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Second Round Interview Strategies: Some Approaches to Make You a Winner

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Congratulations! You made it through the first round of interviews, and you've been invited back for a second meeting. So how can you prepare for the second interview to be sure you "take it across the finish line" and become the selected finalist?

First of all, go under the assumption that the organization is also inviting back other candidates. It will be a competitive situation, and often, the person who does the extra homework or research may be the one selected. Can you do something extra like talking with a member of the association? We know a candidate who was able to arrange an in-person visit to one of the association member's production facilities before her second round interview. The search committee really loved that!

With some organizations, you may be asked to prepare a follow-up presentation or some other type of "homework." If that is the case, take it seriously and stay on point. It's OK to add a little bit of flair or humor, but don't overdo it as that can backfire. Ask someone to review your presentation beforehand for overall content and typos.

If nothing has been specifically requested, that is where you might set yourself apart. A search committee member recently commented that with very strong candidates from which to select, it was like "finding the chink in the armor" to figure

out who would be eliminated. So proactively prepare something for the second round such as a First 100 Days Plan. Keep it simple, and try to keep it to one page, especially if you will be handing it out. Another option could be a 30 day/6 month/first year plan. Candidates sometimes think they may commit to the wrong items in their plan, but search committees generally don't worry about that too much unless you state something outlandish. They are more interested in how you think and generally appreciate the fact that you took the time to prepare follow-up materials.

Other times, candidates may be asked in advance to be prepared to talk about what their first 30-60-90-180 days might look like on the job. "What would you like to have accomplished by the end of your first year?" is another question we've heard. No matter the topic, in these cases, candidates are informed in advance on what the search committee might want to hear, so they have time to prepare thoughtful remarks.

Here are a few more tips to help you hit a home run:

- Do your homework on the organization. In this day and age, there is no excuse for not coming in thoroughly prepared and

knowledgeable about the organization.

- Proactively prepare something they may not have asked for – a “First 100 Days” plan, thoughts about the strategic plan, observations about challenges and opportunities for the organization.
- Select one or two topics from the first interview that you can discuss in more detail during the second interview.
- If you have prepared a formal presentation – PowerPoint or some

other format – take care to keep the document to a manageable few slides or pages, and use visuals rather than copious content to illustrate your points.

Make good eye contact with the search committee members and be sure to project your voice. You may be seated at a conference table, and you don’t want those at the opposite end of the table to be straining trying to hear you. Convey your enthusiasm for the opportunity! It is probably your last chance to do that.

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