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# THE LABOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM



## Warming up for the big interview

What do I need to know beforehand?

Going into a job interview is nerve racking. We all tend to worry about things like:

- What should I wear? Bring?
- What will they ask me?
- Am I prepared to answer?

I have had many opportunities to sit as a member of a panel running interviews, and in many cases, from the moment the candidate walked into the room; it was clear whether or not he/she had prepared well for the occasion.

Here are some tips for you to consider the next time you are being interviewed for a position.

### SOME TIPS:

#### *Prepare!*

- Research the position and/or program you are applying for! And research the company or committee that you're applying to. Do not leave preparations until the last minute, or at least do not let on that you did! For example: "Yah, I looked that one up last night on the Internet"...not a good impression to make!
- When preparing for your interview, think of some questions you're likely to be asked and practice your answers aloud.

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**Janet Stewart**  
*Professional Catalyst*

In a nutshell, she is invited into unions to help them create fundamental and systemic change so that they can prosper in a continuously changing economy.

She doesn't go in and "tell anyone what to do", but rather she works "with" the Members to help them figure out what they need to do to respond to the changes in their industries - she acts as the "catalyst" who gets things going and causes change to happen!

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### **Prepare!** *Cont'd ...*

- Do whatever it takes to arrive on time. Check out the address and parking facilities before the interview date.
- Dress for the occasion – be comfortable, neat, and clean. Image is often as important as content.
- Be prepared to elaborate on examples of the skills and experience that you have listed in your resume.
- Know your strong points and skills. Write a one-minute sales pitch on yourself. Practice until you can comfortably and confidently articulate your strengths.
- Bring any notes you prepare. Organize them ahead of time. (In the interview, position them on the table in front of you so they are easier to refer to.)
- If you have a portfolio of your work or special accomplishments, take this with you to the interview so you can show it to the panel after answering their questions. Few people do this and it can be very impressive.
- If possible, schedule it so that you are not the first person being interviewed. (Research conducted by Robert Half &



Associates shows the first to be interviewed gets the job only 17% of the time, while the last person gets the job 55% of the time. The study also recommends avoiding Mondays or late in the afternoon.)

- Take a bottle of water with you to the interview.
- Go out of your way to be polite to the receptionist and anyone else you meet while there! You just never know...

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### **During the interview**

- Enter the room with confidence.
- Introduce yourself to, and shake the hand of, the interviewer(s).
- Use a firm handshake.
- Maintain direct eye contact.
- Maintain a friendly (but not fake) smile
- Demonstrate a sincere interest and enthusiasm for the position.
- Always display loyalty to your former employers. And if asked to describe a negative experience, be sure to use respectful language and avoid using any names.
- Before answering a question, take your time. Organize your thoughts before beginning to speak. Ensure that you understand the question. Include concrete, quantifiable data – not generalities. Provide details about specific accomplishments. Explain how the strengths relate to the organiza-



- tion's goals and how they might benefit the potential employer.
- Repeat your or your Union's strengths more than once during the interview, so they will be remembered.
- Vary examples that you draw on when answering the questions. If you constantly refer to the same situation or past job, it may give the interviewer(s) the impression that you lack a variety of experiences.
- The interviewers will likely take a lot of notes during the interview. Don't be distracted by this! It is completely normal and should be expected.
- Towards the end of the inter-

view you will usually be given a chance to ask questions yourself. Good questions require advance preparation. Be prepared with 2-3 well-thought-out ones - again this shows that you are thorough and prepared.

### **At end of interview**

- Collect business cards from each of the panel members
- Ask about timeframes for filling the position and find out how and when you will be notified
- Ask if they would like additional information or materials from you

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## The Behaviour Based Interview

In many of today's workplaces, you will be required to complete a "Behaviour Based Interview" (BBI).

### **What Is It?**

BBI is a structured approach which will provide you with opportunities to share your past experiences with the members of the interview panel.

It is based on the assumption that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour in similar situations.

### **What will I be asked?**

You will be asked questions that will require you to recount a time when you encountered a specific type of situation.

You will need to describe the Situation or Task involved, the Actions you took to deal with it and the outcome or Result. For Example: "Tell us about a time when you had to work with someone who was very difficult to get along with."

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### How should I answer?

Use a STAR Response to address the: Situation, or Task, Action and Result

#### S - Situation or T - Task:

When I worked at the ABC Union, I was responsible for interacting with and scheduling all of the volunteers who helped out with the annual convention. The Chairperson of the convention committee was a difficult person to get along with and at one of the monthly meetings she made a point of making me feel as though I was not doing my job properly - in front of the other 10 members of the committee.

#### A - Action:

I felt really horrible about what she had done and I knew that I had to talk to her about it. I waited until

all of the other Members had left for the evening and then I asked if she could stay a little while longer so that I could talk to her about it. I re-capped the comments that she had made and explained to her how they had made me feel. I assured her that I appreciated her point of view, but requested that, in future, she address these kinds of comments to me privately and that I would promise to be open to her feedback.

#### R - Result:

At first, she seemed to dismiss my feelings as “over-reacting”, but as the conversation progressed she seemed to understand my concerns. She never publicly criticized me again after that day - and she did speak to me directly when she had concerns about my work.

## Notes

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## Final Thought...

### Make a list of your relevant qualifications

You can include years of experience, education, special training, technical skills, “inside” knowledge of a product or market, etc.

You can also include general skills like communication, leadership, organization, or work ethic.

### Look at this list objectively

Which items are of most value to your potential employer?

Refine the list further, and use it to write a brief “sales pitch” that describes your qualifications for the job.

Organize your information in a logical fashion, practice it out loud and refine it until it comes out smoothly and naturally.

To interview well, you must believe in yourself and be able to verbalize your best qualifications with conviction.

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