



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEW

An interview is the best opportunity you will have to gather information and sell yourself to a prospective employer. Investing a few minutes to read these tips will help prepare you for this critical step.

PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW

An interview is a two-way conversation, during which both you and the interviewer have several objectives to accomplish.

Yours: Frequently you will go through more than one interview with a company before you are offered a position. Your primary goal during any interview is to get a job offer, or at least an additional interview. Do not reject a position before you get an offer!

An interview is also your opportunity to gather information about the company, its needs, and the specific position. Relate this information to yourself and your qualifications.

The Interviewer: While a certain amount of information about an individual is gained through a resume, employment application, or testing, many questions remain unanswered. Interviewers want to know how you will fit in the organization's environment, what your work style is like, what motivates you, and if your experience and training are relevant to the specific position. The more you know about an organization before you arrive at the interview, the better you will be able to respond to the interviewer's concerns.

PREPARATION

- ✓ Clarify your professional short and long term goals. Be able to articulate them clearly. Professional goals do not always mean getting to the top of a corporation in a short time frame. They may include: attaining specific levels of achievement or production, creating a desirable work situation, or having a business of one's own. Short and long term goals should be consistent.
- ✓ Remember all the details and chronology of your work history. Interviewers will frequently use your resume to help them formulate questions. In addition to being familiar with the information on your resume, be ready to expand on any portion of it, and able to relate it to the needs of the person interviewing you.
- ✓ Learn as much as possible about an organization before you arrive at the interview. Good sources are annual reports, industry catalogs and the Chamber of Commerce. Knowledge of the basic information impresses the interviewer with your interest, and enables you to ask more detailed questions about the company and position.
- ✓ Be prepared for the standard questions. Keep your answers specific. Use examples to illustrate major points, and be positive.

Are you able to answer these questions right now?

- Why do you want to leave your current company?
 - Why should we hire you?
 - What are your long term and short term career goals?
 - What is your biggest strength?
 - Tell me about your work experience.
 - What is your biggest weakness?
 - What do you look for in a job?
 - What is the hardest thing you've ever done?
 - What has been your most important accomplishment?
 - What salary are you looking for?
- (Best answer for this is no answer, until an offer is received.)

INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

Your Appearance. Dress appropriately and professionally for the interview. Avoid loud colors, faddish styles, and anything that will be distracting. It is better to be too conservative in dress than not enough. (Suitable attire includes white shirts, dark suits, etc.) Check the details of your grooming including: neatly combed and trimmed hair, clean manicured fingernails, wrinkle free clothing, and polished shoes.

YOUR ACTIONS

- ✓ Actions do speak louder than words. Be aware of yours.
- ✓ Be 5-10 minutes early for your appointment. Use the extra time to compose yourself, and to read any available material on the organization. If you cannot make the interview on time, call before the scheduled appointment.
- ✓ Be polite, alert and relaxed. Indicate a genuine interest in the interviewer through eye contact, a firm handshake and by using his or her name throughout the interview. Do not forget to smile!
- ✓ Sit up straight, avoid nervous habits, smoking or chewing gum. Slouching, leaning on the interviewer's desk, and moving about constantly are irritants.
- ✓ Enthusiasm is contagious, and one of the most frequently cited reasons for hire! Do not be afraid to express your genuine interest and excitement about the position, the company and their goals.
- ✓ Project self confidence by speaking positively about your abilities, experience, and willingness to acquire new

COMMUNICATING

- ✓ Answer questions in an articulate and organized manner. Speak slowly, and be sure to use emphasis and inflection where appropriate.
- ✓ Listen carefully, and be as concise as possible in your answers. If you are not sure how much detail is wanted, ask. For example, if the interviewer says: "Tell me about the XYZ project," you might ask: "Are you most interested in the technical aspects of the final results?"
- ✓ Always speak positively about former employers and experiences. It is a fatal mistake to complain about a previous supervisor or situation during an interview. Look for the educational value in your negative experiences and speak from that viewpoint.
- ✓ Relate your work experiences directly to the needs of the organization. Examples of past accomplishments effectively demonstrate your abilities.

If you are asked questions about your personal life, use them as opportunities to emphasize how well you balance your personal and professional life. Always keep your answers job related. Save your questions on benefits, vacation, sick leave, etc. for the discussion after you have received an offer. Initially, focus your questions on the company and the position. Asking appropriate thoughtful questions is an effective selling tool. Prepare a mental list before the interview.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

When the interviewer ends your meeting, do not attempt to prolong it. Briefly express your strong interest in the company and the position, thank the interviewer for his or her time, and leave on a positive note. Try: "I appreciate your time and the opportunity to meet with you. I am very interested in the position, and look forward to meeting with you again soon."

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Send a thank you note by the next day. Keep it brief and to the point. Thank the interviewer again for his/her time, restate your qualifications in terms of what you can do for the company, and express your interest in the position.

FINALLY...

- An interview is an important part of the hiring process; remember:
- ✓ Prepare for it like you would for any important meeting.
 - ✓ Present yourself and your qualifications confidently.
 - ✓ Listen carefully, and ask appropriate questions.
 - ✓ Close the interview on a positive note.