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# Interviewing for success: Part 1

**"O**ne important key to success is self-confidence. An important key to self-confidence is preparation." This quote by Arthur Ashe, an American professional tennis player who was the only African American ever to win the singles title at Wimbledon, the U.S. Open and the Australian Open, ties in precisely with the thought process you need to apply when preparing for a job interview.

In part one of this two-part series, I will guide you through techniques to consider prior to the interview:

*Do your homework.* Research, research, research. Know as much as possible about all facets of the company, as well as the nature of the job. In addition, Google the name of the interviewer, or search LinkedIn. Having information about the background of this person can enable you to point out career, education or interest similarities as appropriate. I have a friend who asks all candidates this question: "Having read my LinkedIn profile, what does it tell you about me?" Would you be prepared to respond to that question?

*Conduct a personal inventory.* Identify and analyze how your competencies, skillset, professional/personal experience and interests will enable you to be a good fit for the position and add value to the team. Furthermore, based on the job announcement or what you

know about the position, determine your top five key marketable skills for that job. Of course, these may change based upon the specific position. Once again, be sure you are prepared to relate how these skills will allow you to contribute.

*Detail your successes.* For each applicable job, write down your accomplishments. Pinpoint the details of the situation, the actions you performed and the quantifiable results of each success.

*Review and practice potential questions.* Reread the job posting and create a list of key skills, attributes, and required and preferred qualifications. Then, for each of these items, try to find solid examples from your experience and achievements that demonstrate how your background is a good match. Ask friends, relatives and colleagues for questions they have encountered, and Google "sample interview questions." Next, write out responses to the most likely questions. Practice your answers aloud. Do not memorize your responses. You want to sound natural, confident and prepared. If possible, work through several mock interviews.

*Develop questions to ask the interviewer.* Why? Because by doing this you demonstrate your interest in the job and company; you confirm that you have done your research to the degree you can ask probing, de-

tailed questions; and you can gather information that will enable you to make a well-informed decision if and when the job offer is presented.

*Pay attention to your appearance.* Your goal in dressing for the interview is to create a strong, positive, credible first impression. The way you present yourself is the single most powerful nonverbal statement you can make. Your attire should be neat, clean, professional, in good taste and appropriate for your field of endeavor. And, of course, your grooming from head to toe should be in sync.

*Additional tips.* Carry a portfolio with hard copies of your résumé, references and any other material that may be of interest to the interviewer. Make sure you have the correct time (plan to arrive 10-15 minutes early) and have clear directions to the location.

Interviewing is a learned skill. All it takes is preparation, motivation, enthusiasm, confidence in yourself and practice.

Part two of this series will be published in the September issue and will share strategies for "during and after" the interview. For a list of sample interview questions and questions to ask the interviewer, email [successim1@yahoo.com](mailto:successim1@yahoo.com).

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