

EXECUTIVE INTERVIEW GUIDE

This guide is for informational purposes only and is provided by Charles Aris Inc. as a service to its candidates.

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations – you've been selected for the interview! Your goal (and ours) is now to ensure that you put your best foot forward, learn as much about the opportunity and the team as possible, and make a positive, lasting impression on the interviewers.

You've likely had a number of interviews for various roles during your career, and have probably done well in those interviews. The purpose of this guide is to help you build on what you already know and make the **most** of this opportunity through a successful interview.

A job interview is much more than a "question and answer" session with a prospective employer. It's a chance to make a lasting first impression; to learn things about an employer which cannot be learned anywhere else; and to enhance your career (whether you get the job or not!). Let's review how to ensure that you do just that.

INTERVIEW LOGISTICS

The first step is to make sure you have a handle on the basic logistics of the interview:

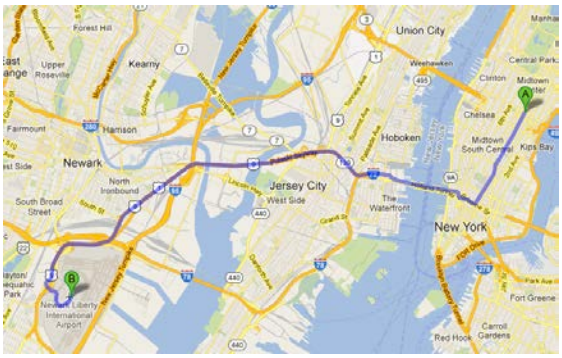
A. With whom will you be meeting? If you are working with the Charles Aris team, we will provide you with a list of the people you'll be meeting and as much of the following information as possible on each of them:

- Title
- Role at the company
- Relationship to the hiring authority, and their role in the hiring process
- Professional background
- Any "hot buttons" or items of special interest or concern

We will also provide you with important contact information (including ours) in case anything unusual comes up. If you are not working with a search partner, you should make every effort to obtain an interview schedule and research the backgrounds of the people you'll be meeting.

B. Confirm the date, time and location. You'll also want to pay attention to the minor details: How are you getting from the airport to the hotel? From the hotel to the interview? How long will it take you to get to the interview? For whom are you asking when you arrive at the interview location? Do you know where to park? **Plan on arriving *and being in the building* 15 minutes early.**

C. Troubleshooting. If you are working with the Charles Aris team and there is a problem or unusual occurrence prior to your interview, contact us immediately. Otherwise, be sure to have a backup plan or at least someone at the company to contact in case a problem arises.



BE PREPARED! (Interviewing 101)

Much of the following information may seem self-evident to an experienced businessperson. The purpose of this guide is to ensure the best possible interview experience, however, and toward that end we will leave no stone unturned.

A. What to take along with you. This can vary depending on the type of interview and role, but the following checklist should be helpful:

- A portfolio that includes a pen and pad of paper
- A list of questions you've jotted down (or typed up and printed out)
- Multiple copies of your résumé printed on quality paper
- A backup of your presentation if you are giving one (electronic and paper versions)
- If appropriate, a collection of your accomplishments or samples of your work
- Client information (webpages, annual report, etc.)
- Abundant **energy**

B. Know your résumé. This seems obvious, but it is possible that you haven't reviewed your résumé recently – at least not in the detailed manner that the interviewers will. You should be able to confidently and concisely walk the interviewers through your résumé. For each of the three or four most recent positions listed, beginning with the most recent, you should be able to describe:

- Your top three or four roles and responsibilities
- Your key **QUANTIFIABLE** accomplishments
- **HOW YOU** were able to attain those accomplishments (i.e., what you specifically did to make them happen, remembering that specificity really matters to most interviewers)

On the following page is a template that can be used to diagram these three critical components for each of your roles.

SUMMARIZING YOUR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Identify the key components of the roles you have held

Specific role	Your top three or four responsibilities	Your key quantifiable accomplishments	How you were able to attain those accomplishments

C. **Appearance.** In today's world, you only have a split second to make a first impression, and how someone dresses is perhaps the most common way by which hiring authorities initially assess talent. While attire is by no means a measure of how successfully a candidate will perform in the role, it is a means by which clients measure cultural fit and how serious a candidate is about the opportunity. The following guidelines apply:

- Men should wear a dark suit (charcoal or navy, for example), with a white shirt and a conservative tie. Shoes should be shined, and a fresh haircut/shave adds a nice touch. Avoid cologne.
- Women should wear a dark business suit with conservative jewelry and no perfume. Any distraction could work against you.
- Cell phones should be TURNED OFF and never, ever answered during the course of an interview. Even a cell phone set to silent mode can make a vibrating sound or emit light that distracts during an interview.



OBJECTIVES OF THE INTERVIEW

Prior to the interview, you should attempt to determine the answers to the following questions (if you are working with us, we will provide the answers for you):

A. **What does the employer hope to accomplish during this meeting?** This can vary: Is the goal to determine your technical skill set? Is it to gauge your fit with the client's culture? Is it to better understand your level of comfort with presenting to a group? The answers to these questions will likely help determine the format of the interview (such as a presentation, case study or behavior-based questioning).
B. **What decisions will be made based on this meeting?** Is this the final interview, after which a hiring decision will be made? Or is this interview a prerequisite for the next round of interviews?
C. **How quickly will decisions be made regarding next steps?**
D. **What is the decision-making process and who is involved?**
E. **Whose opinion matters most if there will be multiple decision makers?**

INTERVIEW FORMATS

If possible, determine the style and format which will be used during the interview. Below is a summary of three of the most common interview formats, along with some sample questions for each:

Experience-Based Interviewing	Behavioral-Based Interviewing	Case-Based Interviewing
By far the most common interviewing method, Experience-Based Interviewing focuses on previous employment and accomplishments the candidate has realized over his/her career, and how those experiences will transfer successfully in the new role	Behavioral-Based Interviewing is based on the premise that past actions are the best indicator of future performance. Such interviews are conducted by discussing scenarios the candidate may have experienced in his/her past and how he/she handled the situation	A favorite method of consulting and investment banking firms, case based interviewing focuses on how a candidate thinks through problems, and is perhaps the best way to qualify an individual's "raw horsepower". The interviewer describes a business problem which the candidate attempts to solve by asking thoughtful questions and proposing a creative solution.

Sample Questions for Each Method

- "Tell me about yourself"
- "What roles and responsibilities have you held in previous positions?"
- "What skills have you garnered over your career?"

- "Tell me about a time when you … (were faced with a difficult challenge, had to be creative, failed miserably at a task, etc.)"
- "How did you react to that situation and why?"

- "Should we expand into the northwest territory?"
- "Should we match our competitor's offer for free delivery on purchases greater than $5k?"
- "How many French fries were eaten in the US last week?"

QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWERS

It's a safe bet that the interviewers are going to be continuously evaluating you based on a number of factors: your appearance, your energy and enthusiasm, your past accomplishments and your communication skills, to name a few. You are also going to be evaluated on both the answers you provide to questions AND the questions you ask the interviewers. Some general guidelines on questions:

- **A.** Questions should be well thought out, written down beforehand and reflect the fact that you are prepared and interested in the role.
- **B.** Questions should be asked of EVERY interviewer. Don't be afraid to ask the same question of more than one person.
- **C.** Review the questions with us beforehand. We may be able to provide advice on phrasing and, if appropriate, ensure that the client is prepared to answer them.
- **D.** Customized questions based on your research of the company are always preferred. On the next page, however, is a list of sample questions you might consider.



19 Questions for a Potential Employer

1. What, as the hiring authority, is your vision of this role? And what are the key responsibilities? [The recruiter] has told me what they understand. What do you see?
2. Can you share with me the structure of the department or division and how it fits into the total organization? (The candidate must address his or her strengths and show how they fit into what the employer is seeking.)
3. Considering the people in your department or company, tell me what your most valued employees are like. What are the three to five things which make them so successful?
4. Describe the corporate culture and the type of person who best fits it.
5. When you came to this company, what did you expect to find that you did not?
6. When you came to this company, what did you find that you didn't expect to?
7. As the hiring authority, tell me about your management style and what traits best match your personality to help foster the most productive working environment.
8. What are the three or four most significant problems or obstacles your company faces? How do you plan to solve these issues? Growth? Financial stability?
9. What are the three or four problems your company faces which you are currently trying to solve?
10. Is your company or department facing any disasters?
11. What are the specific projects I will be working on in the first month?
12. In the first year, what are the three key contributions you would expect from my performance?
13. What makes you enjoy getting up each day and coming to work?
14. In three to five years, where do you see my career going? What, specifically, should I do to get there?
15. What resources will be available to work with (e.g., people, equipment, budget)?
16. What are the three or four things which could cause a person to fail in your department?
17. As the hiring authority, what do you like most about the individual who did this job before me? What three or four things made them most successful?
18. In considering the new position, how do you plan to reorient the role for the future?
19. After interviewing me, how do you see my background adding value to your company? (This question does two things: It can expose any misunderstandings and it gives the employer an opportunity to reflect on your positive qualities and fit with the organization.)

SHOWING INTEREST / CLOSING TECHNIQUES

It's just human nature: People are more *interesting to* us if they are *interested in* us.

It is of critical importance that you demonstrate your interest in both the company AND the career opportunity during the interview. Unfortunately, it is common during an interview for interviewees to become so focused on demonstrating their qualifications that they fail to demonstrate interest in the company or the opportunity!

Here are some tips for demonstrating interest during an interview:

A. **Have great energy.** Be energetic and enthusiastic. Have pep in your step, a firm handshake and good eye contact.
B. **Do your homework on the company.** Become familiar with the organization and the space in which it operates. Read the assignment specification once more, along with the company website, press releases – anything the organization has been in the news about – to help you feel more comfortable.
C. **Prepare and pose great questions**. You are judged just as much by the questions you ask as those you answer. Thoughtful questions show you have done your homework and put real thought into the opportunity.
D. **Be able to articulate: Why this company and why now?** This should be more about what you are *running to* rather than what you are *running from.* Twenty-five percent of your answer should consist of factors influencing why you are looking to leave your current company – location, timing, industry, etc. – and 75 percent should consist of the three to five reasons you've grown excited about this opportunity. Remember that your answer must be perceived as genuine.
E. **Treat each question you are asked as though you are hearing it for the first time.** Beware getting complacent with an answer just because you've already given it to a previous interviewer. Never assume that interviewers will debrief on their interview in detail as a group; they seldom do.
F. **Tell them you are interested.** If you have enjoyed your conversation and still have an interest in the opportunity, thank any and all interviewers for their time and express that interest. The last thing someone hears tends to be the thing they remember the most. General guidelines for telling an employer that you have an interest:
    - If, at the end of the meeting, you like what you've heard and have an interest in moving forward, directly express that interest: "I appreciate your taking the time to interview me today. I have enjoyed our time together and have a strong interest in moving forward with you. Can you tell me about the next step in the process?"

- If, for any reason, you are hesitant about the position after the meeting, thank the interviewer for his or her time and write down any issues or concerns you have as soon as possible afterward. We will then discuss them with you.
- NEVER tell an interviewer that you don't have an interest. Call us first to discuss the issues; then we can make an appropriate decision together.

DINING RULES

A. Alcohol should generally be avoided during any meeting with a prospective employer. If the client orders it first, you should use discretion in determining whether to follow suit. In any case, we strongly encourage a limit of one glass of beer or wine, and absolutely no hard alcohol.

B. Avoid anything to be eaten with fingers. Stick with the cutlery.

C. Avoid anything that stains, as Murphy's Law will ensure that it spills!

D. We have found that the conversation at dining events is typically 50 percent about work and 50 percent about the local area or company culture. This is a good time for you to ask about the local area, especially if you are considering relocation. If this role doesn't require relocation, then focus on the company culture.

E. If you are having dinner with the hiring authority the night before official interviews, and if the hiring authority is not your first interview the next day, it is a good idea to ask the hiring authority for his or her vision of the role at that time. This can enhance your preparation for the following day's interviews.

INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

Please call us *immediately* following the interview, at which time we will ask you our three favorite questions:

A. Did you feel comfortable with the people you met with and can you see yourself working with them successfully?

B. Was the information we gave you accurate? (This is essentially an internal Charles Aris quality-assurance question.) Based on any additional information you learned, can you do the job? Are there any areas of the role which make you uncomfortable?

C. On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being you have absolutely no interest in pursuing this opportunity further, 10 being this is your dream job), where do you fall? What would make you a 10 on that scale?

For face-to-face interviews: Be sure to collect business cards and/or email addresses from every person you interview with, and *send at least a thank-you email* to each within 24 hours. The note should be concise, proofread for grammar and spelling, and personalized for each recipient, perhaps mentioning something that was discussed during the interview.