

Society of Women Engineers | Interview Excellence

Hello from SWE headquarters. My name is Alysoun Park and I use she/her pronouns. Thank you for joining us for today's webinar "Interview Excellence-- The Art of Self-Presentation" with Glekeria Kalathas. She also goes by GK. This is our first Listen and Learn Lecture in our Countdown to Conference Series. Sessions in this series were handpicked for the Advance Learning Center during the WE25 Call for Participation process. Some practical matters before we get started.

We will take questions at the end with our speaker. So if you have a question during this live session, please type it in the Q&A window at any point during the presentation. And we'll get that asked for you towards the end. We also have closed captioning available. You can turn that on or off by clicking on the Closed Caption button that appears below and to the right of your screen. This session is recorded. And the on-demand version of today's presentation will be made available in the Advance Learning Center within 48 hours.

SWE strives to create programming that suits your needs. And one way we do that is with your feedback. So please take a moment afterwards to complete the feedback survey. The survey can be found towards the bottom of this event's course page on the Advance Learning Center. And I will also drop that survey link in the chat. Now, it is my pleasure to introduce our speaker, GK.

Thank you, Alysoun, and good morning, depending on where you are currently residing, which I would love to hear. So in the chat message, if you guys can put in where you're currently dialing in from, that would be great. Let me go ahead and share my screen and get us started. Kicking us off with who I am and why am I talking to you this morning, as Alysoun had mentioned, my name is Glekeria Kalathas, but everyone calls me GK for short.

I am a first generation and the only one in my immediate family to graduate from a four-year school. So my beautiful parents, which I have showcased on the slide, are very, very proud. And it means the world to me. I graduated from Shippensburg University as a marketing major. And coming out of school, I wasn't entirely sure, like most, what I wanted to do.

But one thing I knew for sure is I loved socializing. So I knew I wanted to do something where I was talking to people, customer service, client-facing. And I knew I wanted an opportunity that gave me development to grow my career. But also financial stability was very important to me, like most of you, I'm assuming. I do want to note too, because I think this is important, it's important to truly reflect and think about what is important to you, what's your deciding factors on choosing an opportunity or an employer.

Don't waver on your non-negotiables, but also know which aspects you are willing to waver on. It's important to feel challenged and fulfilled in your career, but not overly stressed every day. Think about how much time you spend at work. So think about what's going to be the best type of work for you, the best type of environment, the team and logistics for you to be able to thrive in.

So going back, I served and bartended through school. And Aerotek was actually some of my regular customers. So when I was getting ready to graduate, I reached out to them, went through the interview process. And after several rounds of interviews, I was offered an opportunity to become an industrial recruiter. So I started in July of 2014.

I recruited in the production and manufacturing space, where I hired 375 employees for roughly about 30 of our clients, different companies. A year later, I was promoted to an on-premise manager, where an opportunity to manage one of our large accounts, develop some of our on-premise recruiters, and build strong relationships with my client. I always had an interest in talent acquisition. And I truly believed in the company after working here for two years.

So I definitely kept an eye out on internal opportunities within the talent acquisition team. Luckily for me, there was a posting that came up. And it was to be an internal recruiter for the offices in DC, Maryland, and Virginia. So I definitely jumped at the opportunity, interviewed, and was offered that position in June of 2016. Three years later, I was promoted into a senior internal recruiter for our strategic recruiting centers, which ran from East Coast to West Coast.

So I was able to manage a team of recruiters. And then I also still supported several locations myself with hiring internally for our company. One year later, I moved over, similar role, but supported our northeast operation. So I ended up covering eight states. I averaged about 1,000 interviews a year. And I hired roughly 550 internal people over the course of five years.

In November of 2021, I was promoted to a talent acquisition manager, focused on developing our TA team, our talent acquisition strategy on attracting and retaining our top talent in our US operations. And then in early 2024, I was promoted to a senior talent acquisition manager, now supporting Canada as well. So my team supports all of our internal hiring efforts, over 150 locations. And we typically, on average, hire anywhere from 700 to 1,000 internal employees a year.

I've talked to a lot of entry-level professionals over the course of my past 11 years who need advice on building their professional brand or tips on interviewing, even resume tips often. Some of my closest friends reach out to me and they're like, can you take a look at my resume? Do you have any tips for this interview? So my hope is to give you guys enough insight today that you all have something to take away with you.

So kicking us off, what will I be covering today? Here's a quick snapshot. I want to go over branding yourself and building your LinkedIn presence, preparing for and winning the interview, and then following up and communicating post interview. Branding yourself, why is it important? Building your LinkedIn presence is not just about completing your profile. It's about strategically positioning yourself to be noticed by hiring managers and recruiters.

Most of this is focused on LinkedIn. So why LinkedIn? LinkedIn is actually the world's largest professional networking platform with over 1 billion users. Recruiters and employers actively searching for talent on LinkedIn, approximately 77% of recruiters and 72% of HR and staffing professionals utilize LinkedIn for their hiring efforts. It's your digital first impression.

So what's your goal? You want to build credibility, showcase your expertise, and stand out in your industry while being authentic. Something you should constantly be thinking about as you're setting up your LinkedIn or making edits or even when you're posting is, what do you want to be known for? So let's deep dive into how to get started.

So what is a LinkedIn All Star? And why is it important? The more sections and content on your LinkedIn profile, the more likely you are to be awarded All Star status from LinkedIn. It is a real thing. This gives you more access to other profiles and makes your profile more visible to other users. More networks, more employers can see your page.

So how do you achieve it? First, this is also hyperlinked. So if you want to go back to the PowerPoint later, you can look at the hyperlinks and click on them as well. You want to customize your URL link. I took a little screenshot over here to put on the slides, just to be able to give you some guides later on, like I mentioned.

Make your URL simple but easy to find. And include it in your resume, include it on your email signature, or even in your business cards, if that's not a thing of the past yet. Make sure to have a professional headshot or photo on your page of just you. LinkedIn stats tell us that a profile can get up to 21 more views if it includes a photo, so be seen. Make sure to include a banner to reflect your industry or personal brand.

And don't forget to include your industry and location. Location is very important when seeking opportunities. If you are looking and open to relocating, include that in your profile. Because ultimately, if you're applying for a position and a recruiter sees that you're not in the location, they might overlook you. So make sure that you're putting in there that you're open to relocation or specific locations that you're looking at as well.

I want to deep dive a little bit more into the Headline and the About You sections. Think of this as your own personal billboard. Headline is positioned right below your name on your LinkedIn profile. It's the first thing that someone reads. It gives you 120 characters to be creative and go beyond just your job title. Show your value and stand out.

For example, "Passionate Mechanical Engineering Recent Graduate. Specializing in Engineering Systems and Automotive Engineering. I craft sustainable solutions for real-world problems. Previously-- Intern at Tesla." This showcases niche skills, names specializations, defines the mission, and capitalizes on past associations like Tesla. The About You section gives you the ability to expand on your headline with 2,000 characters.

Use this as a storytelling format-- who you are, what you do, why it matters, and the value that you bring. For example, "My journey as a mechanical engineer began with a fascination for complex systems and the desire to improve them. I've spent the last 10 years honing my skills and leading teams to success. In my most recent project at General Electric, I was instrumental in redesigning the manufacturing process of a key product line, reducing production costs by 18%. Being part of the aerospace industry, I've had the privilege of working on several groundbreaking projects.

My proudest achievement was designing a fuel-efficient engine that reduced fuel consumption by 15%, contributing substantially to the sustainability goals of our company. I consider myself a lifelong learner. I constantly seek out opportunities to stay updated in my field and improve my skills. I am a certified Six Sigma Black Belt and have used these principles to optimize various processes in my previous roles. In my free time, I mentor young engineers and guide them in their career path. I believe in giving back to the community and helping others grow."

Notice a couple of things. She highlighted specialized skills, used key terms like CAD or project management, showcased quantified achievements like reduction in cost by 15%, stated her passion and focus area, and demonstrated problem solving abilities. If you're a recent graduate, focus on academic projects, relevant internships, and enthusiasm for specific technologies or industries. OK, just a couple more things to hit on before we get into the good stuff.

Experience and skills-- detail your professional experiences, focusing on achievements and value you added in each specific role. Be sure to include keywords for positions you are interested in or systems you've utilized. Because algorithms pull these terms when hiring managers are searching for candidates. So you want to make sure that you stand out. Input results-oriented bullet points, just as we did with the About You section.

Use metrics where applicable. And list top skills endorsed by your peers. Remember, job titles and descriptions may be similar company to company, so it might be easy to copy and paste the job description in. But what you do in each specific role is vastly different, so customize to your accomplishments and strengths specifically.

So now our LinkedIn is set up. And you're ready to start interacting. Networking is very important as a working professional. This gives you an opportunity to gain mentors and eventually mentor others, streamline industry knowledge, and stay relevant. Start with connections you know, like current or former colleagues, or networks you have met in the past through your education or experience.

Once you get comfortable, cast a broader net. Start networking with professionals in the industry you are pursuing. Focus on connecting with people who align with your professional goals and interests. Be intentional. A best practice is to send a personalized message when you're trying to connect with someone new. It leaves a better impression.

Also, join industry-specific groups to expand your network. Just start with one or two. Don't go crazy. It gives you an opportunity to meet new people virtually and share ideas and knowledge. Networking is about mutual exchange, so engage thoughtfully with your connections and contribute to the conversation. It's a two-way street. And don't just broadcast.

Actively participate in discussions by commenting on posts and joining relevant groups. Recommendations and endorsements is a key to making your profile stand out and showcase employers that others have approved of your work in the past. It demonstrates your value in the marketplace. Typically, you can increase your chances of getting others to write recommendations for you by writing a recommendation for them first. So make sure you're out there waiting for others as well.

Content is Queen. First step is to post. Second step is to stay active, which is very, very hard. So Alysoun, I would like to launch the first poll, please, so we can get a pulse check. How often are you currently posting content on LinkedIn? I'll give you guys a couple seconds/minute to respond to that.

We almost have everyone's input in, so I'll just give it a couple more seconds.

OK, perfect. Thank you.

All righty. I'm just going to end the poll and share the results now.

Awesome, thanks. Never, I know. It's very common to see that. And obviously, that's insightful. Every day I would definitely say is a bit much. But I do think it's important to try to do it weekly, if possible. So I do enjoy the insight on that for sure.

So I am going to share a couple pointers on what to post to keep your audience engaged. You want to share a variety of content, which could include industry trends or news, professional tips, personal success stories, lessons learned, or even a list of resources that have helped you. I personally love to highlight my peers and partners too, show them some love and appreciation.

It's important to engage with others. So when you're commenting on posts or reposting, make sure you're sharing your thoughts, which builds visibility. Share your authentic perspective and lessons learned to connect with others on a more personal level. This also demonstrates your expertise and positions you as a knowledgeable resource in your field.

One thing I've learned, and I've also seen a lot of stats on this too, make sure you're using media. So videos or visuals, it stands out and engages more attention. Aim for consistency, like I mentioned, not volume. So if you can post once a week, that is perfect. I know it's hard. Our lives are busy, but it definitely helps others. And it also gives you more visibility and builds your credibility.

One thing I would advise not doing is treating LinkedIn like other social media and being too casual. You want to still show your personality without oversharing. I always laugh because whenever I first started posting on LinkedIn, I would say, oh, I have 5,000 friends on LinkedIn. And people are like, those aren't your friends. Those are connections on LinkedIn.

I do look at them as friends. I'm like, if you're on LinkedIn, you're definitely my friend. So I do share, obviously, highlights. I love to share insight within the industry that I support as well. And I do think it's an opportunity to give others who are early on in their careers an opportunity to learn from my own experience as well.

So now you're a LinkedIn All Star. You're getting more connections and messages. And you've connected with individuals from your dream company. And you landed an interview. Let's talk about how you should prepare for the interview. Alysoun, let's launch poll number 2 to gauge our audience here. I'll give you a couple minutes. And I also want to remind everyone, if you have questions, please make sure you're putting them in the Q&A tab so Alysoun can read them off at the end of our session.

How do you prepare for an interview? Do you research the company? Do you re-review the job description? Do you to test drive to the location? Do you tag a friend to practice mock interview questions?

We still have some answers coming in, so I'll just give it a couple more seconds.

OK, thank you.

OK, I'm going to end it now.

I am happy to see 58% said, all of the above minus spiral. So yes, you should be doing all of the above. But we don't want to be spiraling. And remember, nerves are totally normal. It means you care. But let's prepare and be confident to lessen those nerves.

So preparing for the interview-- I used to put the quote on the slide in my interview prep emails to candidates. "Success is where preparation and opportunity meet." Notice the action being taken in all of the steps on the slide, which we'll come back to as well. But you want to reflect on your past experiences. This will help you be able to pull stories to respond in the STAR format whenever you're being asked a behavioral interview question.

You want to research the company, their mission, their values, anything in the recent news about them, and their reviews. I also would suggest looking at the interviewer. So look them up on LinkedIn. Understand their role and experience. And it also gives you an opportunity to craft questions at the end of the interview, tailored to them.

Review the job description, making sure that you're matching your skills to their needs. This will help you tie it together in the interview as well. You want to check out the commute time. Make sure to ask about the parking, access to the building, so you're not flustered the day of, right before. That's not the way you want to go into an interview.

Also, be sure to ask about the structure of the interview so you're not thrown off. Obviously, if it's a panel interview, you want to know that ahead of time versus you think it's a one-on-one interview, you walk into a conference room and there's three people on the other side. You just want to make sure you're as prepared as possible in setting the expectation so that you're not flustered.

Lastly, well, one of my favorite parts, make sure you plan your outfit. Be sure it's professional, but make sure you're confident in what you're wearing. Lastly, get in the right mindset. Mindset is everything. Mentally prepare for the interview by focusing on your confidence. Remember that you were asked to interview because of your experience, your skills, your accomplishments.

Listen to your favorite pump-me-up song. Do jumping jacks, meditate, read encouraging quotes-- do whatever you need to to calm your nerves beforehand. Last poll for you guys. Alysoun, can you launch poll number 3? Which is, if you had to choose a pump-up-song prior to walking into the interview, what would it be?

This is my way to calm nerves. Give you a couple more seconds.

"Girl on Fire," a little Alicia Keys coming in for the win. I am a little sad because "Ice Ice Baby" is my song, and only 2% voted for that. Totally fair, but I do love that song. And I think it's a pump-me-up song. I love that. And I would definitely suggest finding what works for you. Even this morning, coming in, I knew I had this presentation today. I wanted to do well for all of you guys. I listened to "Ice Ice Baby" on the way in. We're ready for the behavioral interview.

What is behavioral interviewing? Behavioral interviewing is a technique used by employers to learn about your past behavior in particular situations, typically challenging situations. So why do employers ask these types of questions? Past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior. It helps assess accuracy and keeps impartiality intact due to legal credibility in determining the right fit candidate. According to *Forbes*, there is a census that hiring managers only have three questions for applicants-- if you're capable of doing the job, if you will enjoy the job, and if you will fit into the corporate culture.

I did want to give a little insight into commonly asked questions. Employers do look for skills, yes, but they also look for confidence, communication, attitude, and professionalism. It's easy to talk about your experience or systems that you used. The more difficult part of the interview is the behavioral interview questions, because you never know what they're going to ask. When you're responding to behavioral interview questions, you want to make sure that you're responding in the STAR format.

I'm sure many of you have seen this before. If you have, give me a thumbs up in the chat. I see a lot of thumbs. Awesome. So when you're responding in the STAR format, you remember that you want to tell a story, an honest story, but one specific situation. So you start with a situation and set the scene. You move into the task, what was required.

So describe the purpose, the action, so explain what you did, and then the result, the outcome of your efforts. The most important piece to your response that hiring managers are looking for is the action. Remember when I mentioned verbs earlier on how you were preparing for the interview? This is what I mean. You will know if you're hitting the action by the verbs. It's a telling sign. So I reflected, I implemented, I demonstrated, I approached, I executed, et cetera.

You're going to notice by the verbs that you're using, if you're hitting on the action. And you want to listen to the question carefully and answer thoughtfully. So don't rush yourself. Remember to take a couple minutes to think through your response. And don't get flustered. We're all human. Be honest with your experiences and your responses.

It's an opportunity for those interviewing you to gauge your development or where you would need specific areas of development, and assess their team, who would be best to mentor you and develop you. So it's not like a catch you or anything like that. They are truly trying to assess your skills and development needed to be able to perform in the job and see success. Like I mentioned, commonly asked questions, tell me about a time you failed at something.

Explain a time you received constructive criticism. Describe a situation where you had to work with a difficult team member. Walk through an example of a time that you had a heavy workload. These are questions that you could easily think of responses for going into the interview. Because they may ask different questions, but they might be similar. So at least you would have examples off the top of your head in your back pocket to use.

So I would always think of specific examples for these questions. So then you can obviously tailor them to the questions that are being asked. Other common questions that aren't behavioral-based questions are, tell me about yourself. Obviously, with this one, I remember shadowing an interview one time and I was like, oh my gosh, if someone were to ask me that at 22, my life would have flashed before my eyes. Because I'm like, I don't know what you would want.

You want to keep it professional and concise and just make sure you have an elevator pitch for that question. Because that is one of the most asked interview questions. And you don't want to be flustered. But it's a great way for the interviewer to open it up and learn a little bit about you, get you talking, get you comfortable. So it's not a scary question by any means. Just make sure that you have a tailored response to that.

Why should we hire you? Highlight your unique strengths. And remember to tie back your skills to what was listed on the job description. What are your strengths and weaknesses? Be honest, but strategic. No one is perfect. And no one is expecting you to be. Own your opportunities for improvement. Show self-awareness. And make sure to emphasize how you're working on improving those opportunities. And show that you're coachable, that you've already heard the feedback and you're applying it.

So we answered the questions. And we're now closing. So you made it to the end of the interview. And now the tables have turned. You're the one asking the questions. So ask questions that matter to you. Show interest by asking things like, what does success look like in this role? How would you describe the company's culture?

How do you support employee development? What are the next steps in the hiring interview process? These responses will help you understand if the role is right for you. Remember when I mentioned reflection earlier? What type of manager, team, projects, environments, or work brought out the best in you? How do you learn best? Make sure the training provided matches your learning style.

I would suggest always closing out with, is there anything on my resume or from my responses I can elaborate on or provide clarity for you today? Thank them for their time and express your continued interest. And remember, send a thank-you follow-up email 24 hours after. It keeps the interview fresh in your mind and in their mind. You want to reiterate your interest and highlight one strong point to make it memorable.

Be patient, but follow up if you have not heard back within a week. If you decide that the role isn't for you after the interview, make sure you reach out and let them know that respectfully, you've decided to move in another direction. In this day and age, everything is documented. So the last thing you want is to not respond, not follow up when they're reaching out to you to schedule next steps.

So just make sure that you're communicating with them. Because in a future state, it might be one of your clients. It might be an opportunity that you go back to. And the last thing you want is for it to be documented that you didn't respond. Common mistakes to avoid is obviously lack of preparation, speaking negatively about past employers, overtalking or under communicating, not asking questions, and forgetting to follow up. So make sure you don't do any of those.

Closing us out, so takeaways. Your takeaways from today, I hope from this session, are your LinkedIn profile is your digital reputation. Strong personal brand equals more opportunities. That's jobs, that's partnerships, that's visibility. Not just when you are looking for a job, it opens doors at any given time. Be authentic, consistent, and intentional. Confidence equals preparation and practice.

And then call to action from today's session-- audit your profile today and regularly. The last thing you want is to be posting, so on and so forth, and it's years down the road and you haven't even updated your profile. So make sure that you're checking that regularly just to add achievements, add any trainings that you've completed, any education that you've added.

Just make sure it's up to date so that when recruiters are looking or hiring managers are looking at your profile, everything is right there for them. It makes it easy to be able to reach out to you and helps you understand if the opportunity that they have matches what you are able to provide. Define your personal brand statement and elevator pitch. Make sure that whenever an interviewer asks you, tell me about yourself, you have something ready to go.

Commit to engaging weekly on LinkedIn. And just remember, throughout your career search journey, just be yourself and tune out the noise. I was watching a show last weekend. And it said, keep the main thing the main thing. And that's truly what it is. Be yourself and showcase yourself and your achievements and your experience, but don't get overwhelmed. Tune out the noise. You have what it takes to be able to win that interview and gain the job of your dreams.

I will leave this up here. I know Alysoun will be taking over and asking some of the questions. But if you all have any questions at any given point, please feel free to reach out to me. I would be happy to respond. You can send me a LinkedIn message. I would say best way to get in touch with me on a quicker matter is by email. So I'm definitely here to guide or support you in any way I can.

Yes, thank you so much, GK, for that great presentation. I'm so excited to dive into some of these Q&A questions.

Perfect.

Just as a final reminder to everyone, it's really helpful for us to get your feedback on presentations such as this. So please fill out our feedback survey. I'm throwing that link into the chat. But if you have any more questions, even throughout the Q&A session, please just type them into the Q&A tab. But we already have so many good ones here, so I'm just going to start.

Perfect.

We have one here about towards the end of your presentation where you said follow-ups and thank you emails. In the case that you don't have the email address of your interviewers, how do you deal with that? How do you send a thank you or a follow-up?

If the interview is in person, I would always ask for a business card. I know now business cards are less and less. But everyone, they might have a mobile business card. So there is a way to obviously get their contact information. I would also say if someone else set the interview for you, like a recruiter, you could easily ask the recruiter for the contact information or send the email to the recruiter.

And they'll be able to forward it to the hiring manager, which honestly, a lot of recruiters love to do too. Because it showcases, hey, it's another opportunity for them to sell you to the company. You're following up. You pointed out a couple of things from the interview that really stood out to you. And they can make that connection for you and help drive the point as to why you are the best candidate for the role. So I would definitely do it that way. And least scenario is just reach out on LinkedIn.

Yeah. I feel like that makes sense. Nowadays too, if you just type in someone's name and LinkedIn--

You can find them.

Yes, definitely. Thank you so much. So another question about LinkedIn, do you think someone who is not actively searching for a job should be posting as often as someone who is searching for a job?

I do. Because I think it's always about branding yourself and your skills. Even for me, I'm constantly posting, because I do want to emphasize my team and obviously the industry and the company that I support. And I think it's important for others to be active, to be able to showcase that and help others too. But ultimately, if you all of a sudden start posting when you're looking for an opportunity, you just lost a lot of networks and partnerships that you could have gained along the way.

So I would say maybe you don't do it every week. Maybe you do it every other week or once a month because it's too much for you. But I do think it's important to continue to stay active to gain those partnerships, which helps from a growth perspective and development perspective. But then also that visibility, too, for when you do decide that you want to start looking for another opportunity.

Great. Thank you so much. So this is a question about the behavioral interview section that you were discussing. Someone asked, with the behavioral interviews that we have today, what are your thoughts that it might be a little bit biased toward a certain type of person, like a practiced speaker or an extrovert? And I guess the second part of that question would be, what are some tips you have for some people who are maybe more introverted?

No, definitely. I do think the question, there's always a reason for the question to tie into how that impacts in the role. If it's customer service facing, they're probably going to ask you something about a time that you had to deal with a challenging customer. Or sometimes it's dealing with a challenging partner. Because you're going to work with so many different people in the workplace.

I do think it's important to look at the commonly asked questions and think about those prior to going into the interview so that you have those responses in your back pocket. And it's kind of like your fall on. Like, hey, I have these. And it makes you more confident going into it so that you would be able to answer similar questions from those.

But I do think, take a minute, think about it. Because you also look at the opposite side. Someone that's extroverted, they could overtalk. Or if they're introverted, they could under talk. It goes both ways. But you just want to be concise and provide those examples to the hiring manager to showcase what you can do. But it's hard.

And I'll speak even to myself, anytime I obviously have been promoted, I had to interview. And I interview for a living, and I still get nervous. So it is normal to be nervous, no matter what your personality is. You just have to keep the main thing the main thing. Keep the main thing the main thing. And just focus on your response. And give as much detail as possible.

Great. And that makes sense too. I feel like I've definitely nervously overtalked in certain situations.

Yes.

So it's good to know that there are struggles on both sides.

Both sides.

So obviously we're speaking with the Society of Women Engineers. So there are times where people are maybe going out for roles that are more technical. But do you have any tips for someone who's going for a technical or experienced role? Like if they're asked to speak on performing work, business case and pitch, programming, how might someone prepare for something a little bit more specific?

I do think that-- and I know I mentioned this too in the presentation-- your education and the experiences that you have through your education, don't short sight them. I think oftentimes, especially when someone's entering the working world, they're like, well, I don't have any experience. And it's yes, obviously that's understandable.

But at the same time, you do have a lot of applicable experience in those situations to be able to provide. So don't short sight yourself. Talk a lot about the experiences that you do have through your education. And then I also think it's even hitting on your passion for education and development. So then it's like they know that you have the fundamentals and that you're willing to learn anything that you don't know.

So I would hit on anything that you've done through your education to be able to provide that. So it's like baseline, I have this. But I am definitely willing to learn and develop. And these are some of the things that I've worked on myself. And I think from an employer's standpoint, it just shows your passion and your willingness to evolve in your role, which is what employers want.

Thank you. So I also have a question here about stages of interviews. Nowadays, it does seem like you have to go through--

Multiple.

--multiple interviews. So what are any differences that you see in interviewing with a recruiter versus an employee of the company?

It's interesting, too, with recruiters. And I'll speak even for my team too, because there's definitely different levels. I think that the beginning stages of an interview, typically, it's to cover more of the logistics. Does the commute work for you? Does this align to your specific experience? Is it the company that you're interested in? And also the pay, I think oftentimes people are like, well, I don't want to bring up the pay in the beginning.

But it's like, you do have to be comfortable with the pay. Because that's your living. You have to be financially stable. So I do think a lot of times, the beginning stages is more around the logistics of the role and potentially getting into some of the motivators like, what did you like about your last position? What did you not like about your last position? And then that helps them frame up, is this a position that's interest to you? Are you going to be happy and fulfilled in this role?

I think that the later stages is truly like when they get into the behavioral-based interview questions. And the main reason being that the hiring manager wants to assess your ability in the role. And then also, like I mentioned, those gaps, if there's a specific system or software or task that you might not be skilled at yet because you don't have the experience, that's fine.

But they're able to assess that to be able to figure out what development you would need to thrive there or a mentor for you. I think oftentimes we look at it and we're like, oh, I bombed that interview. It's like, no, it truly showed the gaps that were missing to be able to provide the hiring manager where they could lean in to help you in the role, too.

Yeah, thank you. That's so insightful, especially because I've been curious about how recruiters and employees at a company would interact. What are they using each other for, I suppose?

Yeah. I do think it's definitely unique. Because I think about, I've been in staffing for 11 years. And prior to that, it was like, I didn't know anything about recruiting. But it's definitely a partnership from the client and the company to the recruiter. Because maybe the client or the company is like, hey, one thing I didn't hit on in the interview is this or something that I missed is this. And the recruiter could be like, oh, well, we had that conversation.

So it is another opportunity for them to truly sell you to the company as the best-fit candidate for the role, too.

OK, awesome. Thank you. So do you have any recommendations for interviewing internally with people you already know quite well? How formal should you be in the interview? And how much background do you give, especially if it's someone you already kind of know?

You want to put your best foot forward. So I would definitely still take it very serious and still interview as you would someone that you don't know. I do think it's interesting because in your mind, you're probably thinking, I'm assuming, you're like, they already know my accomplishments. They already know what I do in the job. But it's also easy to, I don't want to say forget, but it's not top of mind. And if you're interviewing against other candidates that are showcasing those things, it's a miss on your behalf to not showcase them in your interview.

So I would always hit on the accomplishments, because it's a good reminder to that person of all that you've accomplished and your experience. So it's top of mind. And then they're able to assess all candidates at the same level versus it being like, oh, well, this brought this up in the interview. And it's not top of mind for you because they know you so well. So I would definitely take it very professional and still have the same approach as if you didn't know them.

Yeah, that totally makes sense, especially because I feel like it's an opportunity for them to maybe learn something new about you, like through that kind of conversation.

Definitely.

So back to a question for LinkedIn. So it seems like for LinkedIn networking, sending free notes is limited unless you have LinkedIn Premium. So from an employer or a recruiter's perspective, does having LinkedIn Premium have its perks? Or is it just nice to have?

Honestly, when I started internal recruiting, I didn't have LinkedIn Premium, and I didn't for a very long time. And now, obviously there's different licenses within LinkedIn, which is amazing for staffing. Unfortunately, I was on my way out of recruiting when that happened. But I will say, the more connections that you have, you have a lot more accessibility to candidates.

So even when you don't have enough messages where you're sending a full message to a candidate, when you're sending an invite, you can put in a quick little blurb to the candidate as well. And that's what I always did. Like, hey, I saw your experience and it definitely matches the position I'm looking for. Please connect if you would like to learn more. And I think it creates that opportunity.

And I would say that even if you're just connecting with other people, because you only have so many messages that you can send, the more connections that you have, the more visibility you have. But also you have access to more people. So then it's like, even if you want to post something and you're like, hey, I'm trying to find someone for this or so on and so forth, it's just a broader scope to have that. So I would strongly suggest work with what you have to be able to create those connections to get your message out.

Yeah. And so similar to the topic of messaging people and trying to make those connections, someone asked that, one aspect of LinkedIn that I struggle with is getting responses from recruiters that I cold message. Any advice on connecting with recruiters when cold messaging doesn't seem to work?

They should have their contact information on LinkedIn. And that's another thing, too, I would strongly suggest. Maybe you don't put your cell phone number on LinkedIn, but I would strongly suggest always putting your email. I would reach out to them that way, to be honest. Because if they're actively recruiting, they might just have a ton of messages in LinkedIn, where email, they're on it all day long. So I think it's an easier way for you to be able to get in contact with a recruiter, if you just directly message them or call them, if you have their phone number too.

Yeah, that makes sense. And I know that with networking, sometimes it can be a bit of a numbers game.

Yeah.

I've definitely reached out to people and have never heard responses. But you keep going, and eventually someone does respond.

And honestly, I would also say, maybe you don't hear back for a week or two if you're connecting with someone. I would still put in a reminder for myself to reach out to them again in a couple of weeks. Because then it brings it to the top of the list of messages. And then they might have been away or out of office or on vacation. So it gives an opportunity for you to be top-of-mind to them, too. So don't be discouraged if you reach out once and they don't respond. Make sure that you reach out again.

Yeah, definitely. Another question here about during the interview process. Let's say you get a direct question such as, have you ever used this particular software tool? and you don't have that experience. How would you navigate that without just saying no?

Honestly, what I would suggest is if there's a similar platform that you've utilized before, talk to that. Be like, no, I don't have that specific experience, but a system or a platform or so on and so forth that's similar, this is my experience or capabilities within that system. So you're kind of diverting the question to what you do know. But if it's a similar software, it's not going to take you very long to be able to adapt to the new software that they're utilizing too. So maybe you don't have that specific experience, but you already have similar experience. It's easier for you to be able to maneuver that, too.

And I guess just based off of your response for that, I have a question, I guess.

OK.

I heard something along the lines of, if you're applying for a role and you meet all of the qualifications, that you're maybe considered actually overqualified, and that people might be looking for people who are more willing to grow and learn. Would you find that that's the case? Or would you find that usually people are looking for someone that checks all the boxes?

If you check all the boxes, yes, you're definitely qualified for the job. But I think that there's opportunity in different ways. You could be able to come in and perform in the job day one if you have all of the qualifications. And I also think sometimes it's an opportunity for you to get your foot in the door somewhere and be able to grow within that organization, which is great for an employer.

They want to retain good people. So you being able to come in and make that impact is amazing. On the other side, I think sometimes people don't apply to jobs because they don't have all of the qualifications. So they're like, I don't have this, this, and this. But I have 75% of it. I have 80%. I think oftentimes people are more hesitant to apply because they don't think that they qualify for the job.

But I will say too, A, don't do that. I think it's important to put yourself out there. And I do think, too, having those conversations and seeking to understand from the hiring manager, they may still consider you and be like, oh, those aspects are something that we're willing to develop and train. So I wouldn't discount yourself.

And then also on the flip side, if you are qualified for the job, it is important still. If it's something that interests you or maybe it's a higher amount of money or so on and so forth, it gives you an opportunity. And even if it's a company that offers more opportunity for growth, it's a great way to get your foot in the door too.

Yeah. And I see there's a follow-up question here, which is then, what's a better guideline for how much of a job profile you should match before applying for a job? So what's a good benchmark?

I would say 75%, to be honest.

OK, yeah. I feel like that makes sense.

Yeah. And obviously you can read it too, like, oh, these are things that maybe I don't have the experience with, but I could easily gain. Maybe it's a little bit less than 75%. I think it's still worth putting yourself out there.

OK. I have a question here from someone who is a recent grad. So they're asking, how can you communicate your interests while showing openness to different industries or disciplines, especially if you're a new grad and you're having trouble finding positions that you're qualified for in your area of interest, and you have to apply for any kind of available entry-level job? How do you hone in your interests without seeming like you have a lack of goals or direction?

That one is definitely a tough one, especially when you're coming out of school. Because you choose a major in school. And you're like, I think this is what I want to do. But you change so much. I was an accounting major when I started college like because I love numbers. I still, to this day, love numbers. But then I was like, OK, I'm so social and I love talking. So I switched to marketing.

But coming out of school, all I knew is that I wanted something that was performance driven and something where I can talk a lot. But I didn't know where I wanted to be. And I think that's very common. But I do think that you should hone in on reflection and thinking through that on what does a long-term career look like for me.

Because let's say you want to go into marketing, but then you start in an analyst position, the skills that you're gaining in that role aren't going to get you to your long-term goal. So I do think it's important for you, yes, you want to have a job. But you want to make sure that you're strategic in the roles that you're accepting and honing in on because you want to gain the skills that are going to get you to where you want to be.

And I do think from an employer standpoint, if you really want to be in marketing, but you're applying to an analyst position, they're like, but this isn't where you want to be. Also, it's not that they want to discount you, but they don't want to hire you into a role that that's not where you want to be. It's not beneficial to you either. So I think making sure that you hone in and reflect on where you want to be long-term, and then apply to roles that are similar that are going to be able to give you the skills to be able to grow towards that direction.

Yeah. And that makes sense. I've heard so much about soft skills or even fields that are similar enough to each other that will ease you into a transition.

Yes.

So maybe doing some of that research about similar fields or interests could be helpful.

Definitely. And even within an organization, I think if you start in a role that's similar, you're going to get more exposure within that department too. So it does give you more of a leeway to get there within an organization as well.

Right. I also feel that sometimes in the job search process, or maybe you have a job and you're thinking about your career years down the line, I feel like everyone has that time where they're thinking about going back to school or getting a master's or expanding their level of education. So in your opinion, how key is education in the job search? Having experience versus having a master's degree, does that make a difference?

I'm going to say both are important. I also think education, it's something that people can't take away from you. Yes, experience as well. I think education is important throughout life, whether that's through school or through the experience that you gain. But that truly makes you grow as a person and also as a professional as well too. I definitely think it is dependent on your role and the field and your growth opportunity.

I do think people are different learners. Some people learn better being hands-on with the actual applicable experience. And then other people learn more in an educational setting. So I think it's also on where do you learn best and what's best for you to be able to gain those skills and be able to grow your career and yourself as a professional.

Yeah. And that makes sense. Kind of like what you were discussing with, it's all about how you market yourself.

Yes.

You have a variety of experience, but it's all about how you tell that story that matters. I feel like this is another common question that people are wondering. I think one of the biggest issues nowadays is getting the interview itself. How do you recommend making yourself stand out when applying to a job so that you can get closer to an interview?

Definitely. Obviously, once you apply, I would give it a couple days. If you don't hear back, I would, if you have their email address, I would email them directly or connect with them on LinkedIn and message them on LinkedIn. I do think often, give it a couple days. Because ultimately, they may be going through applications. But you do want to be top of mind. So don't wait two weeks to reach out. But I think just being as proactive as possible is important to be able to put your name at the top of the list.

Yeah, OK. I'm looking for a couple more questions. There have been so many that have come in. So I also want to remind everyone that if we don't get to all of the questions that are in the Q&A, I can send them over to our speaker, GK, afterwards, have them answer. And also upload them to the Advance Learning Center so that you can read through the Q&A after. There are just so many good questions here, and it's hard to--

No, I love that. And I will definitely make sure I take a look and provide answers to any of the ones that we missed.

Yes, OK. So now I'm just looking for another. We have time for maybe two more questions.

OK.

Something I think people are just in general curious about is, when you're rejected from an interview or you don't get the position, but you're not given that feedback about why you weren't considered, how do you deal with that? I guess maybe that's a two-tiered question. Why don't you get feedback? And what can you do to improve if you don't know what you missed?

Yeah, definitely. I would say two things. A, you could not be getting feedback because maybe, if you were working with a recruiter, they might not have the specific feedback from the hiring manager, which is not the situation that we would want. But sometimes it is the case where they're like, hey, we went with this person because of more experience, but you don't have specifics outside of the actual experience that they had.

So I would say, it's not that they're avoiding giving you feedback. It's more so they might not have all of the specifics to give you outside of experience or education or something in that regard. A, I would be honest and ask. And I do think it's asking in the sense of, hey, I wanted to reach out to ask for more specifics on why I didn't get the opportunity, because I am actively interviewing for similar types of positions. And I want to make sure that I'm showcasing the skills and experience that's needed for the role.

So it gives the why on why you're asking, too. And it's like, I want the development. It shows that you're looking for the specifics to be better. And you could come back to that role. So you might gain experience in other positions, and then that's your dream company. You could re-interview for that role. So I do think just being very straightforward in asking and explaining the why on why you're looking for it.

And if you're asking a recruiter and potentially not getting the response, you could always reach out to the hiring manager. If you have their email address or their LinkedIn, reach out to them directly. Because ultimately, they're the ones that made the decision and they're the ones that were in the interview with you, where they can give you more specifics. Hey, the experience that you were lacking was here. Or when you responded about with this behavioral interview question, something that we had concerns with is this. So then it gives you more specifics to be able to work on that for the next time.

Yeah, I think that sometimes you have to actively search for feedback. Just from a numbers perspective, it's hard for people to get back to everyone they've interviewed.

Yeah.

Yeah, I think that that's also an interesting way to stand out, is reaching back out with kindness even after having been rejected. I feel like that's a good way to show that you still are open to growth.

Yes, for sure. And honestly, and I'll speak to this too, I had interviewed students that potentially didn't get the position. And they reached out to me two years later. And they're like, hey, I'm still interested in this company, still had the conversation with them. And they ended up getting hired in the company. So don't ever think that it's a closed door. It's like, OK, it might be closed right now, but it could always open in the future.

Right, yeah. And I know that I said maybe two more questions, but we are out of time.

OK. So I will definitely respond. Once you send the questions over, I'll make sure that I respond to them too.

Definitely. And I think that that was a great note to end on. I think rejection is a scary part about interviewing, but it doesn't always have to be a permanent no.

No, and it helps you grow. It's a learning lesson, for sure. And it helps you be able to get to the success that you want too.

Yes, definitely. So that is all the time that we have for questions. Again, the on-demand version of today's presentation will be made available in the Advance Learning Center within 48 hours. If you learned from and enjoyed this web session, you can find more professional development content at AdvanceLearning.SWE.org. I'd like to thank you all for tuning in and attending this presentation. A big thank you goes out to GK, our wonderful speaker.

Thank you all.

Remember, you can always email learning@swe.org if you have questions for the speakers or need support for this presentation. I'd like to wish everyone a wonderful rest of your day. And thank you again for joining us. Goodbye.

Thank you. Bye-bye.

Bye.