



CARY COMMUNICATIONS INSIGHTS

How to Prepare for an Interview

By Karen Bluestein

If you have spent years focused on doing the work rather than interviewing for it, you may feel a bit rusty returning to the interview process. Interviews today move faster, rely more heavily on conversation than chronology, and often begin on video rather than in a conference room. What has not changed is how much preparation shapes the outcome. Candidates who walk in clear, grounded, and well prepared consistently come across as stronger and more confident.

The goal is not to cover everything you have ever done. The goal is to control the narrative.

Be Clear on the Few Things That Matter Most

Experienced professionals often try to bring their full background into the room. That instinct is understandable, but it usually works against you. Interviewers are not trying to reconstruct your career. They are trying to determine whether you can solve the problems associated with this role.

Before the interview, identify your top three accomplishments that align most closely with the position. Focus on outcomes rather than responsibilities. What changed because of your work. This might include revenue growth, operational improvements, risk mitigation, team performance, or client impact. These examples should not sit in isolation. You should be able to reference them naturally across different questions, whether you are asked about leadership, decision making, or navigating change. When the same strong examples reinforce multiple answers, your value becomes easier to grasp and remember.

Tighten Your Message Through Rehearsal, Not Memorization

One of the biggest challenges for experienced candidates is overexplaining. Context feels responsible, but long answers often dilute your point. Aim to answer most questions in about a minute, with a clear beginning, middle, and end. Provide just enough context to frame the situation, then focus on what you did and what the outcome was.

Rehearsing out loud is essential. Saying the words helps you hear where you drift, repeat yourself, or bury your strongest points. Role playing with a colleague, coach, or trusted friend builds comfort and sharpens delivery. This is especially important if you have not interviewed in years. Familiarity reduces nerves and makes the real conversation feel more natural.

Prepare for Video Interviews as Seriously as In-Person Ones

Video interviews are now standard and often determine who advances. Test your technology well in advance, including sound, lighting, and camera angle. Make sure the camera is at eye level and the background is simple and distraction-free. Dress the same way you would for an in-person interview, not just from the waist up.

Practice answering questions on camera so the format feels normal rather than awkward. Look at the camera when speaking, not at your own image. A calm, steady presence on video builds credibility and helps the interviewer focus on your message rather than the medium.

Know the Company, Role, and Gaps

Spend time researching the company beyond a quick website scan. Review leadership bios, values, and mission statements. Read recent press releases and news articles to understand priorities and direction. This context enables you to tailor your responses and demonstrate genuine interest.

Review the job description closely and identify any areas where your experience does not align perfectly. Be prepared to address those gaps directly. Do not wait for the interviewer to discover them. Explain how your experience transfers, how you have learned similar skills in the past, or how you would approach closing the gap. Confidence and self-awareness matter more than a perfect match.

Prepare three to five thoughtful questions to ask the interviewer. Ask about priorities in the first several months, how success is measured, or what challenges the team is currently facing. These questions signal experience and strategic thinking and help you assess whether the role is right for you.

Ask for the Job

As the interview wraps up, don't be passive. It's appropriate to ask for the job in a professional, confident way. This means clearly expressing your interest and reinforcing how well you fit. You might say that the role aligns well with your experience, that you are excited about the work, and that you would welcome the opportunity to move forward. This signals confidence, removes ambiguity, and helps the interviewer understand your level of interest. Many strong candidates fail to do this and leave the room sounding unsure, even when they are well qualified. Asking for the job, done thoughtfully, shows decisiveness and professionalism.

Handle Salary and Offers With Intention

If asked about salary expectations, do not offer a number first. Instead, ask what the role pays or what range has been approved. This keeps the conversation grounded in reality and prevents you from underpricing yourself before you have full context.

If an offer is extended, do not accept it immediately. Thank them, express interest, and ask for time to review the details. Negotiation is a normal part of the process at this level and signals professionalism. Very few offers are truly final, and accepting the first one without discussion often leaves value on the table.

Plan how you want to close the interview. Reinforce your interest, summarize why your experience aligns with the role, and follow up with a concise thank-you note that references the conversation. These details still matter and often influence final impressions.

With the right preparation, interviews stop feeling like a test and start feeling like a professional discussion about fit, value, and next steps. That shift changes how you show up and how you are perceived.

Need help preparing for an interview? [Contact](#) Cary Communications for a free 15-minute consultation.

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