SHIFT

Interview Preparation

Research, Research, Research

Know Yourself
Anything on your resume is fair game to be asked about in an interview. Prepare to tell your resume experiences with the CAR framework below.

Know the Position and Company
Make sure you know what position you're interviewing for, so you can connect your past experiences and current interests. Do your research on the company; in addition to the company website, look up news about them. For startups/tech, TechCrunch and CrunchBase are good places to start. For all others, Google News searches all recent news.

Know the Industry
Who are the company's competitors? What are recent trends in the industry or in the market? You'll want to show an understanding of the industry and market in your interview, so that you can highlight your knowledge base in addition to your transferable military experiences.

Know Your Audience
When answering interview questions, you should keep in mind who your audience is. Your goal in the interview is to connect with your interviewer. What is this person's role and relation to the potential fellowship? What is their background? What terminology would s/he be familiar with?

You would communicate differently with a senior officer compared to with your peers, right? Similarly, a recruiter in human resources has a different context than an engineer. How might you adapt the way you talk about your experience? And remember, don't be negative about previous experiences or employers!

And lastly...
Remember to show off your personality! If you're bored, they're bored.
Most interviewers care about two things:

- Do I like you?
- Can you do the job?

SHIFT

Interview Preparation

Types of Interview Questions

Resume-based
Resume-based questions are what they sound like - questions about what you've included on your resume. You should be prepared to talk about each and every detail on your own resume.

Behavioral
Behavioral questions are based on the concept that the best predictor of your future success if your past success. These questions are usually some variation of Tell me about a time when... or Give me an example of...

Examples include:

- Tell me about a time when you accomplished a goal.
- Tell me about a time when you learned a new skill.
- Give me an example of when you had to influence people you had no authority over.
- Tell me about a time when you worked with a difficult colleague.

Scenario/Situational
Given a scenario, what would you do? Situational questions evaluate your problem-solving and analytical skills. These questions are usually some variation of what would you do or how would you do. Examples include:

- If you know your boss is 100% wrong about something, how would you handle it?
- If you have X objective and Y resources, how would you evaluate your next steps?

Framework for Sharing Experiences and Telling Stories
It's impossible to anticipate and prepare for every single question you may be asked in an interview. Your best strategy for answering all types of interview questions is to prepare stories from your past experiences to demonstrate your skills and accomplishments. The stories you prepare should relate to the specific competencies of the job you're interviewing for.

The CAR framework is a way to structure these stories:

Context	What was the setting of the story? What details are important to include to help the listener understand the context? Consider: goals/objectives, team structure, resources,
Action	What steps did you take to contribute? What challenges did you overcome and how?
Result	What was impact of your work? What results did you achieve? What did you learn from the experience?

SHIFT

Interview Preparation

CAR Framework Example from a Current Shift Fellow

Possible questions for this story:

- Tell me about a time you developed a process improvement.
- Tell me about a time you persuaded senior leaders to change a policy or process.
- Tell me about a time you accomplished a project.
- Tell me about a time you managed a team.

Context	What was the setting of the story? What details are important to include to help the listener understand the context? Consider: goals/objectives, team structure, resources, etc. I was the Desk Sergeant for the Aircraft Structures and Hydraulics division, where we were responsible for maintaining 30 aircraft worth almost $1 billion total. Every 6 to 12 months, two hundred Marines in our unit would have to prepare for deployment. From November 2016 to May 2017, my team was responsible for making sure that 5 of the 30 aircraft we maintained were ready to fly. Our team consisted of 8 Marines at all levels of proficiency.
Action	What steps did you take to contribute? What challenges did you overcome and how? Typically, when we were NOT preparing for deployment, we would assign team members based on skills in which they needed more training. However, in urgent deployment periods, we had to better prioritize the tasks to accomplish them in a shorter time frame. I created process improvements to match each team member by proficiency with the task, depending on complexity. I received initial pushback from maintenance control to change the process, but I used data to communicate a different need, prioritizing efficiency over training for this particular goal.
Result	What was impact of your work? What results did you achieve? What did you learn from the experience? As a result of our re-oriented strategy, my team and I coordinated for all five aircraft to be in flight status in less than three days; whereas normally, it would've taken over a month. One thing I learned from this experience is that you can always create something new. A lot of organizations have a "This is the way we've always done it" mentality, but innovating a new idea can lead to better results in the end.

SHIFT

Interview Preparation

CAR Framework Worksheet

Possible questions for this story:

- Tell me about a time you developed a process improvement.
- Tell me about a time you persuaded senior leaders to change a policy or process.
- Tell me about a time you accomplished a project.
- Tell me about a time you managed a team.

Context	What was the setting of the story? What details are important to include to help the listener understand the context? Consider: goals/objectives, team structure, resources, etc.
Action	What steps did you take to contribute? What challenges did you overcome and how?
Result	What was impact of your work? What results did you achieve? What did you learn from the experience?

SHIFT

Interview Preparation

Answering "Tell me about yourself"

"Tell me about yourself" (or some variation of it) is one question you will definitely be asked in an interview. Here is a framework for answering this tough, usually first, question. Keep in mind that your answers should consider who your audience is, and then adapt accordingly.

Core	What are the most important things they should know about you? What makes you unique and interesting?
Experience	What are some of your most transferable military skills and experiences to this civilian role?
Transition	Why did you choose to become a Shift fellow? What skills and experiences do you want to be building?
Company	Why are you excited about this role and this company?

I'm from Brasilia, Brazil. I was an aircraft mechanic for 5 years in the Marines. I am fluent in Portuguese, Spanish, and French. I went from not knowing how to turn a wrench to troubleshooting complex hydraulic systems in $33 million aircraft. I went from a worker bee to a shift supervisor in 3 years. Not only did I learn technical skills, I also learned how to mentor others, build teams, and manage projects. During my unit's deployment to Japan from San Diego, I also learned how to communicate across cultural barriers; many of our colleagues only spoke Japanese and had limited English proficiency, so we used blueprints and naval publications to work together to maintain our aircraft in another country. In this next stage of my career, I want to building my project management skills, and have the opportunity to apply them across industries, beyond just a singular goal. I'm excited to join Shift because I'll be able to learn about the tech sector, how it impacts people's lives, and how I can be part of that process.

SHIFT

Interview Preparation

Prepare YOUR Questions

After the interviewer asks you their questions, they'll almost always leave time at the end for you to ask questions of them. This is your opportunity to learn more about the position and company and to show your enthusiasm and interest!

We recommend preparing 4-5 questions per interviewer. You may not get to all the questions, so be sure to prioritize. If you're interviewing with multiple people at the company, it may be useful to ask the same questions of different people.

Here is a comprehensive list of questions you can ask. Tailor these based on what you already know about the position and what will be most helpful in determining whether this role is a fit.

Closing the Interview

At the end of the interview, gather everyone's contact info. Also, ask the hiring manager about next steps and timeline (When do they expect to make a decision? What is their hiring timeline?), so you know when to follow up.

After the Interview

Debrief with yourself and take notes while the interview is still fresh. What went well? What did people respond to? What could've gone better?

Within 24 hours, write a thank-you email to each interviewer. **This is a crucial step to building your impression as a candidate. In your email:

- Thank your interviewer
- Reference specific discussion point(s) - tailor your message to the recipient
- Possibly address interview responses if you went back and did more research - if there's anything you felt could've gone better, this is a way to address it.
- Reiterate your enthusiasm and your fit for the position and company.