

Interview Tips

Homework Assignment (a must!)

- Research the company website and profile online. See if you can find out their competitive advantage, core differentiators, market focus, major accomplishments, threats and culture/values/style.
- Study the position description and know the core functions and selection criteria. Write out 5 ways WHY you are the BEST fit for this position and company.
- Brainstorm on your top 5 strengths and write out examples of where and how you've used them on a professional level.
- This will better prepare you to make the best impression possible. Incorporate all of this information during the interview when answering questions and mention a few more points at the end. Close it by saying "I am very interested in this opportunity and I want to reiterate why I'm the right match for you...(point 1, 2, 3)."

Overview

1. Know the exact place and time of the interview, the interviewer's full name, the correct pronunciation and his or her title.
2. Find out why the hiring manager and/or client representative is interested in your qualifications.
3. Determine how the opportunity will impact your immediate and long-term career development.
4. An interview is a "two-way street." Know what questions to ask during the interview. Your questions allow the hiring manager to evaluate your professional and personal needs. Insightful questions help both of you determine if your relationship will be mutually rewarding. Lastly, the better you understand the opportunity, the more you will be able to communicate your interest in the position.
5. Put your best foot forward. Always wear proper attire and stand up to greet your interviewer with a firm handshake and an enthusiastic smile.

The Interview

1. For hiring managers, the "right match" means they have identified individuals capable of performing the immediate challenges. More importantly, they hope the individuals have the potential to be future resources and assets to the firm.
2. The interviewer is the mechanism used to determine the "right match."
3. You are being interviewed by the hiring manager to determine whether you have the qualifications necessary to do the job and whether a mutually rewarding professional relationship can be formed.

4. Similarly, you must determine whether you can be successful in the available position and whether the company will give you the opportunity for growth and development.
5. Present yourself in the best possible light. However, be yourself; everyone has the same goal - the "right match."

Some "DOs" and "DON'Ts"

1. Plan on what you will wear the day before your interview. If you have an up to date business suit that you look good in and fits well, wear it! Otherwise, you may dress business casual.
2. For men, attire should consist of quality dark blue or gray suit. Shirts should be a solid color and be neatly pressed with a matching tie. Well shined shoes and a matching belt are a must. Clean hands and trimmed fingernails; do not wear cologne and only a touch of after shave. Make sure to shave and have a professional looking hair cut. During the interview, don't take off your coat unless the interviewer offers. If you have a lunch/dinner interview, do not order an alcoholic drink.
3. For women, attire should consist of a dark (navy, gray, black or brown) tailored suit. Preferably a knee-length skirt suit or jacket dress, but a pants suit will work also. Wear a conservative blouse or shell in a solid color. You can wear the same suit with different shirts underneath if there are 2nd and 3rd interviews with the same company. Wear medium/low heeled pumps, neutral hosiery, a small handbag, all appropriate to outfit. Wear conservative nail polish, if any. Conservative jewelry only—dangles can be very distracting during the interview. Wear only a small amount of perfume because your interviewer might be allergic to strong scents.
4. Do plan to arrive on time or a few minutes early. Late arrival for a job interview is never excusable. Give yourself five minutes of check-up tie in front of a mirror to make sure your hair is neat and tie in order.
5. If presented with an application, do fill it out neatly and completely. Have a folder/portfolio for resume and reference copies, that way you can have easy access to your past employer's information. Don't rely on your application or resume to do the selling for you. Interviewers will want you to speak for yourself.
6. Do greet the interviewer by last name if you are sure of the pronunciation. If not, ask the employer to repeat it. Give the appearance of energy as you walk. Smile! Shake hands firmly. Be genuinely glad to meet the interviewer.
7. Do wait until you are offered a chair before sitting. Sit upright, look alert and interested at all times. Be a good listener as well as a good communicator.
8. Do look a prospective employer in the eye while speaking.
9. Do follow the interviewer's leads, but try to get the interviewer to describe the position and the duties to you early in the interview so that you can apply your background, skills and accomplishments to the position.
10. Do make sure that your good points come across to the interviewer in a factual, sincere manner. Be assertive and proud of your achievements, but don't be over-confident. That kind of attitude does not give off a good impression. Stress achievements. For example: sales records, processes developed, savings achieved, systems installed, etc.

11. Do always conduct yourself as if you are determined to get the job you are discussing. Never close the door on opportunity.
12. Do show enthusiasm. If you are interested in the opportunity, enthusiastic feedback can enhance your chances of being further considered. If you are not interested, your responsiveness will still demonstrate your professionalism.
13. Don't forget to bring a copy of your resume and reference sheet! Keep several copies in your portfolio/briefcase if you are afraid you will forget.
14. Don't smoke, even if the interviewer does and offers you a cigarette. Do not smoke before an interview. Do not chew gum.
15. Don't answer with a simple "yes" or "no." Explain whenever possible. Describe those things about yourself which relate to the situation, but do not go on and on about a topic or you will appear "chatty".
16. Don't lie. Answer questions truthfully, frankly and succinctly. However, one thing to keep in mind is do not bring up incidences that are not relevant to the position at hand. Sometimes open-ended questions leave room for bringing up voluntary information about yourself that should not be discussed. Examples include past run-in's with the law or living situations.
17. Don't make unnecessary derogatory remarks about your present or former employers. Obviously, there were issues or else you would not have left a prior company or be looking to leave a present employer. However, when explaining your reasons for leaving, limit your comments to those necessary to adequately communicate your rationale.
18. Don't over-answer questions. And if the interviewer steers the conversation into politics or controversial issues, try to do more listening than speaking since this could be a sensitive situation.
19. Don't inquire about salary, vacations, bonuses, retirement, etc., on the initial interview unless you are sure the employer is interested in hiring you. If the interviewer asks what salary you want, indicate what you've earned but that you're more interested in opportunity than in a specific salary.

Sample Interview Questions:

****Not letting these kinds of subjects catch you off-guard is a key factor in maintaining your composure during an interview. Rehearse these questions and answers in your mind (or even out loud, if you can) in the days before the interview.***

Tell me about yourself.

Tell me about your background, accomplishments.

What are your biggest strength? Weakness?

Describe your ideal job.

What can you offer us?

Define success. Failure.

Have you ever had any failures? What did you learn from them?

Of which 3 achievements are you most proud?

What motivates you most in a job?

Why should we hire you rather than another candidate?

What do you know about our organization?

Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years?

How would you describe your most recent job performance?

Why did you choose to interview with our company?

How do you stay professionally current?

What outside activities are most significant to your personal development?

Questions to Ask Employers:

**Remember a lack of questions may be mistaken as a lack of interest.*

What would I be expected to accomplish in this position?

What are the greatest challenges in this position?

What kinds of assignment might I expect the first six months on the job?

Does your company encourage further education?

How often are performance reviews given?

Do you have plans for expansion?

What are your growth projections for next year?

In what ways is a career with your company better than one with your competitors?

What is the largest single problem facing your department right now?

What do you like most about your company?

Has there been much turnover in this job area?

What characteristics do the achievers in this company seem to share?

What qualities are you looking for in the candidate who fills this position?

Negative Factors Evaluated by An Interviewer:

Personal appearance which is less than professional.

Overbearing, overaggressive or egotistical behavior.

No positive purpose.

Lack of interest and enthusiasm -- passive and indifferent.

Lack of confidence and poise; nervousness.

Overemphasis on compensation.

Evasiveness; making excuses for unfavorable factors in work history.

Lack of tact, maturity and courtesy.

Condemnation of past employers, managers, projects or technologies.

Inability to maintain a conversation.

Lack of commitment to fill the position at hand.

Failure to ask questions about the position.

Persistent attitude of "What can you do for me?"

Lack of preparation for interview -- failure to get information about the company, resulting in inability to ask intelligent questions.

Closing the Interview

1.If you are interested in the position, **let the interviewer know**. If you feel the position is attractive and you want it, be a good salesperson and say something like: "I'm very impressed with what I've seen here today; your company, its products and the people I've met. I am confident I could do an excellent job in the position you've described to me." The interviewer will be impressed with your enthusiasm.

2.Don't be too discouraged if no immediate commitment is made. The interviewer will probably want to communicate with other people in the company or possibly interview more candidates before making a decision.

3.If you get the impression that the interview is not going well and that you have already been rejected, don't let your discouragement show. Once in a while an interviewer who is genuinely interested in you may seem to discourage you as a way of testing your reaction.

4.Thank the interviewer for his or her time and consideration. If you have answered the two questions-- "Why are you interested in this position?" and "What can you offer?"-- you have done.

5. If you are interested in the opportunity, ask "What is the next course of action?" "When should I expect to hear from you or should I contact you?"

6. Quickly follow up with a brief email or letter thanking the interviewer for the opportunity to meet with them, and reiterate your interest in the opening and how your skills and abilities relate to the position

