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## Preparing for an Interview 101

*By Corin Chapman*

What many candidates fail to realize when going into an interview is that often the questions you ask are just as important as how you answer the interviewer's questions. Being properly prepared with well thought out questions can be what separates you from the pack of other actuarial applicants. With the wealth of information available, many candidates struggle with where to even start.

As simple as it may sound, the best place to start is often Google or any internet search engine. I recommend first performing an internet search about the company you're interviewing with. Take note of all major happenings within that company, even those that seem unrelated to the job in which you are interviewing. Even happenings within the company that initially seem irrelevant may make for strong questions with interesting answers. For example, inquiring in an interview about a recent information breach within the software development portion of the company may lead to a discussion about the additional security mandates throughout the entire company.

Next, if you know what department(s) you are interviewing with, I would recommend searching for any new regulations for that line of business. For an interview with a Property & Casualty department, try searching "auto insurance regulation" or "auto insurance litigation." Try to focus on articles written in the most recent six months.

Additionally, if you happen to know ahead of time who you are interviewing with, I would go ahead and run an internet search on those individuals as well. It can be very valuable to know an individual's position within a company, their level of experience and even their educational background to appropriately target your questions. For example, if you are interviewing with a vice president of a company, it would probably be best to save questions about their study program for human resources or a direct supervisor.

Once you have a general idea of the current happenings within the company and their lines of business, also try exploring the company's website. Often interviewers assume that you have looked at the website and may ask you questions about it or the company in general. Usually, they are not in-depth questions, but they do want to know that you cared enough to do a little homework. When searching their website, try and note the general size and location(s) of the company, their lines of business,

and any major ideas that are continuously stressed on the website. For instance, if the company continuously stresses diversity on their website, note that to the interviewer and let them know your thoughts on the subject.

A good way to round out your research is to review a few major publications such as the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, etc. A general knowledge of current happenings can show business acumen. Also you may want to look for an online version of the local newspaper. This can be particularly informative for non-big city firms.

Also, if you are still in school and feel comfortable talking with a professor or know of an actuary already working in the industry, make sure to ask them what they know about the company or general happenings in the industry. Their perspective can be invaluable. Many would also suggest looking at a company's income statement or balance sheet. I would argue that it's much more efficient to look at the company's press release regarding their financial statements rather than try to figure out each company's accounting structure. This is particularly true of insurance companies.

Using the combined internet resources will allow you to go into an interview much more prepared and able to ask very informed questions. Just always keep in mind, you can't believe everything you read on the internet, but you can certainly ask about it!

*Corin Chapman, FSA, MAAA, is State Farm Life/Health Actuarial Analyst with State Farm Insurance in Bloomington, Ill.*