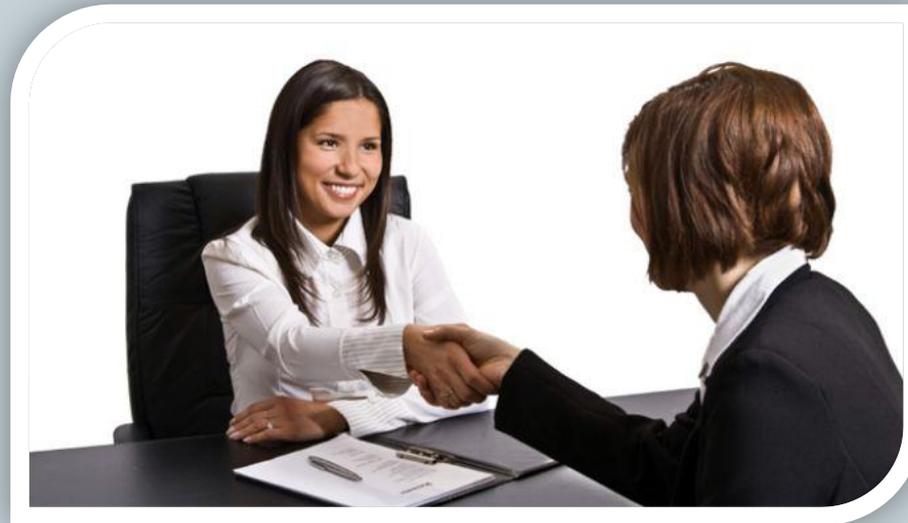


# Interviewing Skills for Internationally Trained Accountants



# What is an interview?



- A professional business meeting used to evaluate a potential employee.
- An opportunity for you to get more information about the position, the company, your prospective employer and colleagues.
- A chance to market yourself and explain your experience, skills, and what qualifies you for this job.
- An opportunity to learn more about yourself and how you interview; both your strengths and areas in which you may need more training, skills or experience.

# Why are interviews challenging?



- Discuss with a partner.

# Interviews are challenging because:



- They make us nervous.
- We may feel we are being judged.
- We may feel unprepared. (What questions will they ask?)
- There's too much competition for the same job.
- They are important. (We want and need the job!)
- We may want to be more expressive with language and attitude but don't know how.

# How can I become a more confident interviewee?



- Discuss.



# I can be a more confident interviewee by:



## **Preparing and Practicing**

- Research the job you are applying to
- Learn what values and skills are important to your potential employer

## **Understanding what is important to the interviewer**

- Know your strengths: What makes you a valuable employee?
- Personal Impression and Character
- Competence
- Leadership
- Motivation and Commitment

## **Learning what to do before, during and after an interview**

- Always present a positive attitude 😊

# First things first: Getting the call



## Phone Etiquette:

- Prepare your greeting and your responses
- Have you checked your VM message lately? Does it work? Is it professional?

## When you get the call:

- Answer phone professionally, have other household members prepared
- Write down the information and REPEAT it
- Write down the NAME of who called you and WHO you are meeting
- Smile; the interviewer can feel it 😊

## Ask:

- Exactly where is the interview? What are the cross-streets?
- Who and how many people will be in the interview?
- What type of interview will it be?
- What is the timeline for filling this position?
  
- **Thank them** for calling and let them know that you are looking forward to meeting them!

# Prepare, Prepare, Prepare!



## **Research the industry:**

- Changes in the Accounting field
- Trends in Finance
- Trends in software
- Challenges in the field/ potential solutions

## **Research the company:**

- What are the values of the company?
- What is the mission of the company?
- Successes/ challenges (When identifying challenges ask yourself “How can I help the employer with these challenges?”)

## **Research the position you are applying for:**

- What are the main responsibilities of the job and how can you fulfill them?

# Where do I research?



- Study the organization's website.  
About Us, History, Mission, Current Projects,  
Annual report, press releases, etc.
- Talk with current or former employees.
- Google search the company name.
- Read reviews on the company.
- Read industry-specific magazines at the library or online.

# What should you bring to a job interview?



## **Resume and Cover Letter**

- Clean, professional looking copies on quality paper  
(You may be interviewed by more than one person)

## **Reference List**

Consider carefully who you want to have on your reference list. Any employer who is serious about hiring you will check your references. Be sure to:

- List people who know your work experience and think highly of you.
- Ask the reference well in advance of the interview if you can use them as a reference.
- Include complete contact information for your references (email address, phone number, fax number, mailing address).
- If you don't have a previous employer who you can use as a reference, use a former teacher or professor who knows you well and thinks highly of you.
- 3 references are usually sufficient.

# Know yourself!



- Before going into an interview, know your value!
  - My greatest strength is....
  - The accomplishment I am most proud of is .....
  - I am passionate about....
- Prepare your interview script.
  - Research common interview questions for accountants and practice answering these questions
  - Know what is on your resume “ Walk me through your resume...”
- Think of the last job interview you gave. What can be improved?
- Present a positive attitude.
  - Smile
  - Breathe deeply to maintain a relaxed state
  - Maintain eye contact
  - Be aware of your body language and nervous mannerisms
    - No crossed arms, tapping of feet, excessive use of arms/ hands, playing with hair/ clothes/ papers in your hand.

# Dress to Impress!



- Dress appropriately and dress for the job you want.
- Dress consistently with the organization and culture.
- An interview is a professional business meeting and you will need to dress the part.

## **Women's Dress Guidelines:**

- Solid color, conservative suit
- Coordinated blouse
- Appropriate shoes (closed toe)
- Limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Appropriate make-up & no perfume
- Neatly trimmed and clean nails (Keep nail polish color conservative)

# Dress to Impress!



## Men's Dress Guidelines

- Solid color, conservative suit
- Conservative tie
- Dark socks, professional shoes
- Very limited jewelry
- Neat, professional hairstyle
- Go easy on the aftershave
- Neatly trimmed and clean nails

Arrive Early!



- Research travel information to the interview site:
  - Early is “On Time”
  - On time is “Late”
  - Late is unacceptable!
- [www.hopstop.com](http://www.hopstop.com) Website to help plan your travel
- Consider taking a “trial run” to the interview site the same day of the interview to see how long it really takes.

# During the Job Interview: Marketing Yourself



- **Sell Your Best Self**
  - ✦ Be honest and genuine.
  - ✦ Be purposeful: talk about why you are passionate about the job
  - ✦ Emphasize your unique skills, experiences, and strengths.
  - ✦ Give direct, clear answers to the interviewers questions.
- **Nonverbal Communication**
  - ✦ Give a firm, confident handshake.
  - ✦ Maintain eye-contact.
  - ✦ Sit up straight and lean slightly forward in your chair.
  - ✦ Show enthusiasm by keeping an interested expression.
  - ✦ If you have more than one person interviewing you at once, make sure you acknowledge each of them with eye contact
- **Ask Questions and Show Interest**
- **Have a positive attitude and act as though you want the job!**

# Common Interview Questions for Accountants



- 1) Tell me about yourself..... or Walk me through your resume.....
- 2) Why are you interested in this position? What do you know about this company?
- 3) What was the toughest accounting task you've had to handle in your career so far?
- 4) Tell me about your work experience in your most recent job as an accountant. How would your employer describe you?
- 5) How do you prioritize your work and make sure that you have all your tasks completed?
- 6) What is your philosophy towards work?

# Common Interview Questions for Accountants



- 7) Describe a situation where you had to handle a difficult and demanding client.
- 8) What do you consider as your strengths and weaknesses as a accountant?
- 9) Which accounting applications are you familiar with?
- 10) Why should we hire you? Or: Explain how you would be an asset to our company.
- 11) Do you have any questions for me?

## Describe your skills giving concrete examples



- State the skill or strength using action verbs.
  - Give specifics: When, Where, What and How
  - Show beneficial results.
  - Link this to the new job.
- 
- *“Last summer my Supervisor at Allied Distributing was in the hospital and I was responsible for taking care of new clients for two months. I was the first to arrive and the last to leave. I double-checked every order, and I made follow-up calls to each customer on a weekly basis. During that time, our customers never experienced any delays or were inconvenienced and my supervisor was reassured, because she could count on me to take the initiative and get the job done.”*

# A note on Behavioral Interview Questions:



- Behavioral interviewing requires job candidates to relate experiences about how they handled challenges related to the skill sets the company requires for the position
- Ideology is that past performance will indicate future performance
  - Describe a situation where you had to handle a difficult and demanding client.
  - Tell me about a time when you had to handle multiple projects.

Use the “PAR” method to answer these questions.

Problem

Action

Result

# PAR Method



- **Problem**

*Describe the problem that you faced.*

- **Action**

*Describe the action that you took to address the problem.*

- **Result**

*Describe the result that you achieved by taking the given action to address the named problem. If at all possible, quantify the result, putting it into hard numbers*

# Be prepared to ask questions:



- About the company
- About the department
- About the job expectations
- About the job responsibilities

## Some examples:

- How do you define successful performance in this position?
- Is there special training you require or suggest for someone holding this position?
- What projects or goals will bring success to your department or team?

# Closing the interview



- Thank the interviewer for his/ her time
- Smile and shake hands
- Ask for a business card to follow-up
- Express interest in the position.
- If you are interviewed by more than one person be sure to collect business cards from all.



# After the Interview is done:



- Thank You Letter and Follow-up
  - *Express your appreciation for the opportunity to interview.*
  - *Identify your stronger selling points.*
  - *Address unresolved issues from your interview, if needed.*
  - *Proofread before you send*
  - *E-mail is appropriate; do not text a thank-you note.*
  
- Evaluate your performance
  - *What did I do well?*
  - *What could be improved?*
  - *What did I learn from this interview that I could use in the future?*  
*(For example: Are there important skills that I am missing? How can I begin to gain those skills?)*

# Interviewer Turn-Off's



- Late arrival
- Indecisive when answering questions
- Lack of interest and enthusiasm
- Wrong emphasis on pay and benefits
- Improper vocal inflection; too loud or too soft
- Displaying nervous habits; “Ums”, “Ahs”, leg shaking, etc.
- Lack of focus and direction
- Lack of poise and confidence
- Failure to make eye contact
- Lack of common courtesy or tact
- Being over-aggressive or a “know-it-all”
- Poor personal appearance or body language
- Lack of qualifications

# Questions?

