



## **Successful Interviewing**

The interview is the last step of the hiring process and the most important. It offers both you and the employer the opportunity to meet one another and decide if this will be the best fit for both of you.

Since there is no one-way of interviewing, you will have to develop your own style. In the short amount of time that you will spend with a potential employer, you will either be screened in or screened out, so you must project yourself in a positive, enthusiastic manner. The interview gives the employer the opportunity to meet you in person and to evaluate the “total” you. This includes your attitude, appearance, personality, confidence, knowledge about yourself, and knowledge about the company, as well as basic ability to do the job.

### **PRIOR TO THE INTERVIEW**

Interviewing affectively means being prepared to present yourself positively by discussing your background and career goals. The interview starts long before you appear in the interviewer’s office! Prepare for your interviews by doing the following;

#### **KNOW YOURSELF**

Having a clear-cut understanding of your career goals, skills, and values will help to present a positive image in the interview.

#### **RESEARCH THE EMPLOYER**

One of the most important things you can do to make a positive impression in the interview is to research the company. Demonstrating knowledge about the employer is an excellent way to communicate your interest, which is almost as important as your ability to do the job. Check the company web site for more information.

#### **PREPARE QUESTIONS**

Your research of an organization or position may not provide all of the information that you will need before you take a job. Be prepared to ask questions during the interview. Techniques for asking good question begin with the use of who, what, where, when, why, and how. *Some examples:*

- ♣ Why are you looking to fill this position? (Is it newly created or did the last employee leave?)
- ♣ What are the opportunities for advancement?
- ♣ How many people are interviewing for this position?

### **THE INTERVIEW**

Know exactly how to get to the company and be prepared to arrive early and stay late. Dress to project an image of confidence and success. Your total image should be appropriate for the job. Bring additional copies of your resume and list of references to give to the interviewer.

Non-verbal behaviors can also contribute to your interviewing effectiveness. Be aware of your body language; how you communicate non-verbally. You will want to convey confidence and a high energy level. These attributes are communicated through your attitude and actions as well as through your verbal responses.

## **TYPES OF INTERVIEWS**

**Screening interviews:** are often done by a person well trained in interviewing at larger companies. The purpose is to weed out candidates and to cut down on the work of the hiring person. May be brief (1/2 hour).

**Individual interviews:** This is the interview that is generally expected. You interview one on one. Occasionally you may need to come back for an additional interview. Hiring decisions may be made on the spot or may be made any time in the future, depending on the number of follow-up interviews and how references check out.

**Panel interviews:** Most government agencies, cities, colleges, and school districts interview candidates by utilizing a panel. The panel may consist of anywhere from 3 to as many as 10 individuals who will be asking you questions.

**Serial interviews:** In a serial interview you may be scheduled for 2 – 7 interviews the same day, within the same company for one position.

**Telephone interviews:** Most of the guidelines for face-to-face interviewing apply. These are increasingly being used for initial screening interviews. Keep your resume (and other interview notes) nearby to help you remember what you've done and what you want to communicate.

## **INTERVIEWING CONTENT**

Frequently, the interview progress in stages: (1) establishing rapport, (2) obtaining data from the applicant, (3) discussing the position and the organization, describing your career objectives, asking the interviewer questions, (4) closing.

1. The warm-up: introduce yourself with a firm handshake and a look that says "I'm looking forward to this" rather than "I hope you don't ask me something I can't answer". Usually the first minute or two is devoted to light chitchat. Remember, that first impressions, positive or negative, die slowly. Make yours count.
2. Information gathering: Most of an initial interview will be spent discussing your qualifications: education, types of jobs held and related experiences. Your immediate career objectives and how you have realistically assessed your abilities to achieve these goals.
3. Your knowledge of the company you are interviewing with; ask questions from your prepared list.
4. Closing: at the end of the interview set parameters for the next contact. (i.e. "When may I expect to hear from you?" or "What is the next step?")

## **AFTER THE INTERVIEW**

Use the interview as a learning experience. Take notes on what you would like to improve after you leave the room. Send a follow-up letter within forty-eight hours to thank the interviewer and stress points in your background that qualify you for the position.

## **REFERENCES**

Assume that your references will be checked. It's vital that the individuals that you are using as a reference are asked, and know in advance, that you are using them as a reference.

## QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT BE ASKED IN AN INTERVIEW

Practice answering the following questions. Use a partner, a tape recorder, or a mirror. Make sure to practice out loud!

### Questions about yourself:

1. Tell me about yourself.
2. What do you consider to be one of your weaknesses?
3. What qualifications do you have that indicate you will be successful in your field?
4. What have you done which shows initiative and willingness to work?
5. What are your greatest work and non-work accomplishments during the past two years?
6. What motivates you?
7. How would a co-worker, or friend, or boss describe you?
8. What qualities do you admire most in others?

### Questions about your Career goals or plans:

1. What would you like to be doing in five (ten) years from now?
2. What type of position are you interested in?
3. What are your salary requirements?
4. What do you expect from a job?

### Previous employment question:

1. What have you learned from your past jobs?
2. How often, and in what way, did you communicate with your subordinates and superiors?
3. What specific skills acquired or used in previous jobs relate to this position?
4. How does your previous experience relate to this position?
5. Why did you leave your last job?
6. What did you like most/least about your last job?
7. Whom may we contact for references?

### Situational/behavioral questions:

1. What is one of the toughest problems you've ever had to solve, or decisions you've ever had to make? Why was it difficult? How did you solve it?
2. Give an example of a time when you had to go above and beyond the call of duty to get the job done?
3. When have you felt overwhelmed? Tell me about it.
4. What is the biggest risk you have ever taken?
5. Let's say your manager gave you ten things to do by 5:00pm and you realized that you couldn't finish them all. What would you do? How would you prioritize them?
6. Tell me about a time when you've "bent" the rules. When is it okay to do so?

### Questions specific to the company/job:

1. Why should we hire you?
2. Why do you want to work here?
3. What do you know about this organization?
4. Why do you think you would like this type of position?
5. What do you think would be your greatest contribution to our operation?
6. How do you solve problems?
7. When are you available to start work?

## INTERVIEWING STRATEGIES AND TIPS

**PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!** Spend time before the interview answering questions out loud.

**BE ON TIME** That means ten to fifteen minutes early. Be sure you have directions and you know where you are going.

**KNOW THE INTERVIEWER'S NAME** Use it in the interview.

**DON'T BE EMBARRASSED BY NERVOUSNESS.** They are probably nervous too.

**DON'T EXAGGERATE.** It will come back to haunt you.

**BE SURE YOU UNDERSTAND THE QUESTION.** Feel free to ask for clarification. Restate the question in your own words. Don't try to outsmart the employer.

**EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE.** Act natural, but dwell on the positive. Be frank and honest, but never apologize for lack of experience or weakness.

**WAIT FOR AN OFFER TO TALK ABOUT SALARY.** Otherwise, don't ask unless the interviewer brings it up.

## INTERVIEWING DO'S AND DON'TS

**DO:**

- Take breath mints with you for the day of the interview
- Express willingness to learn
- Express interest for the position during the interview
- Use a firm handshake
- Maintain good eye contact and posture
- Smile
- Research the company before the interview
- Plan a list of questions to ask in the interview
- Wear appropriate attire
- Express enthusiasm
- Call if you are going to be late or need to reschedule
- Write a thank you letter after the interview

**DON'T:**

- Assume, ask questions
- Be late
- Use call waiting during the telephone interview
- Lie or misrepresent your abilities
- Misrepresent your current compensation
- Fidget and wiggle around in your seat
- Keep checking your watch
- Chew gum
- Interrupt
- Tell negative stories about current employer
- Slouch in your chair