



Alumni

NAIL the Interview

Last Updated: November 2020

NAIL THE INTERVIEW

The time and effort put into the job search have been successful, and the call has come through. Now it is time for the interview! In recruiting, employers are currently interviewing candidates virtually, and this is becoming more of the norm. Make sure you are ready to **NAIL** the interview by following these best practices, whether in person or interviewing on camera.

Never Let Them See You Sweat

If you do not want employers to see you sweat, you must come prepared. To prepare and practice for your interview, we will first look into what I like to call the external forces or, rather, everything around you. Since you have the opportunity to set the stage for the interview, you want to make sure that your background, location, and technology are set up correctly.

- Become comfortable with the virtual interview technology that you are scheduled to interview with. Spend time understanding how it works and test the platform ahead of time to work out any bugs that may occur with the system. Having a backup plan if the system fails or the internet goes down is a great way to show that you have prepared to troubleshoot and that the interview is important to you.
- The background is what the interviewers will see and is just as important as your attire. Your surroundings should be clean, uncluttered, and professional. Some technology will allow for virtual backgrounds so make sure to choose and test your options before your interview.
- You want to make sure that you are in a location where you will be uninterrupted by phone, friends, or family members. The location should be a place that you are familiar and comfortable with and can control any surprises.

Acting Goes a Long Way

Lights, camera, action! Now is the time to practice your acting skills. In this statement, I am not asking you to be someone you are not, but to bring your authentic self into the interview. There are a couple of things we will have in common with actors. We will be on camera, we will have some rehearsed lines, and we should be prepared to perform because we only have one take.

Practicing your answers beforehand can help keep you focused. I like to find a few industry specific interview questions on Google, and I type my answers out and read them over and over. Even though the interviewer may not ask the same questions, your answers can sometimes be used for multiple questions. Practice being interviewed by friends and family or record yourself answering common interview questions and get feedback on how you appear.

Think about not only your answers, but also how you come across on camera. Evaluate your body language and look for signs of fidgeting on-screen and the pace of your words (sounding nervous or talking too fast). Make sure your tone and pitch come off as confident and friendly. Nod your head when appropriate and keep the camera at eye level to help maintain eye contact. It is also important to show enthusiasm by smiling and engaging in the virtual environment. The best way to show interest is by being interested!

IT'S INTERVIEW TIME!

When preparing for the interview, do not forget the basics. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the company you are applying to, the position you are applying for, and the contribution you plan to make.

- You have one moment to make a great first impression.
 1. Keep eye contact with all interviewers participating
 2. Smile! Sit up straight and keep your head held high. Smiling is a great way to show that you are confident and friendly.
 3. Body language can speak just as loud as your voice. Try not to slouch or fidget as that can be confused for being timid or nervous. Watch your hand movements as folding or crossing of arms can seem defensive or closed off.
 4. Build rapport to help ease your nerves. Have small chat about where you grew up or what school you went to but don't get carried away and go too off topic.
- Research the company you are interviewing with. Visit their social media pages or company website to study the current events and have a genuine interest in the company.
- Know your resume and be able to speak about your knowledge, skills, and abilities and how you have successfully used them in your previous positions.
- Understand the position you are applying for and not just the job description. Reread the job posting and truly understand what the interviewer is looking for.
- Provide examples of how you have applied your skills instead of just saying it.
- Be you! Let your genuine self be a part of the interview. Your lack of authenticity will be seen right away.

Leave Them with a Reminder

Make an impression by leaving a reminder of the incredible interview you just completed with a follow-up email or a handwritten thank-you note. It is best to address it individually to everyone who participated in the interview and not keep it general by addressing it to the "Hiring Manager." This should be done within 24 hours, expressing your appreciation for their time and consideration. Make sure your message highlights one or two things that were mentioned during the interview and what makes you excited to work there. This will make your letter meaningful and your interview memorable.

Top Questions to be prepared to Answer

- Tell me about your current and past work experience and why it is directed related to this position?
- Tell me about your strengths and weakness? How are you working on them?
- Describe a situation where you worked with a difficult colleague/customer and how you were able to handle it.
- Tell me about a time when you failed. What happened, and how did you overcome it?
- Why are you interested in this role? What attracted you to this company?
- What are you looking for in your next job?
- Is there anything we didn't talk about that you would like us to know?

The final portion of an interview is usually the applicant's opportunity to ask any questions they may have. When you hear the words "Do you have any questions for me?" it is important that you get some of your questions answered.

We provided these questions below from topics regarding the job, training, performance, company, team, culture, and next steps.

- What attributes does someone need to have to be successful in this position?
- Are there opportunities for advancement or professional development?
- What are the most important things you'd like to see someone accomplish in the first 30, 60, and 90 days on the job?
- What's different about working here than anywhere else you've worked?
- Don't be afraid to ask what the next steps are and the expected timeline to fill the position before you leave. You want to leave knowing that the interviewer has all the information they need from you to make their decision.

Always remember the candidate has just as much as power as the interviewer. Your confidence improves with how much time you spend preparing. Nailing the interview is not just about getting the job but getting the information that you need for you to pick the right career opportunity.

UCF ALUMNI PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

With a UCF degree as a line-item on your resume, you're already well on your way to a phenomenal and fulfilling career. We want to help you get there! We have implemented a fully integrated collection of lifelong professional development programming, services, events and resources to meet the needs of alumni who are at any stage of career management. So whether you're a new graduate about to be launched into the workforce or an experienced professional looking for a career transition, we're here to help. Visit our [website](#) for more information!

Stay Connected with UCF Knights Network!

[UCF Knights Network](#) is our alumni professional networking platform that promotes career and professional development, entrepreneurship, job opportunities, and mentorship. Join today to reconnect with fellow Knights and expand your professional network.

About the author:

Marie Milien '12 PHR, SHRM-CP, is a human resources management professional with an HR generalist background, specializing in employee recruitment and retention and learning and organization development.