

Interview Techniques for Aspiring OPMs

OPM PROSPECT Course
24 July 2007

Overview

- ▶ Self-assessment/Career Planning
- ▶ Resume
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Interview Preparation
- ▶ Actual Interview

Self-Assessment

- ▶ Plan your career
- ▶ Know your limits of mobility
- ▶ Have a mentor
- ▶ Develop yourself – don't wait for the organization to do it for you
- ▶ Know what experience, training, and development you'll need for the next job on your wish list
- ▶ Use electronic job search tools (i.e. www.usajobs.com)

Resume

- ▶ Always assure your resume is up-to-date
- ▶ Remember that this may be all that some panel members know about you
- ▶ Now is not the time for modesty
- ▶ Under NSPS you no longer have to be at the next lower GS level to qualify!

Technical vs. Leadership

- ▶ Lower level positions require primarily technical skills
- ▶ The higher you go in any organization the less technical and more managerial the skills required
- ▶ At some point you will encounter few technical questions

Research

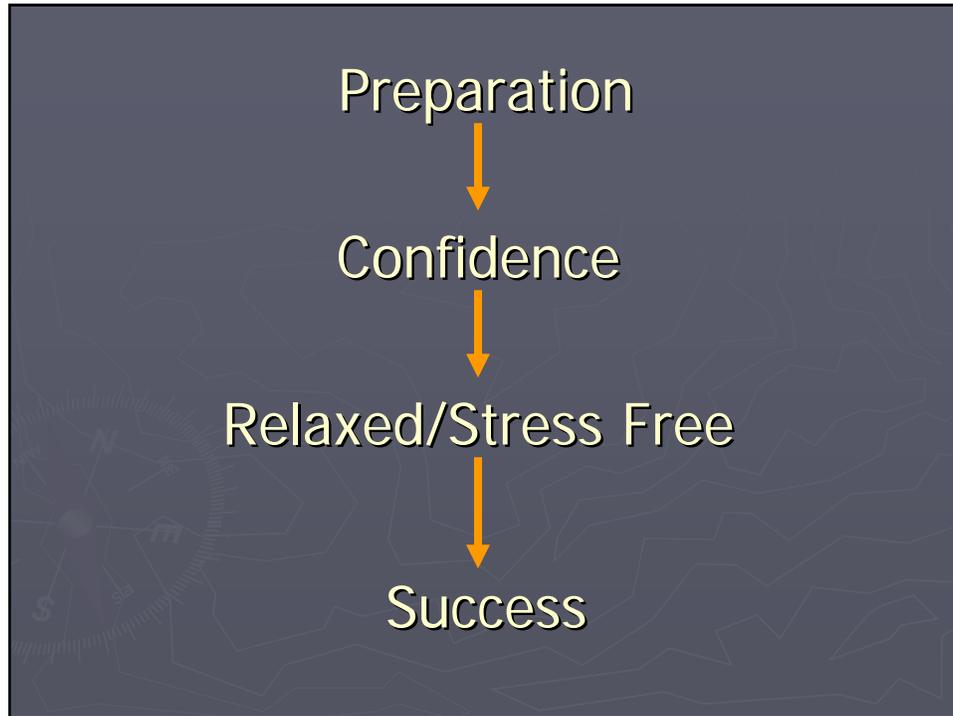
- ▶ Find out as much about the job as you can
 - Organizational structure
 - Personnel – supervisor, peers, subordinates
 - Team or cooperating organizations
 - Mission
 - Facilities
 - Budget
 - Current and future challenges
- ▶ Consider both technical and management aspects

Interview Preparation

- ▶ Try to put yourself in shoes of selecting official
- ▶ Write down all questions that you would ask a candidate if you were making the selection
- ▶ Try to think in terms of current issues, mission, future changes, processes, linkage to national and regional goals, etc.
- ▶ Ask others who may have had recent interviews
- ▶ Consider your strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ Prioritize draft questions and write your answers
- ▶ Use examples as appropriate and try to answer each question in no more than 3 minutes (there are often time limits)

Your Strengths

- ▶ Consider your strengths (4-6) that make you the best candidate or set you apart (i.e. leadership, communications, diverse background, technical proficiency, etc.)
- ▶ When appropriate work these into specific answers
- ▶ Use these if you “draw a blank”
- ▶ Utilize these in your closing statement



The Interview

- ▶ Dress professionally (suits for all and ties for men)
- ▶ Arrive at least 15 minutes early
 - In some cases you will actually be provided the questions for review prior to the interview
- ▶ Follow the lead of the panel chair regarding introductions
- ▶ Maintain eye contact with all panel members
- ▶ Appropriate posture (body language speaks volumes)
- ▶ Be concise and know when to bring answer to a close (rambling is the kiss of death)

Leadership Question

- ▶ Think about topics from LEAD or other leadership training
- ▶ Consider the difference between management and leadership
- ▶ What experiences and training have made you a good leader?
- ▶ Consider the role of communication
- ▶ Consider teambuilding techniques

Will you accept this job?

- ▶ Normally the only acceptable answer is "yes"
- ▶ Don't accept the interview if you can't say yes
- ▶ Avoid "I'm not sure" or "I'll have to get back to you"
- ▶ Don't get cute and say, "When do I start?"

Final Question

- ▶ Final question is normally, "Do you have any questions or final comments?"
- ▶ Avoid responses like, "Yes, I really don't know very much about your organization, can you tell me where your problems lie?"
- ▶ Acceptable response, "No, but I would like to make a closing statement."

Closing Statement

- ▶ Take one to two minutes
- ▶ Review your strengths
- ▶ What sets you apart from the rest of the candidates
- ▶ Why should they select you
- ▶ Remember this is the last thing the panel will hear you say
- ▶ Thank panel for the opportunity and say goodbye

Questions?