

The “5 Levels” Interview Guide

How to prepare for each level of a healthcare leadership interview, and how to execute it in the room.
Most leaders stop at Level 4. Level 5 decides whether you stay and thrive.

[retain] health

Diligence on the organization

PREPARE

Read the strategic plan, quality and safety ratings, and two years of news. Map clinical and administrative leadership changes in the last three years.

EXECUTE

Follow the interviewer's lead and listen. When the conversation opens a door, bring in what you learned, briefly. If asked what you know, give a short read as a hypothesis and ask what you might be missing.

LEVEL

1

WHERE THE FINANCIALS LIVE, BY BUSINESS MODEL

Nonprofit

Form 990, community benefit report, audited financials

Public company

10-K, quarterly earnings calls, investor presentations

Private or PE-backed

Press releases, investor or sponsor site, bond or credit rating reports

Government

Public budget, board meeting minutes, audit reports

Your leadership story

PREPARE

Build a 90-second story in four beats, below. Write it, then say it out loud until it sounds like you, not a script.

EXECUTE

Connect your story to the priorities you found in Level 1. Close with why this seat, not just any seat.

LEVEL

2

THE 90-SECOND LEADERSHIP STORY

~20 SEC

Where I've led

Scope, setting and scale

~20 SEC

How I lead

Your approach, in one example

~20 SEC

What it delivered

One or two results

~30 SEC

Why this seat, now

Tie it to their priorities

Proof in outcomes

PREPARE

Choose three or four results with numbers: the baseline, what you did, the result and the timeframe. Think margin, throughput, staff retention, safety and quality scores, patient experience.

EXECUTE

Flip the STAR framework: **R**esult, **A**ction, **T**ask, **S**ituation. Executives are judged on outcomes, so lead with what changed, then how you got there.

LEVEL

3

The panel and presentation

PREPARE

Find out who is on each panel and what each group cares about: board, physicians, nursing, executives, front-line leaders. Draft a 30-60-90-day plan as hypotheses, not promises.

EXECUTE

Shift your emphasis to the audience in front of you. Present your plan as “what I'd learn first” and invite them to correct it.

LEVEL

4

EXAMPLE: ONE WAY TO SHAPE A 90-DAY PLAN 90-day plans take many shapes. Adapt yours to the role.

DAYS 1-30

Listen and learn

Meet the team, physicians and key partners.
Review the data. Learn what's already in motion.

DAYS 31-60

Confirm priorities

Share what you heard. Agree on two or three priorities with your leader. Deliver an early win.

DAYS 61-90

Act and measure

Launch the first initiatives. Set the metrics and reporting rhythm. Adjust the plan.

LEVEL 5 Assess the seat before you say yes

Questions for the search consultant, the leader you'd report to and the search committee. Six conditions, one starter question each:

01 Scope

“What will this role own in year one, and what sits with someone else?”

02 Decision rights

“Which decisions, including staffing models, can I make on my own, and which need sign-off?”

03 Reporting lines

“Who will I report to, is there a dual clinical and operational line, and how involved is the board or governing body with this role?”

04 Seat history

“Why is this role open, how long did the last two leaders stay, and what initiatives would I inherit?”

05 Budget and team

“What budget will I control, which positions are open today, and how much do we rely on agency staff?”

06 Success measures

“At 12 months, how will you know this hire worked, and who decides?”

My interview prep one-pager

[retain] health

ROLE ORGANIZATION INTERVIEW DATE TRACK
☐ Clinical ☐ Administrative

1 Diligence on the organization

THEIR TOP THREE PRIORITIES

RECENT LEADERSHIP CHANGES

WHAT I LEARNED THAT COULD COME UP NATURALLY

2 Your leadership story

MY 90-SECOND STORY

WHY THIS SEAT, NOW

3 Proof in outcomes

RESULT 1 • NUMBER AND HOW

RESULT 3

RESULT 2

RESULT 4

4 The panel and presentation

WHO'S ON THE PANEL

DAYS 1-30

DAYS 31-60

DAYS 61-90

5 Assess the seat before you say yes

CONDITION	WHAT I HEARD, AND FROM WHOM	CLEAR?
Scope		☐ Yes ☐ Ask more
Decision rights		☐ Yes ☐ Ask more
Reporting lines		☐ Yes ☐ Ask more
Seat history		☐ Yes ☐ Ask more
Budget and team		☐ Yes ☐ Ask more
Success measures		☐ Yes ☐ Ask more

PREPARE

Write your six questions before each round. Save the most sensitive for later conversations.

EXECUTE

Ask the same question of different people. Matching answers mean clarity. If they differ, ask more.

DECIDE

Before you say yes, every condition should have a clear answer.

Bonus: let AI fill this in for you

COPY • PASTE • ADD THE JOB POSTING

Paste this into ChatGPT, Claude or Copilot with the job posting (and your resume, if you like). You'll get a draft of this page to review and make your own.

No AI tool yet? We recommend [Claude](#). (We may receive account credit if you subscribe.)

Act as an interview coach for healthcare leadership roles. Using the 5 Levels framework below, create a one-page interview prep guide from the job posting I paste at the end.

Level 1, Diligence on the organization: list what to research about this organization and its three likely priorities, based on the posting.

Level 2, Your leadership story: outline a 90-second story that connects my background to this role and explains why this seat, now.

Level 3, Proof in outcomes: name the results this role will care about most and the metrics I should prepare.

Level 4, The panel and presentation: identify the likely stakeholders on the panel, what each will care about, and a 30-60-90-day plan written as hypotheses.

Level 5, Assess the seat: write two questions for each condition (scope, decision rights, reporting lines, seat history, budget and team, success measures), tailored to this posting, and flag anything the posting leaves vague.

My track is [clinical or administrative]; tailor the examples and metrics to it.

Use a heading for each level. Don't invent facts about the organization; mark anything I need to verify.

Job posting: [paste here] My resume (optional): [paste here]