

Interviewing for Success

The interview is a conversation to determine mutual needs. You have certain needs just as the company does. You want to describe how your skills fit the job, but you also want to make sure that the job is right for you. The interviewer's decision to hire you is based on your personality, your skills, your career ambitions, your education, your experience, and your ability to communicate these things effectively. Your success on your first interview is a critical factor in getting hired.

DIFFERENT METHODS

Many employers are utilizing a variety of methods such as phone interviews, videotaped interviews, and group or team-led interviews.

Prior to the Interview:

1. RESEARCH THE ORGANIZATION

Know something about their products, services, and their position in the industry. This shows the interviewer you have done your homework.

▶▶ You can find this information at your library in annual reports, brochures, recruiting pamphlets, newspaper articles, *Dunn and Bradstreet* or *Moody's*. It is also very helpful if you can talk to someone who works for the company. Company web sites are also informative.

Dress appropriately: conservatively is best! Obtain a second opinion on your outfit before your interview.

2. ETIQUETTE

- ▶ Be certain of time, place of interview, and name of the interviewer.
- ▶ Arrive early. Give yourself at least 15 extra minutes to allow for traffic problems.
- ▶ Bring a pen and notebook with you, extra résumés, and a list of references.
- ▶ Don't smoke or chew gum and make sure your breath is fresh!
- ▶ Wait for your interviewer to sit down or offer you a chair before seating yourself.

The Three-Step Process for Answering Interview Questions

STEP 1:

Understand What Is Really Being Asked.

It usually relates to the employer's expectations regarding your adaptive skills and personality: Can we depend on you? Are you easy to get along with? Are you a good worker?

STEP 2:

Answer The Question Briefly, In A Non-Damaging Way.

Acknowledge the facts, but present them as an advantage, not a disadvantage.

STEP 3:

Answer The Real Question By Presenting Your Related Skills.

Once you understand the employer's real concern, you can get around to answering the hidden question by presenting your skills and experiences related to the job. Remember to be specific in your responses and try to make them workplace related.

Interviewing Issues: Be Aware

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

You are not obligated to answer any questions with regard to race, ethnic background, native language, age, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, marital status or children. However, if the interviewer asks about these personal aspects, you can answer the underlying question that often relates to your commitment, preparation, and qualifications for the position at hand. For example, if asked, “Do you have a boyfriend?” You can respond by sharing, “If you review my résumé, you’ll see that I am committed to my career and although my social life is important, I do not let it interfere with my professional life.” Remember that you do have control in an interview, with respect to the information which you share! Stay on your toes!

Questions asked by employers

1. What are your long-range and short-range goals and objectives, when and why did you establish these goals, and how are you preparing yourself to achieve them?
2. What do you see yourself doing five years from now?
3. Why did you choose the career for which you are preparing?
4. What do you consider to be your greatest strengths and weaknesses?
5. What do you know about our company?
6. Are you willing to travel?
7. What qualities should a successful manager possess?
8. How do you work under pressure?

Questions to ask the recruiter

1. What qualities are you looking for in your new hires?
2. Could you tell me about your initial and future training programs?
3. What is the work environment like?
4. What makes your firm different from your competitors?

Behavior Based Interviewing

A New Trend

DEFINITION: BEHAVIOR BASED INTERVIEWING

A structured pattern of questions, designed to probe the applicant's past behavior in a situation similar to those required by the job.

PHILOSOPHY

The best indicator of future behavior or performance is past behavior or performance in similar circumstances.

- ▶ The more recent the behavior, the better its predictive power.
- ▶ The longer lasting the behavior, the greater the predictive power.

Sample interview questions

1. Describe a time when you were faced with problems or stresses which tested your coping skills. What did you do?
2. Tell me about a time when you had to use your spoken communication skills in order to get a point across that was important to you.
3. Give an example of a time when you had to use your fact-finding skills to gain information for solving a problem, then tell me how you analyzed the information to come to a decision.
4. Give me an example of an important goal which you had set in the past and tell me about your success in reaching it.
5. Give me an example of a time when you felt you were able to build motivation in your coworkers or subordinates at work.
6. Describe the most significant written document you have had to complete.
7. What did you do in your last job/class project to contribute toward a teamwork environment? Be specific.

Be an interview S.T.A.R.

For a technique to help you remember what information to include in a behavior based interview response, think "STAR"—utilize a concrete example in your response which includes:

Situation

Task

Action

Result

After the Interview

Writing a Thank You Note

Writing thank you notes is a critical step in the job-hunting process that many overlook. Not sending a thank you note may negatively affect your chances.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR WRITING A THANK YOU LETTER

- ▶ Immediately after the interview, ask for the business card of the person you spoke with or, if none is available, get the correct spelling of his or her name and title. Write down your thoughts related to the interview and any specific points you discussed with the interviewer. Do this for each person you speak with immediately after your meeting, if possible. This will allow you to write personalized thank you notes later.
- ▶ Write a thank you note to everyone you interview with—be it an in-person meeting, a phone interview, an informational interview, etc.
- ▶ Write and mail the note promptly after the interview, within 24 hours, if possible.
- ▶ Your note should be brief and personalized.
- ▶ Use either a card or the same paper that you used for your résumé and cover letter, with a matching envelope. Cards can be handwritten, paper should be typed.
- ▶ If you find out during the interview that the hiring decision will be made before a letter sent in the mail can reach the company, then choose an email thank you correspondence instead.
- ▶ Express your appreciation for the opportunity to interview.
- ▶ Reinforce your enthusiasm about the position and the company.
- ▶ Recap the main points that you would like them to remember about you and your strengths in relation to the job.
- ▶ Reiterate what you understand to be the timeline for the hiring process.
- ▶ Include any pertinent information about yourself that you may have forgotten to mention during the interview.
- ▶ Re-answer a question that you might not have answered appropriately or well enough during the interview.

Sample Post-Interview Thank You Letter

Marietta College
Box K-44
Marietta, OH 45750

April 29, 2000

Ms. Susan Garcia
Assistant Superintendent
Main Street City School District
Anytown, IL 60001

Dear Ms. Garcia:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you during your recent visit to Marietta College. I enjoyed our interview very much, and the teaching opportunities sound exciting and challenging.

Per our conversation, I have enclosed an application and a copy of my transcript. If you need additional information, please feel free to contact me at 740-387-5341 or by email at mmcguffe@marietta.edu.

I am looking forward to the possibility of joining your dynamic team and enriching the lives of Main Street City School's students.

Sincerely,

Margaret McGuffey

Enclosures