



How to Ace the Interview!

Paradigm Consulting Group Interview Guide

ParadigmConsulting.com

IIBA Career Fair

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1. Welcome to the Paradigm Interview Guide

The guidance in this document will help you prepare for an interview and conduct yourself in a manner that will make them want to hire you!

We are here to help.

2. The purpose of an interview

The interview allows you to supplement, and the interviewer(s) to validate, your resume information. It also allows the interviewer(s) to evaluate your skills and personality in terms of their 'fit' for the role and their organization. The interview provides an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you understand the role and you have the necessary skills and experience to successfully fill that role.

Finally, the interview allows YOU to gain information about the company and the role that is not available via other sources.

3. Preparing for an in-person interview

3.1 Conduct research on the client and opportunity

You should understand the company, the role, and the background of the interviewer(s). The more research you conduct, the more you'll understand the organization, and the better you'll be able to answer interview questions (as well as ask insightful questions). Look into your LinkedIn network to see if anyone has worked at this company before. You can also learn a lot about their culture of the organization by the posts that they release on LinkedIn.

Review the job posting, the company's website and methodology, and other social media sites to attempt to understand their business and culture.

3.2 Review your Resume

Spend a *significant* time reviewing your resume for areas applicable to the potential opportunity. The interviewer should never ask you a question about what's on your resume and you don't have the answer! Be prepared to discuss *details* of how particular experiences provided you with the knowledge and skills required for the potential opportunity. Where you do not have the exact expertise, the customer may be seeking, find other experiences that may apply.

3.3 Review common interview questions and prepare responses

Another key to interview success is preparing responses to [expected interview questions](https://www.livecareer.com/interview-questions) (<https://www.livecareer.com/interview-questions>).

You may be asked specific questions regarding your education, training, and experience, including how you would approach specific tasks. You may also be asked "behavioural" interview questions intended to uncover your qualifications, strengths, and weaknesses, and probe motivation, interpersonal skills, leadership abilities, and analytical skills.

Understanding the duration of the interview affects your preparation. A scheduled 30 minute interview (5 minute welcome\intro, 20 minute interview, 5 minute end) is very different than a 90 minute interview (5 minute welcome\intro, 80 minute interview, 5 minute end).

3.4 Dress for success

Plan an outfit that fits the client and its culture, striving for the most professional appearance you can. Remember that it is better to be overdressed than underdressed. Wear well-fitting clothing that is clean and pressed. Keep accessories and jewelry to a minimum. Try not to smoke or eat right before the interview.

3.5 Arrive on time, relaxed, and prepared for the interview

Short of a disaster, there is no excuse for arriving late to an interview. Plan to arrive at the interview location no earlier than 10 minutes before the interview to complete any additional paperwork and to allow yourself time to get settled and relax. Arriving early is also a chance to observe the dynamics of the workplace.

The day before the interview, pack up extra copies of your resume. Remember to pack pens and a pad of paper to take notes. Finally, as you arrive for the interview, turn off your cell phone.

3.6 Make good first impressions

A cardinal rule of interviewing is to be polite and offer warm greetings to everyone you meet from the parking attendant to the receptionist to the hiring manager. Employers are often curious how applicants treat staff members and your hiring could easily be derailed based on your interactions with support staff.

When its time for the interview, keep in mind that the impression interviewers get in the first few seconds of meeting you can make or break an interview. Make a strong first impression by dressing well, arriving only slightly early, and when greeting your interviewer, stand, smile, make eye contact, and offer a firm but not bone-crushing handshake (if societal norms permit this).

Remember that having a positive attitude and expressing enthusiasm for the role and the client are vital in the initial stages of the interview. Studies show that hiring managers make critical decisions (especially any negative ones) about applicants very quickly during interviews.

3.7 Be authentic, upbeat, focused, confident, candid, and concise

Once the interview starts, the key to success is the quality and delivery of your responses. Use business language to provide concise (90 seconds is the average attention span), truthful replies that showcase your skills, accomplishments, experience, and fit with the role and the client. Do not embellish, but also do not understate your skills.

Preparing responses to common interview questions will help you avoid long, rambling responses that lose the interviewers attention. If you don't know an answer, don't try to cover it up with a long answer hoping to come up with something intelligent. Saying you don't know is okay!

If you don't have work-related experience examples, try to choose from academic or volunteer experience. Also try to include positive feedback from previous supervisors, colleagues, or clients. If you are unsure whether or

not you answered a question, ask the interviewer “did that answer your question?” or “did you get the information you needed?”.

If you do not understand a question, remain calm and positive and ask for clarification. If you don’t have a specific skill, demonstrate your ability to quickly learn based on previous experience with similar products, projects, etc.

Finally, no matter how much an interviewer might bait you, never badmouth a previous client, employer, boss, or co-worker. The interview is about you and making your case that you are the ideal candidate for the role.

3.8 Remember the importance of body language

While the content of your interview responses is paramount, poor body language can be a distraction at best, or a reason not to hire you at worst. Effective forms of body language include smiling, eye contact, solid posture, active listening, and nodding.

Avoid negative body language including being too stiff, slouching, looking off in the distance, playing with a pen, fidgeting in a chair, brushing back your hair, touching your face, chewing gum, mumbling, writing constantly (or not at all...).

The body language of your interviewers is also important to watch. Does their attention drift after longer answers? After a period of writing notes based on your answer, have they stopped writing? Are they fiddling with their phone?

3.9 Ask insightful questions

Studies continually show that employers make judgments about a candidate’s interest in the role by whether or not he or she asks questions. Thus, even if the interviewer(s) were thorough in their description of the role, you must ask a few questions. This shows that you have done your research and that you are curious.

The smart candidate prepares questions days before the interview, adding any additional queries that arise from the interview.

If a period of silence becomes uncomfortable, ask the interviewer(s) if they require any further details about your response.

3.10 Sell yourself and close the deal

The most qualified candidate is not always the one that gets hired. The winning candidate is often the one who does the best job responding to interview questions and showcasing his or her fit with the role and client.

Think of the interview as a sales call. You are a salesperson and the product you are selling is your ability to fill the client’s needs, solve its problems, and propel its success.

Always ask what the next steps are and when a decision will be made. If you are available immediately, work that into the conversation.

3.11 Thank your interviewer(s)

Common courtesy and politeness go far in interviewing so the importance of thanking each person who interviews you should come as no surprise. Shake hands again.

3.12 Follow up

Within one to two days you can reach out by email to thank the interviewer(s) for their time.

4. Preparing for an ‘informal’ interview (i.e. lunch or coffee)

You may, on occasion, be invited for coffee or lunch by a prospective customer. Do not allow the relaxed setting of the discussion to fool you in to thinking this meeting is anything short of an interview.

You should really prepare for these types of meetings the same way you would for an interview. In addition, and given the setting, you should avoid ordering messy foods or foods that are difficult to eat. Also avoid consuming alcohol.

5. Preparing for a phone interview

5.1 If your phone rings unexpectedly...

Hopefully, you'll be able to schedule the call for a time when you can focus completely in a quiet place where you are comfortable and unlikely to be interrupted (or overheard, if you are not at home).

Sometimes you can't schedule the call. If you are in the middle of something not easily interrupted, ask if you could schedule at a later time. Of course, you need to feel the interviewer out; if he or she hesitates to schedule another time, you might want to forge ahead and do the best you can, considering you might not get another opportunity to present yourself.

5.2 Prepare your environment

When the time comes for the interview, try to ensure you won't be interrupted. If you are not in the office and if you have kids, you'll need someone to look after them. If you have pets, put them out of the room. Turn off the clothes dryer so its alarm doesn't go off, and turn off your landline and cell phone. Close your mail client, etc. Test Bluetooth, maximize the # of bars on your cell phone, and test your headset. Technology MUST be tested the day before the scheduled call.

5.3 Smile!

You'll find that you sound more upbeat and engaged if you smile. Your smiles will be "heard" by the interviewer making a positive impression if on a voice call.

Place a large virtual reminder in front of you to smile (maybe even a small mirror!). During your phone call you can remind yourself to smile.

Try to be physical while on the phone, maintain steady hand movements. Do NOT multitask... focus, focus, focus. Maintain good posture. Do not look up content on the internet while talking.

5.4 Focus on your language and voice

You have only the power of your voice in a telephone call. Speak clearly, stay upbeat, and use positive business language. Smiling will always help.

Take cues from the interviewer(s) (do they speak slowly and softly or fast and loud?), and modulate your tone and word choice to make a positive impression.

The mirror will help you stay positive, but remember that your language and perceived motivation (tone, modulation, enthusiasm) will also help determine your outcome.

6. Preparing for a Video interview

6.1 Make sure you have a professional username

Anything that is difficult to read or that you have been using since high school (i.e. “mudslinger99”) is likely making a bad first impression. Be boring and use your real name.

6.2 Get set up ahead of time

Be sure you've downloaded, installed, and tested the video tool well before your interview. Have a video chat with someone beforehand to make sure everything's working properly.

6.3 Dress up

Put on the same clothes you'd wear if you were going to an in-person interview. Avoid the temptation to dress up only from the waist up. First, wearing the complete ensemble will help you feel confident and prepared. Second, if you have to stand up for some reason, you don't want your shorts or jeans to ruin the impression you've made.

6.4 Prepare your environment

When the time comes for the interview, make sure you won't be interrupted. Secure a private meeting room. If you are not in the office and if you have kids, you'll need someone to look after them. If you have pets, put them out of the room. Close all curtains/blinds behind you. Take a critical view of the background where you will be sitting. Avoid highly personal items in the background.

Turn off the clothes dryer so its alarm doesn't go off and turn off your landline and cell phone. Ignore the doorbell. Close all your other applications (most importantly email).

6.5 Adjust your camera and microphone

Careful video and audio set-up in advance is very important for a successful video interview. Don't have a basket of laundry on the sofa behind you. Avoid using your bedroom; Having your bed and nightstand in the background is a little too personal.

Position the camera so that the camera is just slightly below your eyes. You don't want your interviewer looking up your nose! Place the camera on a firm surface (i.e. not on your lap), having a wobbly camera is very distracting for an interviewer.

If you wear glasses, minimize your monitor's reflection in your glasses. Ensure the webcam is on the same monitor that the interviewers image will be on. You want to appear to be looking directly at them, not have the webcam on one monitor and you looking at another. The interviewer will then be looking at the side of your face!

Test your microphone. Your voice should come through without any echoes, hums, or buzzing. If in doubt, invest in a headset. It's better to wear one than to have poor sound quality that will distract from what you say.

6.6 Bear in mind how you'll look from the interviewer's point of view

You'll look your interviewer(s) in the eye by looking into the camera, not by watching their image on the monitor. Practice talking to the camera and find a position where you're comfortable sitting for a long period of time.

6.7 Rehearse

This is key to any successful interview, but it's especially important on video calls. Not only do you want to make sure you can maintain your poise despite any question you may be asked, you want to be comfortable talking to the camera.

6.8 Pay attention to your body language

Focus on sitting up straight and making eye contact, which is more difficult than it sounds. Again, you'll be tempted to keep your eyes on the monitor but focus instead on the webcam. When you do, interviewers will see you looking at them directly. Lean forward, and nod during the conversation so the interviewers can see that you're engaged. Try not to fidget or move around too much as this will become distracting to the interviewer.

Finally, make sure to have a backup plan in case of technology failure. Ask the interviewer(s) for their phone number so you can call and continue the interview if there are issues with the video conference.

7. Other resources

Interview preparation and best practices – Time: 3:45

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7D1RcWS0ce0&list=PLYRaBKoa1kaqr4iCP5w5BTOM22KZO-gQ3>

Excellent link to interview questions and answers <https://www.livecareer.com/interview-questions>

Top 10 interview questions – Time: 3:45 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I2IDGXX5-YY>

How to look good in a Skype interview – Time: 4:12 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rQwanxQmFnc>

How to answer 'What's your biggest weakness?' - Time 3:13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qydbSseNFsQ>

How to answer "Tell me about yourself" - Time: 4:25 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5kR7TPAkSw>

How to answer "Do you have any questions for us?" - Time: 3:14

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtTZgIPYr8Y>

How to answer "How did you handle a difficult situation?" - Time: 3:43

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H25RnmslChI&index=7&list=PLYRaBKoa1kaqr4iCP5w5BTOM22KZO-gQ3>

7 tips on body language to impress your interviewer – Time: 4:07

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCWVi5pAa30>