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Interviews

The interview is usually one of the last and the most important steps in landing a new job. Your résumé, cover letter, and marketing efforts have all been tools to get you to this point. Based on your résumé and cover letter the employer now knows you are qualified for the position; this is your opportunity to convince them that you’re the right person for the job. An interview is about more than just presenting your qualifications it is about presenting your goals, demonstrating your communication skills, leadership potential, self-awareness, and most importantly your work ethic. It also presents an opportunity for you to get more information about the position and company so you can decide if this job meets your needs.

Types of Interviews

There are different types of interviews:

**Screening and telephone interviews** are often used to weed down the pool of qualified applicants. These interviews are about fact checking; establishing your qualifications and getting more information about you. Keep copies of your résumé and the job description handy and take notes. Note: if asked to do a telephone interview, schedule it at a time when you can give your full attention and not be interrupted. Never underestimate the importance of making a good impression during any contact with an employer.

**One-on-one interviews** take place between yourself and one member of the organization; you may do multiple one-on-ones with different individuals. These interviews can be more conversational, it is important to build a rapport with the interviewer.

**A panel interview** consists of a search committee made up of several members of the organization who will each ask you questions. It is important to direct your answer and attention to the individual asking the question, but also keep in mind you are addressing a group. This is your opportunity to show how you interact in a group setting.

**Group interviews** take place with multiple candidates being interviewed at the same time, these are relatively uncommon. Group interviews can be used to see how well you do under pressure, how you interact with others, and how you stand out from the group. It is important that you do not undercut or try too hard to outdo other candidates, be respectful so you do not come across as arrogant or too aggressive.
Pre-Interview

The most important part of any interview is to be prepared.

Research the company

First and foremost it is important to know the company you are interviewing with. Spend time reviewing the employer’s website to get an idea of what the employer does and the types of services or products they produce. Pay attention to recent events of the employer: recent mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, new products and/or services, changes in management, etc. If publicly held, research company financial performance at various websites such as yahoo/finance, reuters.com, or nasdaq.com. Research competitors in the employer’s industry. This research will help when answering questions and the interviewers will see that you’ve done your homework.

Know the Job Description

Just as important as it is to know the company you are interviewing with it is equally important to know the position you are applying to. Be sure to review the job description carefully. It is good to note any key words or specific qualifications you can expand upon and bring up during the interview.

Know Yourself

Having a clear understanding of who you are and what your goals are will help you prepare for the questions you might be asked during your interview. Analyze your own personal qualities and abilities; understand your habits, and how you work. Think about the jobs you’ve had and what you accomplished in those positions. Also, be familiar with what you put in your résumé and cover letter.

Grooming

Rule of thumb is to dress and groom in a manner that allows you to feel confident. Dressing nicely and comfortably is important, it will make you will feel more at ease. Generally, men should be clean-shaven, hair groomed, dressed in a dark suit with a necktie, and dark socks. Suit and shirt should be clean and pressed with shoes shined. Women should be dressed in either a skirt or suit that is clean and pressed. Skirts should be knee length. Stockings and closed-toe shoes should be worn. Check for lint, pet hair, dandruff, etc. Clean hygiene is essential. Perfumes, colognes, and deodorants should not be too strong. Nails should be clean.

The Day Of...

Be sure to give yourself plenty of time to get to the interview, the last thing you want to be is stressed or rushed. Arrive 10 minutes early. Always bring extra copies of your résumé in case there are individuals who don’t have a copy.
Interview

The first impression is paramount; you do not get a second chance. Typically, the interviewer will make his or her decision on a candidate in the first 30 seconds of an interview. The impact will occur several ways; the confidence in your handshake, tone of your voice, and your eye contact. How well you are prepared will have a direct correlation with the effectiveness of your first impression. Be confident, direct, articulate, and to the point. UC Studies show that 7% of your impact comes from the words you say; 38% from how you say it (your tonal quality); and 55% from what your body is doing while you’re speaking.

Be Enthusiastic

Excitement and enthusiasm is appealing, contagious, and expressed differently by everyone. Your nonverbal expression is just as important as your verbal. The point is to show it in your own unique way. Smile, laugh, and vary the tone, volume, pitch, and rate of your voice. Be cognizant of the interviewer’s style. Always be aware of the nonverbal messages you are sending, such as your eye contact and posture. Show the same level of enthusiasm with every person and with every question.

Listen!

Listen to not only what the employer says, but also how he or she says it. This will give you insight as to the style of the employer and how he or she thinks. Once you understand the interviewer’s style you can better relate and pattern your responses. Listen to each question carefully and don’t be afraid to ask for clarification. You want to answer the question to the best of your ability so fully understanding the question is important.

Ask Questions

It is just as important to ask questions as it is to answer them. Asking questions can make the interview more conversational and more comfortable for everyone involved. This will also help you gain insight into what your life will be like at this company. Make sure your questions are open ended.

Things to Avoid

It is important to never interrupt the employer. When answering questions don’t ramble, lie, or be too vague in your answers. Never say anything negative about your prior employers or colleagues. Don’t get too comfortable, remain professional at all times. Don’t chew gum or have anything in your mouth. Avoid nervous habits such as tapping your foot or pen.

At the End of the Interview

Ask for the job, “Based on my knowledge of this job and our conversation about the company, I want this job.” Be sure to get the interviewer’s business card for follow up.
Interview Questions

There are a few common types of questions:

Open-Ended Questions

These questions are used to find out more information about you. They are used to find out your skills, experience, and more about your education or background. By being open-ended they will allow you to describe yourself in depth.

Examples:

What are your major strengths?
What are your weaknesses?
What accomplishments are you most proud of in your career?
Tell us more about yourself.

Behavioral Questions

These questions ask you to describe how you’ve handled a specific situation. You may also be asked technical questions such as how you have or would perform certain tasks. This is how employers predict how you might operate in the future.

Examples:

- Do you work effectively under pressure?
- Tell us about a time you worked with others to complete a project.
- Give us an example of how you overcame a major obstacle.
- How do you prioritize your tasks?

Situational Questions

These are hypothetical questions revolving around a situation you might be put in or a problem you may have to solve. Here is your chance to show off your problem solving skills.

Examples:

- How do you deal with a colleague whom you seem unable to build a successful working relationship with?
- If your boss asked you to work on an important project then another superior asks you to
complete a different project, how would you balance these two projects?

- Give an example of when you’ve had to explain a complex technical issue to someone who without any technical experience.

**How to Answer Questions**

There are several ways to help prepare yourself prior to going into your interview. First of all think about your past job experiences and how those reflect on your behavior and work ethic, take notes on these experiences and examine your role. Think of examples of situations where you showed initiative, handled problems, or contributed to a specific outcome. Make sure to bring up some challenging experiences you have worked through. Focus on your strengths. Remember not to criticize others or speak negatively about any past coworkers or superiors. Always be positive.

Practice answering questions you think may be asked. You do not want to seem rehearsed or memorize answers but it is good to be prepared, practice makes perfect. It is also a good way to organize your thoughts. If you know the ideas you wish to express and points you want to bring up, you will be better prepared to articulate your thoughts into clear answers during the interview. Always keep your answers relevant, concrete, and quantifiable—try not to be generic. Everyone says they are motivated or hardworking, what makes you unique? It is best to answer questions concisely in short blurbs without rambling on, yet be as specific as possible and never vague. A question should take no longer than two to three minutes to answer depending on how open ended they are, but avoid one-liners.

**Post-Interview**

**The “Thank You” note**

In today’s market, it is expected to e-mail a “Thank you” note. Express your gratitude for their time in meeting with you and your continued interest in the position and the company. Provide 2 to 3 specific reasons why you would be an ideal fit for the position. Mention something specifically talked about in your conversation and express your excitement in taking the next step in the interview process. If possible send a separate and different note to each person that you met. Your note should be sent the same day.
Example Questions

- What do you know about our company?
- What is your reason for leaving your last job?
- What are your top 3 strengths and areas of development?
- Tell me about yourself.
- Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
- Describe the best manager you ever worked for and why?
- What would your boss and co-workers say about you?
- How did you add value to your last company?
- What motivates you to do your best?
- What are your most significant accomplishments?
- How do you handle criticism?
- How do you deal with a co-worker whom you feel isn’t doing their fair share?
- Tell me about one of the most difficult situations you found yourself in and what you learned from it?
- Do you consider yourself successful?
- What have you done to improve yourself in the last year?
- What have you learned from mistakes on the job?
- What computer programs, technology, and office equipment are you familiar with?
Example Questions to ask the Interviewer

- Why is the position open?
- Can you walk me through the responsibilities of this position?
- What do you expect your candidate to get accomplished in the first quarter and the first year?
- What are your priorities or goals for this person and your department?
- How do you measure success?
- How is performance measured?
- What challenges do you anticipate for this position?
- What is the next logical progression for this person’s career in your organization?
- What is your management style?
- How do you motivate and/or develop your team?

Links

Job Interview Boot Camp – Executive the Interview-Video

10 Do’s and Dont’s for Interviews

http://careertv.com/
Check List

- Project a professional appearance with good hygiene
- Arrive early—plan for parking/traffic
- Reflect a positive, can-do attitude
- Remember to smile
- Make eye contact and give a firm handshake
- Highlight accomplishments
- Avoid saying anything negative about your past job, boss, or coworkers
- Be professional and confident
- Listen carefully
- Watch out for nervous habits
- Remember this is the time to brag (market yourself!)