Oregon Department of Early Learning and Care

Interview Preparation & Tips

When you participate in an interview, the questions will not always be the same, and the importance of certain topics will change depending on the needs of the position. However, there are some main areas that you can prepare yourself for that most hiring managers will be considering:

- Do you have the technical skills, experience and/or training that meet the requirements? This will be different for every job. Make sure you read the entire job announcement and position description prior to an interview. If a position description is not attached to the job announcement, then reach out to DELC.JOBS@delc.oregon.gov for a copy. Be prepared to explain how your experience is related to the position for which you are applying. **Know the areas you have strength in and how to best present areas you are looking to improve upon.**

- Do you have the passion and motivation to do a thorough job? **Think of examples where you went above and beyond in your position, times where you displayed a high level of initiative.** These examples will show how motivated you are and help you stand out. Do some research on the position and program. Review the agency's website to learn more about the mission, vision and values and how that aligns with your passion.

- If there is time at the end of your interview, **be prepared to ask a thoughtful question** to show your interest and any research you have done on the position or program.

- The hiring manager is going to want to know how well you get along with others and how you work on a team. **Teamwork is one of the most important factors for hiring managers**. They may ask about how you have handled a disagreement at work, or your approach for handling difficult conversations with internal staff or partners. Be honest in your response. If you share an example of a time that did not go well, make sure to tell the panel what you learned from that experience and what you would do differently. This will also highlight your communication skills.

- **Don't assume anything.** Don't assume that everyone on the panel has read your application, resume or cover letter. Ask for clarification if you don't understand a question. If you know the interview panel members, pretend they are a new acquaintance. In order to be objective and consistent, even if a panel member knows you, they are only able to consider information provided in the interview. Remember, the panel cannot give you credit for what you have done or can do unless you discuss it during the interview.

- **Resist the temptation to speak negatively about anything.** This includes peers, supervisors, the agency, etc. If you talk negatively about others or the agency, the panel assumes you will continue to do so in the new job. Maintain a professional demeanor.

- **Manage your time.** Give more than a yes or no answer. Provide examples that highlight your knowledge and skills. If your interview is 45 minutes and you rush through it in 20 minutes, you will probably not give the panel enough information to fully know your skills, experience and what you are capable of. On the flip side, make sure to allow yourself enough time to provide full responses for each question, and are not rushed. You want to plan for five minutes per question. If you have extra time at the end of the interview, you can always go back and add more examples or context to an answer.

- **Answer all parts of the question.** Listen carefully. Do not skip over any portion of the question. Answer each question clearly and concisely. A nice tactic at the end of a multi part question is to summarize your answer at the end to highlight key points.

- If you are applying for a management or lead role, they will want to know about your **leadership skills.** For management level positions they will want to know if you have any prior supervisory or lead work experience. Consider times when you have led a group and the different functions you performed that would be relevant. Think about your communication and leadership style.

- Other common topics covered might include your experience managing multiple priorities, meeting short deadlines, or conducting a variety of tasks with frequent interruptions.

- While we typically provide the interview questions ahead of time, please refrain from reading from a script during the interview. Engage with the panel. If you take notes, only use bullet points on key areas you want to make sure to address. Reading from a script is distracting and lacks a natural flow of conversation. When reading from a script it can be difficult to adapt, answer follow up questions, and lead to greater nervousness.

Make sure to review the position description and/or job announcement prior to your interview. Start thinking of your experience and examples that relate to the work the position will perform. When you answer a question, give a detailed example by providing a situation that demonstrates your experience, level of responsibility, and how well you performed. When preparing, get comfortable talking about your experience out loud, record yourself or talk into a mirror.

A helpful interviewing tool to use when responding to interview questions is the **STAR** method (below).

STAR INTERVIEW TECHNIQUE

S	T	A	R
SITUATION	TASK	ACTION	RESULT
Describe the situation you were in.	**Describe the task you had to do.** Highlight: · Challenges · Constraints · Deadlines · Issues, etc.	**Describe the action you took.** Highlight: · Teamwork · Leadership · Initiative · Integrity, etc.	**Describe the outcome of your actions.** Highlight: · Achievements · Improvements · Cost Saving · Delivery, etc.

An example of using the STAR method could be:

Question: Can you provide an example of a time when you demonstrated leadership skills in a challenging situation?

Situation:
In my previous role as a project manager at XYZ Company, we were tasked with implementing a new software system to streamline our client onboarding process. The project was critical to the company's efficiency goals, but we encountered significant resistance from some team members who were apprehensive about the change.

Task:
As the project manager, it was my responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of the new software while overcoming resistance from team members. I needed to effectively lead the team through this transition and ensure that everyone remained focused on the project goals.

Action:
To address the resistance, I first organized a series of team meetings to openly discuss concerns and gather feedback. I listened attentively to each team member's perspective, acknowledging their apprehensions and addressing misconceptions about the new software. I also highlighted the benefits of the system and how it would improve our workflow and efficiency.

Additionally, I identified key influencers within the team and sought their support in championing the project. I provided them with additional training and resources to help them feel more confident in using the new software and encouraged them to share their positive experiences with their colleagues.

Throughout the implementation process, I maintained open lines of communication with the team, providing regular updates on our progress and addressing any issues or roadblocks promptly. I led by example, demonstrating my own proficiency with the software and being readily available to assist team members as needed.

Result:
As a result of these efforts, we were able to successfully implement the new software system within the projected timeline and without any major disruptions to our operations. The team members who were initially resistant became advocates for the system, citing its efficiency and effectiveness in improving their workflow.

Furthermore, our department saw a noticeable increase in productivity and a reduction in errors, which directly contributed to the company's bottom line. My ability to lead the team through this challenging transition not only demonstrated my leadership skills but also reinforced my commitment to driving positive change within the organization.

If you have any questions about this information, you can contact the recruitment unit at, DELC.JOBS@delc.oregon.gov