

## **Interview Skills**

The interview is the opportunity to discuss your skills, abilities, achievements and experiences with a prospective employer. All interviewers are trying to determine if you are the best match for the job and if you are genuinely interested in the employer and position. How can you convey what the interviewer wants to know and be relaxed and self-confident in your presentation? The key to having a successful interview is to be prepared!

### *Interview Success Factors*

- Verbal and written communication skills (including actively listening)
- Analytical/logical thinking/problem-solving skills
- Interest in industry/company/function
- Interpersonal comfort and skills
- Enthusiasm
- Goals/direction
- Leadership skills
- Confidence
- High energy
- Ability to work well in teams
- Professionalism
- High degree of intelligence
- Personal presence
- Projecting substance/credibility
- Asking good questions
- Ability to think creatively
- Clear, concise answers
- Honesty

## Interview Dress Code

- Stay away from sheer clothing, low-cut shirts, and anything that shows your belly. Short skirts do not work. Provocative is not professional.
- Think conservative. Think black, navy or dark brown business suit. It's better to be overdressed than underdressed.
- Make sure your clothing fits. Uncomfortable clothing is distracting. Your focus should be on what you are saying, not on what you are wearing.
- When you are shopping for interview suits, consider buying a more expensive outfit if it has classic lines and good fabric. It will wear better than a trendier, less expensive suit. You can always add new tops and accessories to freshen your look.
- Stick with solid, dark colors: navy, brown or black.
- You can add style and flare to a black suit with a brightly colored blouse. Keep jewelry and makeup to a minimum.
- Think about your field. If you are going into banking, play it safe with conservative suits. Those in other fields, like fashion or art, can stray a little farther from the most conservative clothing. Those companies may even want you to show your fashion sense. Do some research so you know what clothing is typical of your industry.
- Keep your skirt length at the knee. Check yourself by sitting down in front of a mirror.
- Make sure your shoes are closed toe with a conservative heel. Wear pantyhose.
- Go easy on the perfume. You don't want to offend anyone.
- Wash and fix your hair in a professional manner. Check your makeup, hair and clothing just before you enter an interview.

## **Interview Etiquette**

- Be on time to the interview (arrive 15mins. early!!)
- Turn off cell phone prior to the interview
- Shake hands firmly at the beginning and end of the interview
- Maintain good eye contact throughout the interview
- Use body language to show interest (nod, sit straight, lean forward, smile)
- Control your motions (hands in lap, feet on floor)
- Speak positively about yourself and others

## **General Preparation for Interviews**

### **Know Yourself**

Conduct a self-assessment. Make lists of your career goals, skills, strengths, accomplishments and interests as they relate to the job. Review your resume! Typically recruiters/hiring managers create questions for the interview based on your document. In addition, know what type of work environment and skills you would like to use.

### **Know about the Organization**

Research the company prior to the interview. Know who you will be meeting with and their position in the company. A simple Google search or visiting the company site will help with this search. LinkedIn is another great resource. Create a list of questions to ask about the company and the position.

### **Create a Portfolio**

Purchase a professional portfolio or nice folder to carry with you to the interview. You can include extra copies of your resume, a list of current references, complete work history (supervisor names, contact info, full addresses, etc.), a pad and pen, a “cheat sheet” which includes directions to interviews, the name of the interviewer, questions for the interviewer and points you want to emphasize; and copies of your best work which relate to the job you are pursuing. Examples of “best work” include major tests, projects and papers which answer the employer question: “how can you prove to me that you have x skill?”

## Types of Interviews

### Traditional:

- Requires you to relay factual information
- Employer is taking your word at face value
- Sample questions: *Tell me about yourself. Why did you choose your major? What is a weakness that you have? Why are you interested in this position?*

### Behavioral:

- Employer makes assumptions about your future performance based on past behaviors and attitudes.
- Requires you to offer concrete, specific examples to reveal skills
- Sample questions: *Tell me about a time when you exhibited teamwork. Give me an example of a challenge you experienced and how you dealt with it.*
- When answering questions in this format think of the STAR method:
  1. What was the **situation**?
  2. What was the **task**?
  3. What **action** did you take?
  4. What was the **result**?

### Case-Method/Case-Based:

- Commonly used interview method in business and consulting fields.
- Interviewee is requested to analyze a problem/situation and present a solution.
- Employer assesses analytical ability/thought process, not the accurateness of the response.
- Sample questions: *How many gas stations are there in the U.S.? How many basketballs would it take to fill up this room? (Google)*
- Case Interview tips:
  1. Listen to the information provided, take notes.
  2. Take time to think the problem through.
  3. Identify the key issues.
  4. Frame your answer toward action. Identify what steps you would take.
  5. Share your ideas or thoughts that brought you to your proposed solution.
  6. Identify resources you would use/seek.

## **The Close/After the Interview**

- Close the interview by leaving a clear picture of what the next step is in the hiring process. Ask, if this information is not offered as you are leaving!
- Write a thank you letter. Send a typed letter immediately to every person with whom you interviewed. It should include any after thoughts from the interview and reinforce why you want the job. (Sample below)
- Follow up by telephone. If you do not get a response in the time you expected to hear, then call the employer by phone. Ask where they are in the hiring process and reaffirm your interest in the position. Don't overdo it-one call should suffice!
- Evaluate your performance. What did you like or dislike about the interview? Think how you will do it differently next time to make future improvements. Remember interviewing is a skill you develop with practice.

## **Sample Thank You Letter**

Your Complete Address  
Today's Date

Interviewer Name  
Title  
Organization  
Complete Address

Dear Mr. /Ms. Last Name:

It was a pleasure to meet with you at your office yesterday to learn more about TRW, Inc. The training program for personnel administrators seems challenging and comprehensive. I believe that my educational background and management work experience have prepared me well for such a demanding program and would be excited at the opportunity to contribute to your team.

Again, thank you for an enjoyable and informative interview. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Job Seeker