

# How to Prepare for Your Next Job Interview – And Stand Out for the Right Reasons

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You've been invited to a job interview. Congratulations – your profile stood out, and now it's your chance to convince the employer that you are not only qualified, but the right fit for the role. Whether you're aiming for a leadership position, a step into a new industry, or a broader international scope, the job interview is a key milestone in your career journey.

But how do you prepare effectively, especially when you want to make a lasting impression and stand out from other candidates?

In my role as HR Consultant at Kienbaum and as a career partner within the Swiss MBAs community, I've accompanied many professionals through critical career transitions. This guide brings together practical advice and strategic insights to help you navigate your next interview with clarity and confidence.

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## 1. Tell Me About Yourself – Crafting a Compelling Introduction

Usually, the interview starts with a round of introductions. The first few minutes already set the tone for the conversation – and this is your opportunity to make a strong impression. Don't just replicate your CV, instead, guide your listener through your professional journey with a clear narrative. Start by highlighting what originally drew you into your field. Then, focus on two or three key experiences that show how your skills have evolved and how you've made an impact. If you've changed industries, taken on larger responsibilities, or been headhunted, mention this to illustrate your ambition and credibility.

Above all, make connections to the role you're interviewing for. For example, you might say that in your last position, you led strategic projects in M&A, which is a core responsibility in this new role. Or that you've worked extensively in regulated environments, which aligns with the company's industry.

Keep this introduction to around **five** minutes. If the interviewer wants to know more, they will ask.

And don't assume you're a natural – you need to practise your introduction! Say it out loud, in front of the mirror, or test it on a friend or partner.

## 2. Why This Company? Show That You've Done Your Homework

Another frequently asked question is why you're interested in this particular company. Here, your answer should go beyond "I've heard great things" or "It's a leader in the market." This is where your preparation comes in.

Start by researching the company's position in the industry – who are its main competitors nationally and internationally, what kinds of clients does it serve, and who are its suppliers or key partners? Understanding this ecosystem helps you speak at eye level with the interviewer.

Next, look at its core products and services. What innovations have they launched recently? Have they expanded into new markets? How are they positioning themselves?

Financial performance also provides valuable insights. Is the company growing, restructuring, or investing in new areas? This can signal strategic directions and challenges. Reading annual reports, investor presentations, or business articles can be very helpful here – if they are publicly available.

Don't forget to learn about the leadership team and corporate culture. How does the management communicate its vision? What values are emphasized?

Once you've gathered this information, connect the dots to your own motivation. Perhaps you admire how the company has driven sustainability in its supply chain, and you've worked on similar initiatives. Or maybe their transformation journey aligns with your experience in change management. The key is to be specific and show that your interest is authentic and well-informed.

### **3. Why Do You Want to Leave Your Current Role? Frame It Strategically**

Interviewers always want to understand your motivation, but they're also listening for red flags. Saying "I'm just ready for a change" is vague. Complaining about your current employer can also backfire.

Instead, focus on what's pulling you toward the new opportunity, rather than what's pushing you away. You might explain that after several years in your current role, there's limited room for further growth. Or that the strategic direction of the company has shifted in a way that no longer aligns with your professional values – and then clearly explain why. Be honest, but keep the tone constructive and future-oriented.

Ultimately, your answer should reflect ambition, clarity, and alignment with the new role.



#### **4. What Are Your Salary Expectations? Be Prepared, Not Defensive**

Some interviewers ask early, others don't. Personally, I always ask in the first conversation – because if our expectations aren't aligned, we can save everyone time. So being prepared will help you handle this question with confidence.

Start by researching typical salary ranges for similar roles in your industry and region. Use platforms, ask trusted colleagues or known headhunters. Also think about your total compensation: base salary, bonuses, pension contributions, benefits, and in some cases, equity or other incentives.

If you're asked, it's also completely fine to respond with a question, such as: "As a professional company, I assume you work with salary bands. Could you share the relevant range, so I can assess if I fit". If the person does not wish to reveal the band yet, you can share a range yourself: "Based on my experience and market data, I would expect a total compensation package in the range of CHF 160'000 to 180'000."

Stay open, but know your minimum – and be ready to explain what value you bring in return.



## 5. Do You Have Any Questions? Ask Smart Ones That Make You Memorable

At the end of the interview, many candidates ask the same standard questions – about the team structure, onboarding process, or office policy. There's nothing wrong with that, but this is also your chance to leave a lasting impression.

Instead of generic questions, ask ones that show strategic thinking and a genuine interest in the business. For example:

- "If someone succeeds here in their first year, what are they doing differently than others?"
- "How does the leadership team define success for this position?"
- "What recent changes in the market have had the biggest impact on your strategy?"
- "Can you describe the culture of feedback and development in the team?"
- "What's something you personally enjoy about working here that surprised you?"

These questions shift the conversation to a higher level and position you as someone who thinks ahead.

## 6. Final Thoughts

A job interview is not just about answering questions – it's about building a connection, telling a clear story, and showing that you've done the work to understand the company and the role. With thoughtful preparation and a strategic mindset, you'll not only feel more confident – you'll also significantly increase your chances of success.

I wish you all the best for your next interview – and if you'd like support in preparing for it, feel free to get in touch.

### **About the Author**

*Fabienne Bezemer has over 9 years of experience in HR consulting, with a strong focus on executive search and recruiting, as well as expertise in performance management and compensation management. Her professional background also includes board advisory services, assessments, change management, and corporate transformation. Fabienne is committed to driving organizational success by identifying top leadership talent and aligning HR strategies with business objectives. Fabienne is also leading the Executive Search team at Kienbaum Switzerland.*

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