

The Interview

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PURPOSE OF THE INTERVIEW :

The interview gives you the opportunity to convey to an employer your interest in a particular position and to present the skills you can bring to the job. The interview is a chance for you and the employer to get to know each other and to assess if this position and company is a suitable fit or match. In addition, the interview allows you to gain insight into the job and the organization, and it enables the employer to determine if you have the skills and abilities needed to be an effective member of his/her organization.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW :

Before going on your first interview, there are several steps to take in order to prepare yourself. Preparing for an interview is critical for a productive and successful interview. Organizations vary, therefore you must prepare for each and every interview. You need to conduct a thorough assessment of both yourself and the employer. Mock interviews are a great way to ensure that you are conveying yourself in a positive and polished manner.

- **Know Yourself**

- ⇒ Know the information on your resume.
- ⇒ Identify your three of your most valuable strengths, along with an example of how you have demonstrated each. Also consider your weaknesses.
- ⇒ Be able to discuss decisions you have made and the thought behind them.
- ⇒ Identify accomplishments you are proud of and be able to verbalize why.
- ⇒ Identify situations you might have handled differently.
- ⇒ Be able to give concrete examples of your skills and qualifications.
- ⇒ Be able to articulate why you are interested in this field. Think about your long-term goals.

- **Know the Employer and the Field**

- ⇒ Review the nature and responsibilities of the position and be able to relate your past experiences to the position.
- ⇒ Read current periodicals and trade journals to learn about current trends in the industry.
- ⇒ Research the Employer/Key Facts to Gather:
 - Company's products/services, technologies and industries.
 - Competitors and customers.
 - Key people in organization.
 - Size in terms employees.
 - Annual revenue, annual net earnings, # of shareowners, annual assets, NYSE symbol.
 - Facility locations.
 - Organizational structure of company.
 - View of company by clients, suppliers and competition.
 - Latest news reports on company (local or national).

Review web site, mission statements, annual reports, and company literature to find the aforementioned information

- **Nonverbal Communication Skills**

Messages are conveyed during the interview by what you say and by how you say it. Positive nonverbal communication factors will reinforce your verbal message.

- ⇒ Greet the employer with a firm handshake.
- ⇒ Maintain steady eye contact with the interviewer.
- ⇒ Sit attentively to demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm.
- ⇒ Display self-confidence.
- ⇒ Dress in suitable manner to convey a polished, professional image (err on conservative side).
- ⇒ SMILE!

- **Verbal Communication Skills**
 - ⇒ Be a good listener; be sure to answer the question that is posed to you. Don't bring up extraneous matters.
 - ⇒ Use clear, concise answers.
 - ⇒ Be prepared to put a positive – but not dishonest – spin on any negatives in your background.
 - ⇒ Don't exaggerate and don't be negative.
 - ⇒ Be specific. Refer to concrete experiences.
 - ⇒ Use proper grammar.
 - ⇒ Don't say: uhm, uh, yeah or yup (instead of yes), y'know, like, okay, I guess, pretty good.
- **Practice for the Interview...*Practice Makes Perfect!***
 - ⇒ Review interview questions.
 - ⇒ Do not try to dominate the interview, let the interviewer guide the questions.
 - ⇒ Consider doing a mock interview with a friend or a member of the CDO staff.
 - ⇒ Relax and be yourself, let them get to know you!
- **Pre-Interview Checklist**
 - ⇒ Are your interviewing cloths clean, pressed and ready to go?
 - ⇒ Do you know where the interview site is and how long it takes to get there so you can be assured that you will arrive at least 15 minutes early?
 - ⇒ Have you contacted all your references?
 - ⇒ Have you prepared a list of questions to ask the recruiter?
 - ⇒ Have you practiced your answers to anticipated questions?
 - ⇒ Have you gathered everything you need to bring? (Extra copies of your resume and/or cover letter and your list of references.)

SAMPLE QUESTIONS ASKED BY EMPLOYERS

- **Questions Most Often Asked**
 - ⇒ Tell me about yourself.
 - ⇒ Why should we hire you?
 - ⇒ Why did you choose this field?
 - ⇒ Why did you choose engineering as your major?
 - ⇒ What do you consider to be your major strengths and weaknesses?
 - ⇒ What major problem have you encountered and how did you deal with it?
 - ⇒ Why did you decide to seek a position with this organization?
 - ⇒ What are you long term goals?
 - ⇒ Where do you see yourself in five/ten years?
- **Questions About Your Previous Employment**
 - ⇒ What job have you enjoyed the most/least? Why?
 - ⇒ What kind of work environment do you prefer?
 - ⇒ If I were to contact a previous supervisor, what would that person have to say about you?
 - ⇒ What was your reason for leaving this job?
- **Questions About Your Role in the Company and Position**
 - ⇒ Why did you decide to seek a position with this firm/organization?
 - ⇒ What do you know about our firm/organization?
 - ⇒ What factors are important to you in a job?
 - ⇒ What are you looking for in a supervisor?
 - ⇒ Do you have a geographic preference?
 - ⇒ Are you willing to travel?

- **Behavioral-Based Interview Questions**

Some employers believe that the best predictor of future success is past success. In behavioral-based interviews, you will be asked to give examples of a specific situation, in order to provide evidence that you have the skills required for the position. The interviewer will not continue until you have provided a specific example.

Success in behavioral-based interviews requires preparation and practice. You must be able to recall many experiences quickly, select the most appropriate one, and then describe it effectively.

Create a list of 15 to 20 main experiences that demonstrate a variety of skills and abilities. Draw upon your college experiences, academic and extracurricular; volunteer and work experiences; and when appropriate, personal experiences.

- ⇒ Describe a time when you were faced with a stressful situation that demonstrated your coping skills.
- ⇒ Give me an example of a time when you set a goal and were able to meet or to achieve it.
- ⇒ Tell me about a time in which you had to use your oral presentation skills to influence someone's opinion.
- ⇒ Please discuss an important written document that you were required to complete.
- ⇒ How do you determine what gets priority in scheduling your time?
- ⇒ What is your typical way of dealing with conflict? Give me an example.
- ⇒ Tell me about a difficult decision you have made in the last year.
- ⇒ Give me an example of when you showed initiative and took the lead.
- ⇒ Give me an example of a time when you motivated others in a team environment.
- ⇒ Give me an example of a time when you felt it was necessary to modify or to change your actions in order to respond to the needs of another person.
- ⇒ Give me an example of a time when you went beyond the call of duty in order to get the job done.
- ⇒ Give me an example of a time when you used your fact-finding skills to solve a problem.

PROBLEM AREAS

To address these areas effectively, prepare in advance your response. Be honest and positive. Do not make excuses for yourself or attempt to blame someone else.

- Low GPA
- Being over or under qualified
- Prior Terminations
- Gaps in your work history

ILLEGAL QUESTIONS

- **Employers cannot ask about**

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| ⇒ Race | ⇒ Marital Status |
| ⇒ National Origin | ⇒ Age |
| ⇒ Religion | ⇒ Prior Criminal Record |

The interviewer may not realize that they have asked an illegal question. Your best bet is to answer in a straightforward and polite manner. You also want to move the conversation to an examination of your skills and abilities, not your status.

A portion of this information is taken from Knock'Em Dead, The Ultimate Job Seeker's Handbook by Martin Yate, published by Adams Media Corporation (800-USA-JOBS).

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK DURING THE INTERVIEW

- **Questions to Ask About The Specific Position**

- ⇒ To whom would I report if I held the position?
- ⇒ Which other departments would I interact with?
- ⇒ What would my key responsibilities be?
- ⇒ What type of training would I receive?
- ⇒ What would my first project be?
- ⇒ Which skills and personal qualities would be needed for success on the job?
- ⇒ What are the biggest challenges of the job?
- ⇒ What are some of the more difficult problems facing someone in this position? How do you think these could best be handled?
- ⇒ Where could a person go who is successful in this position and within what time frame? What would be a typical career path?
- ⇒ How is one judged? How is success measured and determined?
- ⇒ Where is the job located? What are the travel requirements, if any?
- ⇒ How much contact and exposure to clients/customers, etc. is there?

- **Questions to Ask About the Company/Employer**

- ⇒ In what ways has this organization been most successful in terms of products and services over the years?
- ⇒ What significant changes do you foresee in the near future?
- ⇒ What are the skills and attributes most needed to get ahead in the company?
- ⇒ What has been the growth pattern of the company over the last five years? Is it profitable? How profitable? Is the company privately or publicly held?
- ⇒ What issues or concerns are facing this department/organization/firm now?
- ⇒ What are the goals for this department/organization/firm for the upcoming year?
- ⇒ What new projects has this department/organization/firm undertaken recently?

- **Closing Questions**

- ⇒ What is your timeframe for making a decision?
- ⇒ What is the nature of their search process?
- ⇒ How many other candidates do you expect to interview?
- ⇒ Is there anything else you need from me to have a complete picture of my qualifications?
Do not ask questions regarding salary, or benefits of any kind, until the interviewer approaches the subject.

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CLOSING THE INTERVIEW

- **Things to Remember**

- ⇒ At the end of the interview, highlight any of your relevant skills and stress your interest in the position.
- ⇒ If you have any, ask your pertinent questions at this time.
- ⇒ Provide whatever credentials, references, or employment application that may have been requested by the employer.
- ⇒ Be sure to obtain a business card.
- ⇒ Send a typed thank you within a day or two.
 - In this thank you, you may refer to specific issues that were discussed, express your thanks and restate your interest in the position.

⇒ Thank the interviewer for taking the time to meet with you.

REASONS PEOPLE DO NOT GET HIRED

In a publisher's survey of 153 companies nationwide, the following are the top ten reasons in order of importance for rejection of job candidates:

1. Improper appearance. This was the number one reason. To avoid having your appearance used against you, **BE NEAT AND CLEAN AND DRESS APPROPRIATELY**. This cannot be emphasized enough. In general a suit or sport coat with a necktie and slacks for men and a suit or tailored dress for women are acceptable. Even if a corporation is known for its "casual" dress environment, you are not yet an employee of that organization, and still need to represent yourself in a professional manner.
2. Overly aggressive presentation, conceited, "Superior Complex"
3. Poor communication skills (grammar, diction, voice)
4. Lack of career plans, no purpose or goals
5. Lack of interest and enthusiasm, passive or indifferent
6. Lack of confidence or poise, very nervous, or ill-at-ease
7. Overemphasis on money, interested only in best dollar offer
8. Poor scholastic record
9. Expects too much too soon, not willing to start at the bottom
10. Failure to participate in activities

• Other Mistakes People Make During Interviews

- ⇒ Lack of Preparation
- ⇒ Arriving Late
- ⇒ Failing to Listen (what the interviewer wants to hear is more important than what you may want to say)
- ⇒ Condemnation of past employers
- ⇒ Not providing specific experiences or explanations for answers

The Interview Checklist

- Have you considered doing a mock interview?
- Is your suit clean and ironed?
- Do you have extra copies of your resume?
- Have you asked three people to be your reference (supervisor, professor, advisor, etc)?
- Have you prepared a typed list of your three references?
- Have you prepared questions to ask the interviewer and written them down?
- Did you research the company thoroughly?
- Did you print out directions to the interview (directions can usually be found on company's website or www.mapquest.com or www.mbta.com)?
- If you are unfamiliar with the area, did you practice traveling to the interview?
- Is there gas in your car?
- Do you have a cell phone or change for a pay phone, along with the interviewer's phone number, in case of an emergency?
- Did you plan on leaving 30-45 extra minutes for travel (think disabled train, Boston traffic, Big Dig, car accidents on major roads, construction, etc)?