for showing me around. You've been great.”

Send handwritten thank you notes

Differentiate your presentation from your competition. Specifically reference the conversation. “I appreciated your comments about...” to create additional recall about the interview / conversation.

Stay in contact with the company on a routine basis

Remember, many “no's” really might mean “not now.” Don't use “just checkin' in” – but rather send the person you met an article they may not have seen – be sincere in your efforts.

Your ability to follow-up is expected and you would be surprised by the number of people who fail to do so.

Do You Look Like A Professional Or A Drug Dealer?

Facebook, My Space & Twitter, etc

68% of major employers now check social media for candidate background info

Checking social media is also a part of many medical, dental, veterinary and law school admissions processes.

39% of all employers have actually reversed their hiring decisions based upon impressions they got on social media.

Have a professional picture as your profile picture (We will provide one for you)

No cursing, no boozing pictures of any kind. Ask your friends to remove photographs of you from their sites that are not flattering, or block / untag / delete them. Everything "Mother and Dad approved".

Don't send friend requests to the interviewer. This puts you them in an awkward position.

Cell phones and voicemail

Your voicemail message should be professional and portray a positive image of you. No music, jokes or other distracting messages that may leave doubts about your maturity.

Here is a sample for you to use: *"Hello this is Greg Slayton. Please leave a detailed message at the tone and I will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you."*

Answer your phone professionally unless you are interviewing to be a drug dealer.

Turn off your cell phone before you go into an interview or don't bring it in with you.

Do not take business or potential interview cell phone calls in non-business places. *(For example: a subway, a train station, a party or a noisy restaurant.)*

Background checks

Be prepared for someone to check your criminal background and credit history.

If asked about your record, please understand that it is easy for them to check. Be prepared to explain any infractions and what you learned from the experience.

Email addresses for professional and business communication

Do not use your college issued email address on your resume. Your email address should reflect where you're going, not where you've been.

Create an email address for business use. *(For example: `firstname_lastname@aol.com`)*

Here are some unacceptable examples: `PrincessTT@aol.com` and `HokieFan@VTech.edu`

Dress For Success:

Interview Wardrobe & Presentation Guidelines

You want people to remember who you are and not what you are wearing. Your interviewer's expectation is that you dress professionally, even if they are dressed casually for the interview.

Men – To-Do's

- Dark suits / Sports coat or blazer and slacks (not brown)
- No shiny suits
- No cowboy boots
- Blue or white shirt – pressed and ironed
- Power tie
- Conservative, Non Distracting Jewelry
- Haircut - No spiked or bleached hair, mohawks or mullets
- No facial hair - Clean Shaven

Women – To-Do's

- Conservative make-up
- Conservative jewelry
- No bare shoulders
- No excess cleavage
- No overwhelming perfume
- No open-toe shoes
- Modest hair color

Both Men & Women

- Minty breath but **absolutely** no chewing gum
- Shine your shoes, even if the interviewers don't shine theirs, they'll notice
- No college or fraternity pins
- Well manicured fingernails - no garish colors
- Well fitting clothing
- No visible tattoos or multiple piercings
- Don't smell like a smokestack
- Don't smell or look like the night before (boozing)

Keys To Making The Most Of Your References

- Bring a list of references with your resume to speed up the selection process.
Do not include on your resume “references available upon request.”
- Start with three to six references, if you have them. Include complete contact information including phone, physical address and email addresses
- Pick people who know you well from work and school – superiors and professors.
Do not ask peers, subordinates or fellow classmates.
- Ask your potential references first if they’ll be a reference.
Tell them why they would specifically be a good reference for you (i.e.: to reinforce a quality you want reinforced or how you overcame a deficit) and why you have asked them (i.e.: to get into grad school or a job)
- Ask where, when and how they prefer to be contacted.
- Provide them with a copy of your resume so that they are familiar with your full background.
- Call your references and let them know they may be contacted by a school or potential employer.
- Call your references after a decision is made to thank them for their help.

Leveraging Past Internships and Job Experiences

Maintain contact with your previous internship employers

Ask them for references

Leverage summer mission / volunteer experiences

Be able to express what you learned and how you have applied it toward your career goal

Obtaining Future Internships and Job Experiences

Apply for existing positions

If none exist, create your own position – look to opportunities where the experience might complement your field

An unpaid internship is always more valuable than a paid job outside your desired field.

Tips:

Meet with professors – ask for referrals on companies which are in your field

Become well known to Intern Placement / Career Service Offices on campus

Seek out Alumni who are working in your field

Seek out local and state professional associations

Seek out LinkedIn professionals in your field or in companies you want to affiliate with

Research internships via internet / craigslist

Ask for help, most people want to help

Always raise your hand when opportunity presents itself

Resume Strategies To Give You A Competitive Edge

It is likely that the first people who will look at your resume are not the ones who decide whether you get the position or get in. Their job is to “screen out” rather than “screen in”. Make it easy for them to put you in the list for the next positive step.

Your resume will be a thirty second initial read.

You have one chance to stand out. Make the most of it.

Focus on relevancy for the position you want. If you question what is relevant, ask someone who has been successful in that position.”

Speak in clear, concise bullet points. Limit yourself to one page.

Use simple language such as “education”, “objective”, “skill summary” & “work experience”.

Use a laser printer and good paper stock.

Start with name, address, phone and fax number, and e-mail address at the top. (*Don't put the current date on the resume.*)

Use any standard format and start with recent history. Use specific dates.

Quantify your success.

Net revenues increased 100% in two years.

Increased volunteer participation in a community service project by 35%

If you have done an internship, highlight your accomplishments.

Internship in Student Affairs Division responsible for New Student Orientation.

Increased community participation by 50% over prior years.

Interned at Community Medical Clinic. Managed conversion from film x rays to digital for this clinic.

What you list on your resume reflects what you value as being important

If you are graduating from college, your high school accomplishments are not relevant on your resume unless it was an exceptional achievement, such as Valedictorian, Eagle Scout, or Morehead Scholar.

Listing your fraternity or sorority is not particularly relevant, unless you were an officer and can list what you accomplished.

Make sure that you highlight community service. For example, if you were the Vice President of Gamma Gamma Gamma, and you orchestrated a fund raising activity that netted a \$50,000 donation to a specific charity.

Avoid listing clubs or extra-curricular activities that might question your maturity, professionalism, or are purely social. For example, one of the most popular clubs at UNC-Chapel Hill is the Barbecue Club: even if you are the president of this club, it is not relevant.

Once you have had one job out of college, continue to focus on your current accomplishments versus your collegiate career.

Unless you have won the Nobel Prize, do not over embellish your accomplishments.

Proof read carefully

Have five people read and critique your resume.

If you don't catch misspellings and typos, you'll end up with such bloopers as:

"Worked party-time as an office assistant."

"I am entirely through in my work; no detail gets by me."

"Typing speed of 40-50 rpm."

"Assisted with murders and acquisitions."

Write a great cover letter

Personalize it

Be clear, concise and use a conversational tone

Don't use words like perpetrator unless you are applying for a position on CSI.

Don't depend on spell check, have four people look at it and make sure that it is correct.

Unless specifically requested, limit yourself to one half to three quarters of a page.

Anything more will be dark spots in a white field of vision and will be ignored.

Sample Cover Letter

Jane Superstar

**123 South Main Street • Opportunity, CA 91506
Cell: 949-555-1212 • email: janesuperstar@aol.com**

July 13, 2011

Mr. Bob Smith
President
Carolinas Legal Partners, Inc.
1745 Elm Street
Charlotte, NC 28211

Dear Mr. Smith,

Bill Jones suggested that I contact you directly about a position which your company advertised recently on CharlotteObserver.com. Bill shared his excitement about Carolinas Legal Partners corporate culture and future growth, and I am very interested in learning more about your company and what opportunities lie ahead.

Enclosed you will find my resume highlighting some of my success while attending Florida State University. You will note that while attending school full time during my junior and senior years, I also had the pleasure of working as a legislative aide to Florida State Senator Joe Lewis. This position required me to be thoroughly knowledgeable about the state's legislative process and to work diplomatically and proactively with constituents, other legislators and their staff to get legislation passed – a sales and marketing position if there ever was one!

I have recently relocated to the Charlotte area and am looking to affiliate with a dynamic company whose leaders are looking for hard working, enthusiastic team players to grow their companies. I would appreciate a time to meet in person to learn more about the Carolina Legal Partners story and what you are looking for in your future associates.

I will call you next Tuesday at 11:00 to learn if there's a time when we could meet in person. I look forward to our discussion.

Most sincerely,

Jane Superstar

Post Interview Strategies

Ask for interviewers' business cards at end of interview

Send a personalized hand-written thank you note, unless told to use email

Include a "closing statement" in your note.

Send this note Immediately

Use spell/grammar check on all correspondence plus have four people look at it

Sample Thank You Note

Hand Written on Note Cards or Executive Stationary

Jane Superstar

123 South Main Street • Opportunity, CA 91506
Cell: 949-555-1212 • email: janesuperstar@aol.com

Dear Dr. Jones,

Thank you for your time today! I really enjoyed learning more about the Western North Dakota University School Of Medicine.

My long-term goal is to practice medicine in the small community where I grew up, which is why I am most impressed about how the school merges a state-of-the-art medical education with an aggressive outreach of service to the community.

I believe that my credentials, experience and commitment to the dental profession make me a natural fit into the WNDU environment. I look forward to becoming a proud representative of your great institution.

Most sincerely,

Jane Superstar

What's Next?

1. Prepare "Nail It" and "Relevance Statement" responses to the questions most likely to be asked.
2. The question you might think they will never ask may well be the very question they ask to decide between the top two candidates. Be well prepared!
3. Prepare by getting someone to videotape you answering questions. Review the recording and keep doing this until you feel more confident about the way you present.
4. Find a business person in your community who will "practice interview" you. This is someone other than a relative.
5. Even if you are interviewing for medical school and get a physician to help you, You should still seek a successful business person to help you with your practice interview. You will understand why after the interview.
6. Ask your practice interviewer for honest, very specific feedback, and also ask for the opportunity to come back for a second practice interview. This will be your absolute best preparation and is the reason why you should seek the most successful, locally accessible person you can find.

We hope that this material has been helpful to you and we wish you the best success!