

Flipping the Script: How HR Professionals Can Excel as Interviewees

When working with HR professionals making job or career changes, they often ask me what to expect as an interviewee vs. an interviewer.

Switching interview roles can be tricky and unsettling for an HR professional, from guiding the interview and selection process to answering questions and showcasing qualifications.

HR professionals are highly knowledgeable, people-driven, accomplished and capable, and equipped with a deep understanding of the recruitment process, yet having the tables turned can still be unnerving.

However, their unique position allows them to leverage their skills and knowledge to make the interview experience more beneficial for both them and the interviewer. Here's how:

Leverage Insider Knowledge

- **Understand the Process:** As an HR professional, use your understanding of the recruitment process to your advantage. Anticipate the stages of the interview and prepare accordingly. Be the job candidate you always wished YOU could interview.
- **Role Reversal Insight:** Being on the other side can offer valuable insights into the candidate experience, which you can use to improve processes in your future HR role.

Preparation is Key

- **Research the Company:** Go beyond the basics. Deep dive into the company's culture, recent achievements, challenges, and industry position.
- **Understand the Role:** Analyze the job description to identify key skills and qualifications required, tailoring your responses to highlight your compatibility with the role.
- **Prepare Your Questions:** Craft thoughtful questions that show your interest in the role and demonstrate your strategic thinking and understanding of the HR field. HR professionals know the high-quality questions to ask to obtain the information needed to make an informed decision about the job.
- **Use Visualization Techniques:** Before the interview, visualize yourself successfully navigating the interview process. Imagine answering questions confidently, engaging positively with the interviewer, and leaving a strong impression. This technique can help reduce anxiety, boost confidence, and improve overall performance during the actual interview.

Showcase Soft Skills

- **Communication:** Articulate your thoughts clearly and concisely. Use your communication skills to build rapport with the interviewer.
- **Empathy:** Show understanding and consideration for the interviewer's position. Acknowledge the challenges of finding the right candidate and express how to meet those needs.

- **Leadership:** Discuss your experiences leading teams, managing projects, or implementing new policies. Highlight your ability to guide and motivate others.

Highlight HR-Specific Skills

- **Talent Acquisition Strategies:** Share examples of how you've successfully recruited top talent, including the strategies and tools you used.
- **Employee Engagement:** Discuss your initiatives to improve employee satisfaction, retention, and productivity.
- **Compliance Knowledge:** Demonstrate your understanding of employment laws and regulations and how you've applied this knowledge to protect the company and ensure fairness.

Provide Concrete Examples

- **Situation-Action-Result (SAR):** Use the SAR framework to structure your responses, focusing on specific situations, the actions you took, and the results of those actions.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Share your experiences promoting diversity and inclusion within the workplace, including any programs or initiatives you've led or contributed to.

Negotiate Like a Pro

- **Know Your Worth:** Understand the market rate for the position you're applying for, considering your experience and skills. Be aware of your personal bottom line before you go into the interview in case an early discussion about salary is introduced.
- **Be Ready to Discuss Salary:** Prepare to discuss your salary expectations confidently, using your knowledge of HR to navigate this conversation tactfully.

Post-Interview Reflection

- **Self-Analysis:** Reflect on your performance. Consider what went well and areas for improvement. And, of course, send that thank you letter for the interview.
- **Feedback:** If offered, request feedback from the interviewer. This can provide valuable insights into your interview technique and areas to develop.

Networking and Continuous Learning

- **Industry Trends:** Stay informed about the latest HR trends and challenges. This demonstrates your commitment to your professional development.
- **Professional Networks:** Engage with professional networks and communities. This can provide support, advice, and insight into new opportunities.

The Mental and Emotional Aspects

- **Stress Management:** Recognize that interviewing can be stressful. Use stress management techniques to remain calm and focused. Using visualization techniques can help improve your interview performance.
- **Positive Mindset:** Maintain a positive outlook. Viewing the interview as a learning opportunity can improve your performance and experience.

Feedback Loop

- **Implement Learnings:** Apply the insights gained from being on the other side of the interview table to improve your HR practices, especially in recruitment and candidate experience.

Transitioning from HR professional to interviewee can be a unique challenge, but also an opportunity to showcase your skills, empathy, and understanding of the hiring process from both perspectives.

By preparing thoroughly, leveraging your HR expertise, and approaching the interview with confidence and humility, you can create a positive experience for both yourself and the interviewer. Remember, this is a chance to not only secure a new role but also to gain insights that can enhance your professional growth and contribute to the evolution of HR practices.

HR professionals possess a unique advantage when interviewing for a new position. Their background allows them to empathize with the interviewer, anticipate the interview flow, and present themselves as the ideal candidate through well-structured responses and strategic questions. By reflecting on their experience, HR professionals can improve their practices, ensuring a more empathetic, efficient, and effective recruitment process in their future roles.