

Section 5

Detailed Interview Preparation

Section 5 – Detailed Interview Preparation

Expanding Your Examples

Now that you have gained an introduction to interviewing and started sketching out your best career examples, now you must get more in-depth to ensure your experiences will adequately answer the questions asked by an interviewer. This section will help you focus on the most common questions and provide key considerations in answering these questions.

It is essential that you remember the STAR format when developing your examples. We also encourage you to review the Interview Preparation Library on our website as you start to work on these answers. Contact your recruiter for information on how to access this portion of the website.

Remember, write out your answers and then practice out loud!

Standard Interview Questions

Most interviews, regardless of the type of position or industry, will have some similar questions. Here are some of the standard questions you may encounter in any type of interview.

1. Tell me about yourself.

- Do not go longer than two to four minutes.
- Think of this as a commercial. You have an opportunity to sell the product (you), and you have complete control over what you say.
- Your statement should be well rehearsed and practiced.
- Speak briefly about high school and college (extracurricular activities and work experience), and then work through your professional experience.
- Do not get bogged down in the details unless the interviewer asks for specific details.
- Highlight key achievements and accomplishments that help illustrate why you are a great candidate for the company and position you are interviewing for.
- Your statement needs to be about your work experience and education, not about your personal life and family.

2. What are your strengths?

- Have at least three for each type of position you are applying for.
- Each strength should have a specific example from your experience. Quantifiable examples are best (#'s, %'s, \$'s, and time).
- Technical Interview: Stress your troubleshooting skills, ability to diagnose and fix problems, critical thinking, customer service, ability to learn new equipment quickly, etc.
- Leadership and Management Interview: Stress leadership skills, mission accomplishment, planning and organization skills, conflict resolution skills, the ability to see the big picture, etc.

- Sales Interview: Stress competitiveness, autonomous work skills, communication skills, relationship building skills, etc.

3. What has distinguished you from your peers?

- Companies interview multiple people for each available position. You must be able to convince a hiring manager that you are the best person for the position.
- Were you selected from a group of peers for a particularly demanding assignment or project?
- Were you ranked higher than your peers during evaluations?
- Were you recognized or awarded for doing something above and beyond your typical position?
- Have you completed additional training that goes beyond the majority of people in your field?
- Are you the “go to” person for a particular system, issue, or piece of equipment?
- What makes you great?

4. What are your weaknesses?

- Have a couple in mind, but only answer with one of them. Everyone has weaknesses and competent people know their weaknesses and take steps to improve them.
- Keep the answer as unrelated to the core strengths required for the position as possible. For example: If the position requires constant interaction with customers, don't say your weakness is dealing with people.
- Explain how you are working to improve your weakness and the steps you have already taken to get better. This shows you are self-aware and focused on improvement.
- Interviews are not confessions, so be selective in what you share.
- Don't use canned answers. For example: “My weakness is I'm a workaholic.” Hiring managers hear canned answers all the time. Be genuine and if you are going to use a commonly heard answer, back it up with some examples.

5. Why are you (or did you) leaving the military?

- Like everything in an interview, keep your answer positive.
- This is not the time to bad mouth your previous boss or employer.
- Answer the question in terms of wanting new challenges or meeting your goals.

6. Have you dealt with conflict in the past?

- Everyone has dealt with conflict.
- Cite specific examples.
- Managers are looking for conflict resolution and problems to be solved.
- Rigidity is not usually the best approach to resolving conflict in the corporate world. Military veterans have an often unfair stereotype of being too rigid. Think about Gunnery Sergeant Highway (my way or the highway type thinking). Corporate America is looking for dynamic and thoughtful people that listen and consider other people's perspectives.

7. Have you ever failed?

- You have, we all have. A manager does not want to hire a person that has never failed. If you have never failed, how do you (or the manager) know how you will respond and deal with failure?
- The interviewer is looking for how you responded and reacted to failure. What did you learn from it? Did you try again, or give up?
- Underscore that you do not make the same mistakes repeatedly.

8. What are some of your significant accomplishments?

- Have at least three.
- Quantify and qualify each accomplishment. For example: “My division’s operational readiness rate increased 10% during my tenure as the Leading Petty Officer. Our readiness posture was 5% over the Navy standard.”
- Always explain the specific role you played in the accomplishment. The manager is not hiring your team of coworkers; they are hiring you.

9. How do you motivate your people?

- Don’t just give an answer, give examples.
- Stress the importance you place on motivating others while keeping your own motivation high.

10. Which position in your work history did you like the best?

- Whatever your answer, support it with the reasons you enjoyed the position so much.
- Ensure the position you mention is relatable to the position you are interviewing for.

11. What do you like about us?

- Solid knowledge of the position, company, products, services, and philosophy are essential to answering this question.
- The interviewer is checking to see if you have done your research.
- The interviewer wants to know that you see the position and company from a realistic viewpoint and that you truly want to work for them.

12. Do you have any questions for me?

- In the interviewer’s mind, if you don’t have any questions, you must not have interest in the company or position.
- Ensure your questions demonstrate curiosity and enthusiasm.
- Your questions need to go beyond information that can quickly and easily be found on the company’s website.
- Your questions should not be about what the company can do for you (i.e. pay, benefits, vacation, etc.).
- Your questions should show you are genuinely interested in the company and position.

Technical Interview Preparation



The purpose of a technical interview is to assess your overall fitness for a technical position within a given organization. A technical interview will focus primarily on your technical background and experience, but an interviewer will also ask questions about your leadership experiences, soft skills, and communication skills.

The key to a successful technical interview is to focus on the examples in your past that will support your answers. Specific examples (with names and places) add depth and meaning to your answers.

Keys to Success

Focus on Your Technical Expertise. You are interviewing for a technical position, so you must emphasize your technical expertise and provide examples throughout your interview that show you have these essential skills. Focus on experiences where you held the most technical responsibility.

Understand What the Company Needs. Every company is looking for something different. Research the company, talk to the Orion Account Executive and your Orion Recruiter, and analyze the job summary to identify the three key attributes a company needs from a candidate in this position.

Tailor Your Strengths. Tailor your strengths to the company's needs. As a successful military technician, you have a number of strengths. Emphasize the strengths that match up with the company's needs throughout your interview, and always support with an example.

Technical Examples. You must support your answers with specific examples. Have examples that highlight your technical skills. Those examples will add depth to your answers and make an impact on the interviewer.

Energy and Enthusiasm. Show the interviewer that you want the job. Would you hire someone who seemed disinterested? An interviewer won't either. You must convince an interviewer that you are excited about the company and the job in order to land the position.

Discuss your Adaptability. Express to the interviewer that you are able to learn quickly and be adaptable. The technical work you have done in the military will not match exactly to what most companies need, so you need to stress that you can apply what you know to new systems and learn quickly.

Brush up on your given technical field. Take some time to go back and review some of the basic concepts and theories from your technical discipline, especially if you are more than a year removed from using it on a daily basis.

Ask good questions. Questions equal interest to an interviewer. Ask well thought out questions about the equipment, systems, culture, training, employees, and company that demonstrate a genuine interest in the company. Good questions can help build rapport with an interviewer.

Close the Interview. Don't overlook the close. Make sure the interviewer knows you want the job by closing the interview.

Sample Technical Questions

The list of sample technical questions below is by no means comprehensive, but it should serve as a good starting point when preparing for a technical interview. Practice these questions until you can comfortably verbalize your answers. The more preparation you do prior to your interview, the better you will perform in your interview.

Some of the most common interview questions are listed below. You need to personalize your answers with specific examples from your past to avoid sounding over-coached and disingenuous.

- **Why are you interested in this technical role?** Make it clear to the interviewer where your technical interest comes from (past experience, hobbies, goals, etc.) and utilize specific career examples that show your technical aptitude, such as discussing your favorite technical billet and how you succeeded.
- **What technical experience do you have?** Take the time to explain your career field and highlight examples that show strong technical methodologies. Sell the interviewer that you have the interest AND the aptitude based off of your past experiences. Give detailed answers that illustrate your complete knowledge of the systems you worked on.
- **How did you apply your technical skillset in your last position?** The military moves you around, so you may not be in your career field when you transition. Bridge the gap for the interviewer to make it clear that you had to use the same analytical principles in each billet, and reinforce that through the results you demonstrate.
- **What special technical qualifications do you possess?** We receive great training in the military, but not all of our schools are clear to the civilian employer. Highlight the training that you have received, focusing on the technical aspects and relating that to the position.

Additional Technical Interview Questions

The following questions are examples of more specific questions that may be asked in the interview. Utilizing your best examples developed previously, you should be able to adjust the presentation of your experiences to answer these effectively.

General Technical Questions:

- How would you troubleshoot a problem without the benefit of a technical manual?
- Describe your troubleshooting thought process.
- Describe the system(s) you have experience with.
- What type of test equipment have you used?
- How do you rate your ability to read schematics, blueprints and technical drawings?
- What was the most complicated technical problem you had to solve?
- What were you the “go to” person for in your last position?

Electrical / Electronics:

- Describe Ohms Law for me in the simplest terms.
- In an electrical circuit, what is resistance measured in?
- In an electrical circuit, what is current measured in?
- In an electrical circuit, what is voltage measured in?
- What is the difference between a series and parallel circuit?
- Explain the difference between AC & DC power?
- What is a PLC?
- Explain ladder logic.
- What is the difference between analog and digital?
- Provide an example of an analog and digital circuit.
- What does a resistor do?
- What does a diode do?
- Explain what happens when a circuit shorts.
- Explain what happens when a circuit is open.

Mechanical:

- What is the purpose of a needle valve in a hydraulic line?
- In constructing a hydraulic system, what material should never be used?
- What is the best way to protect a pressure gage from pressure surges in a hydraulic circuit?
- What is the first thing you should check if you are troubleshooting a pneumatic system?
- What is the point at which a pry bar pivots called?
- Explain how gear ratios work.
- Explain how an internal combustion engine works.
- Explain how a gas turbine / jet engine works.
- Explain how a boiler works. How is a boiler used to create electricity?

Reading

Companies will be looking for solid experience and the ability to learn quickly and adapt. We recommend selecting at least one book from each section of our ready list to ensure that you have a well-rounded skill set and perspective. You will notice the reading list also contains a section of sales books. Even if you are focused on a technical career, you should read at least one sales book. Until you get “the offer”, you are in the business of selling yourself, so learn how to do it. *Please refer to the end of this section for a comprehensive reading list.*

Leadership Interview Preparation

The purpose of a leadership interview is to assess your overall fit for a supervisory role within a given organization. A leadership interview will focus primarily on your supervisory skills and experience, but an interviewer will also typically

ask questions about your background, qualifications, and communication skills. An interviewer will also want to explore how you have dealt with conflict in the past.

The key to a successful leadership interview is to focus on the examples in your past that will support your answers. Specific examples (with names and places) add depth and meaning to your answers. Giving an answer on philosophy alone will not work in a management interview.

Keys to Success

Focus On Leadership. You are interviewing for a leadership position, so you must emphasize your leadership skills and provide examples throughout your interview that show you are a strong leader. Focus on jobs where you held the most responsibility. Also, remember to talk about your soft skills.

Understand What The Company Needs. Every company is looking for something different. Research the company, talk to the Orion Account Executive and your Orion Recruiter, and analyze the job summary to identify the three key attributes a company needs from a candidate in this position.

Tailor Your Strengths. Tailor your strengths to the company's needs. As a successful military leader, you have a number of strengths. Emphasize the strengths that match up with that company's needs throughout your interview.

Examples, Examples, Examples. You must support your answers with specific examples. Those examples will add depth to your answers and make an impact on the interviewer.

Energy and Enthusiasm. Show the interviewer that you want the job. Would you hire someone who seemed disinterested? An interviewer won't either. You must convince an interviewer that you are excited about the company and the job in order to land the position.

Ask Good Questions. Questions equal interest to an interviewer. Ask well thought out questions about the culture, training, employees, and company that demonstrate a genuine interest in the company. Good questions can help build rapport with an interviewer.

Close the Interview. Don't overlook the close. Make sure the interviewer knows you want the job by closing the interview.

Sample Leadership Questions

The list of sample leadership questions below is by no means comprehensive, but it should serve as a good starting point when preparing for a leadership interview. Practice these questions until you can comfortably verbalize your answers. The more preparation you do prior to your interview, the better you will perform during the interview.

Some of the most common interview questions are listed below. We have included tips or sample answers to give you a good idea of what you should discuss. You should personalize your answers with specific examples from your past to avoid sounding over-coached and disingenuous. Your ability to personalize your answers and give specific examples in support of those answers will differentiate you from other candidates who may be competing for the same position, so the key now is to develop these answers further. Write them out and practice them out loud.

Remember three things when you practice questions for a leadership interview and you will be successful:

- (1) Avoid cliché answers.
 - (2) Give solid, STAR format examples.
 - (3) Focus on your leadership skills.
- **What are your strengths?** Tailor your answers to the job you are interviewing for: For leadership positions, focus primarily on leadership, mission focus, communication and planning skills. Always provide an example of how you have used this strength.
 - **What is your biggest professional achievement?** An ideal answer should be a professional achievement that is significant, makes an impact, and somehow relates to the job you are interviewing for (i.e. shows significant leadership under stressful conditions like combat).
 - **Which job did you like best in the military and why?** Tailor your answer for a leadership position. Focus on the job where you held the most responsibility and was the most leadership intensive. An interviewer wants to know that the job you liked best is similar to the position you are interviewing for. Make sure you highlight the skills that you learned in the past and how they translate to a career in the civilian workforce.
 - **What is your leadership style?** You must overcome the military stigma. Show them you are a strong leader, but have a flexible leadership style and great communication skills. Companies want a mature decision maker who is able to motivate a team of diverse individuals.
 - **Give me an example of dealing with conflict.** Be specific. Focus on an actual event where you dealt with conflict in a workplace. An ideal example will show your ability to mediate a hostile situation and maintain a positive work environment. Your ability to provide a good example will show the interviewer how you will react at their company, so make sure are you sending the right message.
 - **Are you open to shift work?** Many management positions occur in a shift work environment, such as a distribution center, power generation facility, or a manufacturing facility. The flexible candidate, open to shift work, will typically take the lead in the interview process for these roles. Remember, off shift work is not expected to last forever, as folks often move to the day shift with career progression.
 - **What are your long and short term goals?** Companies hire military leaders because they are goal driven individuals. Define short and long term, and then state your goals. They should be professional and related to the company as best as possible. A good example of a short term goal would be to come on board, learn quickly and make an impact and demonstrate your ability to take on more responsibility. In the long term, you can look to continually learn, be challenged and keep building the value you bring to your organization so you can be selected for increasing roles of responsibility.

Additional Leadership Interview Questions

The following questions are examples of more complicated questions that may be asked in the interview. Utilizing your best examples developed previously, you should be able to adjust the presentation of your experiences to answer these just as effectively.

- What date are you ready to start your new career?
- Why are you interested in management?
- Why did you join the military?
- What are your location preferences?
- Have you interviewed with any companies in the past 6 months? If so, which ones and for what locations?
- Do you currently have any other offers? If so, which companies and for what salary?
- Where do you see yourself in the next 5 years?
- Where do you see yourself in the next 10 years?
- Name three of your strengths.
- Name three of your weaknesses.
- How do you deal with stress?
- Are you open to shift work?
- Are you open to working overtime?
- How many days in a month are you willing to travel?
- What is a long day to you?
- How many hours a week are you open to working?
- Tell me about a project you led from start to finish.
- Have you ever had a mentor? If so, what did he or she do for you?
- What was the last book that you read and why?
- What was the last movie you watched and why?
- Describe a time that you...
 - Took a risk
 - Led a team through a challenging situation
- How would you characterize your leadership style?
- Describe a time when you had to deal with a poor performer.
- How do you deal with conflict?
- Who is your favorite leader and why? How did they handle conflict?
- How do you motivate people?
- If you had to give me a 5K “window”, what would your annual salary expectations be?
- Why should I hire you?
- What do you know about our company?
- What makes you qualified for this position?

Reading



If your goal is to enter the private sector in a production/operations management position, the books on our reading list will be extremely helpful. Your leadership experience is a very valuable asset. Companies will be looking for sound leadership principals and the ability to learn quickly and adapt. Reading a couple of the books on the reading list will allow you to combine your practical leadership experience with supplemental information on the industry that can provide you the edge you need in an interview. We recommend selecting at least one book from each section in addition to a book or two on interviewing. You will notice the reading list also contains a section of sales books. Even if you are focused on operations, management or an engineering position, you should read at least one sales book. Until you get “the offer,” you are in the business of selling yourself, so learn how to do it.

Please refer to the end of this section for a comprehensive reading list.

Sales Interview Preparation

In general, sales is a critical component of any corporation. Without an aggressive, self-motivated, professional sales force promoting a product, there would be no reason to have a manufacturing facility or logistics infrastructure. As a sales representative for a given company, you begin the actual business cycle between customer and vendor. While a sales career is significantly different than a technical or leadership career, you will find all interviewers are looking for the best talent for their companies. However, a career in sales typically involves working in a more dynamic and less structured environment than in most other careers. Therefore, candidates interested in sales must be able to deal with change and think well on their feet.

Your goal in sales is to gain access to potential clients and artfully influence them to commit to buying your products. Accomplishing that goal is the key to your professional success as a sales person and how you will ultimately be evaluated. Sales is a performance oriented career where your success is measured and evaluated as it relates to the corporate bottom line. Nowhere in business will you find more readily identifiable goals than in sales. Every action and effort in sales must have a purpose, and that purpose is measured in dollars.

Sales is a very autonomous career. You may work for a company as part of a sales team, but getting the job done on a daily basis is strictly up to you. Research, client calls, scheduling, presentations, follow-up, and closing a deal are ultimately driven by you alone. An individual’s success in sales is primarily defined by his or her personality, drive, ability to influence people, and time management skills.

As you move through the interview process for sales, remember that the companies are looking for the next generation of professionals to grow their business. They need superior talent and are willing to search long and hard to find the right “fit”. During an interview, you must convince the interviewer that you have a record of performance and success, outstanding drive and motivation, the ability to work autonomously, that you are goal focused, are a problem solver, are intelligent and creative, possess strong presentation skills, and are a very competitive individual. If you can prove that you possess these attributes, you will be successful.

How to Prepare

Before you enter a sales interview, you must do four things:

- (1) Research yourself
- (2) Research the company
- (3) Develop a plan for your interview
- (4) Create a brag book

Research Yourself. Self-analysis is a critical component of sales interview preparation, your resume and military evaluation reports are good resources for this portion of your preparation. You must know your resume and be able to talk about your entire career from high school to present. It is critical that you have specific examples that add depth to your answers. Ensure you are prepared to talk about the following topics (all are key attributes companies are looking for in a successful salesperson) and have examples that support each:

- Selling and influencing a situation (This is the key question because you may not have previous sales experience. You need to have examples of times you did “sell”)
- Leadership
- Performance oriented mindset
- Demonstrated, quantifiable successes
- Drive and motivation
- Autonomous decision-making
- Goal focused problem solving
- Intelligence and the ability to learn
- Creativity and innovation
- Rapport building skills and the desire to work with people
- Aggressiveness and competitiveness
- The desire to win
- Integrity and ethics
- Persistence and dedication
- Time management

Self-analysis exercise. An easy way to perform a self-analysis is to start with your resume and a sheet like the one in Section 4. Divide it into the following four sections: (1) Accomplishments and Strengths, (2) Failures and Weaknesses, (3) Selling Change, and (4) Hobbies and Drivers.

- In section one, look at each job on your resume, and list as many successful accomplishments as you can for each position. For each accomplishment, list the personal attributes (strengths) that made you successful. A single word or short sentence is sufficient. This will help you identify all of your accomplishments and strengths.
- In section two, look at your resume and identify where you have failed. It is probably not listed there in black and white, but we all have failed somewhere. A failure does not have to be catastrophic. It just needs to be something where you didn’t achieve a 100% success. It must, however, be significant and something that you grew from

professionally. List the failure and the personal attribute or shortcoming (weakness) that was the root cause. Also identify the professional lesson you learned as a result of that failure.

- In section three, look at your resume and identify any positions where you had to implement change and present (sell) your idea. Next to that, list any objections that were raised during your presentation and how you overcame those objections. Identifying specific examples where you presented something and then overcame objections/resistance is critical to success in a sales interview.
- In section four, list what you like to do in your spare time. What are your hobbies? Then list things you want to do in the future (trips, investments, family goals, etc.) and why you want to do them. This list will help you identify what you enjoy doing, the drivers in your career search, and personal goals.

Research the Company. Researching a company prior to your interview is critical. Most of the information you need for interview preparation can be found on the corporate website. Professional journals, Google, Fortune Magazine, and the Wall Street Journal can also be excellent resources. At a minimum, companies expect you to have visited the website and know some basic information about the company. When possible, meet with a local sales representative and ask them questions about the position and industry that can help you in an interview, or meet with businesses that buy the company's products to gain their insight. When researching a company prior to your interview, make sure you are familiar with the following information:

- Corporate Structure (headquarters location, size, divisions, international or domestic, public or private)
- Product lines and services
- Products under research & development
- Top competitors
- Trends pertinent to the company and industry

Develop a Plan. Once you have researched a company and done some self-analysis, you must develop a plan for your interview. Using your company research, identify three key attributes that you must convey to an interviewer to land the job. Think of these attributes as the theme for your interview. Using your personal research, match your strengths with those key attributes and identify specific examples to support your answers. Do not go into a sales interview without a good plan.

Develop a Brag Book. Most sales companies will require you to sell to your client using some sort of literature. A brag book shows an interviewer that you have initiative by developing the document and that you are able to sell to that literature. A brag book should be either bounded professionally or you should use a professional portfolio and it should contain the following:

- Cover Page
- Your resume
- Your evaluation reports
- College Transcripts (unofficial copy is acceptable)
- Awards
- Articles where your achievements were noted (newspaper or other publications)

- Any other documents showing your track record of performance, success, drive, etc.
- Sales figures (if you have previous sales experience)
- A printout from the DMV webpage (to show your clean driving record)
- A list of references, including email address and phone number

Each section should be neatly tabbed and one or two significant pieces of information on each page contained in your brag book should be highlighted for quick reference. You should normally provide a copy of your brag book to your interviewer as a courtesy while using your own during the interview for reference. For more information on how to use your brag book, please contact your Orion Recruiter.

The Sales Interview

Interviewing for sales is typically a multi-step process involving anywhere between two to six interviews. Some companies require a sales candidate to conduct a field ride as part of the interview process. A field ride is an interview that allows you to shadow a sales representative during a typical day.

Always arrive early to the interview location because being late to an interview simply says you will be late to sales calls. The setting is usually professional, but comfortable. The interviewer is interested in setting a scene where he/she can get to know you. This may take place in a formal setting such as on-site at the company or in an informal setting such as an airport business center or hotel lobby. Do not let the setting influence you. Remember, sales is a social as well as a professional career. Flexibility and adaptability are as important to sales as the close.

Relax prior to the interview and be prepared to answer the questions. Have a plan. Look sharp and make a good impression; selling is about your presentation skills and your appearance is a key component of that skill set. The tone of the interview is often conversational with the most successful candidates being the individuals who can professionally and smoothly engage the interviewer in a dialogue about themselves and the company. Building rapport is key. Keep in mind that you are being evaluated the entire time, from the time you knock at the door until you exit.

Sample Sales Questions

Success in professional sales interviews hinges on your ability to communicate effectively using specific examples. Questions typically focus on three areas: your personal attributes, your professional experience, and your knowledge of the company and sales. The list of questions below is by no means comprehensive, but should be a good starting point for you as you prepare for a sales interview. Practice these questions until you are comfortable verbalizing them. If you are asked something you weren't prepared for, be flexible and think on your feet!

- **Why are you interested in sales?** Focus on your competitive nature and intrinsic motivation under challenging conditions. Make clear that you want to contribute to the success of the business by impacting the bottom line. Express how you thrive in an environment where you can be directly rewarded for your performance.
- **What have you done to prepare for a sales position?** You want to express how you have taken the initiative to lay the groundwork for a sales career. Mention any of the sales books you have read, discuss what you learned on a ride-along (field ride), and explain what type of product research you have conducted. Companies want to see that you have taken the initiative to prepare for a new career and have a true interest in their company.

- **Describe a time you sold an idea to another individual.** Be prepared to make a connection between your military experience and a possible sales situation. Ideally, select an answer where you had to sell either your supervisor or your peers on a plan or course of action. Clearly articulate the steps you took to present the idea, follow up with the result, and how your idea was implemented.
- **How competitive are you?** Start out by stating you are very competitive and transition into your examples. Have several concrete examples to support your statement and use numbers and facts to compare yourself with others to express your competitive nature. Convey that you have a history of setting high goals for yourself and how you attain them with purpose.
- **When was the last time you faced resistance, and what did you do to overcome it?** Ensure that you have a recent example (within the past 2 years) that demonstrates how you were able to overcome adversity. Make sure you show how you were able to persevere and accomplish your goal. Lay out the situation, walk through the task you were trying to accomplish, express the specific actions you took to overcome the resistance, and the final result.
- **Sell me this Pen.** This question can be asked with any product, but the pen is the most common. The key is to show the interviewer that you understand the basics of sales. Do not begin describing the pen's features and qualities. Ask the interviewer questions about what he or she is looking for in a pen. What type, size, quantity? Qualify the interviewer's needs, and then present the features of your pen that fit the "client's" need. Remember to close them and ask them for the sale!
- **Closing is Imperative.** In a sales interview, you must be prepared to "close" the interview. Anyone in sales knows that they have to ask for the order or try to gain some commitment from their client in order to move the process forward. You could have a great interview, but if you do not try to close it, the sales manager is going to notice and begin to question whether you will be able to close once you are hired. You can lead into your close naturally by asking questions. Ask or confirm what the next step is in the hiring process. You can also ask if the manager sees you as a good fit for the role or if there is anything about your background they have any questions about. If they think you are a good fit, then you can confirm your interest in the opportunity and ask if you can schedule the next interview now. If they have any objections, you still have a chance to overcome them.

Additional Sales Questions

Personal Attributes

- Describe a situation in life where your request / demand was rejected. How did it feel? What did you do?
- Describe an experience in which you felt you gained something because you persisted long enough and saw it through to success.
- To what or whom do you compare yourself?
- What is the one thing that really motivates you?
- I am... (Fill in the blank with traits)
- How do you feel when you lose?
- What are your three greatest weaknesses?
- What are your three greatest strengths?
- What has been your greatest disappointment?

- Describe a time that you have...
 - Demonstrated creativity
 - Took initiative
 - Worked without a lot of direction
 - Sold an idea to another individual (discuss how you convinced that other individual)
 - Set a goal for yourself and the steps you took to achieve it
- In 60 seconds list as many descriptors of yourself as possible.
- What do you do in your spare time?
- Define stress. How do you relieve stress?
- Define pressure. How do you relieve pressure? Is pressure different from stress?
- How do you impact your family, your friends, your associates?
- Do you prefer to work alone or with others? Why? (Measures Ego & Drive)
- Would you prefer to follow the rules or make the rules? (Measures Ego & Drive)
- What has been the toughest decision you ever had to make?
- Have you ever been aggressive to the point where you pushed someone too far?

Professional Experience

- What is the most difficult aspect of your current position?
- Why have you been successful in the past?
- Under what conditions do you work best?
- What do you consider your most significant achievement?
- What is the most stressful situation you have encountered in your current position? How did you handle it?
- How are you measured where you work? How do you work with your peers?
- Explain how your boss would describe you.
- What are the two toughest decisions you have had to make? Which was the best decision? Which was the worst?
- What are some of the additional responsibilities you have taken on recently that are not in your job description?
- What is the most striking fact about your present company?
- Do you see yourself in your current job 6 months from now?
- What has been the biggest disappointment in your professional career(s) to date?
- What was the most important thing you learned from your last job?

Sales Knowledge

- Why Sales?
- Why should I hire you over an individual with sales experience?
- Do you like to control the conversation in selling?
- When was the last time you faced resistance, and what did you do?
- What have you done to prepare yourself for selling?
- What are the top two attributes you bring to the company?
- If your sales were published to the sales force, would you like them published: Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually?
- What are your goals for the month of _____?

- When do you decide what you will do each day? How do you do it? How do you track it? Show me tomorrow.
- Tell me the last self-improvement book you read or presentation you listened to?
- Tell me the last Sales book you read or presentation you listened to?
- Tell me about my company. (You must cover: Company, Product Line, Typical Sales Day, R&D efforts)
- How do you continue to improve your skill level? In what continuing education or personal activities do you participate?
- How do you go about understanding and learning technical information quickly? What methods do you use?
- How long did it take you to become familiar with the technical information needed to sell your current product or services? What methods did you use? How might you improve your learning?
- What methods do you use to keep informed of what is going on in your area of responsibility? What are their benefits? Why do these methods work for you?
- What methods of learning (reading, audiovisual, computer/CBT, classroom, etc.) do you find most productive for you? What methods do you least prefer? How do you adapt to different learning situations?
- What ongoing systems or habits have you established to get information on a regular basis? Describe some results of these systems or habits.
- What sources of information do you use to keep up with what is going on in the organization? How do you use this information?

Reading List

For a sales interview, it is particularly important that you read as much as possible prior to interviewing. Most transitioning military service members have no prior sales experience, so you must make up for your lack of experience with knowledge of the industry. Interviewers can tell a well prepared candidate from a poorly prepared one. A well prepared candidate can demonstrate good overall understanding of the industry. Select two or more of the books on the comprehensive reading list as a good starting point for your career in sales. *Please refer to the end of this section for a comprehensive reading list.*

Additional Interview Preparation Information

The Salary Question

Candidates are often asked questions about their salary requirements. This question is used to screen a candidate out if the position pays less than their target. As a candidate, you do not want to price yourself out of the position, nor do you want to cut yourself short.

Keys to Success

- Know the salary range that Orion has provided. Tell the interviewer you are comfortable in that range.
- If asked again, focus on the overall opportunity. While money is important, you are more interested in the ability to grow and learn with their company.

- If pressed again, we recommend providing the employer a range. Start with the midpoint of the range provided by Orion. End with a salary number just above their stated high end. This bracket of the range will neither price you out nor sell you short.

Sample Questions to Ask an Employer

As mentioned previously, a sign that an interview is starting to wrap up is when the employer asks if you have any questions. This is a critical part of the interview for you to both convey your interest in the company and the position through asking intelligent, research based questions, but also for you to start learning more about the company in order to evaluate them.

We recommend that you have a core group of questions that you are prepared to ask any company, but we also recommend doing the research to have questions that are of a specific and current nature. You can utilize resources such as Google News to find current events information on a company.

Remember, a Lack of Questions = Lack of Interest.

General Questions

- What are you looking for in an employee for this position?
- What traits or skill sets are most important in this role?
- Is this position newly created or is it a back-fill position?
- How did the person do that was in this position before me?
- What mistakes are common to someone new to this position?
- What is unique about the product that we make in comparison to the competition?
- What do you see as the biggest challenge that I would face as a new employee?
- How is an employee evaluated and how often is this done?
- Has your company hired military before? What have been the results?
- Is there anything about my background or qualifications that you have questions or concerns about in terms of being a good fit for this position?
- What is the next step in the interview process?

Leadership Position Questions

- As you look at the plant's workforce, what area(s) require the most attention right now (quality, quantity, people, maintenance, scheduling, safety)?
- Has anyone tried any leadership techniques or tactics that have not worked well?
- How does this workforce like to be motivated in general? What has worked in the past in your plant?
- How would you characterize the management-employee relationship in the plant?
- How did you (the interviewer) get started with the company? What has been your experience?

- What is the current ranking of the territory? What is the growth potential of this territory? What is your market share in this territory / industry?
- I understand that the product's main competitors are _____. Who will be my main competition in this territory? Which products are the market leaders in this territory?
- Where do you expect me to take the territory in my first year?
- What can I do to better prepare myself before I come to work?
- Have you ever been aggressive to the point where you pushed someone too far?
- Are there any particular books or magazines that you recommend that I read to further prepare myself?
- How do our sales representatives differentiate our products from the competition?
- What traits or skill sets are most important?
- How did you (the interviewer) get started with the company? What has been your experience?
- I have read that (product) is pursuing an indication in _____. How do you expect that will impact market share?
- I have read that the company has been investing in research and development. Can you tell me if the company has any new products in the pipeline?

The Close

As discussed previously, the close is asking for some form of commitment from your customer, in this case, the employer. This is absolutely essential in an interview. Remember to focus on the key points below when writing out and practicing your close.

Thanking the interviewer for their time

Selling yourself and recapping how you fit the role

Asking for what you want

Thank You Notes

After every interview, successful or not, you should send a thank you note. This simple step can keep you in the running, reinvigorate your interview process, or simply develop a good line of communication with a professional you may work with in the future. Most experts agree that it is a great idea to send a Thank You of some kind to the interviewer for any interview that you have. Only about 10% of all people who are interviewing take the time to thank the interviewer, which makes sending the Thank You a great way to stand out to potential employers.

We suggest that you send an email version of a thank you note shortly after your interview, possibly even the same day. It may also make sense to send a hand written note that really shows your interest in the role. If you choose to send a paper thank you note, it will serve as a reminder of you and the interview a few days after the interview. It will also stand out to the interviewer. Either way, ensure that you are sending your Thank You no later than the day following the interview. We also recommend that you send a separate and unique message to each interviewer if you interviewed with more than one person at a time.

Keys to Success

Treat your thank you note much like your close. Thank them for their time, recap your fit, and ask for what you want.

Go the extra mile. Purchase nice thank you cards. They can make a difference.

Send an email and a hard copy.

Example of a handwritten Thank You note:

Dear David,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to interview for the maintenance technician position. I enjoyed the time spent learning about your company. As I stated in the interview, my experience troubleshooting, maintaining, and repairing prime power equipment in the Navy, make me a great fit for the position. Thank you again, and I look forward to hearing from you about a date when I could schedule my second interview!

Sincerely,
John Smith

Example of a Thank You email:

Dear David,

I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to interview for the maintenance technician position with your company. I enjoyed meeting you and finding out more about your company and this opportunity.

My experience at maintaining power generation equipment in the Navy seems to match the needs of your opportunity. I would enjoy the opportunity to bring my skills and experience to a position such as the one your company is offering. I did not have a chance to mention experience on the equipment controls, which I feel would be applicable to this multi-craft role. I am confident that my education, experience, and interests make me a perfect fit for the opportunity.

I am convinced that I want to become a member of your team. I realize your time is valuable and I want to thank you again for meeting with me. I look forward to hearing from you about a date when I could schedule my second interview!

Sincerely,

John Smith
(555) 555-5555
John.smith@email.com

Recommended Reading List

Transition Prep Books

- Interviewing Handbook for Military Leaders (Paul Kreider)
- Military-to-Civilian Transition Guide (Carl S. Savino)
- What Color is Your Parachute? 2012 (Richard N. Bolles)

Business Books

- Built to Last (Jim Collins)
- Good to Great (Jim Collins)

Leadership Books

- Bringing out the Best in People (Aubrey C. Daniels)
- Management Strategies for the 21st Century (Peter F. Drucker)
- Take Command (Kelly Perdue)

Interview Preparation Books

- Interviewing Handbook for Military Leaders (Paul Kreider)
- Knock Em' Dead 2012 (Martin Yate)
- Now, Discover your Strengths (Marcus Buckingham)

Sales Books

- Ziglar on Selling (Zig Ziglar)
- Conceptual Selling (Heiman)

Manufacturing/Engineering Books

- World Class Manufacturing (Schonberger)

Monthly Periodicals

- *Fortune*
- *Wall Street Journal*