

INTERVIEWING

PURPOSE

The purpose of an interview is to determine if you and an employer are suited to work together. Both you and the interviewer are promoting one another.

In the interview you want to present yourself as the most qualified candidate for the job. You must demonstrate that you have the following qualities and skills:

- ?? Potential
- ?? Personality
- ?? Skill
- ?? Ability to work on a team

The employer wants to let you know that he/she has a good opportunity for you.

HANDSHAKE

How did your partner's handshake feel? What sense do you now have of this person?

Interviewing Skills Quiz

- T F 1. You should schedule your first interviews with companies in which you are most interested in.**
- T F 2. You do not have to answer questions regarding age, race, national origin, marital status, or children.**
- T F 3. Conducting informational interviews can be an effective way to find a job.**
- T F 4. In a job interview, an exchange of information is made between two people so that each person can arrive at an employment decision.**
- T F 5. It is important to discuss salary requirements early in the interview to get that part of the discussion out of the way.**
- T F 6. When asked to describe your background, you should spend no more than a couple of minutes unless questioned further.**
- T F 7. Try to avoid eye contact with the interviewer since it is likely to make him/her uncomfortable.**
- T F 8. If you are asked if you have any weaknesses, you should never give any.**
- T F 9. If you are a smoker and want to smoke during an interview, you should first ask the interviewer if it's O.K.**
- T F 10. It is not a good idea to ask the interviewer why the position is open.**
- T F 11. About 65% of all jobs are filled through recruiters, personnel agencies and newspaper ads.**

TYPES OF INTERVIEWS

There are two major categories of job interviews:

- ?? Screening
- ?? Hiring

Screening Interviews

The screening interviewer's job is not to decide if you are the best person for the job, but to judge whether or not you measure up to the profile of the hypothetically ideal candidate profile.

These interviewers tend to proceed in logical, systematic fashion. They often make a written report of the facts they collected and of their opinions of the candidates. They know what information is needed and ask the right questions to get it. Your answers should be direct, concise and positive.

There are two major types of screening interviews:

- ?? Telephone
- ?? Preliminary

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews are for screening a candidate when an organization does not have a representative in the area and is unable to send someone to meet the candidate. They are also used to screen local candidates. Within

five minutes an employer can usually determine whether he/she wants to bring a candidate in for an interview.

Preliminary Interview

Large organizations use a brief screening interview conducted by a personnel specialist to screen out candidates who are clearly not appropriate. The interview will consist of probing questions to determine technical competence and open-ended questions to assess personality.

Hiring Interview

The hiring interview is usually conducted by the immediate boss or by a person with authority to hire. The supervisor is usually interested in the following:

?? Can you do what the company wants?

?? Can you solve their problem?

?? Will you fit in the organization?

This meeting with the supervisor is selling situation. It is necessary to be a good listener, ask questions and illustrate through discussion of your accomplishments that you can address their organization needs. There are two major types of hiring interviews:

Panel or Board Interview

This type of interview is conducted by two or more people simultaneously, usually taking turns asking questions, each with their own separate agendas. You

may be interviewed by as many as five different people representing different levels of management and different functional areas within the organization and a human resources representative.

Series Interviews

Series interviews consist of individual interviews with three or more people in the organization, all in one day. The participants are possibly the same people as the panel interview but you will meet one at a time rather than all participants at one time.

INTERVIEW PREPARATION STEPS

There are four basic steps you need to take to prepare effectively for an interview:

- ?? Research the company and the position
- ?? Match your strengths to the company and the position profile
- ?? Prepare answers to difficult questions
- ?? Prepare questions to ask

LEADERSHIP is a behavior critical to the Professional Sales Associate position. Here are some questions we could ask the applicants in order to determine their strengths in this area:

- ?? *Have you ever needed cooperation from groups that did not report to you? What did you do to gain cooperation? What were the satisfactions and disappointments?*
- ?? *Specifically, what do you do to set an example for your subordinates or peers?*
- ?? *What have you learned about managing/supervising?*

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STEP ONE: RESEARCH THE COMPANY AND THE POSITION

RESEARCH THE COMPANY

The more information you have about a prospective employer, the better prepared you are during the interview. Knowing about the organization's products or services, trends, and employment requirements are vital to your interview preparation and success. Use the sample Employer Research Form in this book to find:

- ?? Name of company/organization
- ?? Ownership – Publicly or Privately held, Foreign Owned
 - When was the company established

- By whom was the company established
- Where was the company established
- ?? Ability to attract and keep talented people
- ?? Opportunity for staff career development
- ?? Parent Corporation/Subsidiaries
- ?? Area/Locale of Business: Local, Regional, National or International
- ?? Stable or advancing industry
- ?? Use of corporate assets
- ?? Value of long-term investments
- ?? Commitment to Research and Development
- ?? Innovation
- ?? Environmental commitment
- ?? Community Service responsibility
- ?? Primary mission or purpose of the company/organization
- ?? Principle services/products
- ?? Latest annual sales/revenue information
- ?? Major competitors

- ?? Competitive advantages and/or weaknesses
- ?? Organizational culture (management style, work environment, structure)
- ?? Historical information
- ?? Trends, hot issues and other relevant information
- ?? Related fields or careers

RESEARCH THE POSITION

- ?? The kind of work performed in the field
- ?? Type of setting, work conditions
- ?? Qualifications/skills required
- ?? Training/education required
- ?? Typical earnings, advancement
- ?? Career path
- ?? Employment outlook
- ?? Volunteer or internship

WHERE TO LOOK

?? Speak with people that work, hire and teach in the career field

?? Public Library

?? Career Planning and Placement

- Salary Surveys

~~///~~American Salaries and Wages Survey

~~///~~www.salary.com

- Magazines and Trade Journals

~~///~~Business Week

~~///~~Wall Street Journal

STEP TWO: MATCHING YOUR SKILLS TO COMPANY PROFILE AND POSITION

Once you have relevant company information, you will need to prepare to describe yourself to demonstrate that you will be a valuable addition to the firm. The best way to convince the boss that you can do the job is to illustrate how you have performed similar tasks in the past.

Select the achievements you want to emphasize based on what you know about the company and the position.

STEP THREE: PREPARING ANSWERS TO DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Once you have determined the skills you possess that best match the company profile and position description, you need to organize your thoughts so that your answers flow naturally. Experienced recruiters ask penetrating and often difficult questions. They have limited time and are skilled at getting to the point. Advance preparation allows you to illustrate good communication skills and express yourself in a well-organized, professional manner.

Although you cannot anticipate every question, you can prepare your responses and practice answering difficult questions (see pages [through](#)).

?? Recall and write your accomplishments ahead of time.

?? Follow each skill or accomplishment with a concrete example.

?? Describe your skills/accomplishments by telling a story, by painting a picture.

?? Use the statement, “*That reminds me...*” when there is information that you want to share.

ORANIZATION EXCERCISE

A good method of organizing your stories in writing before you interview is the PAR method. Writing PAR statements allows you to illustrate the benefit of your accomplishments clearly and in advance so that during an interview your communication flows naturally. In a PAR, P is for the Problem, A is for the Action you took to solve the problem, and R is for the Results of your action. Include the BENEFIT of your experience, there is always a benefit even in a bad experience.

Give a PAR experience in which you were a team player.

P = _____

A = _____

R = _____

BENEFIT: _____

Write PAR Statements for situations such as:

Research projects

Volunteer activities

Teamwork/Solitary work

Handling crisis or failure

Leadership

Handling conflicting priorities

Presentations

STEP FOUR: PREPARING QUESTIONS TO ASK

Take the time to develop relevant and insightful questions for each interview.

- ?? Review the list of “Sample Questions To Ask Interviewers” contained in this packet.
- ?? Make a list of your own questions. Do not rely on generic questions.
- ?? Keep questions focused on the position and company. Save employee benefits questions for after the offer.

OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS

An objection is **not** a rejection. It is a request for more information. If the employer says you do not have as much experience as desired, do not take it personally or become defensive. Overcome the objection by:

?? Describing relevant experience

?? Reviewing work that relates to the position

?? Pointing out that you are a quick learner and giving an example.

PROJECT ENTHUSIAM

Employers seek enthusiastic people. Show enthusiasm by speaking positively about previous jobs or supervisors. Demonstrate enthusiasm about yourself, the job, your future boss and the company... it can get you the job!

SMILE!

INTERVIEWING SKILLS

Active Listening

Body language can show that you are interested and truly listening.

Be relaxed

Do not slouch or sit too stiffly

Eye contact

Maintain friendly and attentive eye contact without a glassy stare. Do not let your eyes wander. When there is more than one interviewer, establish eye contact with each of them.

Facial Expression

Make sure your facial expression matches what you are saying. Relax and smile often.

<i>Posture</i>	During your interviews sit up straight on your chair. Leaning forward indicates interest when it is appropriate.
<i>Tone of voice</i>	Inflection and volume are important. Speak in a clear, well modulated, audible voice. Rapid speech and loud volume show your nervousness. Your voice is your primary instrument of communication so use it wisely.
<i>Nonwords</i>	Eliminate nonwords such as “you know,” “um,” “like,” and “ok.”
<i>Gestures</i>	Be careful not to tap nervously or jiggle.

INTERVIEWING TIPS

First impressions are important

First impressions occur between the first 30 seconds and two minutes. Once formed they are hard to break.

Dress appropriately

Standards of dress are industry specific. The following are recommended guidelines:

<u>Women</u>	<u>Men</u>
?? Suit or tailored dress in solid or subtle color, no extreme slits, necklines or hemlines	?? Dark solid or pin striped suit
?? Polished, closed toe shoes, basic dark pumps with medium or low heels	?? Shined, dark shoes, laced shoes preferred
?? Clean nails and no chips if polished	?? Clean nails
?? Small handbag or attaché, not both	?? Conservative tie
?? Light make-up and jewelry	?? Solid white shirt, clean and pressed
?? Neutral colored stockings	?? Avoid flashy cuff links, rings, neck chains or earrings
	?? Over the calf dark socks

Both

?? Light fragrance, if any

?? One ring per hand except wedding set

Show what you can do for the company

One of the biggest turnoffs for the employer is a candidate who seems self-centered and cares only about what the company can do for him/her.

Shakes hands firmly while making direct eye contact

All people like a firm handshake and dislike the limp or bone crushing encounter.

Remember that the employer is on your side

Recruiters need to hire qualified individuals and have every reason to hope that you fill their requirements.

Leave the interview on a positive note

As you leave, express your interest in the position. Find out about the next step in the interview process and when you can expect to hear from the employer.

Send a thank you note

A simple courtesy can make the difference between selection and rejection. When an employer receives a thank you note, you are remembered and you stand out positively. A short three lines are all it takes.

EXAMPLE:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the position of Public Relations Assistant. I am excited about the prospect of working for your firm and I am confident that I will meet your expectations.

I will follow-up with you early next week.

Tell me about yourself – “The 90 Second Interview”

Write a brief statement answering each of these areas:

?? Where were you born and raised?

?? What is your educational background?

?? What is your work experience and/or community involvement?

?? What are your career objectives?

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASK INTERVIEWERS

Why is the position available?

What has been the primary reason for turnover in the position?

Who is the direct supervisor for this position and what is that person's style of management?

How are employees evaluated and how is success measured?

What would you like done differently by the next person who fills the position?

What type of people seem to do well in this department/company?

What type of training is provided?

What are some of the objectives that you would like accomplished in this job?

What issues and projects are most pressing?

What are some of the more difficult problems facing someone in this position? How do you think these could best be handled?

What kind of support does this position receive in terms of people, finances, etc.?

How would you describe the corporate culture?

Where is the company strong and where does it need to be strengthened?

Where could a person go who is successful in this position and within what time frame?

What are the opportunities you see for the department/company in the next year?

What do you like about this company?

Who would you say are the company's main competitors?

What would you change about this organization?

How well do the departments interact with each other?

How is the company primed to deal with technological changes over the next two years?

What forces drive this company?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED TO ANSWER

1. Tell me about yourself.

Do not spend too much time on this question. Avoid details and do not ramble. You can break the ice with a little personal history; however, giving too much personal information is not appropriate in an interview

?? Where you have lived

?? Your educational background

?? Work experience and community involvement

?? Your career objectives

2. Did you bring your resume?

Have several copies with you in case you meet with additional staff members

3. What do you know about our organization?

Demonstrate that you have done your research! Highlight the organization's history, products, services, revenues, and problems.

4. What is your definition of success?

Be prepared with your own definition.

5. What have been your most significant accomplishments?

Refer to accomplishment statements and provide concrete examples.

6. How would you describe your personality?

Your answer should be concise and relevant to the particular position

and organization.

7. What are your strong points?

Present three. Present them as they relate to the particular position and organization.

8. What are your weak points?

Do not say “none.” Give only one. Turn it around to a positive answer such as, “I am sometimes impatient and do the work myself, rather than asking for help when working against a tight deadline.”

9. If I spoke with one of your previous employers or supervisors, what would he or she say are your greatest strengths and weaknesses?

Discuss how you feel others perceive you and your performance. Do not be inconsistent with your own perceptions.

10. How long would it take you to make a meaningful contribution to our organization?

Discuss your ability to learn quickly and adapt to new situations. Point out how your related experience and skills could benefit the organization.

11. How long would you stay with us?

Do not give an exact period of time unless the interviewer specifically asks for one. You could mention that your commitment to the organization would continue as long as the relationship is mutually satisfactory.

12. Describe your style of management/supervision.

If the job requires you to supervise, be prepared to answer this question, even if you have not had direct previous experience. Mention the establishment of clear expectations, providing timely feedback and recognition, and personal traits, which would make you an effective supervisor.

13. Describe your communication skills.

Point out your particular strengths in written or verbal communication, or if you are very good with numbers or figures.

14. Why do you want to work in a company of this type and size?

Explain how your skills would fit in with the nature of the company.

15. What was the last book you read? ...movie you saw? ...sporting even you attended?

Think through this ahead of time. Select a book that relates to the company culture.

16. Describe situations in which you have worked under pressure or deadlines.

Describe previous work experiences or other situations where you worked under pressure.

17. Describe examples of times when you were a leader.

Even if you have not held an elected or appointed leadership position, possibilities include times when you took the lead on a group project, organized social or volunteer events, etc.

18. What are your career goals and objectives?

Talk first about the position for which you are now applying, present long-range plans. Be more specific with short-term objectives and fairly general with long-range plans.

19. What position do you expect to have in two years?

Mention a position similar to the one you are interviewing for or the next step up.

20. Why do you want to work for us?

Discuss how the organization could benefit from your employment and vice-versa.

21. What would you do for us?

Relate your experience and skills to the challenges of the position you are interviewing for. If possible, provide concrete contributions you could offer.

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS IN SUCCESSFUL INTERVIEWING

Do

Act naturally

Be prompt, neat, and courteous

Follow through on commitments

Ask relevant questions

Allow the employer to express
him/herself

Read company literature

Examine company rankings

Evaluate the opportunity
objectively

Follow company hiring procedures

Make yourself understood

Listen to the other person

Present informative credentials

DON'T

Freeze or become tense

Be late for the interview

Make elaborate promises

Criticize yourself, anyone, or
anything

Present an extreme appearance

Come unprepared

Become impatient

Become emotional

Draw out the interview

Try to be funny

Talk too much or too little

Oversell yourself

EMPLOYER RESEARCH FORM

Name of company/organization: _____

Headquarters location: _____

Regional hub/branch locations: _____

Main address: _____ Telephone Number: (____) _____

_____ Fax Number: (____) _____

Name and title of President/CEO: _____ Year founded: _____

Organization's Primary Mission:

Principle Services/Products:

Total Number of Employees: _____

Latest Annual Sales/Revenue Information:

Major Competitors:

Organizational Culture (management style, work environment, structure, etc.)

Historical Information:

Trends/Hot Issues/Other Relevant Information:

Interviewer Name: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____ Telephone Number: (____) _____

_____ Fax Number: (____) _____

Number of years with organization: ____

Interviewer's position/duties within organization: _____