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ACCOUNTING & AUDIT

How to Master the Job Hunt and Land Your Dream Accounting Role

When searching for jobs, read through the job descriptions and be honest with yourself — do you meet all the necessary criteria or is there room for improvement? This will help you determine where you should start when it comes time to negotiate your ...

Jodi Chavez • Jul. 14, 2020



Congratulations! You've accomplished a major milestone: graduation. And while you're no doubt eager to get out there and conquer the career world, you're probably every bit anxious about finding, interviewing for and landing your dream accounting job. The good news is there are a lot of great opportunities right now for [finance and accounting professionals](#), as unemployment rates continue to remain [staggeringly low](#).

However, finding the right talent has proven to be a major challenge for most employers. When it's all said and done, you shouldn't have to worry about hunting for your first job resulting in "Hunger Games" levels of competition. After all, when you look at the numbers, it really is true — "the odds are ever in your favor." Still, when that first opportunity comes knocking, you need to be prepared in order to land it. To help you, here are two things you can do to better prepare for your interview and, ultimately, secure your dream job.

Be prepared for the tough questions

Years of schooling led to this very moment: an interview for your dream job. However, when it comes to finally sitting down with your prospective employer, many people end up freezing. Fifty percent of [Americans say they've done a job interview that they felt completely unprepared for](#). After all, poor preparation and

out-of-control nerves make for a bad combination. But if you prepare ahead of time, you can avoid wasting all those years you spent training and crunching for exams. Here's a list of some of the most **commonly asked interview questions** to get familiar with before your next interview.

- What are your strengths/weaknesses?
- Why should I hire you, what value will you bring to the company?
- Tell me about yourself, what soft skills make you a good employee?
- Why do you want to work here?
- How do you handle tight deadlines?

Thinking through anticipated questions ahead of time can lessen your nerves and prevent you from getting caught by surprise. Practice your answers with a friend so you can sharpen your responses. Rehearsing your answers in advance also helps you build up a mental reservoir of past examples to pull from during the interview. The more you prepare and practice, the less likely you'll be to panic when asked a tough question.

Strengthen your soft skills during the interview

Yes, you're a degree-toting scholar who's up on all the latest accounting software. But what about your soft skills? Most job candidates tend to deprioritize them, but they're no less important in helping to tip the scales in your favor. Here are **some of the soft skills you should strengthen** beforehand to improve your chances of getting a call back for a second interview.

- **Communication** ☐ Millennial and Gen Z candidates carry a reputation for being very tech-savvy — but this comes at a cost. Many face challenges with face-to-face interactions, as they've grown up communicating behind the buffer of a screen. The upside? Many individuals in this age group **crave more in-person collaboration**. Join local chapters of finance organizations to hone your networking and communication skills. The more you expose yourself to talking to people face-to-face in or out of the office, the less intimidating it will be.
- **Organization** ☐ Knowing how to organize your daily priorities is crucial to any role you take on — both in and outside of work. If you can master this at home, you'll see a great improvement to your work-life balance, which in turn, can make you even more productive at your job. Attempt to **master prioritization and scheduling specific tasks throughout the day**. You'll complete assignments before deadlines, and with fewer revisions, too. Reach out to a mentor or supervisor to

understand how they manage their work processes — your firm may have training that provides additional best practices for staying organized.

- **Adaptability** □ Every employee reacts to change in the workplace differently. Some employees have difficulty dealing with changes, while others create solutions to adapt. Which one are you? Employers appreciate an employee who is flexible to change, so make sure you're prepared to handle it when it comes. Challenge yourself by observing a peer you admire and learn how they cope with change in the workplace. As we've seen time and time again, change is the only constant in today's post-digital workplace.
- **Analytical** □ Critical thinking skills allow you to visualize and solve problems, which is a form of self-management. Obtaining these skills can help you see solutions to problems that may not be immediately obvious to everyone else. If you're not a naturally analytical person, don't fret, as it's a skill that can be taught. Here's a [great article](#) to help you improve your critical thinking skills.
- **Teamwork** □ Your ability to work well with others could make the difference between loving your job and finding it frustrating and unenjoyable. Work with your team to create team-building projects or events that bring you closer together. This will improve your ability to work together and create a stronger office culture at the same time.

Find an in-demand accounting opportunity that pays

There's no greater time than the present to be working in the finance and accounting industry. In fact, the [job outlook](#) is promising for novice finance professionals. Preparation before you land the interview gives you the opportunity to identify your goals, measure your abilities and outline ways to play up your strengths.

Finding the perfect job that offers fair pay doesn't have to be a struggle. Based on current industry trends, here's a list of the most [in-demand jobs](#) in finance and accounting and their respective entry-level salaries.

- Credit and collections clerks: \$30,354 – \$35,711
- Accounts payable clerks: \$32,372 – \$37,101
- Accounts receivable clerks: \$33,303 – \$38,104
- Staff accountants: \$54,336 – \$64,984
- Senior accountants: \$59,965 – \$71,012
- Financial analysts: \$63,189 – \$75,820
- Payroll managers: \$64,251 – \$78,387
- Credit and collections managers: \$75,212 – \$90,777

When searching for jobs, read through the job descriptions and be honest with yourself — do you meet all the necessary criteria or is there room for improvement? This will help you determine where you should start when it comes time to negotiate your salary. Another great way to land your dream job with adequate pay is to work with a [staffing agency](#) which can help match your strengths to a position best-suited for you. By doing your homework ahead of time, you allow them to see your best assets.

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About Jodi Chavez,

Jodi Chavez is Group President, [Randstad Professionals](#), [Randstad Life Sciences](#) and [Tatum](#), where she oversees the field organization and provides strategic direction for Randstad Life Sciences, Randstad Professionals and Tatum. With more than 20 years' experience in the staffing industry, Jodi's entrepreneurial drive and strong business acumen have enabled her to consistently increase revenues, grow profits and deliver ROI. Her breadth of expertise spans team building, strategic planning and execution, M&A, branding, social media and multi-generational leadership.

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