



## Episode 60: Tips to Shine in a Job Interview

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today's episode is for my job seekers out there. My goal today is to help you feel confident, ready, and excited for your next interview.

Because, as we know, interviews can be stressful. The focus is on you, and you might only have 30 minutes to tell people about your experience and strengths. Virtual interviews can be even harder, as you can only see people's faces and none of their body language.

Clients tell me about their past negative experiences being interviewed. I hear about being a finalist multiple times, only to have the job offered to the other candidate. I hear about interviewers who were in bad moods or who seemed to have already made their mind and are hiring someone else.

Personally, I still cringe when I think about one of the interviews I had for my psychiatry residency program years ago. The interviewer asked me what questions I had, and my nervous mind went blank. I felt the interviewer quickly lose interest, and I was not offered a spot at that program.

Today, I know better and I'm much more prepared for important conversations. That's what I want for you: to feel confident, clear, and prepared these important conversations.

So, grab some paper and buckle in. We're going to talk through a number of ways for you to prepare for interviews, so that you can shine and show them your awesomeness.

We start by remembering what's in your control. In an interview, here are the things in your control: your words, tone, and body language. That includes your facial expressions, posture, the phrases and descriptors you use to tell them about you, and the questions you ask.

So many things! We're going to focus on what is in your control. Because when you maximize your preparation and presence, you'll know that you put your best foot forward.

Preparation is key before your interview. If there's any way for you to get background information about the organization, group, and people you'll be talking with, do it. Ask the people in your network, look up the interviewers on LinkedIn, Google the company.

Because when they ask you, Why them? You'll want to have a reason that shows you did your homework.

One side note about this – when I ask clients the reason they want a job, they sometimes talk about things like passion and purpose. “It's purposeful for me to do this work,” they might say. That's great, and please share another reason in the interview.

Instead of saying what you're passionate about, please shift your answer to focus on the company. Tell them how you can help them. Show that you're hearing their needs and let them know how your experience will contribute to their success.

Here's the big coaching idea we're leaning into: you get to tell people the conclusions you want them to draw about you. An interview is an opportunity for people to hear about what you've done. It's also an opportunity for them to learn about you as a leader and professional. To hear your point of view about things like building teams, working cross functionally, and bouncing back from failure.

You get to share with them your approach and perspective, in other words, your leadership beliefs. Your leadership beliefs are things you know to be true given your perspective and experience. Sharing your leadership beliefs lets others into your thinking. They get to see what you're committed to, how you see the world, and the values you bring to work.

Before an interview, take some time to crystallize and practice saying out loud some of your leadership beliefs.

For example, how would you fill in the rest of these sentences?

Successful cross-functional collaboration takes.....what?

When people feel empowered, they..... what?

When leading a team through change, it's important to....what?

For example, one of my clients completed the last leadership belief example like this: When leading a team through change, it's important to communicate the plan often and express appreciation.

Sharing your leadership beliefs in an interview gives you a competitive edge. It conveys to the interviewer that you have a point of view, you understand what it takes to be a leader – in other words, you've got this.

During the interview, it often works well to share a leadership belief as a headline to a story or example. For instance, let's say you're asked about a time when you navigated change. Before diving into the specific time, start with a big leadership belief about navigating change. Then dive into your example.

Speaking of examples – or as we call them in coaching, share stories – make sure to prepare a few of these ahead of time. Your stories should highlight both the things you've done as well as the qualities you're known for. In general, I suggest coming up with about 5-7 different share stories.

To choose appropriate share stories, make sure to review the job description. What do they say is needed for success in this role? Creating a vision? If so, make sure you have a story about a time you created and executed an exciting vision. Do they want someone who is agile and flexible? If yes, make sure you have a story about when you leaned into these qualities.

Share stories usually follow a standard format.

They start with the problem, or situation. What was happening? What was the opportunity or gap?

After that, you share what you did. The actions you took, both individually and also as a team or group.

Then, you share the result or outcome. If there's any way to quantify this, please do. How much money was made? How quickly was it accomplished? How many people benefitted?

After the outcome, there's one more part to share. This is the "so what?" piece. Tell them the reason you're sharing this story. What's the conclusion you want them to draw from this story? You might say something like, "This means that I would dive right into the role and start building relationships with key people." Or whatever you want them to know about what it means they could expect from you.

In addition to preparing your share stories, please prepare questions you have for the interviewer. Think about what you really want to know and create a list of open-ended questions. Here are a few examples of things you might be curious and ask about:

What do you like best about the culture?

How do people reach consensus when there are multiple opinions?

What learning opportunities are there for people at this level?

OK, so far, we've focused on preparing what we say: the stories we share and the questions we ask. As you practice, please make sure to practice by talking out loud. Everything sounds different in our heads as compared to when we say them out loud. Practice requires talking out loud.

In addition to preparing what you say, you'll want to prepare your energy. How we show up – the energy we bring—matters. People will respond best to your energy of enthusiasm, interest, and confidence. There are a few ways to prepare your energy: you can power pose, listen to music that boosts your confidence, or move your body to get your energy up. I also recommend choosing a 3-word intention describing how you want to show up and then setting that intention in your body.

Speaking of your body, make sure to practice confident body language. If the interview is virtual, do you want to sit or stand? If you sit, are you sitting all the way back in the chair or at the edge? Try out different options so that you can find the position that feels most comfortable, confident, and grounded.

The other benefit of a virtual interview is that you can put notes and images behind your computer screen to remind you what you want to remember. Put on our wall the phrases you want to say, the questions you want to ask, and a picture of something that makes you smile. Prepare your space just as you prepare your talking points.

Lastly, please remember this one big no-no. No badmouthing anyone or any company. Even if you all have the same point of view, don't do it. Negative talk equals negative energy, and negative energy undermines your presence.

And you want presence that conveys trustworthiness and integrity. An interview is an opportunity to verbalize your inner values, strengths, and purpose. It's your time to shine. Please give yourself permission to share what you've achieved, how you approach situational leadership, and all of the expertise and qualities they'll get when they hire you. You get to bring your best self.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you would like help with interview preparation, please reach out. Email me at [deb@debelbaum.com](mailto:deb@debelbaum.com) or go to my website [debelbaum.com](http://debelbaum.com) to schedule a consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!