



YOUR WINNING *Interview Strategy*

Thank you for downloading
Your Winning Interview Strategy!

We know the entire process of interviewing can be nerve-racking. You want to present yourself in the best possible light and “wow” the interviewer. But sometimes our nerves get the better of us and we end up talking too much or talking too little.

If you're not finding any success in getting beyond the first interview, you may not be presenting yourself in the best manner.

Knowing how to effectively answer the interviewer's questions, you will showcase not only who you are, but how you are the best fit for the job. Our goal is to help you confidently showcase you!

Over the next week or two, set aside some “you” time and complete each section. Use this guide as your interview resource, adding notes and updates as you gain interviewing confidence.

Congratulations! You're on your way to creating your winning interview strategy!!

Cooper, Gale, and Mary

Your Winning Interview Strategy Guide

Conduct a Self-Assessment

Having self-awareness means that you have knowledge of yourself. You understand your habits, likes, dislikes, the way you view the world, what work environment you thrive in, and your personal values. Nobody knows you better than you. When you're interviewing, understanding what matters most to you can help one to focus on what companies and jobs to apply for.

Have you ever worked for a company that didn't align with your personality or conflicted with your work style? Creating a self-assessment can provide a foundation that can help lead you to finding the right job at the right company. Ask yourself:

- ▶ What unique strengths do you have?
- ▶ What unique insights do you bring to the table?
- ▶ What are your core beliefs about yourself?
- ▶ What skills do you possess that others don't?
- ▶ What expertise do you have that sets you apart?
- ▶ What are you most passionate about?
- ▶ What work environment do you thrive in?
- ▶ What work environment drains you?
- ▶ What don't you want to do?
- ▶ What kind of work would make you look forward to Mondays?

Create your SWOO

A SWOO analysis goes one step further than the self-analysis. It gives you a broad overview of your current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and obstacles. Once created, it's a great tool in helping you to form answers to the most commonly asked questions. "Tell me about your strengths" or "Tell me about your weaknesses" are two of the most frustrating questions for the interviewee. Having defined your SWOO will help in answering these questions a little bit easier.

A great benefit of a SWOO, is it pinpoints weaknesses and opportunities you can work on right now. When asked about your weaknesses, you can answer in full and go a step further in showcasing how you're addressing them. When asked about your strengths, you can highlight how you stand out amongst your peers and how you'd be bringing that skill to the new job.

A candid SWOO Analysis takes time, effort, thought, and honesty. To begin, you can utilize the next page or create your own and write down answers for the following:

- ▶ What you are best at, what skills, experiences, certifications, or awards set you apart from your peers (strength)
 - ▶ What particular skills or training do you lack, have you created a negative work habit such as being late, do you fail to participate in meetings or take on additional responsibilities due to low confidence (weakness)
 - ▶ What external factors are taking place you in your industry, what areas is your company growing, how is technology changing how your industry/company is doing business, think of how you can add value to be seen as a strategic leader in these areas (opportunities)
 - ▶ What external factors that are beyond your control, what you can do to minimize the effects they'll have on your career (obstacles)
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Research the company / Research the industry

Now that you've created your self-assessment and your personal SWOO, it's time to find a company and job that aligns with who you are. A large part of preparing for the interview is knowing as much about the company you're interviewing for and current news within the industry. Researching the company can give you insight into their company culture, their work environment, and especially those areas that are most important to you.

It's not unusual for an interviewer to see what you know about the company and/or industry. You may be asked, "What do you know about our company," or "What are the top news stories you've read about our industry and the direction it's headed." The interviewer isn't looking for a deep analysis, they're asking because they want to know you've done your homework.

COMPANY

- ▶ What's their company and work culture
- ▶ What's their work culture (cubes, offices, WFH)
- ▶ What's their mission statement/motto
- ▶ Their role within their industry
- ▶ Their reputation within the industry
- ▶ Read the CEO's letter in their annual report (if they're publicly traded)
- ▶ Have they been in the news

INDUSTRY

- ▶ What issues is the industry facing
- ▶ How has technology or other advancements affected the industry
- ▶ Which corporations are the industry leaders and why
- ▶ What distinguishes this industry over others
- ▶ What about the industry do you find most interesting

How to master the behavioral interview questions

You've created your SWOO, you've done your research, now you're ready to master the behavioral interview questions. This is where you need to help the interviewer see how fabulous you are and how well you'd fit within the organization. Understand that the interviewer is determining how you, your skills, experiences, and personality aligns with the company. They're looking to see how you'd be an integral part of their team, how well you work with others, how you are under pressure, under a deadline, how you deal with change.

Think about the role you're applying for. What strengths would the interviewer be looking for? What weaknesses would they be concerned about? Put yourself in their place. If you were interviewing someone for that role, what would you want to know.

We won't lie, your answers are being scrutinized. How well you did or didn't answer the questions will determine if you receive a job offer. Being prepared to answer their questions fully, showing them your thought process as you go through the situation and resolution provides them with a complete picture of who you are as an employee.

A simple but effective format called the **Funnel Response System (FRS)** can guide you in giving the interviewer a comprehensive answer and demonstrate why you are the best candidate for the job. The FRS is a format that works well with behavioral questions. Think of a funnel, it's wide at the top and then narrows at the bottom. That's how you want to structure your answers:

1. Start your answer with a general or broad statement.
 2. Provide details and an example. Let them hear your thought process.
 3. Provide the resolution and the lesson learned from the experience.
 4. Wrap up with how you incorporated the lesson learned as you moved forward in your career.
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Role plays and Mock interviews

It's natural to feel nervous about job interviews. Using mock interviews and role plays to gain confidence and make a better impression on a potential employer is a great exercise. This is where you put everything together and utilize your SWOO and the Funnel Response System to shine in the interview. Rehearsing commonly asked questions helps you develop how you present yourself and gain a rhythm in answering the questions. Think about:

1. Who you choose to do your mock interview with is critical to the success of the exercise. If you have a friend or friend of a friend who is in human resources or recruiting, they would be an ideal choice. Someone in a position of management who conducts interviews would be a great choice as well. Look for someone who can devote the time and will take the task seriously.
 2. Discuss your goals with whomever you have chosen. Let them understand where you need help and the feedback you're looking for, from body language to verbal responses. We all have some distracting mannerisms, make sure those are addressed as well.
 3. Create a neutral setting. With the current environment of virtual interviews, practice on various platforms so you are familiar with how they work. You don't need any added technology stress during the interview.
 4. Schedule 2-3 mock interviews with different people. And then repeat. If you've conducted a mock interview with person A, come back to them in a couple weeks when you've had more practice, ask them how you've improved and what you still need to work on.
 5. After every mock interview, have a debrief session. Take notes and reflect on what you did well and how you can improve.
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Role plays and Mock interviews (Continued)

6. Using your SWOO, create complete answers to the most commonly asked questions:
 - a. Tell me about yourself
 - b. What are your strengths
 - c. What are your weaknesses
 - d. Why should we hire you/what makes you qualified for this job
 - e. Why are you interviewing for this position
 7. Have your funnel answers prepared!
 8. Work on your greeting and closing. Everything you do contributes to the impression you make.
 9. Record your interview and then go back and watch and listen to yourself and do it objectively. Don't be super critical. Again, think like an interviewer. What did you do well? What did you do not so well? Where can you improve?
 10. If need be, and you can afford it, consider professional services. Do your research, ask for referrals. Sometimes doing a mock interview with someone who doesn't know you can provide a fresh perspective.
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How to close out the interview and the follow-up

Remember, the interview process is about the company finding the right candidate. They are looking at you through a long-term lens and determining how quickly you will assimilate into the team and how you'll fit within the company. But just as they are trying to determine if you're a good fit, you need to do the same.

At the end of most interviews, the interviewer will ask two wrap-up questions:

1. Do you have any questions for me?
2. Is there anything more you'd like to add that we didn't get a chance to talk about?

This is the time to interview the interviewer. You want to have 2-3 solid questions for the interviewer to help determine if the company is the right fit for you and if the job itself is something that aligns with your career goals. Think about what's most important to you.

- ▶ Tell me about your onboarding process. Does the company conduct training throughout the year as well?
- ▶ What does success look like for this position
- ▶ What was the biggest challenge the last person in this role faced
- ▶ How does the company support their employees and set them up for success
- ▶ Can you elaborate on the daily responsibilities of this position
- ▶ How would you describe the company culture
- ▶ What are the company's or the department's biggest opportunities and challenges at the moment
- ▶ What are the daily responsibilities or what does a typical day look like



How to close out the interview and the follow-up

(Continued)

If during the interview, a topic comes up you want to hear more about, here's the time to ask and get a more detailed answer.

Finally, this is when you need to close and sum up your qualifications to let the interviewer know why you are the best person for the job. This is what some would call your Elevator Speech. Reiterate your interest in the job and the company and how your experience and skills are a great fit for the role. DO ask about the next steps so you leave the interview knowing who will contact you and the timeframe.

Remember, you should place as much thought and preparation into how to interview the interviewer as you did for being interviewed.

Once you're back home, send an email thank you to everyone you spoke with. And to really stand out, send a thank you note in the mail. When the interviewer receives it, it's a nice little reminder of who you are.

Be yourself, let your confidence shine, and be fearless!



Congratulations!

You're on your way to winning the interview! We're excited to be a part of your career success and look forward to connecting with you!

For additional tips, tools, and downloads, be sure to visit us at www.sweetbutfearless.com

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