

Prepping For The Big Show

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The SES Selection Process

The details behind this process assumes

you are a first time candidate. Steps in the process include:

1. **Package Prep:** Includes resume, ECQs, TQs, and cover letter. Allow at least one month for prep, but recognize that some postings are up for only 1-2 weeks.
2. **Package Submittal:** Goes first to HR for a review of basic qualifications. If minimally qualified, will go to the hiring office.
3. **SES Review Panel:** Hiring office will bring at least 3 current SES in to review the packages, primarily for the TQs, but ECQs and other materials are reviewed.
4. **SES Interview Panel:** Typically 3-5 SES will comprise the panel, which lasts 1-2 hours.
5. **Hiring Official Decision:** The Interview Panel will refer all highly rated candidates to the hiring official for consideration. Sometimes the Hiring Official will also wish to interview the final few candidates.
6. **Executive Resources Board (ERB):** All large agencies and many small agencies have an ERB, which will approve/disapprove the hiring official's decision.
7. **OPM Qualifications Review Board (QRB):** The QRB only reviews the ECQs. 90% of applicants are approved, but many are sent back with specific recommendations, such as filling in gaps in knowledge. Those who are rejected get one more bite at the apple and if they are rejected twice, their application is dead.
8. **Offer Letter:** Once OPM approves, the agency HR office provides an offer letter, which includes a start date and salary offer.
9. **Timeframe:** This process typically takes 6-9 months to complete.

The Path To Success

Successfully navigating the SES selection process involves the following steps:

- Optimal Package Prep – Use the “Smart Brevity” Principles to prepare:
 - Cover Letter
 - ECQs/TQs
 - Resume
- Competitive Intelligence – Understand what the job is before applying by:
 - Utilizing your Google skills
 - Tapping into your network
 - Relying on Mentors
- Successful Interviewing Skills – Practice/Practice/Practice
 - Set up mock interview sessions. ([10 Interview Questions That CEOs Love to Ask | LinkedIn](#))
 - Research the agency/position.
 - Use Smart Brevity principles to craft your elevator speech & responses to questions.

“Smart Brevity” Package Prep

Very few of us are great writers and most SES applicants rely on advice gleaned from mentors, friends, the Internet, OPM or consultants. There is a third path – “Smart Brevity”. Smart Brevity was developed by Axios ([Axios - Breaking news, U.S. news and politics, and local news](#)) and can help hone your cover letters, ECQs and even your interviewing skills.

The basic premise – less is better.

Smart Brevity resources:

- **Workbook:** [How to kick off every essential communication](#)
- **Webinar:** [The art and science behind Smart Brevity](#)
- **Pep talk:** [Axios CEO Jim VandeHei’s TEDx talk](#) on why we all need to radically transform the way we communicate
- “Smart Brevity” book: [Smart Brevity - Google Books](#)

Smart Brevity



Jim VandeHei, Mike Allen,
and Roy Schwartz

A quick look at Smart Brevity

Let's look at two before-and-after examples:

Before	After
Healthcare has the power to keep the labor market afloat even if we face a recession in the future	Healthcare hiring is recession-proof

Takeaways

Before	After
Update on our plans	Our remote work plans through year-end

Takeaways

Be specific: Don't use vague language when you have the space to be precise.

Be honest: At times, longer is better. Smart Brevity should maximize the value of every word, without sacrificing the context readers need to understand your message.

Pro Tips when prepping your SES package

ECQs: Even if you have OPM cert for your ECQs, you should always adapt them to the specific position and review them with Smart Brevity in mind.

TQs: Never assume you know what the agency is asking for in its TQs. Review the specific office to see if you can discern what they are specifically hiring for.

Resume: Always align your resume to the specific job. Streamline it to only 2 pages and focused on the position you are applying for.

Cover Letter: You should always prep a cover letter that succinctly addresses why you are the best candidate. Use your elevator speech but adapt to the specific position.

Competitive Intelligence: Inform the ECQs, TQs, Resume & Cover Letter with information about the job/agency/industry.

Competitive Intelligence – The Big Differentiator

If you don't use CI, you're flying blind & giving *your competition* a huge advantage. CI improves your chances of success by:

- Utilizing your Google skills to fully understand the agency, office, & job.
- Tapping into your network to uncover nuggets that will help you when writing ECQs, TQs, Cover Letter & Resume.
- Relying on Mentors to provide advice and pro tips about the job, what you can expect in the interview process and how to present yourself.



Versus



Interviewing as if Your Life Depended on It (Hint – It Does)

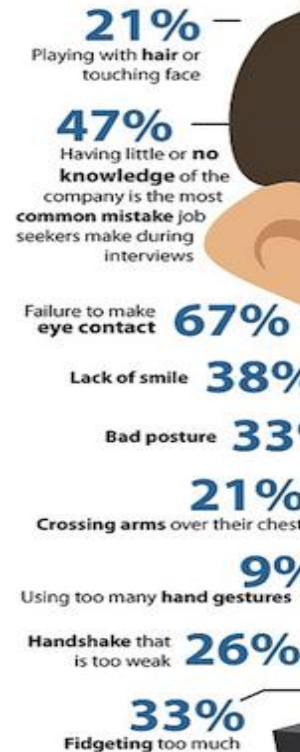
Interviewing is a *learned behavior*.
It's also designed to make you uncomfortable, ill at ease, and induce honest answers.

- Set up mock interview sessions ([10 Interview Questions That CEOs Love to Ask | LinkedIn](#))
- Research the agency/position.
- Use Smart Brevity principles to craft your elevator speech & responses to questions.

What You Wish You'd Known Before Your JOB INTERVIEW

Common nonverbal mistakes made at a job interview

From a survey of 2000 bosses



In a survey of 2000 bosses **33%** claimed that they know within the first 90 seconds of an interview whether they will hire someone



The average length of an interview is approximately 40 minutes

Statistics show that when meeting new people the impact is:



Interviewing Do's & Don't's

• Do:

- Quantify experience - numbers, percentages, timelines.
- Use measurable results whenever possible.
- Use action oriented verbs - active voice vs. passive.
- Describe experience, accomplishments in clear, organized manner - be succinct.
- Use “I” instead of third person, and don't succumb to the “We” syndrome.
- Speak in layperson's terms and avoid acronyms.
- Demonstrate enterprise/executive/strategic level actions/results.

• Don't:

- Use the same example more than once.
- Make vague statements & use poor grammar.
- Make statements that describe personal beliefs, philosophies, commitment to social/political cause.
- Make disparaging remarks about former managers or colleagues.
- Reveal info about political affiliation, activities.
- Use bureaucratic words, expressions.
- Lie or mislead about accomplishments.

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